

Index of Articles

Jonah, pt 12	1
Jude, Caution and Counsel, pt. 1	3
The All-Sufficiency of the Sacrifice of Calvary	5
The Lord's Supper	7
The Dayspring from on High	9
Altars of the Bible, pt. 1	10

Jonah

Part 12

Steve Walvatne

The Mourners

"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them... Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away His fierce anger, that we perish not?" (3:5, 9).

We come now to an amazing scene, one transcending even Jonah's experience with the great fish. The preacher's proclamation has staggered Nineveh. As David wrote, "The voice of the Lord is powerful... The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars..." (Ps. 29:4-5). Said C. H. Spurgeon, "When the Lord sends the word, it breaks hearts far stouter than the cedars" ("The Treasury of David"), and so it was here. Down every lane of the city, Jonah's words resounded, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Soon, the "talk" of the town became the "terror" of the town, causing every activity to cease. Businesses closed; pleasures evaporated; deep-felt mourning ensued. Haughty men, profane men, ruthless men – individuals of every stripe – fell prostrate before Elohim, the supreme God of heaven and earth. Well could they say, "The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning" (Lam. 5:15). How things change when heaven gets a hook into men!

In this paper we'll consider verses 5-9 of chapter 3, observing how Jonah's message affected (1) **Nineveh's Residents** and (2) **Nineveh's Ruler**.

Nineveh's Residents

Jonah's preaching **Altered the Ninevites' Attitude**, for "so the people of Nineveh believed God." The prophet faded from view as listeners peered past him to the proclamation's Source. There they saw One "to be feared above all gods" (Ps. 96:4) and believed that His warning to them was true. The

depth of that belief is unknown, though as W.W. Fereday said, "...It is not unlikely that some individuals (possibly many) found eternal blessing as the result of the great alarm" ("Jonah and His Experiences"). Without question, however, their altered attitude epitomized the contrition God desires from perishing sinners or erring saints (Ps. 51:6). Offenders must be honest, they have to come clean, otherwise, "though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (Ezek. 8:18).

The preaching also **Altered the Ninevites' Appetite**, for they "proclaimed a fast." Fasting, "an exercise designed to mortify the flesh for the benefit of the spirit" (George Young: "Lectures on the Book of Jonah"), proved reality.

For, how could they dine when doom rent the air?
Or how sit in ease, as sorrows drew near?
Troubled intensely and gnawed by despair,
They bowed before God, His wrath to forbear.

Their appetite for mercy now exceeded their appetite for meat. In their quest for the heavenly, they lost heart for earthly. Such is the case still, with those that feel sin's weight and fear its wages. The focus grows narrower as they "strive to enter in at the strait gate" (Lk. 13:24).

Thirdly, Jonah's preaching **Altered the Ninevites' Appearance**, for they "put on sackcloth." Composed mainly of goat's hair, sackcloth was a coarse, uncomfortable fabric, worn chiefly by prophets, prisoners, and poor people. It generally manifested a mournful spirit. Thus, the Ninevites by wearing sackcloth expressed their poverty and discomfort, their sorrow and regret, at the wickedness sully-ing their lives.

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Three more things deserve notice. (1) The Ninevites received Jonah's message **without distinction**. Every individual, "from the greatest of them even to the least of them" believed God. All owned their part in the crime, recognizing that "there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22-23). (2)

The Ninevites also received Jonah's message **without delay**. None, it appears, hesitated, or stated like Felix, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). They were dead earnest and it was well they were. Lastly, (3) the Ninevites received Jonah's message **without discord**. Few, if any, scoffed or scorned at God's words, unlike multitudes who as fools, "make a mock at sin" (Pr. 14:9), having "no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). Something similar occurred in Acts 8:5-6, where we read, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake..." No wonder we read soon after, "And there was great joy in that city" (v.8).

Nineveh's Ruler

Word of Jonah's message "came unto" or "reached" the king of Nineveh, suggesting that what he received was an indirect report of the sudden phenomenon befalling the people. News likely filtered in from the city's precincts and the king's reaction to it was nothing short of astonishing. Generally, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called..." (1 Cor. 1:26), but as England's Countess of Huntingdon (1707-1791) reportedly said, "Thank God for the letter 'm' in that word 'many.'" Nineveh's king was among the few, who for a time at least, bowed before the majesty of Almighty God. Four items in particular, characterized the king's attitude when he heard the message from heaven. We're informed of,

1. **The King's Descent:** "He arose from his throne...and sat in ashes."
2. **The King's Disrobing:** "He laid his robe from him."
3. **The King's Decree:** "He caused it to be proclaimed and published..."
4. **The King's Desire:** "...That we perish not."

The King's Descent. A king's throne was emblematic of his authority and power, for from its elevated height, judgments came down and rule was enforced. For a sovereign to leave his throne and assume ground on par with his lowliest subjects, was an expression of utter submission. This ruler never flinched, but freely fell to an ash-strewn place, that through mourning he might appease the King of all kings, the very God of heaven. What an example for his subjects!

