

Acts - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, August 31 (9:3-5)

“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks”— Acts 9:3-5.

THE conversion of Saul of Tarsus was, as every true conversion is, a supernatural event. Brought face to face with the risen, exalted Christ, he saw himself a poor, guilty sinner (1 Tim. 1:15, 16), who had been fighting against his own best interests in resisting the claims of the Lord Jesus. Repentant and subdued, he yielded himself in whole-hearted allegiance to the One he had spurned, henceforth to count all things but loss for Christ (Phil. 3:7, 8). Some such crisis there must be in the lives of all who are saved, unless, indeed, they had trusted Jesus so early in life that they have never been consciously His enemies. But they, too, are called to a complete surrender to His will when in years of maturity they recognize that He is not only Saviour but Lord.

It is evident that Saul had known considerable exercise as indicated in the expression, “It is hard for thee to kick against the goads” (Acts 26:14, R. V.), Like a refractory ox he had been injuring himself while resisting the authority of the Lord. Convinced at last of his error in the past, there was instant surrender to the claims of the risen Christ.

—Frances Bevan

Daily Sacrifice, August 9 (9:15-16)

“The Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he its to chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake”— Acts 9:15, 16.

THE importance of the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and his selection by the risen Lord to be His special ambassador to the Gentiles may be gathered from the fact that it is related, more or less fully, five times in the New Testament. Here in Acts 9 we have Luke’s account. In chapters 22 we have Paul’s story of his conversion as he related it to the Jews in Jerusalem. In chapters 26 he tells it again before Festus and Agrippa. Then in Philippians 3:4-11 he refers to it when writing to a Christian church. To his son in the faith, Timothy, he again tells the story of his one-time enmity to the gospel and the grace of God that transformed the persecutor into an evangelist (1 Tim. 1:12-16). These five recitals of the great change that came to this man are most suggestive, emphasizing, as they do, the incorrigible evil of the heart of man—even religious man—and the sovereign, electing grace of God.

—Amy Carmichael.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, August 30 (8:14-17)

“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” — Acts 8:14-17.

THE Pentecostal gift of the Spirit was not granted to these Samaritan converts immediately. They came of a schismatic group who were intensely jealous of their own claims to being the chosen people, as were the Jews to the south of them. They must learn definitely that “salvation is of the Jews” as our Lord had declared (John 4:22), so they had to wait until the apostles came from Jerusalem ere they were baptized into the one Body of Christ.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is to be distinguished both from new birth by the Spirit and from the gifts of the Spirit. All believers are born of the Spirit, by the Word of God when they believe the gospel (1 Peter 1:23-25). The gifts of the Spirit are the graces or talents He divides “to every man severally as He will” (1 Cor. 12:11), in order that we may work for God in our various spheres. But the gift of the Spirit is the Holy One Himself, who indwells believers and by whose baptism we are made members of Christ and so added to the Lord.

— Mary Bowley.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, August 29 (7:56)

“And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God” —Acts 7:56.

IN the seventh chapter of Acts we have Stephen's address when called to witness before the Jewish Council. He traces all Jehovah's ways with His people from Abraham to Christ and leads us in spirit by the God of glory (vs. 2) up to the glory of God (vs. 55). When he falls smitten by the stones hurled by his cruel murderers he exclaims with rapture, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!" Elsewhere, after the ascension of our Lord, He is set forth as seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Here He is standing as though bending eagerly forward to welcome His faithful witness and to express His deep sympathy with him in his suffering. Such is ever His attitude toward His persecuted saints. How blessed to know that His love is unfailing and His welcome sure! Meantime His protecting care is over us.

—Helen McDowell

Daily Sacrifice, August 8 (7:17)

"When the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt"— Acts 7:17.

GOD has a definite time for the fulfillment of every promise. Israel became a nation of slaves, suffering under the cruel task-masters set over them by a new dynasty of Pharaohs, who "knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8). Every effort was made to destroy them, but the more they were afflicted the more they multiplied and grew (Ex. 1:12), until the hour struck which God had foretold to Abraham, His friend, and their deliverance was effected. So it shall be in connection with the termination of their present long-drawn-out agony. The time of the promise draws nigh. Deliverance will come with Messiah's Second Advent in God's appointed time.

Daily Sacrifice, August 7 (5:41)

"They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name"— Acts 5:41.

THERE is a difference between suffering with Christ (Rom. 8:17) and suffering for Him (Acts 5:41). All Christians suffer with Him because of the very fact that they are partakers of the divine nature, and therefore are quick to feel the adverse conditions through which they are called to pass. But to suffer for Him is to bear shame and reproach—even unto persecution and death—for Christ's name's sake (Acts 9:16). We are told that unto us it is given, not only to believe on Him but to suffer for His sake.

—Isaac Watts.

—J. G. Deck.

Daily Sacrifice, August 6 (4:13)

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"— Acts 4:13.

NOTHING brings out more clearly the blessing of Pentecost than the contrast between the behavior and testimony of these two disciples before and after that stupendous event. Peter, who had been self-assertive and overconfident, yet vacillating and even cowardly in the hour of danger, became, when endued with the Holy Spirit, humble, yet bold; firm, yet gracious; and was enabled to bear witness to the risen Christ in such power that multitudes were brought to Him. John, who would have called down fire from heaven, on one occasion, to destroy those who were opposed to his Master (Luke 9:54), became the apostle of love, whose letters overflow with the tender compassion of Christ. Both men were born again before the coming of the Spirit to usher in the new dispensation of the grace of God, but, in accordance with the promise given by the Lord, they received power for witnessing when the Comforter came to convince the world, through them, of sin, righteousness, and judgment. They became transformed, and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. His holiness was reflected in their lives; His love filled their hearts, and in His name they both wrought signs and wonders (Acts 4:30) and bore testimony to the fact that He who died on the cross now lived to save all who trusted in His name.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, August 28 (3:6-8)

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God"—Acts 3:6-8.

THE "signs of an apostle" (2 Cor. 12:12), that is, the ability to work miracles in the name of the risen Christ, followed close upon the Pentecostal endowment in order to accredit the apostles as the direct, authorized representatives of the glorified Lord. When He was on earth and His mission confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24), He gave them similar powers, but in resurrection these were confirmed and enlarged. Such gifts were not promised to all believers, but to "them that believe" of the apostolic company (Mark 16:17, 18). And so we see Peter, once cravenly denying his Lord, now not only boldly confessing Him, but doing mighty deeds in His name, thus bearing

testimony to the might of the One whom Jew and Gentile had united to crucify, but who had been raised from the dead by the power of God, All blessing for mankind is bound up in the risen Christ. He sits now exalted at the Father's right hand to dispense riches of grace to all who come in His name, owning their need and confessing their sin. The healing of the man lame from his birth was in order to demonstrate the power and authority of the name of the Lord Jesus.

—C. C. Crowston.

The Unchanging Christ and Other Sermons, 5. The Message of Pentecost (2:22-36)

Text: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth. a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs. which God did by him in the midst of you. as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved; Therefore did ow heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad: moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He, seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he said himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:22-36)

I WANT you to look with me at a sermon that another man preached over nineteen hundred years ago; a sermon that had greater results probably than any other that has ever been preached in the history of the world.

