

Deuteronomy - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 25 (8:2)

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no"— Deuteronomy 8:2.

ALL the wilderness experiences of God's redeemed ones are designed to bring them to an end of themselves and to cast them more implicitly upon Himself. If He suffers us to hunger it is that we may learn to appreciate the Bread from heaven. If He permits us to thirst it is that we may enjoy the more the clear crystal streams of grace flowing from the Smitten Rock. What memories all His ways will stir when safely home at last!

Daily Sacrifice, February 2 (6:6-7)

"These words... shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children..." —Deut. 6:6, 7.

IN Old Testament times the Jewish home presented the highest type of family affection and child-training that was known in the world. Paganism at its best never reached anything like the Jewish ideal as to this. But it is in the Christian home that we see the fullest development of family privilege and responsibility. There Christ is ever to have the pre-eminent place; and husband, wife, parents, children, masters, and servants are all called upon to live and behave toward one another as in His holy presence and as seeking His glory in all that they do (Eph. 5:22 to 6:9). To this end, there should be the daily reading of the Scriptures and prayer in the family circle, when all together bow before the Father above and commit one another to His loving care. But besides this, the young are to be trained in the ways of the Lord and the knowledge of His Word. Where parents leave this to the Sunday School or other outside activities, they are unfaithful to the responsibility God has put upon them. Nothing can make up for lack of Christian nurture at home.

—Amos P. Wells.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 30 (33:24)

"And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil"— Deuteronomy 33:24.

OIL is a well-known type of the Holy Spirit. He who dips his foot in oil will leave a mark behind him as he walks through this scene. It is walking in the Spirit that causes any life to count for God. Such an one will enjoy the fellowship of his brethren as they see Christ in his ways. And he will be blessed with children. It is the man who walks in the Spirit who is a successful soul-winner and knows the joy of seeing his children in the faith glorifying God on his behalf. Asher is the blessed or happy one. Happy indeed is he of whom these things are true.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 29 (33:3)

"Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand; and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words"— Deuteronomy 33:3.

HERE God's saints are seen in three places. They are in His heart: "He loved the people!" How precious to dwell in the bosom of Infinite Love! What rest in the hour of strife and in the day of distress! They are also in His hand—the place of security, as our Lord tells us in John 10:27-30, whence none can pluck them. Last of all they are at his feet—the place of discipleship, learning His mind and will that they may walk in His ways. How abundant the provision which He has made for the comfort, security and instruction of all His redeemed ones!

Mysteries of God, Preface (29:29)

KNOWING of nothing that aims to present in one volume, the various mysteries of the New Testament, it has been a happy service to pen these papers, hoping thereby to minister to the profit of some who, while of the household of faith, may have given little or no attention to truths of such vast importance.

The teaching set forth is not original with the writer. He is indebted to many, both through oral and written ministry, for most of the instruction he now seeks to impart to others. May it be yours, reader, to test all by the word of the living God, and thus find true profit.

H. A. Ironside.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 28 (29:29)

“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law”— Deuteronomy 29:29.

MUCH that was secret in Moses' day has been revealed now. Jesus said, “I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.” All that has been revealed is for us, and should challenge our hearts to enter into and enjoy. There are still mysteries that we cannot solve and that God has not been pleased, as yet, to reveal, but some day all will be made plain. “In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, then shall the mystery of God be finished.” Till then we are to appropriate in faith all that has been unfolded, as we study the Word in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

—F. R. Havergal.

The Unchanging Christ and Other Sermons, 6. Consistent Christian Behavior (28:8-12)

Text: “When thou blindest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence. Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds; lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and on as together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts as of woollen and linen together. Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself.” (Deut. 28:8-12).

AS AN amplification of the last verse in the above text, let us turn to Numbers 15:37-38, where we read: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue.” The Apostle Paul has set us the example of drawing spiritual lessons from some of these Old Testament regulations for which, otherwise, we might not see the need in our day. When he treats of the support of Christian ministers, he goes back to Deuteronomy to find a text. He selects one that we might think had no real application to the subject in hand—a very peculiar text indeed, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.” We might naturally ask, What has that to do with the question of the support of a minister of the gospel? But Paul uses it, not to teach consideration for the toiling creatures who so patiently serve man, though this is clearly emphasized in Scripture, but rather to show us our responsibility to care for the temporal needs of spiritual laborers, in order that they may be free to carry on their work without anxiety as to earthly things.