The King's Disrobing. Nothing was more out of place at a time like this, then the king's luxurious robe.

Thus, "he laid his robe from him." The words connote deliberate action. He was quick to put it away. Richard Sibthorp imagined the king's angst – "Take the robe from me, the glitter of which is painful to my sight...Darken the rooms, hush the babbling tongue, and soften the step of the busy foot. Bring the sackcloth. Sprinkle me with the ashes" ("Notes of Lectures on the Book of Jonah"). In like manner, sinners must dispense with fleshly "garments" that hinder salvation, and turn humbly to Christ.

The King's Decree. In consultation with his nobles, the king issued a decree, demanding,

1. **A Cessation of food and water**
2. **A Covering of sackcloth**
3. **A Crying unto God**
4. **A Change in Activities**

A Cessation of food and water: "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water" (v.7). Most of Nineveh likely began fasting before this edict. Nevertheless, the king's ruling made it mandatory and established guidelines for its scope. It was a fast of "unusual severity" (John Broad: "Lectures on Jonah"), forbidding water as well as food, and affecting beasts as well as humans. This shows how seriously Nineveh's Ruler regarded God's message. In Noah's day, wicked sinners "did eat" and "they drank," then "the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Lk. 17:27). Likewise in Lot's day, the vile populace "did eat" and "they drank" and it "rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Lk. 17:28-29). The rich man of Luke 12 did the same, saying, "Soul...take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Ah, but "God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee..." (vv.19-20). Nineveh's king was different. He feared God, commanding all eating and drinking to cease.

A Covering of sackcloth: "Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth" (v.8). If fasting depicted deprivation, then sackcloth depicted humiliation. In short, the covering of sackcloth bore witness to the fact that neither man nor beast was fit for God's presence. "The horses of Nineveh," wrote Richard Sibthorp, "had been much used to promote the pride and oppression of her warriors and nobles. It was fitting that they should express their master's present humiliation for those and other sins." Like lead weight, that dark, coarse coat of sackcloth pressed on its bearer as sin does on souls that discover its exceeding sinfulness (Rom. 7:13). How good when sinners lose that coat and exclaim gladly, "...He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10).

A Crying unto God: "Cry mightily unto God" (v.8). The King wanted one great, harmonious cry to reach the ear of God. It must be "mighty," for they were mighty sinners.

“Their sins had been crying to heaven for vengeance; and the messenger of God was crying against them in the most awful threatening: it became them, therefore, in this hour of alarming crisis to “cry mightily unto God’ for mercy” (George Young: “Lectures on the Book of Jonah”). Even hungry beasts, say some, would have added their bellows to the pathetic chorus. All of it – the entire wail – must find its way to the God they’d offended. Only then, was there any hope of reprieve.

A Change in activities: “Let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands” (v.8). The Ninevites’ remorse was to rise not just from within, but resonate without. “Life” and “lip” must move as one, for “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). Anything less is a sham and the king knew it. Their repentance was worthless if it failed to alter both their walk (“evil way”) and their works (“the violence in their hands”). This entailed long-term change. Sincere repentance is never a one-time act at conversion, but a life-time attitude that only deepens through the years. It ever abides with those that remember, “the hole of the pit whence [they were] digged” (Isa. 51:1).

The King’s Desire. In closing, notice the king’s unceasing desire for mercy. Yet, in the end, he could only say, “Who can tell if God will turn...?” J.M. Flanigan says, “There is a certain sadness about ‘Who can tell?’... There was no guarantee, but there was hope, if only a glimmer.” (“What the Bible Teaches, Jonah”). The Israelites “cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses” (Ps. 107:5-6), but would He hear Nineveh’s plea? If not, then the city would “perish soliciting His grace” (George Young) – there was no other option, for God’s “fierce anger” hung heavy. Jeremiah witnessed its blow on Jerusalem. Darkness veiled its intensity at Calvary. The cry rang out, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His **fierce anger**” (Lam. 1:12). Steeped in false gods, Nineveh’s residents and ruler trembled, comprehending in measure, how fearful it was “to fall into the hands of the **living God**” (Heb. 10:31)! *(continued)*

Jude: Caution and Counsel

Joel Portman

Jude is one of the short epistles that are packed with very important teaching and encouragement for the last days of the Christian era. It stands with the second and third epistles of John especially, as both depict conditions that

exist when early apostolic teaching and principles have lost much of their power, and when man’s degenerative tendency begins to express itself. 2nd John warns the elect lady about the dangers that will prevail because of roving false teachers who will attempt to undermine the truth that concerns the Lord Jesus. 3rd John is written to encourage a faithful brother, Gaius, in the midst of problems in a local assembly because of a man seeking to dominate and control. Jude seems to combine and summarize both of those problems. He warns his readers of the evil teaching that was slyly entering in among the saints with the resultant moral degeneration that would ensue. He also instructs them on how to continue faithful in the midst of men who would corrupt sound doctrine and practices. We need such warnings and encouragement today, so that believers can recognize the pattern of wrong behavior and be preserved with spiritual strength and fortitude to continue faithfully to the Lord and His Word.

