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The Cry of the Suffering Christ, pt 2

Address by W. J. Hocking

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? why art Thou far from My salvation, from the words of My groaning? My God I cry by day, and Thou answerest not; and by night, and there is no rest for Me: and Thou art holy, Thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:1-3)

The Seven Words from the Cross

We learn from the Gospels of seven utterances made by our Lord during His crucifixion. Three of them were spoken during the earlier hours, and four during the later period. The only one of the seven found in more than one Gospel is the cry of Christ's abandonment by His God, recorded by both Matthew and Mark. It is evident from this double testimony of the Holy Spirit that this cry demands our reverent attention and prayerful meditation, especially.

First, the Lord, when they bound Him to the tree of cursing, prayed, "Father, (He did not say "My God"), forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Again, while the sun still shone brightly in the heavens, Jesus saw Mary His mother and the beloved disciple. He said to her, "Woman, behold thy son," and to him, "Behold thy mother" (John 19:26,27). His sympathies were not dulled by His sorrows and His sufferings. Further, we can hear His gracious and assured promise to the believing robber sharing the horrors of crucifixion at His side, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Though poorer than the poorest of the poor, the Lord could still

give. Cast out of His inheritance, stripped even of His garments, He seemed to possess nothing, yet He bestows upon this converted criminal the right of entrance to paradise itself. What joy there was in heaven over the one sinner who had repented!

But then the noonday sun was supernaturally eclipsed. There was darkness over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour. The Holy Sufferer was hidden from the eyes of men. He was closeted with God; and in the "night season" He was not silent. But out of the prevailing darkness came the cry, "My God; My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" John also records (19:28-30) two other utterances, "I thirst" and "It is finished," both spoken with the assuredness of omniscience. What had to be done had then been accomplished.

What then had been finished? What had been done? Who can describe it? Who can measure it? Was it not that stupendous work of propitiation which in respect of all His attributes satisfied God as to sin, enabling Him to be just and the justifier of the unjust who believe in Jesus? The Lord knew what He had accomplished. He knew what He had endured, and that in His suffering He was forsaken of God.

Moreover, the Son of God knew that the appointed offering for sin had been made and that the sacrifice was acceptable. He knew that the darkness had passed, and that He had emerged into the sunshine of God and the Father's delight and complacency. We have next the seventh utterance, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46). And He passed into paradise, there to welcome the penitent robber who had believed on Him and for whose sins He had made propitiation to God.

Propitiation and Praise

In the third verse, Messiah provides the answer to His own inquiry, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The answer is, "Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." The holiness of Jehovah required the judgment of sin before either His people or the praises of His people could be acceptable to Him. Propitiation for sins

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Editor and Publisher: Joel Portman
1200 Forest Glen Ct. SE,
Cedar Rapids, IA, 52403
Write to: mail@truthsforourday.com

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is the foundation of worship and praise, because the place where Jehovah dwells is holy. Now the children of Israel were a people separated from all other nations of the earth to offer praises to Jehovah continually. The tabernacle was built in the wilderness and the temple on Mount Zion that He might dwell among them and receive their tribute to His name. Jehovah appointed that daily, morning and evening, the priests should burn "the most holy incense" to Him in the holy place. Incense is a figure of the sweet-smelling praise that God seeks from the lips of man.

Israel was elected in order that in their daily service of praise they might illustrate what Jehovah required from all men. He brought them out of the house of bondage, showing them His mercy when the destroying angel passed by their dwellings, and His redemption when their enemies were drowned in the Red Sea. Immediately, the song of praise ascended to Jehovah from His redeemed people. Moses and the children of Israel celebrated His victory, ascribing their deliverance to the strength of His right arm (Exod. 15).

Moreover, in this national praise-song, Israel looked forward to the mountain of Jehovah's inheritance, His dwelling-place, the sanctuary established by His own hands in the land of promise. Then "they believed His words; they sang His praise." But soon they forgot Jehovah's mighty works, disobeyed His commandments, and worshiped the idols of the heathen that knew not God. They forsook the Holy One of Israel, and neglected their daily offering of praises before His dwelling-place. Israel sinned grievously, and provoked the righteous wrath of their God, the One Who inhabits the praises of Israel.