We read in the Book of Proverbs: “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” A man who had been converted gave his testimony to that fact at a public meeting. When he got through his wife stepped up, and said. “My friends, if any one here questions my husband's testimony, you should come out to our farm. Before he was converted, every cow, every horse, and every dog on the place would run away from him because he was so vicious and would beat them so cruelly; now, all the animals run to him.” The man's whole attitude toward the creatures of the farm was changed. But the Apostle Paul says that this was not written just for the oxen, but for our benefit. The oxen treading out the corn is a beautiful picture of the servant of Christ—beating out the soul-nourishing truth of the Word of God in order that He may pass it on to us. Now think of the ox treading out the corn, and reaching down every now and then to pick up a bite for himself. God says, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. Too many churches forget that. They are quite content to have the servants of Christ minister the Word year in and year out, and are not concerned in the least as to how they are cared for. They are like the deacon who prayed, “Lord, bless our minister; keep him humble and we will keep him poor.” The Apostle's use of that text suggests many texts applying to bygone conditions, which, after all, have a hidden suggestion for us.

These five verses in Deuteronomy prove this in a remarkable way. “When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.” The roofs of the Hebrews' houses, as the roofs of many Oriental houses today, or the roofs of the Pueblo Indians or the Mexicans of our own country, served as place of social intercourse, where the families gathered to visit. The roof answered the same purpose that our living room does; in fact, the Hebrew could have well called the roof his parlor, a place of communion and fellowship. Samuel took Saul up on the roof and talked to him; he put food before him and bade him eat. The roof also was a place of, prayer, for we read that the Apostle Peter was praying on the roof of the house when he received the vision of the sheet which was suspended from heaven—a picture of the mystery of the Church. Sometimes we go too far in saying that the mystery of the Church was revealed only to the Apostle Paul. The “all manner of beasts” represented the Gentiles' right to the Gospel, afterward made expressly clear to Paul. God said, “when you build a new house you are to put a battlement around your roof.” What for? Lest anybody should fall from thence. But here is a Hebrew who says, “I don't think a battlement will fit in with my plan of architecture. Besides, my wife and I are both elderly people. There is no danger for either of us. I will make a roof with a straight edge without any battlement.” Before long some neighbor comes to visit them. They have a child of tender years, who, in running and playing about on the roof, comes too near the edge and goes over. Why did God order a battlement about the roof? Simply for this reason: the battlement afforded protection for all. This man is held responsible for the death of the child. The battlement may not always be for your own sake, but for the sake of other people. Does it not emphasize the New Testament words, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself?” A great many things that we, as individuals, think we could do with impunity would wreck the Christian life of somebody weaker in faith. The fact that he sees us do something which he fears is not right or consistent with a Christian profession may lead him to do the same thing, but his consecration does not stand the strain —worldly things soon overcome him and his testimony as a Christian is lost. You can see, therefore, that your example

was not right. An evil example has doubtless been the cause of much backsliding. In the eighth chapter of First Corinthians we read of meat being offered to idols. Paul says that the Christian should not eat such meat if it would offend a weak one; we should do nothing to offend one of these. But, you say, "I can take that nice, tender steak. I can eat it and enjoy it even though it has been dedicated to the idol, for I know an idol is nothing but a mere lifeless image." "Yes, I know," says Paul, "but somebody else might drift away from Christianity if he saw you do it. Ruin not him for whom Christ died." We should live for others; we should be willing to sacrifice much in order to help others, and not mislead them.

"Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds; lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled." Seed? For us, that means the Word of God. We have been entrusted with the Word of God, holy and free from error. Thou shalt not use divers seeds. I want to warn you against dabbling with false cults. Some think they must be up to date, so they read everything and study everything that they can get their hands on in order that they may be well read. Often doubts are instilled in the mind in regard to great truths of God's Word, all because the vineyard has been sown with mingled seed. Here was Elisha preparing a meal for the sons of the Prophets. Finances were not too abundant, so he sent them out into the field to gather some greens for dinner; by mistake, they gathered some that were poisonous. One of the students was a good taster, and it happened that, before they ate, he reached down and tasted DEATH in the pot. Elisha was informed of the fact, and the greens were omitted from the menu. One spoonful proved that death was there. Some people think you have to go to the bottom of the pot in order to really test out what is in it. Someone says, "I believe in investigating; I can get a little good out of everything. I look into all religions and I find a little good in all of them. I listen to this one and that one and I can get a little good from all." Suppose we admit that. Our digestive organs might be able to assimilate stewed or boiled sawdust and possibly get a little nourishment from it, if there is any. But what a fool I would be to eat sawdust, when I could get good oatmeal porridge! Why not give yourself that which you know is nourishing? "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with mingled seed lest it be defiled." That is why the Apostle wrote: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Have you ever noticed in some preaching an absolute lack of definiteness? I was in a school recently where a man talked very indefinitely. At the close of his message, a youth asked me this question, "Is he a modernist or a fundamentalist?" I had to answer, "I do not know." There was nothing absolutely wrong, yet he did not say anything that any modernist could not have approved; it would not have killed a fly; it didn't amount to anything. Preach the truth in its simplicity. Don't get off on other lines.