The pattern of Jude seems to follow the example of Nehemiah’s men when they rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem in the face of enemy opposition (Neh. 4:17). They built with their tools in one hand, while they held a weapon of defense in the other. There was a need to build as well as to defend. Jude writes to contend for the faith in vss. 1-16 and shows **why** this is necessary, and he reminds the saints of the need to edify themselves in their most holy faith (v. 20), so that in the remaining verses as he shows **how** to contend for the faith. Believers in every day need to be equipped and ready to function in both aspects. The enemy of souls is always opposed to the truth and is unremitting in his efforts to destroy all that stands for God’s honor and must be resisted on all points (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

The placement of Jude’s epistle is appropriate, even though the order of the books of the Bible is not inspired. Nevertheless, its position before the Revelation is indicative of its relationship to the latter conditions of Christian testimony seen in the letter to the seven churches in Rev. 2-3 and the following judgments of God unleashed on an ungodly world. Evil conditions of the world that result from disregard for God’s Word sadly affect genuine believers as well, so that we see the need to reinforce divine principles in the hearts of the saints especially at the late hour that is indicated.

We assume, as is the conviction of most reliable commentators, that this epistle was written by a man who didn’t believe on the Lord Jesus during the period of His humanity, but who did become a follower of Christ after His resurrection. He seems to have been the brother of James (as he says), who was the half-brother of the Lord. Some have suggested that the Lord Jesus appeared to James first (1 Cor. 15:7) and that James was instrumental to convince those of his family of the resurrection of Christ. He evidently was in the upper room following the Lord’s ascension (Acts 1:14). His writing is like that of his brother’s in many ways; both use very strong, forceful and

descriptive words, and they express their teaching in a very clear, certain manner. We notice that they draw their illustrations from nature and from man's affairs, so we conclude that they were careful observers of their environment. Notice the vivid imagery of James 1:11, 3:3-6, 5:3 along with other similar passages, as compared with Jude's description of the apostates and their evil. Clearly, both were certain of what they were writing, and they expressed it in words that would make a definite impact on their readers. They were not man-pleasers in their writing, nor did they express their teaching in fuzzy, indefinite words that would not offend the readers. Those who speak God's Word must do so as the "oracles of God," (1 Pet. 4:11) and do so with the burden of a divinely-given message for the people.

Jude was also completely familiar with the teachings of the Old Testament, and his use of different aspects of God's judgment would impress the readers with the reality of what he is speaking. It's interesting that he never quotes directly from the Old Testament; however, he uses examples that were well-known to his readers and includes other sources that are not found in Holy Scripture. He reminds them that God doesn't change in His attitude toward evil, and no matter where such evil is found, it will be judged severely according to the standard of Divine righteousness. He speaks of a sinning people being destroyed, sinning angels being cast down, and large cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed. He uses these illustrations to emphasize that God will most surely judge sin no matter where it is found, and all the more when it is seen in those who have had more privilege. The Lord also reminds His listeners in Matt. 11 that they were liable for more severe judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah since they had greater privilege than those cities. Responsibility depends on privilege and opportunity that one has received from God.

However, in the midst of such condemnatory statements, Jude constantly expresses his deep love for the saints of God. Four times he addresses them as "beloved" (vss. 1, (accepting the translation of JND and others for "sanctified") 3, 17, 20. He is also concerned about their preservation, since he uses words that are thus translated five times (vss. 1, 21, 24 in contrast to v. 6, where angels who kept not are now being "kept"). This is an element that is essential for us; God's preservation of His people with their exercise to keep themselves is set over against those who kept not the position that God had given them.

Jude offers his readers three views to consider:

1. **A Present Assessment of their Condition, Need and Work**
2. **A Remembrance of the Past Examples (v.5) and Past Word (v. 17)**
3. **An Anticipation of the Future (v. 14, 21, 24)**

Introduction, vss. 1-2

Jude's personal identification rests solely on his relationship to Jesus Christ (a bondservant) and to his more well-known brother, James. He never claimed a familial relationship or any closeness with Christ, but rather exalted Him above all others and rested content to be a slave who was completely at the command of His exalted Lord. His place is the proper place for all believers to take, never with familiarity in any relation to Christ but recognizing His greatness and absolute right to all authority. He was serving Christ by warning and exhorting the saints. He also enjoyed a familial and spiritual relationship with James, and seems to have exhibited a similar strength of character, somewhat stern, but deeply exercised about the welfare of God's people.