You all know, of course, that it is a little over nineteen hundred years since the Holy Spirit came on that wondrous Pentecost at Jerusalem. Our chronology is reasonably certain excepting that when the calendar was arranged as we have it now, those who had charge of these matters were misled on account of a misunderstanding of the Roman calendar. We say B. C., before Christ, and A. D., Anno Domini, since Christ, the year of our Lord. Somebody has said, "His pierced hand lifted empires off their hinges and changed the course of ages." We date everything from the time that Christ Jesus came into the world. Chronologists discovered a few hundred years ago that those who had computed those dates had been misled in some particulars, and that our Lord Jesus was born four years earlier than supposed date of His birth. He was in this scene thirty-three and one-half years, therefore He was crucified in all probability in the spring of A.D. 30, although some think it was more likely in A.D. 29. Fifty days after His resurrection the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, On the morning of that day, the twelve apostles came together to wait upon God, and with them a number of others who brought the entire company up to one hundred twenty. The twelve who had the prominent place were those who had been associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in His life on earth "from the days of John the Baptist until the day in which He was taken up."

Judas had proven recreant and after selling his Lord had committed suicide going to his own place. Though bearing the name of a disciple, he was ever "a devil." But in place of Judas another had been chosen, Matthias. He had been an eye-witness of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. These men had been commissioned by the Saviour to go out "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." They were largely illiterate. They had had very few advantages, thinking of them from the scholastic standpoint. But as they had been instructed by the greatest Teacher who had ever walked this earth, spiritually and intellectually, too, they had enjoyed remarkable privileges. They had been transformed by the years of companionship with Him. But there they were, a forlorn little company; they had seen their Lord crucified, they had given up hope; they said, "We thought it was He who should deliver us," but His death seemed to end all that. Then they were electrified to hear that the stone had been rolled away from the door of the tomb, and they thought His enemies had stolen His body. His foes were as perturbed as they, for their greatest desire was that He should remain forever in the tomb.

Suddenly the Blessed Lord appeared to His disciples and in such a way that there could be no doubt that He was the same blessed One who had been nailed to the cross, who had gone through all the agonies of the tree and cried out in His anguish, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

He was risen, no question about it. If His enemies had stolen the body, they would have produced it for they would realize that they had made the greatest possible mistake. If the disciples had taken it, they would have produced it, for they were upset to think that their enemies might have taken it. But they had to believe that He had risen when they saw Him. He could actually say to a doubter, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing" (John 20:27). During forty days the risen Lord gave them a postgraduate course in Christian service and commissioned them to carry His gospel into all the world, and yet those men shrank from the task before them. But He told them not to begin until a new power should come to them. "Tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). And they waited for ten days after He had ascended to heaven and then we are told that "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting (Acts 2:1, 2). Oh, the solemnity of it! Imagine what it must have meant to them when suddenly they heard that sound from heaven. There was no evidence of storm in the sky and yet there came "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." Then as they gazed one upon another "there, appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:3). The Spirit had come in cleansing power and had come to empower them to carry the message of the gospel in the tongues of all men to the very ends of the world. They were to go forth to win men not with human reason nor by grace nor by their eloquence, but with the tongue of fire, the tongue touched by the Holy Spirit. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and their filling was not just for their own satisfaction; it was not simply for their own joy and gladness; it was not a mere emotional

experience that would give them a certain ecstatic sensation; but they were filled in order that they might be the messengers of grace to a dying world and “they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Thousands of years before, men rose up in their pride when God had commanded them to scatter on the face of the earth, and undertook to build a tower that would reach to heaven and said, “We will remain here and we will be strong in our own strength, in our own power.” But we read that God came down to see the tower which the children of men had builded, and He divided their tongues so that they were not able to understand one another’s speech. One man asked for bricks in one language and he was answered in bewilderment by his brother in another language. The work ceased and they were scattered abroad. But on the day of Pentecost the very opposite miracle was wrought. God used men, all of whom were Galileans, to preach in languages that they had never learned, and gave them opportunity to manifest this new power which they had received.

The Jews had come up to Jerusalem from their own countries where they had been scattered in order to worship God at Pentecost, and there they were all ready for the message. They were amazed to hear every man speak in their own language and they said, “Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?” Remember we have no intimation that anybody but the twelve had this marvelous manifestation. It was the twelve apostles that were preaching in tongues that day; not the one hundred twenty, not the people who were converted afterward. And yet they said, “How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” They could not explain it. “Why,” they said, “what meaneth this?” Those who could understand the different languages could get what was being preached; those who did not understand thought the men were just babbling and said, “These men are full of new wine.” It was not that they were acting in an erotic manner but as they preached in these strange languages the Palestine Jews said, “Why, these men are babbling drunkards.” But Peter replied, “No, no, this is the very same power that was spoken of in the book of the prophet Joel.” He does not say that this is the fulfilment of the prophet Joel, for when Joel’s prophecy will be completely fulfilled, there shall appear “wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke” (Joel 2:30). But the very same power that is going to work then was the power that was working on Pentecost, and so Peter says, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.”

The same Spirit, the same power, came at that day to accompany the ministry of the Gospel, and in that power Peter preached the Word. Do you wonder as you read it, how it was that it produced such tremendous results? I did not hear any man cry for mercy; I did not hear any one sobbing over his sins when we read it this morning, but when Peter preached, the effect was electric; it stirred his great audience from the center to circumference. Those people were all familiar with the events that had just taken place; they knew how Jesus had been denied in Pilate’s judgment hall, how He had been crucified, laid in a tomb, and now Peter’s solemnly attested declaration is that Jesus whom many of them had seen carried to the tomb, had been raised in power and was living to save. It stirred those people to the very depths of their being. Oh, that the Spirit who gave power to that message nineteen hundred years ago might give power to it as I read it again to you today.

“Ye men of Israel”— let me change it— “Ye men of Chicago, you who are here today out of Christ, you who are more or less familiar with these things but have never allowed them to grip your heart and conscience, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.” Jesus came in exact accord with the prophetic word; everything was headed up in Him. He came in the way of righteousness; He said the things that He had been expected to say, and yet, alas, alas, they rejected Him. People say, “If we could only see miracles wrought; if the ministers today could work signs and wonders, people would believe.” Not at all! No one was ever converted to God by a miracle. God has given miracles in order to attest His message. Even if we could call the dead to life, men would no more believe than they do when the Gospel preached.

You remember that rich man who died and went down into Hades, and cried, “I pray thee, therefore, that thou wouldest send Lazarus to my father’s house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment” (Luke 16:27, 28). Think of it! Six brothers, one in hell and five on the way. What a family! And that man in hell said, “I do not want my brothers to come here; send Lazarus to them.” But Abraham said, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them,” let them read their Bible, let them accept the message of the Bible. That rich man knew how he himself had neglected his Bible, and he knew his brethren were just like him, and said, “Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent” (Luke 16:30). And Abraham said, — (hear it, Christless soul, you who have sometimes said, “If God only gave me some other advantages than those He has given in His Word”)— Abraham said, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31). What does this mean? Just this, that if men will not believe the Bible, they will not believe the greatest possible miracle; they would call it all in question, they would not accept it. O, my friend, God is not speaking to you through miracles but He has sent His Word which Jesus attested by miracles. Would men accept Him? They cried, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him.”

But now, see how Peter drives that home. “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”— nothing took God by surprise. He knew just what they would do, but that does not lessen their sinfulness— “Ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.” The world stands guilty before God of the murder of His Son, and if you have never yet turned to God in repentance, saying, “O God, I confess the awful sin of rejecting Thy Son, and I take Him now as my Saviour and own Him as my Lord,” you remain under the dreadful indictment of having crucified the Lord of glory, for you stand with those who were guilty of the most fearful crime that has ever taken place in this world. Every man or woman who has never turned from the world to Christ stands guilty before God of the murder of His Son.

