

Romans - Commentaries by Alfred Henry Burton

Christian's Library: Volume 5, Remarks on Romans 8:9-11. (8:9-11)

IN these verses the Holy Ghost is spoken of in three different ways, as "the Spirit of God," then as "the Spirit of Christ," and lastly as "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead." In the first instance, in connection with the new place the believer is in before God, in contrast to his old standing as "in the flesh." Secondly, "the Spirit of Christ," as formative in power of the new man. If any man has not the Spirit thus, "he is not of Him," — "none of His."

It is well to remark that in the first verse of this chapter, the believer is said to be "in Christ," but in verse 10, we have another side of the truth brought before us, namely, that Christ is "in us."

It is difficult to understand the true force of the words, "not of Him," in verse 9, if we separate it from the statement, "and if Christ be in you, of verse 10."

It is not union by the Holy Ghost, with a glorified Christ, the Head and the members, as in 1 Corinthians 12:13, but Christ in us as life, and the Spirit as formative of that life, in character and power. To be "not of Him," or "none of His," is not to have the Spirit, "the Spirit of Christ," indwelling us. This does not touch the question of conversion, or new birth, but is connected with the indwelling of the Spirit, consequent, not only on faith in the person, but in the redemption work of Christ. One who has "not the Spirit of Christ," is not in the Christian place. Thus in these verses, the Spirit defines our standing, our character, and in result secures, in view of resurrection, our mortal bodies, which are to be quickened "by His Spirit" which dwells in us.

In John 14:20, we have a statement which bears upon what we have before us in Rom. 8:1 and 10, — "at that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me" (e.g. Rom. 8:1), "and I in you" (e.g. Rom. 8:10). To introduce any thought of the body into the passage, Rom. 8:9-11, would, I think, cloud the meaning, and be faulty interpretation. Although the Christ we have to do with, and in whom we are, is glorified, yet as to the doctrine in the first eight chapters of the epistle to the Romans, it does not appear that the apostle is presenting Him in that aspect, but as dead and risen, the federal head of a new race, who derive from Him, and in Him have their new standing in life, liberty, and righteousness before God.

T. H. T.

NOTE—It will be seen that these "remarks" bear upon an article that appeared in the January number of this magazine. We commend the subject to the prayerful and extended study of the reader. It is clear that those to whom the apostle was writing, were members of the body of Christ, as well as individually belonging to Christ. The question for consideration is, whether the expression "not of Him" contains in it the thought of union or not. It seems to us that the latter half of verse 9 is as much connected with the first half of the same verse as with verse 10. And while it is true that the truth of the body of Christ is not developed in the epistle as a whole, this does not necessarily preclude all allusion to the subject, as is evident from chapter 12:4, 5, and 16. 25. — ED.

Christian's Library: Volume 10, Bible Study: The Offerings (12:1-2)

WE have now reached the end of the second year of this little work of studying the Scriptures together, and we can certainly thank our gracious Lord and Master for whatever He has given us by it, and ask Him to continue His mercy to us for this year that lies before us.

"Of Him and through Him, and to Him are all things."

We are commencing the subject of the sacrifices. Shall we then take a verse from the Epistle to the Romans and pray that it may guide our path during this year —

"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" (Rom. 12:1, 2).

A living sacrifice is a strange thing—it combines two opposite thoughts, for a sacrifice is by death. What does it mean? We are not left to guess, but the apostle goes on to show how God has purposed that we should discover by practical experience the change from a multitude of jarring, restless wills to that one perfect will of God. In full keeping with the object of the Epistle to the Romans, the body of Christ is shown here as the way in which we are each to learn what a living sacrifice means. As members of one body in Christ each individual, instead of being moved by a will of his own, is to be moved and controlled by the will of God. Just as our hands and feet do not move at their own will, but only as they are moved by the will that has its seat in the brain, so we who once by our own wills yielded our members as the instruments of sin, are now, by the reckoning of faith and the mercies of God, to be moved only by the will of the Head, but that is none other than the will of God. In this way we become living sacrifices, and actually prove by experience what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

It will not profit us much to know about the sacrifices as mere knowledge, if we do not learn actually what a living sacrifice means, nor may we forget that it is not by living and acting and feeling as members of a body, some body of our own choosing, but as members of the body,

even the whole body of Christ, that we can prove this.