To this great sin by that favored nation especially the Holy Sufferer seems to make allusion in verse 3. Because of their sins, not His own, He was forsaken, and His cries were unheard. Jesus was standing in the breach. He had given Himself a sacrifice for sins. He was making propitiation for sin. By His suffering, He would bring holiness where there was now unholiness, righteousness where there was unrighteousness and praise where there was now but "cursing and bitterness." By His atoning work, the Lord Jesus would satisfy every

claim the Holy One inhabiting the praises of Israel made in respect of the sins of men; but in the meantime that Holy One was irresponsive to His cry. The close connection between propitiation and praise is plainly marked in the construction of the Psalm. The former part, to the middle of verse 21, depicts Christ upon the cross, while the rest of the Psalm foretells the results of Christ's atonement in imbuing Israel and all the nations to the ends of the earth with the spirit of praise to Jehovah.

The Fathers Delivered, but Christ Abandoned

In verse 4 the Spirit of Christ still speaks. The Lord upon the cross contrasts Himself with pious men of olden days.

"Our fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and others) trusted in Thee; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded." Was it not, therefore, contrary to God's past dealings that the Lord Jesus should be forsaken by God in His sufferings, and His cries for deliverance disregarded? Abraham was not perfect in his piety, yet his prayers were heard. Job was noted for his patience in suffering, but showed much impatience with his "friends," and confessed to Jehovah, "Behold, I am vile." Job, too, was heard and delivered.

But when the Messiah in His agony cried out to God, there was silence in the heavens. No arm of Jehovah was outstretched to save Him in that hour. What the will of God had given Him to do, He must do by Himself, enduring all alone, unaided. And in His soul was the bitter sense that in His extremity, God was not helping Him as He had helped the fathers in Israel. Why was this change? Because He, Son of man, Who knew no sin, had been "made sin" to make expiation for sin. Then and then only, for this and for this only, did God forsake His obedient Servant that the glory of "the death of the cross" might shine undimmed throughout the ages of eternity.

But the patience and lowliness of our Lord comes into view in that dark hour. As the forsaken One, He says, "But I am a worm and no man." He accepts a place of nothingness among the sons of men. He obliterates self

entirely. Now as always, "Christ pleased not Himself." As a "worm and no man," He surrendered every claim upon divine deliverance. This is the crowning evidence of that Blessed One's perfect humility and self-abnegation. The worm is the symbol of utter weakness, and the Lord Who was "crucified in weakness" applied the figure to Himself to justify the seeming neglect of His God.

On the cross, the Lord is not oblivious to the thoughts and words of the bystanders. They add to His sorrows and sufferings. He is reproached and despised of the people. They taunt Him because no deliverance comes to Him from God in Whom it was well known that He trusted. But, unperceived by onlookers, Christ in the midst of His crucifixion maintains unbroken confidence in His God (vers. 9-11). As in Bethlehem and Nazareth, in Capernaum and Chorazin, in Bethany and Jerusalem, so at Calvary, Jesus was "the leader and completer of faith" (Heb. 12:2). Despising the shame of the cross, He abode steadfastly in the will of God according to His own word, "Not My will, but Thine be done. Man mocked, Christ suffered, God was glorified.

At the commencement of His ministry when our Lord was tempted of Satan, He was in the wilderness with the wild beasts (Mark i. 13). When upon the cross, He sees men around Him behaving towards Him like the cruel and shameless beasts that perish. He is beset by "strong bulls of Bashan" and by the "ravaging and roaring lion." Unclean and destructive "dogs" have compassed Him about. Nailed to the tree in the midst of them, He is helpless. He is poured out like water. His strength is dried up like a potsherd.

All His bones are out of joint.

Such is the confessed weakness of Christ crucified as the assembly of evil-doers surround Him and work their wicked will on Him Whose hands and feet they have pierced. They strip Him of His raiment and gamble for His vesture. They gloat upon His nakedness as a sight for their wicked hearts to enjoy amid the solemnities of the paschal feast!

