

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

Meditations on the Last Days of Christ

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

OFFERING AND SACRIFICE

WE SHALL CONFINE our present meditation to the state of resignation in which we left our great High Priest, at the close of the last chapter. He yields Himself up to His adversaries, and suffers them to do with Him just as they please.

With what feelings the holy angels must have witnessed their Lord being thus taken prisoner - they whom the Saviour's humiliation never for a moment prevented from being conscious of His real character and dignity; and who, wherever He went, perceived in Him the Lord of glory and the King of kings, before whose throne they only ventured to approach with veiled faces!

Let us realize, if possible, what they must have felt at that moment, when, looking down from the clouds, they saw the High and Lofty One surrounded by the officers, as if He had been the vilest of criminals; the Prince of heaven taken captive with swords and staves; the Judge of the world fettered like a murderer, and then dragged away under the escort of a crowd of ruthless men amid blasphemies and curses, to be put upon trial!

May not a cry of horror have rung through heaven, and the idea have occurred to those holy beings that the measure of human wickedness was now full, and that the day of vengeance on the ungodly earth had arrived?

We can so easily forget, in His appearance as a man, who it is that we have before us in the humbled individual of Nazareth; and it is only now and then that it flashes through our minds who He really is. But then our hearts become petrified with amazement, and we can only look in silent astonishment.

But however dreadful His position may be, the Saviour bears with composure these outrageous proceedings. He delivers Himself up, and to whom? - to the armed band, the officers and servants. But we are witnesses here of another yielding up of Himself, and one that is veiled and invisible; and the latter is of incomparably greater importance to us than that which is apparent to the outward senses.

Christ here gives Himself up to His Father, first, as “**an offering**” (Ephesians 5:2).

How shall we sufficiently appreciate the excellency of this offering? Behold Him, then, as One against whom all hell may be let loose without being able to cast the slightest blemish on His innocence; as One who endured the fiercest ordeal without the smallest trace of dross; who boldly withstood the storm of temptation; who, in a state of the most painful inward privations, preserved unshaken His love to His Father; and, although His Father's heart seemed turned away from Him, yet regarded it, as before, as His meat and drink to do the will of Him who sent Him; who, in a situation in which acute agony forced Him to sweat blood, could nevertheless pray from the bottom of His heart that not what He desired, but what the eternal Father wished and had determined respecting Him, might take place. Such is the dazzlingly pure, immutably holy, and severely tested offering which Christ in His own person presents to the Father.

Regard Him now as submitting Himself, not only to the disgrace of a public arrest, but also to the fate of a common delinquent, in obedience to His Father's will. Hear Him address His enemies. With the majesty, freedom, and sublime composure of One who marks out Himself the path on which He is to walk, in accordance with His Father's counsel.

He says to the multitude, and especially to their leaders, the chief priests, and the captains of the Jewish temple guard, and to the elders, the assessors of the Sanhedrin, **"Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves to take me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me, nor stretched forth your hands against me."**

Our Lord intends that these words shall serve as a testimony, not merely to those that heard them, but also to the whole world, that He was led guiltless to the slaughter, and that no power on earth would have been able to overcome Him, had He not, when His hour was come, voluntarily yielded up Himself in free submission to His Father's will.

Until He had completed His ministerial office, no enemy dared to touch Him. Nor had they been able to discover anything in Him which might have enabled them to prosecute Him. The invisible barrier is now removed.

"This," continues the Saviour, to the profound confusion of His adversaries, **"is your hour and the power of darkness."** His meaning is, "By an act of the divine government the chain of Satan has been lengthened, that it may do with me as it pleases."

What self-possession and divine composure are in these words! With unreserved willingness does He yield Himself up to the most disgraceful treatment. His soul continues in a state of equanimity and serenity, just as if they were not jailers' assistants, who bound Him with cords, but followers and friends.

But what benefit do we derive from the fact of Christ's giving Himself up so completely and devotedly to the Father? The greatest and most beatifying of which thought is capable. Listen! The Lord says in His law, **"Ye shall not appear before me empty."**

Consider, that if we wish to inherit heaven, we cannot do without salvation.