Leviticus. —In beginning the study of Leviticus the following outline may be found of help in showing how the various subjects fall into their places in God's plan of the book.

1. The Offerings (cc. 1-6. 7). — This part of the book is wholly taken up with the offerings in relation to God.

(a) Burnt Offering.

(b) Meat Offering.

(c) Peace Offering.

(d) Sin Offering.

(e) Trespass Offering.

2. The Law of the Offerings (cc. 6:8-7.). —This takes up the responsibilities and privileges of the priesthood in connection with the offerings.

3. The Priesthood (cc. 8.-15.).

(a) Consecration of the Priests.

(b) The Priesthood in exercise, and the blessing following.

(c) The Failure of the Priesthood.

(d) External cleanness. Clean and unclean animals.

(e) Internal cleanness. Cleansing of defilement of birth, leprosy, and issue.

In all this we find God's holiness, man's defilement, and the exercise of the priesthood to meet the need that arises from the dwelling of a holy God in the midst of an unclean people. But the failure of the priesthood raises deeper questions, for what remains if that breaks down?

This leads up to the central point of the book.

4. The Atonement and its consequences for the people (cc. 16-17).

5. The Law of Holiness (cc. 18-22). —The principle of these chapters, both for people and priests, is summed up in 19:2, "Holy shall ye be, for I Jehovah, your God, am holy."

6. The Feasts of Jehovah (c. 23). —This fully unfolds the blessing in the heart of God, His purpose to rest in the blessing of His own with Himself.

7. The Government of Jehovah (cc. 24-27). —These chapters unfold the principles of God's government among the people whom He has redeemed and blessed. In the end all is found to rest on redemption.

This is very brief and summary, and in no way a final division of the book, for other students may divide it from other points of view. But it will at least serve to give those who are beginning to study the book some idea of how perfectly God has arranged it. We can find a surer principle of order than the scissors and paste of generations of unknown editors! It may also be helpful to point out a remarkable thing, which we shall have occasion to speak of again when we come to the 16th of Leviticus. It is that each of the three books, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, presents a crisis, a point where everything hopelessly breaks down, and God's mercy comes in to show how blessedly. He is over all the results of man's sin. In Exodus this is found in cc. 32-34. In Leviticus in c. 10, answered by c. 16. In Numbers in cc. 13-14.

worship is from the heart.

The only question raised is, "What is acceptable to Him?" And the 1st of Leviticus is wholly occupied with the way in which one who is vile and unacceptable may be accepted before God, and bring into His presence what is perfectly acceptable to Him. Hence the chapter, in every detail of its types, speaks of Christ and His infinite value to God in offering Himself to accomplish the work of Calvary.

The whole subject is God's estimate of the Person of Christ, not man's estimate. In worship we do not bring to God our thoughts of Christ, our estimate of the value of His Person and work, but we bring to God His own thoughts of Christ, His value of Christ, expressed by the Holy Ghost, who alone can utter the worship that delights the heart of God.

So the three divisions of this chapter do not bring out different measures of our estimate of Christ, but three different aspects of God's estimate of Christ, all absolutely perfect in sweet savor to Him, and all of which may be brought before our hearts when we draw near to worship the Father. Space will not allow of our entering into the details of each aspect, but the student will find no sweeter or richer pasture for his soul than these unfoldings in type of the perfection and preciousness of Christ to God.

The main differences will be pointed out, and the rest left to each to study for himself.

1. The Offering from the Herd.—The main points peculiar to this offering are that the entrance of the tent of meeting is mentioned as the place where the offering is to be presented; the offerer lays his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it is accepted for him to make

atonement for him. There are other details, all deeply interesting, but the main point is that this aspect of the offering and of the presenting of the blood is connected with the entrance into the holy place where God dwells, and with the acceptance of the offerer according to the value of his offering.