As is his practice, possibly about 12 times in the epistle, he groups his teaching in three's, or triads. He writes in terms that include every believer in Christ. They are **Sanctified** (or beloved, JND, RV), though it seems that the AV is in keeping with the teaching of the epistle. Jude sees the saints as those who are set apart, separated from the contamination of the world. This has been accomplished positionally by God the Father upon salvation and is to be progressively seen in our lives as we go on. They are also "**Preserved** (kept) in/for Jesus Christ." Both forms are true, since believers are kept "in" Christ and "for" Christ. It is God's power that keeps us and it is for His pleasure and use that we are kept. They were also "**Called**" or chosen, an expression which is primarily applied to genuine believers and indicating that it is God's purpose which has been expressed in bringing them to the position they occupy. These terms are in the perfect participle, showing that this wasn't solely an initial or transient condition, but it is permanent and is still true.

He then reminds them of God's actions and attitude toward them. They receive "mercy," "peace," and "love" abundantly. This is an unusual combination that is unique to Jude. In their circumstances, they needed all three: 'mercy' is the practical compassion of God toward them in their trials, 'peace' is needed in the tumultuous conditions that result from disruptive teachers, and 'love' is a requirement in view of their continuation of a close relationship with the Lord (v. 21) and a useful condition toward men (vss 22-23). Mercy was expressed in God's love toward the world that resulted in His grace ("For God so loved (God's mercy) the world, that He gave (God's grace) His only begotten Son..." (Jn, 3:16). But also in our experience, the grace that brought us to Christ is followed by the mercy that we need along the way. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," (Ps. 23:6). His desire is that these elements might be found in their lives abundantly, "in increasing abundance," ("Wuest Lit. Trans") and this is always the result and expression of the bountiful hand of God toward His people.

Following this opening, Jude launches into his purpose for writing. He explains why he was moved to write such a heavy epistle in contrast to what he had intended to write. This, in itself, would indicate to us an aspect of the great truth of Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

(continued)

***"The dearest idol I have known
Whate'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee."***

***"So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb."
William Cowper***

The All-Sufficiency of the Sacrifice of Calvary

Dr. E. A. Martin

The Gospel of Christ is set forth in the Epistle to the Romans as the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. It is "To him that worketh not," (Rom. 4:5), to those who are "without strength," (Rom. 5:6) for the "ungodly," "while we were yet sinners," (Rom. 8) and "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." (Rom. 5:10).

But there are those who are not satisfied with such a gospel. They are not willing to believe that their own doings—good works, as they call them—have no part in the procuring of this salvation. There were then, as there are now, preachers who taught that in order to be saved the sinner must do something. What he must do they find written in the law.

The Epistle to the Galatians was written to defend the Gospel against such preachers, upon whom it pronounces the curse of God. The addition of our imperfect works to the perfect sacrifice of Calvary would be to pollute God's altar, and so to make it "of none effect." Such preaching is "another gospel which is not another"; it is to "pervert the Gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7).

In the book of Leviticus we have the cross of Christ set forth by five different offerings as fully meeting the

sinner's need—the sin, the trespass, the burnt, the meal, and the peace offerings. All these must be unblemished sacrifices. He who would add a sixth offering, to represent his own works, would add a blemished sacrifice, thus polluting God's altar and meriting the curse of God. This same five-fold aspect of the cross of Christ is presented in this epistle, as the sole ground upon which the sinner must rest for salvation, and a curse attached to the man who, considering this insufficient, profanes God's altar by the addition of his own works.

Christ, the All-Sufficient Sin Offering.

"Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world." (Gal. 1:4). Sin is anything that a man does contrary to the character of God. The world is called "this present evil world." Satan is its God and prince, and all the unregenerate serve him; nor can they serve any other master, therefore all that emanates from them is sin, no matter how good it may appear in their own eyes. The repentant man is the man who has learned that this is true of him. He may be what the religious world terms a very good man but he discovers that there is no good in him, and the language of his heart is, "Behold, I am vile," (Job. 40:4), "Woe is me, for I am undone." (Isa. 6:5). He sees himself not only devoid of good works, but also of goodness. The gospel of the sin offering is good news to such. "He gave Himself for our SINS." (Gal. 1:4). "The bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp wherefore Jesus also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood suffered without the gate." (Heb. 13:11-12). Because of our sins He was cast out as unfit for the city of God. Because of His blood we are made fit for the very sanctuary of God. Our sins were imputed to Him; His righteous work is imputed to us. The man who considers himself not wholly bad is, in his own estimation, too good a sinner to offer only Christ Jesus as a sin offering. He must needs add his own "good words," and thus he pollutes the altar and merits the curse of God.

Christ as the All-Sufficient Trespass Offering.

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. 3:13) While sin is anything that is contrary to the character of God, transgression is the breaking of God's commands. It is an aggravated form of sin, and may be done either knowingly or ignorantly. Trespass is measured by the Word of God and not by our knowledge of that Word. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). When the Spirit of God deals with a man, he discovers that he has not kept ALL God's commandments, no, nor even any one of them, and that he is under the curse of the holy law. The gospel of the trespass offering is good

news for such a one. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. 3:13). The curse that was my due fell upon the One who was "wounded for our (my) transgressions," (Isa. 53:5) and I am free.