In these verses (12-18), Christ by the prophetic Spirit is describing His sufferings from man as they were multiplied and concen-

trated at the cross. But throughout, Messiah expresses His unwavering dependence on Jehovah. He says, "Thou art My God. . . Thou art He that took Me out of the womb. . . Thou art My God. . . Be not far from Me" (vers. 9-11). Thus the Christ spreads out before His God the story of His sorrow and suffering from man led on by the prince of this world. All that the power of darkness brought Him in that hour He received as the will of God for Him. As the self-emptied Son of God, He was obedient even down to the death of the cross. And in this lowest depth of humiliation to which He had come, He owns the supreme purpose of God that brought Him there: "Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death" (ver. 15).

The Cry of Conquest, "It is Finished"

But the end comes. The intensity of prayer is replaced by the fervency of praise. The Lord pleads with Jehovah: "O My strength, haste Thee to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling (only one) from the power of the dog; save Me from the lion's mouth" (vers. 19-21). Then in the middle of verse 21, the Speaker suddenly changes His tone. Hitherto in the Psalm, unanswered supplication has been His theme. Now, the answer has been given; the reply is received. "Yea, from the horns of the buffaloes (unicorns) hast Thou answered Me."

No statement is made in the Psalm concerning the immeasurable significance of the change from asking to receiving by the One Who at the outset confessed Himself forsaken of God. It is left to us to ponder upon the fact that the same Voice that said to God, "Save Me from the lion's mouth," adds afterwards, "Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns." The One Who previously said, "O My God, I cry. . . but Thou hearest not" (ver. 2) now declares to Him, "Thou hast heard Me." With strong crying and tears, with prayers and supplications, He had called upon God in His suffering upon the cross as the sin-bearer. Then the moment came when He knew that His work of propitiation for sins had been accomplished, and that because of His piety He had been heard by Him Who was able to save Him out of death (Heb. 5:7). His piety or holy fear had been tried to the uttermost; and in the very

bottomless depths of suffering when abandoned by God on behalf of guilty man His unfaltering obedience shone untarnished and undiminished, approved of God though derided by man.

Now deliverance had come even when He was transfixed by the "horns of the unicorns" and under "the power of the dog." The throne of righteousness in heaven and the cross of Calvary on earth were united when Christ Jesus had offered His one sacrifice for sins. His atoning blood was upon the golden mercy-seat beneath the cherubim of glory. His eternally efficacious work of expiation for sin was completed "in the body of His flesh" upon the cross. This fact, the Lord Himself in His omniscience announced to men, to angels, to demons. "When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished; and having bowed His head, He delivered up His spirit" (John 19: 30). The apostle John thus records the Son of God's verbal testimony to the conclusion of His own work. It was but one word as originally uttered upon the cross, but it fell from the lips of omniscient omnipotence, and will reverberate to the ends of the universe throughout the ages of the ages.

After hearing the Lord's own pronouncement upon the work He had by Himself undertaken in respect of sin that God might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus, can we entertain the notion that nevertheless something more remained to be done to establish fully the glory of God? Is it possible that when Christ gave Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God, and said, It is finished, there still remained something more to be done in order to make propitiation for sins? Unless supported by plain scripture, such a suggestion by its implications discredits Christ Himself and impoverishes both His word and His work.

Opening the Gates of Praise

The Forsaken One having been heard from the horns of the unicorns, propitiation having been made, the service of praise at once begins. The fragrant odours of the most holy incense mingle with the fumes of the accepted sin-offering. Still with eyes uplifted to heaven, the Captain of salvation, now made "perfect through sufferings," says, "I will declare Thy name to My

brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee" (ver. 22). Here is the prophetic promise of the results of an accomplished atonement. The name of God as the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit should be there-upon unfolded, and Christ Himself would be the Leader of worthy praise to God in the midst of His assembled worshippers.