Thus it is the largest of the offerings, that which speaks of the full measure of the Father's satisfaction in Christ and His work, that gives the offerer entrance and acceptance before God. This is the foundation of all worship. There can be none until the place of acceptance in the Beloved, and the title to enter into the holiest are known.

2. The Offering from the Flock. —Here the place where the victim is slaughtered is emphasized, and we have the head and the fat mentioned in connection with the cutting up of the victim into its pieces; the words, "the priest shall present it all," are also special to this part.

The question of entrance and acceptance is not raised here, but we have instead the side of the altar northward, the place of judgment. It is the aspect of Christ's offering as meeting God's judgment in order that nothing might ever arise to touch the believer's acceptance and eternal security. Here, too, taking the place of man in his ruin and responsibility, and offering Himself wholly to God, the blessed Lord is presented as perfect, a sweet savor.

[The force of the north side as connected with judgment may be seen from such passages as Jer. 1:13, 14, 4:6, 46:10; Ezek. 1:4, &c.]

3. The Offering from the Fowls. —Here we find the head is pinched off and burnt separately, the blood is pressed out, not sprinkled, the crop and feathers are cast beside the altar on the east, into the place of ashes, and finally the bird is to be split open at the wings, but not divided asunder. Here the details speak, not of acceptance and entrance, not of judgment met and satisfied, but of the personal sufferings and anguish of the blessed Lord's heart at the cross where He gave Himself for us, and where His perfect obedience and love to the Father came out fully. We remember that the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in bodily form as a dove, at the commencement of His pathway, when first the Father's voice was heard, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." We find in Heb. 9:14, that it was by the Eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God. Hence this aspect of the offering is specially the Spirit's estimate, as He presents the sufferings of Christ to the heart for worship.

But in the crop and feathers cast into the place of ashes, we may see what the blessed Lord's heart found in this world. It was the place where God's judgment lay on all, and His heart could find nothing here to rest in. This, too, the Spirit presents to us that the world may be to us what it was to Him—a place of ashes. But that leads on to the glory. The sufferings and the glory of Christ are always found together, and the Spirit leads our hearts by the way of Christ's sufferings to the Father's answer in the glory. The place of ashes is on the east side of the altar, the side of the glory. Nor is this all.

He will not be alone in the glory. While the cross had severed every link for Him with a world which crucified and cast Him out, still His love, stronger than death, held fast, "having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end." We shall be with Him in the glory, that is the supreme display of His love. Hence we have, "shall not divide it asunder."

So this three-fold presentation gives us the full value of Christ as the object of worship, the delight of the Father's heart, and the One whom the Holy Ghost presents to the affection of our hearts, that worship may flow out. Much more, infinitely more, might be gathered from this wonderful chapter, but these slight outlines must suffice.

Answers to Questions

1. This question has been answered above.

2. The actual cases in which burnt offerings are explicitly said to have been offered up to the time of Lev. 1, are: Noah, Gen. 8:20; Abraham, Gen. 22:13; Jethro, Exod. 18:12; the youths of the children of Israel, Exod. 24:5; idolatrous offerings to the golden calf, Exod. 32:6; Moses, Exod. 40:29. It does not say that Abel's offering was a burnt offering, but the description is that of a burnt offering.

3. Seven times, Ps. 20:3, 40:6, 1:8, 51:16, 19, 66:13, 15.

4. Lev. 7:8.

For next month (D.V.) the subject of study will be:

The Peace offering, Leviticus 3. The following questions may be answered or searched out: —

1. What is the chief difference to be noted between the burnt offering, the meat offering, and the peace offering?

2. What was the priest's work in the sacrifice of the peace offering, and what was his portion?

3. What had the offerer to do in connection with the peace offering?

4. What was done with the fat of the peace offering?

B.S. ED.