Do you say, “Preacher, you do not know me; I am respectable; my life is a good life; I am a good father, a good husband, a dutiful son, an obedient daughter. You have no reason to point me out as a sinner?” The Spirit came that He might convict men of sin. What sin? Jesus says, “Of sin, because they believe not on me” (John 16:9). If you are not guilty of any other sin, that one sin of Christ-rejection is the worst one you could possibly commit. And it is the sin that will sink you down to the deepest depths of bitter woe for all eternity if you do not repent, if you do not turn to God and say, “O God, I accept the One the world rejected, the One the world crucified I put my trust in Him; I will take Him as my Saviour.” This is what Peter drove home in the power of the Holy Ghost to those people that day. He reminded them of what David said, “I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is my right hand that I should not be moved” and then went on to show how this was fulfilled in Christ. “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” David was not speaking of

himself for he died and had to await the time when believers would be raised in the first resurrection. But Peter said that David was speaking of Christ, and he declared, "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." Now Peter says, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses."

Jesus has been raised from the dead. What does that mean? Two things. First, that He who died lives again to be the Judge of all. "He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." You must see Him some day; you must look into His face some day; hear His voice, and meet Him either in this world or in the world to come.

The second thing is this. Jesus has been raised from the dead to give repentance and remission of sins. "Let all the house of Israel— (let all the people of Chicago) —know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, both Lord and Christ." As Christ, He is the Saviour of sinners, the risen Jesus. You must meet Him either in life or at the great white throne, but the first time you meet Him you must meet Him in all your sins. You can meet Him in your sins today and be saved for all eternity; but if you refuse to meet Him in your sins in this life, you must do so in the judgment day only to hear Him say so sadly, so sorrowfully, "Depart from me. I never knew you."

Jesus lives. He lives to save you today if you will come to Him. This was the message that Peter preached. Can you imagine the results? Does it seem impossible that 3,000 people smitten to the heart, cried out, "What shall we do?" They confessed Jesus as Saviour and Lord and were baptized in His name, and the same glorious gift was given to them as came to the twelve and to the one hundred twenty. You have heard the same story. What effect will it have upon you? Are you here in your sin? Are you here unsaved? You cannot do a thing to save yourself, but Christ died for your sin and has been raised from the dead. He sits today exalted on God's right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, and He has commissioned us to preach repentance and remission of sins to all who trust His name. Will you trust Him as did they of Pentecost over 1900 years ago? Will you heed the message? Will you come to Him?

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, August 27 (2:39)

"The promise is unto you and to your children" —Acts 2:39.

It is a recognized principle, running through all dispensations, that God desires to save the households of His people. Noah prepared an ark for the saving of his house (Heb. 11:7), and God said to him, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation" (Gen. 7:1). Of Abraham the Lord declared, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19). David said, "Thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come" (2 Sam. 7:19). The promise to the Philippian jailer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, August 26 (2:1)

"When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" — Acts 2:1.

It is all important to understand aright what took place at Pentecost. There had been many Pentecosts in Israel's history, for it was an annual feast celebrating the beginning of the harvest, but all these were types. The Pentecost of Acts 2 was the fulfillment of the type. On that day God began a new work of taking out a special people to Himself, from Jews and Gentiles, to form the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit came that day as a divine Person to indwell believers and to baptize them into one Body. He came, too, to empower them for service as a redeemed and cleansed people that the message of the gospel might be carried to the ends of the earth. Strictly speaking, there can never be another Pentecost, any more than there can be another Passover owned by God since Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. But it is necessary for each believer to recognize and yield to the Spirit who came at Pentecost if he would be a witness in power to a lost world.

Before the coming of the Spirit the apostles were so many individuals as yet unfilled for the great task allotted to them. After that momentous event they were members of the Body of Christ, endued with power from on high to go forth to proclaim the gospel message to the ends of the earth.

—Mary Bowley.

Daily Sacrifice, August 5 (2:23)

"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain"— Acts 2:23.

THE betrayal, mock trial, and condemnation to death of our blessed Lord form together the most colossal miscarriage of justice in all history. Yet everything was foreseen by God, and all was in accord with the sure Word of prophecy. Those who participated in this infamous crime were all playing the parts long since predicted, little as they realized it. It is not that they were foreordained to act as they did. They were free moral agents in one sense, because they acted deliberately according to their own wills. But they were slaves of Satan, the great arch-enemy of God and man, who led them on to do what God Himself had declared should be done. There is a difference between His foreknowledge and

His foreordination—a difference that Peter made clear in his sermon that day. Every adverse actor in that most awful drama of the ages was individually responsible for his behavior toward the Holy Saviour, even though it was by their means that He was brought to the cross, where He offered up Himself as a propitiation for our sins.

—John Newton.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 11 (26:18)

“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me” —Acts 26:18.

THIS was the charge given by the glorified Lord to Paul at his ordination to the Christian ministry, on the Damascus turnpike. There he tells us he was made a minister and a witness of these things. He was commissioned to carry to the nations an offer of forgiveness and of title to a place in the inheritance of those who were set apart to God through faith in Christ. How blessed it is to enter into the reality of all this. God sees each believer as not only pardoned but freed from every possible charge. Ours is an eternal forgiveness. And we share in a sanctification that is perfect and complete. The heart goes out to God in adoring love and worship as one enters into some realization of this grace wherein we stand.

—R. M. McCheyne.

The Unchanging Christ and Other Sermons, 10. The Folly of Procrastination (24:25)

Text: “When I have a convenient season I will call for thee.” (Acts 24:25).

I AM not going to occupy you with the story of Felix, his duplicity, his perfidy, and his folly in deferring the question of salvation until for him I fear it was forever too late. For as you know, what little history records concerning him suggests that he lived and died in his sins. But I want you to consider with me the foolishness of following his example in saying, not so much perhaps to a servant of God, but to the Holy Spirit of God, what he said to the Apostle Paul, “When I have a convenient season I will call for thee.”

I am addressing myself I presume to an audience composed largely of Christians, yet I am sure there are many here tonight who are still without the saving knowledge of Christ. I take it for granted you intend to become a Christian someday. You have not thought of spending all your life in rebellion against God and going out into eternity an impenitent sinner to be lost forever. You have said to yourself over and over again, “Someday I must settle this question and settle it in the right way. Someday I must yield to the voice of God; someday I must accept Christ’s gracious invitation.” But you have added, “Not now. When I have a convenient season, a more convenient season, will take this matter up and give it my earnest attention.”

Let me earnestly inquire, When do you think that more convenient season will arrive? When do you think it will be easier to face your sins in the presence of God, to confess them, to turn to God in definite repentance, and to accept the Lord Jesus Christ by faith as your Saviour, than it would be tonight?