Historically, it was in this strain that our Lord spoke of His God to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection. He said, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God" (John 20:17), a declaration not made nor true before. But now atonement for sin had been made, the righteousness of God in respect of His grace had been established, and it was consistent with the glory of God that a new relationship of believers should be announced. Accordingly through the work finished upon the cross, our Lord associated His feeble associated His feeble and failing disciples with Himself as His brethren. Now they were entitled, not merely because they had been born afresh by water and by the Spirit, but because of Christ's offered and accepted sacrifice for sins, to stand before God as sons in an acceptance like that of Christ Himself— "My Father and your Father." Being raised from the dead "by the glory of the Father," the Lord connects His own with Himself as His brethren. As He had said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). "My God" was the cry of the Lord when alone and forsaken, when bearing our sins in His body; none could then share that cry. But now He says to His brethren, "My God and your God." This new link was the firstfruits of Christ's atoning sufferings and death.

But the harvest follows the firstfruits. Throughout the remaining stanzas of this psalm, the unfolding of ever widening circles of praise to Jehovah continues. All the seed of Jacob and of Israel shall glorify and fear Him. All the ends of the earth and the families of the nations shall remember, shall turn unto Him, and shall worship before Him. And in the concluding verse, we read, "They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He has done this." The final phrase, "that He hath done this (it)" is suggestive. The words are general, and

some might ask, Who has done it? and What has He done? But to every spiritual mind the reference is obvious. It is the unrivaled act of making propitiation performed by Christ on the cross, where He was set forth as a mercy-seat to declare the righteousness of God in respect of sins (Rom. 3:23-26).

Christ Himself in His utterance, "It is finished," was the first witness to His own completed work. His followers, led by the Spirit of God, have continued that testimony on earth throughout succeeding generations. Expiation for sins is the foundation of all praise, worship, and service. And heaven and earth shall yet unite in ascribing all worthiness to the Lamb that was slain. Every heart and voice of the redeemed shall joyfully confess to the glory of God that "He hath done this."

Let this psalm, beloved friends speak continually to us of "the affliction of the afflicted" One (ver. 24); and may it awaken our songs of praise, imparting to them a holy savour befitting the sanctuary of God and the presence of Christ. His sufferings and sacrificial death form the everlasting basis of acceptable worship. The Father seeks worship in spirit and truth. Who can render this save those who know Christ Jesus and who rest in faith upon His finished work! May we have the happy experience that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of His assembly as the Leader and Theme of its praises as often as we remember that "He hath done this" and indeed whenever we gather unto His name.

***Some murmur when their sky is clear
And wholly bright in view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue;
And some with thankful love are
filled
If but one streak of light
One ray of God's good mercy gild,
The darkness of their night.***

The Wood Offering

Duncan Dunsire, Winnepeg, MB, Canada

Offerings in the Old Testament scriptures generally in one way or another teach us about the person and work of The Lord Jesus. The writer has identified over twenty different names applied to or characterizing the offerings in the Old Testament. These are as follows:

List of offerings.

- 1) Burnt. Lev 1:3-17; Psa 66:15
- 2) Sin. Lev 4:3-35; 6:25; 10:17
- 3) Trespass. Lev 5:16-19; 6:6; 7:1
- 4) Peace. Lev 3:1-17; 7:11
- 5) Heave. Exod 29:27,28; 7:14; Num 15:19
- 6) Wave. Exod 29:26; Lev 7:30
- 7) Meat Lev 2:1-16; Num 15:4
- 8) Drink. Gen 35:14; Exd 29:40; Num 15:5
- 9) Thank Lev 7:12; 22:29; Psa 50:14
- 10) Free-will. Voluntary, Lev 7,16 23:38; Deu 16:10; 23:23
- 11) Incense. Exod 30:8; Mal 1:11; Luk 1:9
- 12) First-fruits. Exod 22:29; Deu 18:4
- 13) Tithe. Lev 27:30; Num 18:21; Deu 14:22
- 14) Gifts. Exod 35:22; Num 7:2-88
- 15) Jealousy Num 5:15
- 16) Personal, for redemption. Exod 30:13,15
- 17) Wood offering. Neh 10 and 13.
- 18) Red heifer Num 19.
- 19) Two birds Lev14
- 20) Scapegoat. Lev 16
- 21) New meal offering. Lev 23
- 22) Unleavened bread. Table of shewbread. Lev 24:5-9.
- 23) Vow. Lev 7:16

Many of these offerings can be clearly identified in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Jukes wrote "He is the Burnt-offering, the Meat-offering, the Peace-offering, the Sin-offering, and the Trespass-offering for His people. By His one oblation of Himself 'once offered,' He has stood in all these different relations"

"We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:10)

It is of value to see the distinctions in these offerings, some are sweet savour, some are clearly for sin. Some are in thanksgiving.

