Strange Fire and the Fire From Heaven

Streams of Refreshing · Leviticus 10; 1 Kings 18

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Strange Fire and the Fire From Heaven; Or, Man's Thoughts and God's Thoughts of Christ 2 Chron. 7:1-10 Human thoughts concerning Christ and His sacrificial work are at the best poor. Man can think of the crucifixion as an historical fact, and write and speak of the nails that pierced His hands and feet, of the thorny crown, and other external circumstances connected with His death; and come to his own conclusion too as to the worth of that sacrifice. In fact, the gigantic Christendom round about us is built up mainly on man's miserable thoughts of Christ, and of things concerning Him. Like Nadab and Abihu, they have mingled strange fire with the incense which God commanded them not; and, like them, judgment and death must be the result. We are told that they died before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-3);

and so must all those who are bringing the name of Christ and His work into use simply for present advantage and human exaltation; thus making ordinances and religious things their refuge, or relying upon the false foundation of associating man's opinions and his actions with the name of Christ, instead of relying only on Christ Himself and His infinitely efficacious work. Such is

Jesus Christ, and Him crucified {1 Cor. 2:2};

for God has so estimated the priceless value of that finished work on the cross as to raise Him up from the dead, and give us life, righteousness, and completeness in Him. God, we know, has counted that blessed One, who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, worthy of the highest possible exaltation. It is God who tells us that we are now justified by His blood {Rom. 5:9},

and who gives us fullest liberty to come into the holiest of all. Just, then, as we are seeing God's dealing with Jesus His own Son upon the tree, and learning His mind from His word and by His Spirit -- His estimate of the infinite perfections of that one offering which was once offered -- will our hearts be set at liberty, and established in unquestionable security before God. God hath reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ. Next observe, that the sacrifices having been consumed with fire from heaven, glory followed. We are told that the glory of the Lord filled the house {2 Chron. 7:1}.

strange fire (Lev. 10:1);

it is not according to God's mind; it does not give Him the glory. It is man's religiousness; and the end of these things is death. It was not so, however, in Solomon's day, when he dedicated the house of the Lord. (See 2 Chron. 7:1-10.) We do not find strange fire

offered; but the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices {2 Chron. 7:1}.

We see God here, and His actings in relation to the sacrifice. This is what the faith of a Spirit-taught, sin-convicted soul specially beholds in the cross of Christ. They are not ignorant of the external facts of the crucifixion; but until they see God acting in the scene, until they there see God dealing with His own Son as the sin-bearer, they find no real ground of peace and rest. In the cross of Christ faith sees the invisible God searching the victim, trying and estimating its worth by the fire of His uncompromising holiness, and condemning sin in the flesh. The cross of Calvary tells us of an unblemished One, who was in Himself infinitely acceptable to God, who fully glorified God in regard to our sins, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It is God's estimate of the death of Christ, and nothing short of it, that establishes our souls in peace before Him. The resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ show us the infinite acceptability, the savour of rest, of that offering in the sight of God, and all combine to tell us that our security is built upon Divine righteousness and truth. If, then, we would have the joy of this immoveable security before God, we must have God's thoughts of

And does not this teach us what a sure title to glory the blood of the cross is? There is a most blessed connection between the sacrifice

and the glory.

Let us well consider this. The death of Christ, like a mighty lever, gives the one who believes title to the very glory of God. Like the rent vail, it removes every obstacle to going at once into God's presence. Glory must follow. We are at this moment between the cross and the glory, with liberty to enter into the holiest by faith. On no other ground whatever could we enter into the cloudless, holy presence of God, but that Christ died for our sins {1 Cor. 15:3},

according to the Scriptures, and that He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father {Rom. 6:4}.

We are therefore told, that the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burntoffering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house (2 Chron. 7:1)

No wonder, then, that we so often sing -"O Lord, we adore Thee, For Thou hast redeemed us; Our title to glory We read in Thy blood."

Is it not most blessed to see this connection between the sacrifice and the glory? How clearly it shows us that we owe all our blessings to the blood of Christ, and that in the glory itself we shall be so deeply conscious of it, as to be for ever rejoicing in the infinite value of that blood, and giving unceasing glory to God and the Lamb.

God's estimate of Christ in His presence, and what He is to us and has done for us, we cannot but be moved to readiness of heart and purpose to associate ourselves with Him in a world that still rejects Him, and most truly feel that His interests are our interests, His joy our joy, and that what grieves and dishonors Him also grieves and dishonors us.

Nothing so really humbles us as the sense of what God has wrought for us in Christ. It leaves no room for self-exaltation. It is a completed work. We are

We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (reconciliation) (Rom. 5:11).

made the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

This bows the heart before God to praise and give thanks. We are therefore told, that when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever (2 Chron. 7:3).

It is, then, being in communion with God's mind as to the glories of Christ, and the unsearchable value of His work on the cross, that the heart is really emptied of self and earth, and filled with praise and gratitude, to God. We are taken up with God, and delight to tell God what He is. This is worship. Devotedness too will be connected with it; for the affections and desires of the heart are stirred by such wondrous mercy; and purposes of soul are formed according to the will of God. Hence this inspired narrative next tells us, that THEN,

yes, then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord (2 Chron. 7:4).

How is it that in the present day many Christians feel it so difficult to yield themselves and their substance to the Lord? The answer is plain. It is because Christ is so little understood, -- God's estimate of Him so feebly apprehended -- His perfections not known. Our ignorance of Christ is great, and very culpable. When God's revelation of the glories of His beloved Son is really known, and the infinite acceptability of His work received; when the blessed reality of being in Christ is laid hold of, our nearness to God in Him apprehended, the all-satisfying portion He is, and His all-sufficiency for us under all circumstances known; then the affections of our hearts are roused, and our energies so drawn forth, that we cry out -"Love so amazing, so Divine, Demands my soul, my life, my ALL." We are further told, that the people were glad and merry in heart.

And why? Because of the goodness that the Lord had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel His people (2 Chron. 7:10).

I ask, then, in conclusion, can we fail to learn from these lessons that our present happiness, devotedness, and worship, all owe their source to God, as He has revealed Himself in Christ? Learning