Will it be a more convenient season, a better time to go into this matter when perchance you are stricken down by illness and find yourself lying helplessly on a sick bed? Is this your idea of a convenient season? When you can no longer rush hither and thither as you do now, but when on a bed racked by pain and weakened by disease, you lie in a quiet room or perhaps in a hospital ward with plenty of time to think, and to weigh the great questions of time and eternity? Are you so sure this will be a more convenient season? Do you think it more likely that you will be in a better condition to take up such tremendous issues when weak and sick and perhaps tormented by anxiety as to the final outcome? During the years in which I have sought to preach the Gospel of Christ, I have sat by thousands of sick beds. I have been sent again and again by anxious relatives who have said to me something like this, “This son, (this husband, this wife, this daughter, or whatever else the relationship may be) is very ill and we fear has never turned to Christ. Will you not come to see if you could help such an one to a definite decision?” And so often I have gone in and the nurse has said, “Be careful do not say anything that would excite the patient”, or “the doctor has warned against anything that might make the sick one think that death is near,” and I have felt so handicapped as I have tried to speak of Christ and the soul’s great need. But in so many instances the brain has been so wrought or the nervous system so upset that I could only get in a few words and then after reading some passages from God’s blessed Book kneel in prayer, and commit the sick one to Christ. I am afraid that sometimes I have actually prayed rather for the edification, as I hoped, of the patient, than that my words might reach the ears of God, that is, hoping that indirectly some expressions used in the prayer might be carried by the Spirit of God home to the heart of the one who lay there so restless or perhaps so lethargic, and over and over again, when the end has come there has been no assurance whatever that the Word has found lodgment in the soul or that the sinner was saved.

My friend, a sick bed is a poor place upon which to settle the question of one’s relationship to God. Tonight while you are strong and well, while the eye is clear, and bright and the breath comes regularly and the pulse beats in an orderly way, it is the time to attend to the question of your soul’s salvation. Do not, I beg of you, think of a sick bed as affording a more convenient season.

Then again in this rushing work-a-day age when there seems so little time for quiet meditation, are you saying to yourself, “When I can take life more leisurely, when I do not have so much to occupy me, perhaps when I have made my fortune and can retire from business, that will be a more convenient season, and then I will attend to the matter of getting right with God?” But have you ever reflected how many people there are who never attain to this period of leisure? Do you realize that the great majority of us are so situated that we have to work on and

on saving very little; and then perhaps by some unexpected change of condition, lose all that we have saved, and so struggle for bread and butter right up to the last until eventually the poor overwrought heart suddenly stops and we go out to meet God. Oh, what a solemn thing if one is thus called to meet Him unprepared! You have

You remember the other verse of that old gospel hymn:

While you are waiting for a time of greater leisure, when as you fancy you may with less distraction take up and settle the solemn problems that have to do with your eternal weal or woe, will you not remember that it is given to very few indeed to ever reach such a desirable state in life? Surely then the only wise thing is to heed the call of God now.

Jesus called Peter from a busy fisherman's life; He called Matthew from the tax collector's office where he was doubtless literally overwhelmed with work. He stopped Saul of Tarsus in the midst of a rushing career, and all found salvation through heeding His Word. You do not need more leisure in order to inquire more particularly in regard to these things. The Gospel is so plain, the invitation is so clear, the message is so simple, you have but to lift your heart in the midst of all the rushing things of life and look to Jesus in faith to be eternally saved.

Are there others who are saying, perhaps not with the lips but at least in their hearts, "Go Thy way for this time. When I am old, I will send for Thee"? Are you cherishing the hope that in old age if you ever attain to it, you will be better prepared to come to Christ than you are in youth or in middle life? Do you realize that very few old people who have lived all their lives in sin ever turn to Christ at last? Do you remember that the Holy Scripture speaks of the heart being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin? Do you recall that there is such a thing as the conscience becoming seared as with a hot iron so that it ceases to register? You have often heard the expression, "He or she is gospel-hardened" and it sets forth a condition to which many, alas, attain. There are people all over Christendom who have heard the Gospel so many times that it ceases to move them in the slightest degree. Pharaoh hardened his heart against God so often that at last we read, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart." How did He harden it? Simply by the repeated declarations of His will to which Pharaoh refused to give heed. The sun which softens the wax hardens the clay, and the same gospel message which melts the tender heart of an exercised youth, will make no impression whatever, perchance upon the hard heart of an aged sinner.

I shall never forget listening night after night to Dwight L. Moody in the old Hazzard's Pavilion, Los Angeles, when I was but a lad of twelve. I could not get a seat the first night I went, the place was so full, so I climbed out on one of the steel girders reaching from the top gallery supported from the roof, and there I lay looking down upon the great throng, watching the sturdily built matter-of-fact businesslike man, who had been advertised as the renowned evangelist, Moody. I was greatly impressed by his intensity, and many a time as I lay there, I said in my heart, "Oh, how glad I would be if I could some day reach great throngs of people with the Gospel in the way that man is doing." I remember so well one night Mr. Moody asked all who were sure they were converted to stand on their feet. He kept them standing while the ushers gave an estate of the number who had risen. They were reported to be between five and six thousand. Then Mr. Moody asked all who had come to Christ before they were fifteen years of age to sit down. To my amazement, fully two-thirds of that great throng dropped to their seats. Then he said, "All who became Christians before you were twenty, sit down." Less than one-half were left standing. Then he requested all who were saved under thirty to sit down, and another grtatsompLy1 took their seats. So it went on, those under forty, under fifty, and by that time there were perhaps not twenty people still standing. It was one of the most striking testimonies I have ever seen of the fact that the great majority of people are saved in early youth, and very few indeed ever turn to God after they have passed the one-half century. What stupendous folly then for any one with whom the Spirit is now pleading to say, "When I get old, it will be a more convenient season. Let me alone now, Holy Spirit of God; come back to me when my hair is white, my step is infirm, my eyes are dim, and my nerves shattered and my whole body has become decrepit and infirm."

Or are there some here who are saying, "When I feel different then I will come." You think the present is not a propitious season because you are not overwhelmed with emotions. But on some future occasion when your feelings are more deeply stirred, when perhaps you imagine yourself to be better than you are now, or more interested in spiritual things, then you will come to Christ and close with his offer of mercy. Have you noticed that God nowhere asks you to feel different before you come to Jesus? Everywhere the Scripture insists on immediate response to the call of God irrespective of frames or feelings. It is not necessary that you go through some great emotional experience in order to trust in Christ. You remember the old hymn:

You do not have to improve yourself before coming to Christ. He is not calling upon you to cleanse your own heart from its sinfulness or to break off evil habits that have bound you. You are not asked to help Him save you, but He offers to take you just as you are and save you fully and completely by His own almighty power.

And now I would ask you to consider the divine answer to your suggestion that you wait for a more convenient season. In 2 Corinthians 6:2, the Holy Spirit has said, "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." And in Hebrews 3:15 we read, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Why should you thus attempt to defer the settlement of your soul's salvation when God is so ready to save you now?

Consider four things which I want to press upon you briefly in closing.

1. Remember no better time will ever come. No matter if you live to a vigorous old age, you will never have a better opportunity to close with Christ than you have now, and it is questionable if you will ever be more ready to be saved. In the meantime even supposing you come after sixty or seventy years of living in sin, you will have lost just that much joy and peace which you might have had by being saved earlier.

2. This is of great importance. You will never have fewer sins to account for than you have tonight. Do you say, "I am not a great sinner?" What do you mean by that? If you are still rejecting Christ, you are guilty of the worst sin any one can possibly commit, for nothing can exceed in guilt the spurning of God's own blessed Son. But take the question of actual violations of His holy law. Every day that you live, you are adding to the number of your transgressions. Suppose that you only commit three sins a day, one in thought, one in word, and one in deed; that would be in round numbers 1000 sins a year, and you are perchance 20, 30, 40, 50 years of age. Then you are guilty of 20, 30, 40, 50,000 sins already, and every day you live you are adding to the number. Is it not the greatest folly to go on increasing your guilt while

hoping for a more convenient season to be cleansed therefrom? But who is there who has only committed three sins a day? Is it not a dreadful fact that the record is far greater than that, and that you now stand guilty before God of untold myriads of sins for which no other atonement is possible than that which was made by Christ upon the Cross? Why not then trust at once in Him who died and have the blessed assurance that all your sins are forever cast into the sea of God's forgetfulness.