Not all offerings involve blood and not all involve an altar. Some of the names are more generic dealing with the character of the offering rather than the type. In Leviticus 7:16 a vow or a voluntary offering is associated with the peace offering, in Leviticus 22 a vow and a free will offering are associated with a burnt offering or a peace offering. The drink offering is normally linked with the burnt offering along with the meal offering.

Offering: is a general term that refers to anything offered to God whether in worship or only in fulfillment of His command.

Sacrifice: is the term given to the offering when it involves shedding of blood.

Oblation: is the term given to the offering when no blood shed is involved but the oblation here is meant for worship only.

Corban (*κορβαν*) was a Hebrew term for any sacrifice, whether by the shedding of blood or otherwise;

Much has been spoken and written about the five offerings in the early chapters of the book of Leviticus. These offerings are associated with an altar, with wood and with fire.

Only four of them are associated with blood, the meal offering, speaking of the preciousness in the life of the Lord Jesus had no blood in it, but as previously noted, was normally associated with a burnt offering. Similarly the drink offering was normally associated with a burnt offering. Ref. Leviticus 23. Putting them together we are given a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, a man, approved by God, perfect in all his going, subject in all his ways, obedient in every step, flawless in all His works, sinless in every aspect of His person, making peace through the blood of His cross.

The Wood Offering

In the book of Nehemiah 10 and 13, we read about a 'wood' offering.

Nehemiah 10:34 "And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring [it] into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as [it is] written in the law:" 13:31 "And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the first-fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good."

Little has been said or written about this offering, Jim Flanigan wrote "The most lowly service of every believer is necessary for the maintaining of worship in the assembly and testimony for God. Our presence at the gatherings, our prayers for the gatherings, and our participation in the gatherings, if at all possible, are all like the humble Wood Offering keeping the fire burning."

From enquiries on this subject, the **devotion** of the Lord Jesus has been suggested as seen in the wood offering, Others suggest linking it with John 19 where John writes of the Lord Jesus going forth bearing His cross.

Each of those suggestions are worthy of our careful consideration. I would like to suggest another application of the wood offering relating it to the humanity of the Lord Jesus.

In Proverbs 26:20 (KJV). We read "Where no wood is, [there] the fire goeth out:" so we would understand wood as being fundamental to an offering with fire.

Fire is used in the Scriptures, normally as a figure of Divine judgment or wrath (e.g. Isaiah 10:7; Jeremiah 23:29; Matthew 3:12), but its significance was not restricted merely to this and we find this for example in the sweet savour offerings. We find God who dwelt in the bush (Deuteronomy 33) spoke to Moses from the bush in Exodus 3. The bush was burning, but not consumed.

The Fire

The fire came down from heaven in Leviticus 9:24 "And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces"

The fire could not go out. Leviticus 6:13. "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out."

Although the writer could not locate a scripture to confirm this, he believes that as we read in Leviticus 16, the fire from the Brazen altar was placed in a censer and the incense put on the fire before the Lord, so similarly, the fire on the golden altar would be from the Brazen altar. A sweet incense rising to God.

The writer suggests similarly the fire from the Brazen altar would be used to ignite

the wood for the fire for the sin offering to be burned without the camp.

In respect to a blood offering, there are some fundamentals. We require an offerer, we require an altar, we require an offering, we require Fire, we require wood. We recall Isaac's question in Genesis 22:7 "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

In the scriptures we see:-

Christ as the offerer. Hebrews 10:12

Christ as the altar. Hebrews 13:10, 15,
1 Peter Ch 2.5

Christ as the offering. Isaiah 53:10, Ephesians
5:2. 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, 15:20.
Hebrews 10:10

The Fire came from Heaven. Leviticus 9, 24

On one hand fire speaks of the wrath of God against sin, on the other hand, it speaks of the pleasure God finds in the offering.