And not only so, the "blessing of Abraham" is now mine, through Jesus Christ. In the case of trespass there was not only the sacrificing of the victim; there must also be restitution to the one who had been harmed, according to the priest's evaluation, with one-fifth more added to the original amount of the trespass. Adam's trespass robbed God of His due and robbed the human family of Eden life, filling the world with bloodshed and violence, but through the trespass offering of Calvary God is glorified above His Edenic glory, and the saved have that which is better than Edenic life—life eternal; not merely Eden, but the Paradise of God; not merely a visit from God but God dwelling in the midst of His redeemed. Thus there has been added by this one offering infinitely more than what was taken away, and while restitution by man to his fellow man has its right place, yet it adds nothing to the one great trespass offering, and he who rests for salvation, even in part, on any sufferings that he may endure on account of his own guilt, or upon any restitution which he may make, but adds that which defiles, and so makes the cross of Christ of none effect. He remains under the curse.

Christ as the All-Sufficient Burnt Offering.

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2:20.) The burnt offering differed from either the sin or trespass offering, in that it was a sweet savor offering. It speaks of the ground of our approach with acceptance to God. Finding ourselves utterly unworthy, we approach in His name. Christ in His entire service, person, experience and walk, tested by the infinite holiness and righteousness of God was found perfectly acceptable, a sweet savor unto God; and not only so, a savor of rest, for so the Hebrew word implies, being that on which God could rest with full satisfaction and delight, every attribute and perfection having been manifested, harmonized and glorified thereby. "To all this God has set His seal by raising Him from the dead and setting Him on His own right hand. Thus, the so-called burnt sacrifice is, properly speaking, the ascending offering, as it sets forth Christ, not only in life and death, but in resurrection and ascension. The offerer, in drawing nigh to God, conscious of his own imperfection of character and conduct, approaches Him in the name of one in whom every human virtue and excellence was seen in full perfection, the chiefest of ten thousand and the altogether lovely, to be accepted in the sweet savor of what Christ was in the estimate of God His father, in the perfection of His life as well as in the value of His atoning death." (Newbury).

The sinner who believes in adding for his accep-

tion aught of his own goodness, believes another gospel than that of the burnt offering of Calvary, and is under the curse.

Christ as the All-Sufficient Meat Offering.

"The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Gal. 2:20). Under the law the burnt and meat offerings were always found together. Here also we have them in closest contact. As to the meaning of the meat offering, we will quote again from the same author, "The so-called meat offering is, properly speaking a gift offering, the Hebrew word (minkhah) being derived from a root signifying to give. It is a beautiful type, similar to that of the manna, representing Christ as the gift of God (John 3:16, 6:32, Gal. 2:20). The "fine flour" is emblematic of the pure, holy humanity of the Son of Man, the woman's seed, the virgin's son. "Unleavened," for though made in all points like His brethren, and in the likeness of sinful flesh, He was without sin-- "Holy, harmless, separate from sinners." All that Jesus was in person, character, experience and atoning sufferings being tested by the holiness and righteousness of God, is found to be most holy and acceptable, and such on which every divine perfection can feed with infinite satisfaction and delight. In this holy fellowship the believer also, in his priestly character, through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, has his share, he too can feed and triumph and repose." (Newbury).

The food of the man who is crucified with Christ, and who yet lives, is none other than the food of God's altar, the meat offering. "It is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The bread of heaven, the bread of life, fed upon by faith, becomes assimilated; part of our very being and a new life is lived in the strength of that bread. The moment a sinner, no matter how degraded and powerless he is to lead a righteous life, feeds upon the meal offering by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, that moment he receives power to produce the fruits of righteousness. Christ lives in him. The life which he now lives he lives by the faith of the Son of God. The very same faith that enabled Him to overcome the world dwells in the true believer, and in spite of much stumbling he will also overcome the world. This power to lead a life pleasing to God is the outcome of feeding upon the meal offering, the result of salvation and not the procuring cause. He who, in order to obtain salvation, presents his own righteousness, only pollutes God's meal offering, and is under the curse.

Christ as the All-Sufficient Peace Offering.

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord

Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. . . . As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them.” (Gal. 6:14-16). The sinner is a rebel against the government of God, and therefore a stranger to peace. To him God is a dreadful foe, liable to seize him at any moment and thrust him into Hell. He may purpose many terms of peace to God, such as professing religion, saying prayers, doing penance, or the performance of good works, as he calls them. He will “give his heart to God,” “make a start for the kingdom,” “join the church,” as he says, and a thousand other things, in the vain endeavor to make his peace with God. But though he gives his all, it is not an offering of sufficient value to bring about reconciliation with God. Nothing that the sinner can do can take out of his heart the love of sin with its consequent hatred of God. “The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:7-8).

The Peace offering tells upon what ground God Himself proposes peace: “Peace through the blood of His cross.” (Col. 1:20). By means of the cross the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world, “for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation, and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them.” (Gal. 6:15-16). This double crucifixion takes the sinner out of the old creation and puts him into the new, where peace reigns. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature (creation), old things are passed away, behold all things are become new and all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 5:17). When God and the sinner meet at the Cross all that stood between them is removed, and the sinner becoming part of the new creation enters into peace as enduring as the new creation, the eternal peace of God. He who in order to obtain peace with God offers that which has emanated from himself thereby defiles the altar of God's peace offering, and brings upon himself the curse of God.