The next verse is a warning against the unequal yoke. "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." When the Apostle wrote, in 2 Corinthians, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," he must have had this passage in mind. An ox and a donkey, unsuited to each other, together—a stalwart old ox and a donkey, an unequal arrangement. Why? The ox is a clean beast, used for sacrifice, and the ass is an unclean beast, a type of the natural man. That is the trouble with all of us; by nature, we are just stubborn donkeys. The donkey nature will come out in us sometimes, even after conversion. We may say that the ass is a type of the sinner, the man in his natural condition; the ox is a picture of the servant of God. "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." How far does this go? It touches every relationship in life. A Christian man has an opportunity to buy his way into a well paying business. It means partnership with an ungodly man. How long does he do business without feeling the yoke galling him? They are not fitted to work together.

Such an arrangement generally culminates in the backsliding of the Christian—unless he breaks away. Some think that this does not apply to fraternal relationships. Often when I finish preaching, men will come to me and shake my hand in all kinds of strange ways. Belong to a fraternal organization? I belong to the greatest one on earth! The church of the living God is a wonderful society—a secret society of the mysteries that the world knows nothing about. Why have I not joined human fraternal organizations? Several Scriptures have kept me out. I am to take the Lord Jesus as my example. He said, "In secret I have said nothing." I have to follow Him. Then there is this question of the unequal yoke. And God has said, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." We belong to the light. What place have we in the secret lodge room?

Then there is the question of church fellowship. The bane of the professing church is its effort to get numbers. Get the people into the church and afterward get them converted — build up a church membership. Where, in God's Word, do you read of the apostles of our Lord trying to get the unsaved into church fellowship? Where in the Word do you read that you must get the unregenerate in the church first, and then do them good afterward? Ordinarily it works out as in the case of the boys who caught young linnets and placed one on one side and one on the other side of the canary. They told their mother that they had caught them young and placed them there by the canary so that they would learn to sing as did the canary. The mother was rather dubious, but she didn't say anything. A few days later the boys rushed to their mother and cried, "Mother, our canary is chirping like a linnet."

The linnets never learned to sing as the canary, but the canary lost its song. Christians become exceedingly worldly by association in church fellowship with the worldly. Be sure people are saved, and then lead them on into Christian fellowship.

This applies also to the marriage relationship. I never can understand how a real Christian can contemplate entering into the most sacred of all relationships with an unsaved person. Some seem to imagine that once married, they will be able to lead their partners to Christ. It generally goes the other way. After the honeymoon the unsaved one says, "I am not going to church any more or have any more of that religious cant in my home." The unsaved one is usually the stronger. The other one has already disobeyed Christ, so he has not much spiritual strength by which to stand. An old Puritan divine once said, "If you marry a child of the devil, you can expect to have trouble with your father-in-law." "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together."

Here is one that will come home to us, for it is about clothes. "Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sort, as of woollen and linen together." Isn't it strange that God would not allow his people to wear mixed clothes? It was all right to wear linen and woollen if they were different garments, but not one in which the two were mixed. I want to call your attention to the word "garment" in this verse. In the Bible the word is used in two ways, meaning both clothing and behavior. Also in our English language, as well as in the Bible, garment and behavior are the same word; we have "habit" in clothing and "habit" in behavior. There are walking habits, riding habits, and bathing habits. We say, "That young man has a very evil habit," or "a good habit," meaning, of course, good behavior. Clothing then represents behavior. We speak of someone's garments always being white. What is that? Behavior. "Fine linen" is the righteousness of the Saints. The bride has made herself ready by righteous behavior. The sinner's righteousness is as filthy rags, just like old, defiled garments. Now God says to you and to me: "You

are not to be people of mixed behavior, very pious and godly in the classroom and thoroughly worldly and carnal outside; religious in church and very frivolous and foolish in the world—not to have one behavior in one company and another in another company” Remember, wherever you find yourself, that you are there to represent the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Lot for an example. Lot wore garments of linen and woolen. When with Abraham, he was very saintly, but in Sodom there was not much difference between him and the crowd. He was thought so well of, in fact, that they elected him a judge. They never would have made Abraham a judge.