In respect to the fire, we notice two different Hebrew words used for 'burn'. First there is the word "**Qatar**", (Strong H6999) this word is generally associated with the Brazen Altar and burning incense. It is a gentle flame.

In relation to the second word "**Saraph**". (Strong H8313) the thought of burning is to burn completely. A consuming fire and is found for example in Leviticus 8:17 where the bullock for the sin offering is burnt outside the camp. Used with sin and trespass offerings.

The same fire: on one hand – A gentle flame and a sweet savour,

On the other hand – A consuming flame.

One has written, "it indicates a link between the sacrificial work of Christ and the fragrance of His devoted life as well as the contents and theme of our worship."

The Nethinim (Nathiyn)

The Gibeonites in Joshua Ch 9 appear to have been the first Nethinim.

Joshua 9:27 in reference to the Gibeonites, "And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose".

"**Nethinim** was the name given to the hereditary temple servants in all the post-Exilic books of Scripture. The word (Nathiyn)

means **given**, i.e., "those set apart", viz., to the menial work of the sanctuary for the Levites. The name occurs 18 times in 15 verses of the Hebrew concordance of the KJV and as per the RV should be termed **Nethinim**.

The Gibeonites (Joshua 9:7) appear to be the original people, afterwards called Nethinim. Their numbers were added to from captives in battle; and they were formally given by David to the Levites (Ezra 8:20) and so were called Nethinim, i.e., the given ones, given to the Levites to be their servants. Only a few Nethinim returned from Babylon (Ezra 2:58; 8:20). It would appear they became merged in the general body of the Jewish people and so in Nehemiah 10 we have the work of the wood offering distributed among the Priests, the Levites and the people".

The order of an offering by Fire as seen in Lev 1 is the preparation of the offering, the fire, then the wood, then the offering is placed upon the wood.

We have noted the person of the Lord Jesus as seen as the offerer, the offering, the Altar and now we wish to see Him in relation to the wood offering.

It is quite clear that no offering by fire could be offered without the wood. Only in His perfect humanity could Christ die.

This is seen in Hebrews 2:14-17 "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

In all of the offerings made by fire, wood had to be laid on the fire on the altar, the wood was essential for the fire to consume the sacrifice, whether as noted, it was the ascending flame of Leviticus 1, a gentle flame, with the fragrance of the sacrifice ascending continually to heaven, or the fierce consuming flame of the sin offering outside the camp, wood was neces-

sary to enable the fire to burn. So becoming flesh John 1:14 was fundamental for the Lord Jesus to make propitiation for sin.

It is worth noting that the word 'made' in John 1:14 should be 'became'. Similarly in Philipians 2 "made in the likeness of men" should read, "became in the likeness of men" (DBY). "taking his place in". However when we come to 2 Corinthians 5:21, a different Greek Word translated 'made' is used where we read "For he hath **made** him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

The Lord Jesus never became sin, but "God made to meet upon Him, the iniquity of us all". "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

Of interest is His becoming flesh. Many suggest this relates to his birth, This begs the question, if He became flesh at His birth, what was He in the womb? I believe The Lord Jesus became flesh at conception and the babe in Mary's womb was a man child, the eternal Son of God.

In the tabernacle and in the temple, we have two altars, the Brazen altar and the Golden altar and we believe both would speak of the Lord Jesus.

Both altars are composed of shittim, or acacia wood, overlaid with pure gold. This wood is close-grained and is not readily attacked by insects. It therefore is well suited for the construction of the ark of the covenant, the table of shewbread, the altars and the boards of the tabernacle. It has been called incorruptible wood. Most if not all writers are agreed that this wood speaks of the incorruptible Christ, not only did He not sin, but in Him was no sin and he knew no sin, A lamb without blemish and without spot.

Trees in the Scriptures

There are over thirty references to trees in the Word of God, twelve of them being found in the book of Psalms.

We see the cedar in relation to the temple, the fig leaf in Genesis for a covering, and gopher wood used for the ark.