We now possess it, and the days of our grief and shame are at an end. We may now boldly appear before the Father, knowing that He loves us, and has opened the gates of His palace to us. But what have we to exhibit to Him that is meritorious?

Sufficient - yea, more than the angels possess. We have, indeed, nothing of our own. In the records of our lives we perceive only transgression and guilt. But God be thanked that we need nothing of our own, and are even warned against trusting and depending upon anything of the kind.

We are instructed to appeal to the righteousness of Another, and this is the living **“offering”** of which we speak - Christ, with the entire fullness of His obedience in our stead. If He was accepted, so are we, since all that He did and suffered is placed to our account. For, **“as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”**

Those who are in Christ are no longer transgressors in the sight of God, but pure, blameless, and spotless. What a blissful mystery! If you are unable to believe it, grant it at least a place in your memory. The hour may come in which you will be able to use it; for we have often had occasion to witness how it fared at the last with those who supposed themselves among the most pious and holy of mankind. Whatever of a meritorious and approved character they imagined they possessed, nothing remained when the light of eternity and approaching judgment threw its penetrating rays upon their past lives. The splendor of their virtues expired, their gold became dim, and that which they had preserved as real worth, proved only tinsel and valueless.

What is to be done in such a case? How weave together, in haste, such a righteousness as God requires, and without which no man can enter heaven? What answer are we to make to the accusers that open their mouths against us - Satan, the law, and our own consciences, which say to us, **“Thou art the man?”**

If we are not to give ourselves up to despair, something which is not ours must be bestowed upon us, which we may offer unto God as the ground of our claim to salvation.

The living offering which Christ made of Himself can then alone suffice, and that abundantly, to recommend us to God. Possessing this, we no longer need be mute in the presence of our accusers. In Christ, as our Surety, we fulfilled the conditions to which the heavenly inheritance is attached. Henceforth, who will accuse us, who will condemn us? We rejoice with Paul, and say, **“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

The Lord Jesus appears in our narrative not only as an **“offering,”** but also as a **“sacrifice.”** Our sins are imputed to Him, and in His sacred humanity He endured what they deserved. Let us therefore consider Him in the character of our Representative, and the sufferings He endured, and the wrongs He sustained will then appear in their proper light.

A blissful and heart-cheering mystery is here presented before us.

If I possess saving faith, I find myself in a peculiar relation to the Sufferer at Gethsemane. For know that the horrors He there experienced are not His curse but mine. The Holy and the Just submits Himself, representatively, to the fate of the guilty and the damnable; while the latter are forever liberated, and inherit the lot of the holy Son of God. Wonderful and incomparably blissful truth! Our only shield and comfort in life and death!

O ye blessed, who belong to Christ, who can worthily describe the glory of your state! We hail the wondrous exchange which the eternal Son of God has made with you. We glorify the Surety and the Liquidator of your debts. Never forget the nocturnal arrest of your High Priest. Paint it, in bright and vivid colors, on the walls of your chambers. If you are again reminded of the curse which your sins had brought upon you, accustom yourselves to regard it only in this sacred picture, where you no longer behold it lying upon you, but upon Him, in whose agonies it eternally perished.

Therefore, let not shadows any longer disturb you.

There will never be a period in eternity when you will be compelled to say to your enemies and accusers, **“Now is your hour and the power of darkness.”**

Your Representative uttered it, once for all, for you; and henceforward only the hour of triumph and delight, which shall never end, awaits you. Peace be with you, therefore, ye who are justified by His righteousness, and forever perfected by His one offering!

No longer dream of imaginary burdens, but know and never forget that your suit is gained to all eternity. Behold, Christ yonder bears your fetters; and nothing more is required of you than to love Him with all your heart, and embrace Him more and more closely who took your entire anathema upon Himself, that you might be able eternally to rejoice and exclaim, “Jehovah Tsidkenu - **the Lord our Righteousness.**”

~ end of chapter 17 ~

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