3. In the third place, consider, God will never be more ready to save you than He is now. He has manifested His love to the fullest extent in sending His only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He has given His Holy Spirit to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He has sent His messengers out into all the world with the Gospel proclamation. Everywhere they go they are instructed to cry, "All things are ready, Come." Do you not see that you are insulting God when you coldly turn away and say, "I intend to accept the invitation someday but not now. When I have a convenient season, I will call for Thee."

4. Lastly, let me affectionately remind you that the Gospel will never be more efficacious to bring peace to your weary heart than now. The blood of Christ will never avail to any greater extent than at this present moment to cleanse your conscience from every stain of sin and make you perfectly fit for the presence of God. The work of the Cross is finished. There is nothing to be added to what Christ has done. God calls upon you to believe the message and to bow in thanksgiving at the Saviour's feet. Will you not do this now while our hearts are lifted up to Him in earnest prayer for all in this presence who are, still unsaved?

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 10 (20:24)

"But none of these things move me neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" — Acts 20:24.

PAUL delighted to speak on various occasions of that which he had "received of the Lord Jesus." It was the assurance that his was a ministry given by the risen Christ which enabled him to "endure all things for the elect's sake," He knew Christ and he knew the value of the things of God, and because of this knowledge he was able to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible." It is as heavenly things loom large before the soul that one can hold the things of earth with a loose hand, and endure suffering and persecution with joyfulness knowing that Christ will estimate all aright at His judgment-seat and reward according to the measure of devotedness manifested here.

—J. G. Deck.

The Unchanging Christ and Other Sermons, 1. The Unchanging Christ (1:9-11)

Text: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up behold, two men stood by them in white apparel: which also said, men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? his same Jesus, which is taken of from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11.)

I WANT you to notice especially those precious words, "This same Jesus." Men often talk of needing a new Christ for a new age. In a recent book, which has been widely read, the writer states that a changing order demands a fresh revelation of God, that we cannot think of any past revelation as "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." He declares that inasmuch as times change, people change, and our viewpoints change, it is not to be supposed that the Christ of nineteen hundred years ago will meet the needs of men today. God reveals himself in different ways and He may have another revelation of Himself which will soon break upon us making all previous ones obsolete!

It is very common to hear people using that kind of language today but when we turn to the blessed Book of God, we find that our Lord Jesus Christ is God's last word to men. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, vs. 1 and 2, we read, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners—in many ways—spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." The word translated, "worlds" there is the customary word for "ages" and that verse may be translated, "By whom also he fitted the ages together." Christ is the beginning, Christ is the end, and Christ is the center of all the ages. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself accomplished a purification for sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). And there He sits today, the same blessed Saviour that He was when here on earth.

In the last chapter of this epistle we have those wonderful words, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). "Jesus Christ the same yesterday"— that carries us back to the long ages before He became incarnate. You and I began to be when we were born into this world. It was otherwise with our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not begin to live when He was born of the blessed virgin Mary, He simply changed His clothing as it were. He who had been in the form of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, divested himself of the garments of glory that had been His from all eternity, clothed himself in a body of flesh and blood, stooped in grace to become a servant, as servant became not an angel but a man, and as man humbled himself and became obedient unto death. And such death, that of the cross! He was the same in the past eternity. In the sixteenth chapter of John's Gospel, verse twenty-eight, we hear Him say, "I came from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, amigo to the Father." There you have Him in the past. He came forth from the Father; He dwelt in the Father's bosom throughout the interminable ages of the past.

"In the beginning was the Word." That is, when everything that ever had beginning began, "the Word was." Not, "the Word began." This was an unbeginning beginning. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Notice the seven things

that are predicated of Him in regard to the past, that yesterday of Hebrews thirteen. First, His eternal existence— “In the beginning was the Word.” Second, His distinct personality— “The Word was with God.” Third, His true and perfect deity— “The Word was God.” Fourth, the unchangeableness of His personal relationship to the Father— “The same was in the beginning with God.” Fifth, His full creatorial glory— “All things were made by him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Sixth, all life had its source in Him— “In him was life.” Seventh, all light comes from Him— “The life was the light of men.” This is the One who came in grace into this world, assumed a servant’s form, passed angels by, and became a man for our redemption.

Do we need a different Christ? Where will we find Him? God Himself has already come down to us and there is none higher than He to come.

We look for no other Christ; there can be none other. God has been fully told out in Him. I believe that is involved in the expression: “In the beginning was the Word”— “The Logos.” I wonder sometimes whether the Spirit of God did not intend this message given through John, to be the answer to the yearning cry of Plato and his follower’s throughout the Greek speaking world. You remember that Plato, dazed, amazed, as he thought of the great mysteries of life, death and eternity, said on one occasion to that little group in Athens discussing these questions: “It may be that some day there will come forth from God a Word, a Logos, who will reveal all mysteries and make everything plain.” And the Spirit of God, through the Apostle John, says, “Yes, and, He has come, the Logos was made flesh, became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus Christ the same yesterday and Jesus Christ the same today; — for having by himself made purification for sins He has been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. I wonder if you have ever noticed that the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is attributed to every person of the holy Trinity. We read in one instance that the Father raised Him from the dead; we read again that He was quickened by the Spirit; and then we hear Him saying, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” The Father raised Him from the dead, the Spirit raised Him from the dead, and the Son raised himself from the dead. He says, “I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again.” So intimate is the relationship subsisting between the three persons of the adorable Trinity that the one person does not act apart from the other. As Christ walketh here on earth, the Father walked here also, and now that He has gone back to the Father He says, “I will send the Comforter”; But He also says, “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, we will come in to him, and will sup with him,” By the reception of the Holy Spirit we now receive the Father and the Son, How wonderfully are we blessed! When our Saviour comes again, God is coming to take control of things in this world and the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in council in the past eternity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working out our salvation here on earth; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bringing in the glory by and by when the long period of man’s trial is over, when the kingdom is fully established, and the Lord Jesus Christ abide forevermore the One in whom the Father and Spirit as well as the Son are fully displayed,— for He is the image of the invisible God.

In the seventeenth chapter of John the Lord Jesus Christ is addressing the Father in His great high priestly prayer, and He says, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” He came from that glory into the degradation and humiliation of that which resulted in the cross, and now He has gone back to that glory but He remains a Man in glory still. Does your soul get hold of that? Some Christians have lost the blessedness of it; they think Christ is no longer the Man Christ Jesus that He was when here on earth, but Scripture says, “There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). And as the Man in glory He is seated on the Father’s throne, waiting until the day of His triumph when His enemies shall be made His footstool.

For the One, who is coming back, is Jesus Christ who is “the same yesterday and today and forever.”