Reader, upon what are you resting for salvation? Is it upon anything that you have done in the past; upon anything that you are doing; or shall yet do? Then you are under the curse of God. How dare you add your polluted doings to the holy sacrifice of Calvary? Can you thus proclaim that Sacrifice to be insufficient and yet expect to escape the curse of God? Happy are all those who finding in themselves only sin, trespass, unacceptability, death, and enmity against God, find in the One who hung upon the tree all that is required to meet their need, as well as that which infinitely glorifies every attribute of a thrice Holy God.

All else owes its beauty to its coloring. Truth alone loses its beauty when colored.

Panin

The Perversion, Purpose, and Proclamation of the Supper

1 Corinthians 11:20-34.

Robert Surgenor

It was common in the early days of the Church for believers to gather together on a daily basis for a love feast and a time of fellowship one with another (Acts 2:46). Corinth was a cosmopolitan seaport city, taken up with the finer arts, oratory, philosophy, and yet very licentious with its worship of Venus, the goddess of lust. When Paul entered Corinth to preach the gospel, “many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). Continuing there for a year and six months, Paul taught them assembly principles, and God graciously bestowed upon the assembly spiritual gifts.

Among the converts were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. However, God sanctified and justified them through their faith in the Lord Jesus, which resulted in them washing themselves (1 Cor. 6:9-11). What a dramatic change in their lifestyle! This was to their credit.

However, as an assembly they still seemed to look lightly upon certain sins, as a reading of 1 Corinthians 5 shows. Many errors began to raise their ugly head in the Corinthian assembly, and Paul writes his first epistle to them to correct their errors.

The error exposed in 1 Corinthians 11 was that they were not keeping the Lord's Supper in a scriptural way. Instead, they were making a love feast out of the Supper. The rich were bringing an abundance of delicate food to gorge on, while the poor were going hungry. Some even became drunken from consuming the wine that was the emblem of the Lord's blood. The Lord's Supper was instituted for the benefit of the soul, not the benefit of the stomach.

Thus Paul rebukes them sharply, and tells them that in so gathering to remember the Lord, they were in reality not keeping the Supper at all. The marginal rendering of verse 20 is, “When ye come together therefore into one place, ye cannot eat the Lord's Supper.”

I do not know of an assembly today where such perverse activity prevails Lord's Day morning at the Lord's Supper. However, it is possible for an assembly to simply go through the motions in a mechanical way, thinking that they are keeping the Lord's Supper, when in reality the Lord is not recognizing their little “program,” or, “ritual,” at all. Let us all examine ourselves.

Paul had personally received the pattern of the Supper from the risen Lord. In relating that, he also said, “That the Lord Jesus (in) the same night in which He was betrayed took bread.” There is something worth noticing

here, and it is found in the word “was betrayed.” The Newberry Bible shows that the word “was” is in the imperfect tense. Thus it should read, “was being betrayed,” which clearly shows that while the Lord was instituting the Supper, Judas was meeting with the chief priests who covenanted with him to betray the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. This is another proof that Judas was not at the Lord’s Supper.

“This is My body which is broken for you.” J. N. Darby’s translation reads, “This is My body, which is for you.” There is no verb “broken” in the text. His body was “given” (as we have noticed) to pay our debt, but it was never broken. He was wounded, bruised, stricken, cut off, and smitten of God, but His body was never broken. Scripture declares, “For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30). I like to think of it in this way, that just as His body was never broken, so I, being a member of His body will never be broken (severed) from Him.

I remember years ago, my dear friend, the late G. P. Taylor, came to the New Creek Assembly in West Virginia and gave good practical ministry. However, Lord’s Day afternoon, during his meeting, he said that every meeting of the assembly was equally as important as any other assembly meeting. While driving back to the home where we were staying, he asked me how I felt the meeting went. I said to him, “Brother Taylor, if the doctor allowed you to leave your home only two hours a week, what meeting would you choose to attend?” He blurted out, “Why the breaking of bread of course!” I then said, “Why wouldn’t you attend the prayer meeting, or the gospel meeting, or the prayer meeting, seeing you said that every meeting was equally important?” He gave me that “G.P. grin,” and said, “You’ve got me.”

The gathering together for the Lord’s Supper is not a mere request, it is a direct command – “this do.” This command is in the present/continuous tense which indicates His desire that they hold Him continuously in their remembrance throughout their sojourn down here. The word “remembrance” means an affectionate calling to one’s mind of a person loved. Paul then states the end result of the Supper; “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till He come” (vs. 26). The word “eat” means “to devour, to consume.”

I once asked the late William Warke how the bread was disposed of after the Supper? He said that he didn’t think that any was left, they consumed it all. The late William Williams said that some saints take such a small portion of the loaf, that they could lose it if it fell into a cavity in their tooth.