Let us think for a moment, on worldly pleasures. No Christian who is walking with God is troubled much concerning them. In the first place, the world doesn't want them around. Gypsy Smith, the great evangelist, in a sermon one night, danced across the stage, and then said, “My friends, I can dance as well as any of you, but since the day I was converted, nobody has invited me to a dance or to the theater.” Why hadn't they? Because they knew from the day of his conversion that he was out and out for God! Your conversion has killed your chances with the world. Can't you hear some worldly friend saying, “There isn't any use asking her. She will throw gloom all over the party, talking about our souls. Imagine her getting you into some corner and saying, ‘Is your soul saved?’ “If you wear the right kind of garments, you will never be in style with the world.

Now we will look at the positive side of this question. “Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself.” “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringes of the borders a ribband of blue.”

(Num. 15:37-38). The Lord Jesus undoubtedly dressed that way. But why the ribbon of blue? In order “that ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.” God says to his people, “You are to be characterized by heavenly-mindedness in all your ways.” Are you always careful to have the ribbon of blue? Do people realize that you belong to heaven? Our citizenship, you know, is in heaven. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” The Israelite had this band of blue around the lower edge of his garment (he always wore long flowing garments), so that right down to the very lowest place where the garment nearly touched the earth he wore that which showed he belonged to the God of heaven. Where you and I come closest to the world, we are to manifest the heavenly character. Can you say, “For me to live is Christ?” Who lives Christ? One who wears a ribbon of blue!

It has been told how, years ago, the Crown Prince of France, was put under the care of an English tutor. The Dauphin was of royal blood and his tutor was of ordinary strain. It was unthinkable that a commoner should attempt to punish one of royal blood, and yet the prince was often as obnoxious as he could be; he made life as difficult for the English tutor as possible. In despair at last, hardly knowing how to control his royal pupil, the Englishman had a purple rosette made, and the next morning at the appearance of the prince, he said, “I want to pin this on your coat.” “What's that for?” “That is the royal color. It is not permitted me to punish you for any disobedience of the rules, but whenever you misbehave yourself, I am going to point at the purple.” Then one day the prince acted in an ungentlemanlike way; he was naughty. The tutor stopped, pointed to the purple, and immediately the prince colored and said, “I beg your pardon.” It was the appeal to the purple, reminding the Dauphin that rank imposes obligation. God gives us an appeal—it is an appeal to the blue. We represent heaven. The world judges our Lord by us.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 27 (23:9)

“When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing” — Deut. 23:9.

GOD'S host of old was invincible so long as they walked in obedience to His Word. But sin tolerated rendered them weak and powerless against the enemy. We who wrestle not with flesh and blood but with wicked spirits in heavenly places, must deal unsparingly with every evil tendency in ourselves if we would triumph in the hour of conflict. Hidden sin, unjudged and unconfessed, will be our undoing when we attempt to meet the enemy. A bad conscience will nullify all our holy weapons and result in utter defeat. But if we deal unsparingly with the evil we can count on God to work in us and to fight for us.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 26 (18:15)

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken”— Deuteronomy 18:15.

CHRIST JESUS is the Prophet, who, like unto Moses, is the Deliverer and Leader of His people, freeing from Satan's bondage and leading in triumph on to the rest that remains for the people of God. He who was with the Father from all eternity, became Man that He might qualify as the Mediator of our redemption. It was necessary that He partake of our nature apart from sin, that He might represent us before God and pay the penalty that we deserved. Now He is exalted as Prince and Saviour, and we are to heed His voice, following Him as we journey on to the Land of prose—to the inheritance laid up for us in heaven.

—I. Watts.

Daily Sacrifice, February 4 (11:26-28)

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known”— Deuteronomy 11:26-28.

SIN never pays. Intemperance cannot produce happiness. Licentiousness brings only ruin and death. These are incontrovertible facts. In all the years of human history, no one has ever found peace and satisfaction in throwing the reins upon lust and living to gratify sensual desire. The path of sobriety is the path of security. A life of temperance is a life of serenity. When the Lord God is sanctified in the heart (1 Peter 3:15) and the Holy Spirit is given control of the life, the soul enters into peace and contentment such as the devotees of passion and appetite never know. Every sin brings its own punishment, either in this life or the next, but a life of godliness is profitable in all things, whether for time or eternity.

Daily Sacrifice, February 3 (11:24)

“Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be”— Deuteronomy 11:24.

THIS promise was reiterated to Joshua. (Josh. 1:3).

God had given all the land of Canaan and adjacent countries also, from Lebanon and the Euphrates unto the Mediterranean Sea, to Israel before they ever entered upon their inheritance at all. It was all theirs by title. But they were responsible to make it theirs by actual experience. So is it with believers today. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3), but how few of us have really entered experimentally into the enjoyment of our inheritance! Israel never occupied all the land God promised them. When they are restored to the Lord in the last days, we are told that “the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions” (Obad. 17). This will be under the New Covenant of grace.

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