“This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Away with the ridiculous errorists who tell us that Christ will never come back again as a Man, that He only exists now as a part of the all pervading spirit of the universe! He who walked on earth as the lowly Man of Galilee, knelt in agony in Gethsemane’s garden, cried in anguish from the cross, “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?” later surrendered His Spirit in peace to the Father as He exclaimed, “It is finished!” He who was raised from the dead, walked for forty wonderful days among His disciples and then led them Out one day to the Mount of Olives, as farces Bethany, was suddenly parted from them and ascended up and up and up until a cloud, the royal chariot of heaven, came down and received Him out of their sight and wafted Him away to the Father’s house from which He had come,— this same Jesus will be unchanged when He comes back.

I remember when a boy they used to sing in the Sunday School:

I can remember as well as though it were yesterday how I would say to myself, “My, I wish I had been born eighteen hundred or more years sooner. I wish I had lived when Jesus was here. Those boys in Galilee and Judea had something I will never have. He is so changed now, I will never hear His voice as they did; I will never see those kind eyes as they did; I have been born altogether too late.” But after I was saved and began to understand this blessed Book of God, I learned that the same precious adorable Saviour, unchanged and unchangeable, is the One I shall see when He returns. The only difference is that He will come in His kingly robes. He was here on earth in lowly garb, but it is just the outward semblance that is changed. He will be in royal apparel when He returns. How gladly we will greet Him and bow at His feet when we adore Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I am wondering if any of you have never trusted this wonderful Saviour. He came the first time to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and on yonder cross He, the Lord of glory, died. There He bore the judgment that your sins and mine deserved; there as our surety He took our place. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5). Today He lives in glory, the exalted One, mighty to save, for “God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified,” Peter says, “to be both Lord and Christ.” And He is the risen One. He is inviting sinners to come to Him, inviting weary burdened souls to find rest at His feet.

If I am speaking to one soul who has never trusted in Him, it is not yet too late; you may come now and may know Him as your own personal Saviour.

I close by repeating three stanzas of, Madge Rae’s poem.” “This Same Jesus.”

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, August 25 (1:10-11)

“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” Acts 1:10, 11.

FOUR times in this chapter we read that “He was taken up.” God has highly exalted Him who stooped to the death of the cross for our redemption. Now He sits in highest glory at the Father’s right hand, the Man of patience, waiting for the hour when He is to return to the scene of His sufferings, first to claim His chosen bride and then to reign in righteousness over all the world. In that day of His power “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” The time draws nigh. Let us labor on in faith while we await His return. The very fact that the hour of the second advent is not revealed should keep us on the alert, ever expecting to hear His shout, and to be called to meet Him in the air.

—M. E. Rae.

Daily Sacrifice, August 4 (1:8)

“Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”— Acts 1:8.

OUR risen Lord made known His program for world evangelization clearly enough before His ascension, when He instructed His disciples to go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, beginning at Jerusalem, then throughout Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. But there seemed to be a strange reluctance to carry out the commission as given. It took persecution to move the disciples out into the adjacent lands, then to farther countries, and even then they appeared to shrink from going to the Gentiles. Peter had to be specially called and instructed in order to prepare him to go to the house of Cornelius, a Roman, who may also have been a proselyte of the gate (as the Jews designated a Gentile who had accepted the Old Testament revelation of one true and living God), but whose house the Apostle would not have entered had it not been for the vision of the sheet let down from heaven—so slowly did the most devoted of Christ’s followers enter into the great concern of the heart of God for the evangelization of a lost world.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 9 (18:17)

“And Gallio cared for none of those things” —Acts 18:17.

GALLIO the indifferent! History tells us he was the brother of Seneca the philosopher, who exclaims, “O most sweet Gallio! Few men are so agreeable about anything as my brother Gallio is about everything!” Yet this amiable man lost a marvelous opportunity to hear the gospel from the lips of Paul, and perhaps lost his soul at last just because he was so unconcerned about eternal things that he did not consider them worthy of his attention. To him the whole matter was beneath contempt, consisting only, as he supposed, of a quarrel about words and names and Jewish ceremonial observances. So he turned scornfully away without hearing that glad message which God was sending out in grace to a needy world. His attitude stands out as a warning to others not to treat lightly the privileges God gives, lest the day of doom find them still in their sins.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 8 (17:30-31)

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: he, cause He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” —Acts 17:30, 31.

TO all men comes the command to repent and believe the gospel. Repentance is a change of mind, a complete turning right about face, an entirely changed attitude toward God, and sin, and self. It is the soul coming to the bar of judgment now that his case may all be settled before the appointed day when the Man who hung on the cross will sit on the throne. God has raised Him from the dead to give repentance and remission of sins to all who yield to His Spirit’s entreaty as set forth in the proclamation of the gospel. Those who thus turn to Him now in this day of grace need have no fear of judgment in that last great assize. They stand forever cleared of every charge.

— Zinzendorf.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 7 (16:30-31)

“And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” —Acts 16:30, 31.

THE jailer's question implied an exercised conscience and a repentant heart. He saw his need and longed for the knowledge of God's salvation. The reply to his anxious inquiry came quick and plain, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Nor did the apostle stop there. The same blessed privilege was extended, through matchless grace, to his household. All were invited to put their trust in Christ. There were no other terms, no demands to make restitution first for wrongs done, no insistence on a deeper sense of sinfulness. Just one thing was put before him as the necessary link between his soul and Christ. “Believe on Him.” To believe on Jesus is to trust in Him. He has borne all the sin, paid all the debt. Now the believer goes free.

—F. R. Havergal.

Daily Sacrifice, August 13 (16:6-7)

“They... were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia.... they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not”— Acts 16:6, 7.

HE who has commissioned His servants to go into all the world with the gospel message can be depended upon to guide His workers as to their respective fields of labor, if there be but dependence upon Himself and readiness to obey His leading. He opens doors and none can shut them; He closes and none can open (Rev. 3:7). It means much to be in such intimate fellowship with Him that His voice can be heard and thus each laborer shall be directed in the special work he ought to do, and in regard to the proper field of service, at any given time. We read, “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way” (Psa. 25:9).

—Frances Ridley Havergal.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 6 (15:18)

“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world”— Acts 15:18.

GOD does nothing at haphazard. He is never taken by surprise. He works according to a plan, the purpose or counsel which He has had in His heart from all eternity. From Moses to Christ He was dealing with Israel as His covenant people, while in large measure He overlooked the ignorance of the Gentiles (Acts 17:30). He taught His earthly people by laws and ceremonies, which prefigured good things to come. Now He is taking out from the Gentiles a people to His name (Acts 15:14). These saved Gentiles and the believing Jews are thus united in one Body (Eph. 3:6). When this work is completed, Christ will return and “build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down.” That will be the time for the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies in regard to Israel, when the Gentiles shall come to their light and be blessed through them. Failure to see this led many of the early Hebrew Christians to look with suspicion on Gentile converts if they did not submit to legal regulations. The gospel of grace frees the soul from all such bondage, when God's orderly plan is clearly understood.

Daily Sacrifice, August 12 (15:11)

“We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as thee —Acts 15:11.

WE have the historical account of the mission of Peter to the home of Cornelius in Acts 10, and Peter's own story, when challenged by the Jerusalem brethren, in chapter 11. In both it is evident that the river of grace, which had been artificially restrained by the dams of human ignorance and prejudice on the part of the believers in Judea, had burst all bounds and was now flowing out into all the world. Nevermore would it be possible to limit it to one particular nation, but the glad tidings of a full, free, and eternal salvation for all men everywhere, who will turn to God in repentance and trust His blessed Son, was destined to be carried to the uttermost parts of the earth, bringing life to the nations wherever the living waters should flow (Ezek. 47:9). The heart of God will never be satisfied until every man has heard the message of salvation and been given an opportunity to be saved by His grace.