I have often been asked what should be done with what remains of the emblems. Should some sister take it home for bread pudding, or should it be reserved with a meal? As far as the bread is concerned, it is only bread, yet,

that ordinary bread was used for a very special occasion. Let us dispose of it in a quiet way, and not use it to satisfy our stomachs. Some assemblies break the remains into crumbs to feed the birds. The wine that is left in the cup should never be poured back into the container holding fresh wine. There is a possibility that in time, the whole container could become contaminated. The proper thing to do with any wine left in the cup is to dispose of it.

You will remember in Matthew 26:27, when the Lord was instituting the Supper it says, “He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” When the New Creek Assembly was planted, one lady was very hesitant about coming into the fellowship, so I went to visit her. Very seriously she told me that she wanted to be in the assembly, but felt that it was too much for her to try and consume a whole cup of wine at the Supper. I asked her what made her think that she would be expected to drink eight ounces or more of wine while remembering the Lord? Opening her Bible she showed me Matthew 26:27 where the Lord said, “Drink ye all of it.” She thought that when the cup was to be passed to a believer, that person was obligated to drink the whole cup, and then it would be refilled for the next person, until all in the circle had individually consumed one whole cup of wine. I showed her that the Greek word “of ” was ek, meaning “from,” and that the text should read, “Drink ye all from it.” She smiled a sigh of relief, and that coming Lord’s Day when the assembly remembered the Lord for the first time, she was in the circle.

I remember William Williams relating to me an incident he had with a newly saved couple in Venezuela. Visiting their home a few days after they had been received into an assembly, he noticed a plate covered with a glass bowl sitting on top of the mantel. On the plate was a chunk of bread. Brother Williams inquired about it, and the newly saved brother told him that the piece of bread was from their “first communion.” Previous to their conversion, they were Roman Catholics, and lo and behold at their first breaking of bread, he tore off a chunk from the loaf, took it home to adore it. Having worshipped statues prior to his salvation, he was still wearing some “grave clothes” of Roman Catholicism. William Williams went over to the mantel, lifted the glass cover, picked up the plate holding the bread, and went to the front door and tossed the bread out of the house. They were making an idol out of the bread by adoring it.

On the other hand, I heard of an assembly where the Christians’ children were running up to the emblems after the meeting was closed in prayer and tearing off pieces to eat. How disgraceful! Such impure activity should never be condoned. God will hold the elders responsible for allowing such irreverent activity.

In one assembly, after the breaking of bread, refreshments were served in the basement. Two young

“sisters,” daughters of an elder, and supposedly in the fellowship, took the bread and made dough-balls to throw at one another in the dining room of the hall. It so upset a couple, who formerly were Lutherans, that they complained to the father of the young women who were throwing the bread at each other. Instead of the young “sisters” being rebuked, the couple that complained were rebuked. Consequently, they left the assembly, and told me that they had witnessed more reverence in the Lutheran Church than in that assembly.

The fleshly conditions at Corinth were severe, but let us all beware, for the flesh is still very much alive, and there is the danger that, little by little, we too, could drift into a fleshly, irreverent state, as the assembly just mentioned.

(to be concluded)

The Dayspring from on High

“Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.” (Luke 1:78)

This beautiful name that Zacharias used to speak of the coming Savior was uttered when he was “filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied” (Luke 1:67), thus directed by the Holy Spirit to so speak of Christ. It is interesting that he also called Him “the Highest” and “the Lord” and anticipated that He would “give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins” (vv. 76-77). This was spoken before the birth of Christ.

It is only in this passage that we find this particular word that translates the Greek word for “the east,” (Mt. 2:1-2, 9) or “rising.” Dr. Robertson (“Robertson’s Word Pictures”) refers it to the rising of the sun or stars, and Pulpit Commentary says it is “derived from the magnificence of an Eastern sunrise. In his temple service at Jerusalem, the priest must have seen the ruddy dawn rise grandly over the dark chain of the distant mountains and light up with a blaze of golden glory the everlasting hills.” We find similar expressions in prophecies that anticipated the coming of the Messiah, such as in Isaiah 60:1-3 and His coming advent of glory that Malachi anticipates in 4:2.

F.B. Hole indicates that this expression, “The Dayspring from on high” is a peculiarly lovely description of Christ. Alternative words for “Dayspring” would be “Daydawn” or “Sunrising. “His advent was indeed the dawning of a new day. Every earthly sunrising has been, to human eyes, from beneath upwards. This one was from “on high,” that is, from above downwards. . . He saw however, that it meant the bringing in of both light and peace for men; and here he does begin to speak of things that were blessedly accomplished in the first coming of Christ. . . In the first glimpse we have of him (Zachariah), he is a

troubled and fearful man. His last word recorded in Scripture is “peace”. He had seen by faith the coming of the Savior, like the dawning of a new day of blessing, and that made all the difference.”