Christian's Library: Volume 5, Epistle to the Romans. (10:1-21)

FROM chapter 41:1 to 15:7 another matter of great practical importance is treated, and a variety of principles of daily application are inculcated.

Mutual forbearance with one another is enjoined in all matters where conscience is concerned. There should be the avoidance of all that would produce needless discussion (ver. 1), a judging spirit (ver. 2-12), or that would be a stumbling-block to our brother (ver. 13); all should aim at that which makes for peace and edification, ever keeping the example of the Lord Jesus Christ before the eye (14:17-15:7).

“Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputation” (ver. 1) — that is, not for the disputing about doubtful or unsettled points. There was no doubt some difference of judgment amongst Jewish and Gentile believers upon such matters as the observance of days and the eating of meats. The Jew had been trained up from infancy to observe certain days and to abstain from certain meats upon religious grounds. The Gentile, freed from all such trammels of conscience, was in danger of despising him for such scruples. On the other hand, the Jew was apt to judge the Gentile believer for what he considered laxity (see Acts 15.). Both were wrong.

In all matters of conscience it is with God we have to do directly and not with man. “To his own master he standeth or falleth,” and, thank God, it is added, “Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.” It is beautiful to see how the highest motive is here imputed both to the eater and to the one who eats not. Each is supposed to act with direct reference to God, seeking to do His will and giving Him thanks. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” Further acquaintance with Scripture and increasing light from God may make clear to-morrow what to-day seems doubtful.

At any rate, let us not judge one another, as we are so apt to do; leave all such matters to be decided at the judgment-seat of Christ. It is most instructive to observe the different manner in which the same apostle is led to apply the solemn truth of the judgment-seat of Christ in Romans and Corinthians. In Romans the saints were in danger of judging one another, and they are exhorted not to do so, for the simple reason that “every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Whereas in Corinthians it is used as a reason why we should judge ourselves now, for we must all appear then.

In any case the saint should remember that, whether living or dying, he is the Lord’s. Christ who died and rose is Lord both of the dead and living. He it is that has a claim upon the allegiance and obedience of the believer, and none should seek to usurp His place, least of all those who are the most intelligent.

In matters such as those treated of in this chapter, which might be called ceremonial rather than moral and doctrinal, free scope must be given to conscience, and above all let no one put a stumbling-block or occasion to fall in his brother’s way (vers. 13-23).

The apostle himself had no uncertain judgment as to the question of meats. In itself nothing was unclean, of this he was persuaded, and that by the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless if any had a conscience as to certain meats (Lev. 11.), “to him it is unclean,” and the spirit of Christian charity would lead the strong to consider the weak.

Some may feel a difficulty as to verse 15. How, it may be asked, can a brother be destroyed? Certainly he cannot be in the sense of being lost; and yet, so far as the conscience of the weak brother is concerned, he is brought under condemnation if he violates it by eating when doubtful as to its being the will of God. One may with clear conscience before God eat meat or drink wine (of course not to excess); but if this leads another to do it who has a conscience troubled about it, the tendency of the action on the part of the first is to destroy the other. But we ought rather to edify one another. “It is good, therefore, neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth,” &c. For we should seek the Kingdom of God, and this is not a question of meat and drink, but of the far weightier matters of “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

It makes a great difference whether it be a question of the scruples of a weak brother’s conscience or the determined legality of false teachers. If the latter, the inspired communications by the same apostle leave no room for doubt (see Galatians and Colossians), and no quarter is to be given. If the observance of days and the question of taking flesh and wine be sought to be enforced on the principle of legal bondage, it is a return to the weak and beggarly elements of the law, and thus undermines the whole gospel of the grace of God. It must be resisted with firmness.

Doubtless great wisdom will be needed to discern between “the infirmities of the weak” and the inroads of legalism. But this will be given if Christ be the object before the soul.

We are exhorted, then, to receive one another, not because all have attained to a certain standard of intelligence, but as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Christ’s own example is set before us in our dealings one with the other (15:1-8). How far do we not come short of it!

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