—James Montgomery.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 5 (13:38-39)

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” — Acts 13:38, 39.

FORGIVENESS and Justification. Here are two things divinely joined together which man cannot reconcile. We cannot both forgive one and justify him. If he is justified, he does not need forgiveness. If forgiven, he is not justified, but is admittedly guilty. But God not only forgives the repentant sinner, because of the work of Christ on his behalf, but He justifies forever, clears of every charge all who trust in Him. All such

are “accepted in the Beloved.” The soul that receives God’s testimony concerning His Son is seen henceforth as in Christ, and therefore as truly accepted as He is. He is justified in the risen Saviour, for it is written, “As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 4 (12:5-7)

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands” —{vi 27343-27345}Acts 12:5-7.

GOD is better than our faith. While it is true that He has said He will do for us “according to your faith,” nevertheless He is not restricted in the exercise of His lovingkindness by our failure to lay hold on His promises. The Church in Jerusalem prayed for Peter’s deliverance, but they had a very faulty apprehension both of God’s power and His readiness to hear and answer. At the best, perhaps, they hoped grace might be given the apostle to endure a long imprisonment with eventual deliverance, or to triumph in the hour of death. But while they prayed, God answered, and did exceeding abundantly above their asking or thinking. And so it often is today. Our faith at the best is a poor feeble thing. His grace is an all-sufficient dynamic energy that refuses to be restrained by the feebleness of our apprehension or the poverty of our expectation.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 3 (11:13-14)

“And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” — Acts 11:13, 14.

CONSIDER the state of Cornelius before Peter preached to him. He was a moral, upright, devout man, God-fearing and generous. But all this in itself could not save (Acts 11:13, 14). Yet it might be a mistake to conclude that there was no work of grace in his soul before he heard the clear gospel message. He seems to have turned to God from idolatry, as a repentant, seeking soul, which would imply that he was quickened by the Spirit, but needing clearer light in order that he might know and enjoy God’s salvation.

Where there is a desire for the knowledge of God, He will see that light is given. No man will he finally lost who honestly desired to be saved. The Lord will bring the seeking soul and the messenger of grace together, for He never disappoints those who cry to Him in repentance for his pardoning grace.

Divine Priorities and Other Messages, 4. Cleaving to the Lord (11:22-23)

“Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord,”—Acts 11:22, 23.

THE background and context of these verses is intensely interesting. Some years had elapsed since the glorious Pentecostal outpouring when the work of grace began in the city of Jerusalem. Our blessed Lord had instructed His disciples to begin there and go throughout Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth, proclaiming the wondrous story of His salvation; but, somehow, His disciples were very slow when it came to obeying the Word. They lingered in Jerusalem and Judea. One at last had faith enough to go to Samaria and was followed by two of the apostles, but there the work seemed to stop. They seemed not to have the spiritual energy to reach out among the Gentiles. So God shook them up. Persecution broke out, as a result of which the Christians were scattered. They went everywhere preaching the Word, but even then they preached only to Jews. Finally, some went as far as Antioch and launched out in a Gospel campaign among those called, in our Authorized Version, the “Grecians.” Ordinarily, the Scriptures distinguish between “Greeks,” the Gentiles, and “Grecians,” the term used for the Jews born among the Gentiles. They were Greek-speaking Israelites and were characterized by many of the mannerisms of the Gentiles. That is the word used here in the Authorized Version, but actually, according to the best texts, it should be translated “Greeks,” for these Jewish believers went to the Gentiles and preached Christ to those in Antioch who had been before worshipers of idols. The great work of God continued. It went on for months, and a great many were saved. Word of this great ministry was carried back to Jerusalem, and when the brethren heard about it they said, “We had better investigate. If God is working this way among the Gentiles, we had better find out.” So they sent Barnabas, and when he saw for himself the evidence of the grace of God working among the Gentiles, his soul was stirred and he began to exhort and try to help those who were already saved, telling them that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord.

Now this verse came to me as I thought of the many who have had their hearts opened to their need of Christ and have trusted Him as their Saviour. We would not have you think conversion is actually the end of the Christian experience—it is only the beginning. When people come to Christ and put their trust in Him, that is just the start in the Christian life. When we receive the Lord Jesus we are born again but are only babes in Christ and need to grow. Certain things are important in the nurture of a babe—proper care, good food, constant cleansing, and fresh air. A great many things are required that the babe may develop and grow in a way that will cheer the hearts of the parents, relatives, and friends.

So, often, people are converted in great revival meetings, and years go by and they seem not to develop as Christians should, and unthinking people turn and blame the evangelist, saying, "People get converted but do not get anywhere or amount to anything for God." That is true if the converts are not built up in Christ afterwards, Barnabas realized that and went among these young converts and exhorted them, that "with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

That is the exhortation we would bring to all today who have recently accepted Christ. We plead with you for your own soul's blessing that you cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. You have trusted Christ, have taken Him as your own personal Saviour. Now see to it that you set your mind on the work of glorifying God in everything. You could not be saved through any effort of your own, but now that you are saved it is necessary for you to put forward every effort you can to glorify Him. If you have been born again you have been bought with a price. The Apostle Peter wrote:

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass; and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Salvation does not depend on a happy feeling or an emotional upset or signing a card or holding up your hand or rising from your seat and going to the inquiry room. All these things are right and proper in their places, but new birth depends upon having received the word of the truth of the Gospel. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," and that Word speaks to the conscience, and the power of the Holy Ghost produces new life. If you believe the Gospel you begin as a babe in Christ. As a babe, you need food. You need with purpose of heart to acquire that food which will be for your spiritual nourishment and upbuilding. The Apostle Peter's first letter, chapter 2, opening verse, reads, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

You will never grow, you will never make progress, you will never really develop as a Christian if you neglect your Bible. With purpose of heart cleave to the Lord and let one evidence of your cleaving be that from now on you will never permit a day to go by that you do not spend some time over your Bible. And as you open it, lift your eyes to Him who wrote it (for "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost") and ask God to reveal His mind and will to you in His Word, and seek grace to walk in obedience to His will. There is no other way to make a success of the Christian life. Back in the Old Testament, in the book of Joshua, there is a verse I like to give to young converts, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Josh. 1:8). There you have it! You want to make your way prosperous? You want to have good success? You want your Christian life to count for God? Then do not neglect your Bible!

Some of you may say, "I have never been in the habit of reading the Bible. I do not know how to go about it. Frankly, there is so much in it I don't understand," Of course not! You can expect that in a book from God. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:2). But remember God, who wrote it, has given you the Holy Spirit. "After that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). The Holy Spirit has come to dwell in you. You who have trusted Christ, your body is new the temple of God and the spirit of God delights to take the things of God and show them to you. As you open your Bible, look up to Him and say, "I do not understand it all; but, Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit open it up to me," and you will be surprised how He will delight to do it.

Some of you may say, "Shall I take it as a whole or by certain sections?" I think if I were you I would begin immediately to read thoughtfully, prayerfully, through the Bible—from the first chapter in Genesis to the last chapter in Revelation, Perhaps take a chapter a day—it takes only a few minutes; and then after you read it, pray over it and look it over again and say, "What in this chapter is for me, what speaks to my own heart?" If you do not find something, look to the Lord to open it up, wait on Him. Perhaps He will answer another question. Ask Him or yourself this question, "In what way is Christ presented?" Take the first chapter of Genesis you are reading through. You ask, "In what way is Christ presented?" The first chapter says, "Let there be light." Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." You read God made the sun and Jesus is called the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). So wherever you go in your Bible you will always find something speaking of Him. Then look it over and say, "Is there anything here I should be careful to avoid or obey or against which I am warned? Is there anything God is showing me I ought to do?" So read your Bible, chapter by chapter, and you will find the more dependent you are on the Holy Spirit, the more it will open up to you.