That coming to which Malachi 4:2 refers is the future, greater sunrise, the coming in glory of that One who will rise with “healing in His wings,” and deliver His people to bring in lasting peace and blessing. That will be the last sunrise, for in the eternal day, “there shall be no night there . . . for the Lord God giveth them light,” (Rev. 22:5).

God's promises are not exhausted when they are fulfilled, for when once performed, they stand just as good as they did before, and we may wait a second accomplishment of them. Man's promises, even at the best, are like a cistern which holds but a temporary supply; but God's promises are as a fountain, never emptied, ever overflowing, so you may draw from them the whole measure of that which they apparently contain, and they shall be still as full as ever. anon

Altars of the Bible, pt. 1

Alcímedes Velasco, Venezuela

(from “La Sana Doctrina,” #290, Jul-Aug 2007)

It is interesting to note the references to different altars in the Scriptures, especially those that have a spiritual connotation with practical lessons. The general feeling is that an altar in the Scriptures is associated with a sacrifice that has the purpose to establish or maintain a good relationship with God. We will begin with the Family Altar, the exercise of Job in his concern for his sons as he offered burnt offerings on their behalf in case they had sinned. We see him as an example of an Old Testament father who can help us in this modern age so contaminated with sins that affect the children, adolescents and the young.

1. Occasion of Normal Distractions

It is inferred that the seven sons of Job were married, and that the three daughters were living yet in their parents' house. Among them there existed an exemplary harmony. The liberation from the parental home through marriage didn't affect the brotherly relations among them; we see that they had the healthy custom of getting together in rotating turns to celebrate a festival in a family atmosphere. Job gave certain liberty to his sons because he considered them sufficiently responsible. This man of God was balanced as a godly man, his character was incompatible with evil, but not with total joy. He wasn't an extremist in matters of wholesome conduct; but as we will notice below, by his experience he was conscious of sin that could follow those who attended the love feasts.

The frequent use of the legitimate, without proper caution, can change it into abuse. The good, without careful control, can gradually come to evil. It isn't in vain that the Scripture says, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Cor. 6:12, 10:23). The principles that are manifest in these two portions of 1 Corinthians establish that if something that we do isn't against the Scripture, and neither will it cause another believer to stumble, nor will put off those that seek salvation, then one is allowed the liberty of their conscience. With all this, the Bible teaches that we must avoid every situation that, even if it seems right to us, will give an occasion so that the weak brother "stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." (Rom. 14:21).

2. Possibility of Sinful Contamination

The ancient patriarch wasn't passing sudden judgments on his sons, neither expressing the feeling that those gatherings were sinful of themselves; he says, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts," (Job. 1:5).

The fact that they were sons of a rich father allowed them the luxury of having family banquets in different times of the year. The good food and good wine (1:13) weren't absent from those feasts. The Holy Book says: "Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," (Prov. 20:1). There was the possibility that in the warmth of the feast, they might have secretly offended God.

Clearly the reasoning of Job wasn't carnal or malicious; it was based on scriptural principles:

- a) Our nature is sinful
- b) An environment of soft music and light drinks is subtly dangerous
- c) The enemy seeks an occasion to cause the possibility of sinning.

And more, he wasn't imagining manifested moral failures. He was preventing evil thoughts in the hearts of his sons that could provide occasion for corrupt acts.

It is difficult to think that a man of the stature of Job, before they began those gatherings, didn't admonish and instruct his sons about the risks that could present themselves in that scene of healthy happiness. An excess of tolerance in this can bring terrible consequences. We remember the bitterness and unpleasant experience of Eli (1 Sam. 2:12, 29-36).

3. Concern for an Early Purification

Job knew the remedy against sin, whether of omission or commission. The relationship with God is restored on the basis of the bloody provision that was on the altar. In the patriarchal era, the priest that officiated was the father of the family. Job was exercising this responsibility, when all the turns of the banquets had passed, when he called his sons to his house very early to gather them before the altar. His intent wasn't to condemn, but for rectification and devotion. He didn't offer a collective sacrifice. With spiritual exercise, he decided to reach the conscience of each one of his sons. The text says, "He. . . offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all:" (Job 1:5). What a tremendous impression would be caused in those sons to see their father, a man "perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil," (Job 1:1), meeting with them at the altar and officiating for every one of them! The oldest, the middle and the youngest, all would take notice of his act.

The flame that rose from that altar is a figure of the holy fervor that should rise continually from the heart of a believer, who, with exercise, is continually judging his sin in the presence of God. Equivalent to this attitude and corresponding in our practices today is the good practice of lighting the altar in a gathering of the family: the father and husband, the wife and mother, and the children, setting aside a time of the day for the reading of the Word, for intercessory prayer, and the singing of proper hymns. How healthy is this meeting for the spiritual welfare of the children, in days when on every hand there are those who disseminate the seed of contrary values.

Our society is breaking. The only thing that will save the new generation from being contaminated with this wave of materialism is to return to these divine principles. Young couples raising families, try to be like Elijah, who restored the altar of God that was ruined! (1 Kings 19:30).