I would like to suggest this to you. Besides reading through chapter by chapter, I think it will be a wise thing for you who have only recently accepted the Lord to take a book like the Gospel of John and read a chapter of that each day, because you know John's Gospel was given especially to make known the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. "These are written," John tells us, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20:31). You will find wonderful truths which will make the things of God more and more real.

Then if you are able to set apart three periods a day, may I suggest another book. You want to learn to pray and praise. Read one of the Psalms daily and meditate on that Psalm. Ask the Spirit of God to open it up to you. I can promise you this, in a few weeks and months, though you may not realize it, others will see you are growing and developing as a Christian.

A second thing, you not only need to read your Bible in order to grow in grace and knowledge, but you need to set apart some time daily for prayer. Let me read a passage from Paul's epistle to the Philippians, chapter 4, verse 6, "Be careful for nothing [that may be translated, "Be not anxious about anything." It is natural for us to be anxious. There are so many things to worry and distract us]; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And then he promises that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Now, you can be a Christian without giving yourself to a life of prayer, but you will never be a growing, healthy, useful Christian if you neglect prayer; and so I would urge upon you that with purpose of heart you cleave to the Lord in prayer—that just as you set aside a certain time every day for reading the Word, so, in connection with it, you take time to pray. Some of you may say, "I do not know how to pray." Perhaps

you have not prayed since as a child you said, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Perhaps you were never even taught that. May I suggest, you could not find a better model than that given by our Lord in what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. Until you can pray at liberty yourself, until the Holy Spirit opens your heart and lips so you can pour out your soul in intercession, take those words as a guide in prayer. He said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father." it is a wonderful thing to be able to say that. You who have accepted Christ, only now do you have the right to say that. You may have used the words before but now you are entitled to pray and say, "Our Father." As you think of that it would be well to say, "God is my Father—and just as I go to my earthly father and tell him what is in my heart, so I can tell Him how I long to live for Him, how I want guidance and help along the way, and the supply of my temporal and spiritual needs, for He says, 'Be not anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.'"

"Hallowed be thy name." That is, He would have you enter into a spirit of worship and adoration as you come into His presence.

Pray for the extension of His work. "Thy kingdom come."

Pray for temporal things. "Give us this day our daily bread."

Pray for deliverance from trial and temptation. "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

And I would suggest that you accustom yourself to praying out loud when you get alone in your room where nobody will hear but God and you. Half of the victory in your prayer life is gained when you become accustomed to hearing your own voice. Many people cannot pray in public, because they have never become accustomed to hearing their own voices. If you have liberty in praying in secret, you will soon have liberty in praying in public. Because your words seem crude and seem not to come all at once, do not discontinue praying. Continue to cleave to the Lord and you will find He will open your lips and heart and really teach you to pray.

The last thing I want to say to you is this: The one who bore your sins is not only your Saviour but is your Lord and Master. Therefore you must recognize the fact that you are no longer your own. Before you were saved, you did what you pleased and went where you liked. That should be over now. You should say, "I am not my own. I belong to another. I have been bought with a price. Therefore I must be careful where I go, I must be careful in choosing my companions. I am called to serve the Lord Christ." In the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans there is a very important exhortation in the first verse:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Do not be discouraged because you are not all you hope to be at the beginning. Do not be discouraged if you find old things tugging at your heart and you do not see the immediate will of God. As you become better acquainted with His Word and spend more time in prayer and walk with Him, the more clear all these things will become.

As young Christians you should also avail yourselves of the opportunity of coming together with the people of God, that you may get better acquainted with His Word. He wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. He said, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10: 25) but to come together and wait upon God together "and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

So I can assure you of this—if in these things you with purpose of heart cleave to the Lord, your Christian life will bring joy and satisfaction, and you will be used in winning others to Christ.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 2 (10:38)

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. —Acts 10:38.

THE miracles wrought by our Lord differ greatly from the wonders generally ascribed to the founders and holy men of the great pagan religious systems. He never performed a sign simply to astonish credulous people, or to thwart the will of His enemies. Behind all the works of power was human need and His own gracious compassion for suffering and troubled humanity. The cursing of the fig-tree is the only seeming exception that proves the rule. It was an acted parable designed to illustrate Israel's sad condition and her deep need. Jesus never stooped to anything approaching legerdemain or magical incantation. He did not desire to be known as a wonder-worker, He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38), and in this way manifesting His Messianic mission. It had been predicted of old that in His days the dumb would sing, the blind see, the lame leap as an hart, and the poor be satisfied with bread (Isa. 35:5, 6; Psa. 132:15).

—Henry Twells.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 1 (10:34-35)

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" — Acts 10:34, 35.

IN the life and ministry of Simon Peter we see how God made an outstanding witness to His truth from most unlikely material. Who would have thought of the rugged impetuous, profane fisherman Simon ever becoming the eloquent, spiritual preacher, whose burning words would be used to the conversion of thousands of souls? But God works with what He brings, not simply with what He finds. Simon the fisherman, regenerated, becomes Peter the apostle, to whose sermons and letters the whole world owes a debt that it can never pay. While his ministry was primarily toward the Jews, yet the “branches run over the wall” (Gen. 49:22), and he was the one specially chosen of God to open the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 15:7). A man of strong prejudices, his narrow views were superseded by remarkable breadth of vision when taught by the Holy Spirit. Like his brother apostle, Paul, he delighted in “the true grace of God” (1 Peter 5:12), which knows no national or racial boundaries. Hence his messages are the delight of believers from among the nations, whom he once despised, as well as among those of Jewry, who have found in the Lord Jesus the promised Messiah.

—J. G. Deck

Daily Sacrifice, August 11 (10:43)

“To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins”— Acts 10:43.

THESE are the words of the apostle Peter who was one of those to whom Jesus, in resurrection, gave authority to proclaim remission of sins (John 20:23) and declared that heaven would ratify such a proclamation. This sermon proves conclusively that there was no sacramental absolution involved in this commission. Peter did not retire into a confessional and offer forgiveness, or remission, to all who came to confess to him and to do penance! He declared that every believer has remission of sins, and heaven ratified this by giving to Cornelius and his household the gift of the Holy Spirit when they received the message in faith. There is no other commission given to Christ’s servants today.

Daily Sacrifice, August 10 (10:15,34)

“What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common... I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” —Acts 10:15, 34.

WHILE God has given special privileges and opportunities to some nations, which, up to the present time, have been denied to others, He is, nevertheless, concerned about the salvation of all men. Through the cross all are cleansed in the sense that no one is now to be accounted outside the pale of the covenanted blessing of Abraham, through whose Seed all nations are now looked at by God as in a new place of privilege and responsibility. All men are precious in His sight. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn to Him and live (2 Peter 3:9; Ezek. 33:11). How foolish and wicked it is for those who profess faith in Him who died for all (2 Cor. 5:14, 15) to cherish in their hearts contempt for any people, whatever their ignorance or unpleasant characteristics!

—Colin Sterne.

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