A tree was connected with man's sin. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve ate the

forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:1-7).

A tree is connected with the health of the nations in a millennial scene in Rev 22.

In 1 Peter 2:24 The Lord Jesus "Bare our sins in His own body on the tree".

In Solomon's Temple in 1 Kings there are many different types of wood used and all may speak of the Lord Jesus.

In Psalm 1 The Lord Jesus is seen in a fruitful tree, In Isaiah 53. He is seen as a Tender plant. In Songs 2 He is likened to The Apple tree.

Christ is also seen as the Branch. In Isa 4, He is the "Branch of Jehovah". In Jer 23, He is the "Righteous Branch". In Zech 3, We read of "My Servant the Branch". In Zech 6, we have the "Man whose name is the Branch".

Finally in John 19 We read of the Lord Jesus bearing his cross.

Therefore with so many beautiful pictures of the Lord Jesus as seen in these trees in the Old Testament, we have no difficulty seeing the Lord Jesus in the Wood Offering.

The Lord Jesus took flesh and blood, He took humanity, He became man. The humanity of the Lord Jesus was fundamental to His coming to this scene to give His life a ransom for many, to meet the claims of a Holy God in respect to sin,

1 John 2:2 "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world."

"The will of God is always a bigger thing than we bargain for, but we must believe that whatever it involves, it is good, acceptable and perfect."

Jim Elliot

"Ye are Not Your Own"

Joel Portman

This expression, so important to Christian experience, is found in 1 Cor. 6:19, but the truth of it is emphasized throughout the entire Bible. In this passage, it is in the context of immoral usage of the believer's body, and Paul emphatically teaches us, as well as the Corinthian believers, that the Christian's body belongs to the Lord, the body is a member of Christ's body, that believer is joined to the Lord, and the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. These are powerful arguments put forth by Paul to reprimand the wrong practices of the Corinthians, and the principle encountered here can be applied to every aspect of a believer's life.

Not only is the truth of the Lord's rightful and intended control of our bodies and lives taught here, but we find the same truth in other portions of Scripture. Ps. 100:4 emphasizes His ownership of all things by saying, "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." We ignore or forget this at our own peril, and sadly, many have done so. Rom. 14:7-9 teaches that if we live, it is to the Lord, and if we die, it is also the same, so that in either case, "we are the Lord's". Just think of what that means in its practical implications! We belong to someone else and have no rights, even as a slave in the Roman Empire was the entire possession of the master. It means that His will is paramount, but even more, it is really all that matters in a Christian's life. Our main purpose in life is not what one brother once told me, and that was to win souls; rather the main purpose of a Christian's life is to live Christ and do His will, so that others might see Him in me.

2 Cor. 5:15 reiterates this truth: "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." As the infinite price that our Savior paid to redeem us impresses itself on our minds, it will increasingly cause anyone with a modicum of appreciation to realize what the practical implications are.

However, it is sadly evident in the lives of many professing Christians, that the results that our Lord expects from this truth fail to be realized or expressed. How many that we know have a measure of "religion" and outward adherence to what is expected of them by others, possibly including the elders of their assembly, but no more than what is basically expected in order to be accepted or to avoid problems! These truths were written in Holy Scripture by a man who during the entirety of his life manifested that purpose that he expressed when he first encountered Christ. "What wilt thou have me to do?" was his question, and that, along with his other inquiry, "Who art thou Lord?", seems to have determined the entire direction and occupation of his life. His was a life-long quest to know Christ, and to do whatever He wanted him to do. He wrote those memorable words, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," (Phil. 1:21), and we all know the words, but seldom do we enter into the truth that he expressed. He could do so, because he had clearly been living the reality of a life that centered around and focused entirely on Christ. All that mattered to him was the truth that he had expressed in the two original questions. If Christ were removed from his life, he is saying, he would have no life to live. He is the one who exhorted the believers in Rom. 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present (yield) 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." This act of yielding ourselves (the body represents the entire being of a person) means that is not mine but entirely belongs to Him, even as a sacrifice that was laid on an altar no longer belonged to the offerer, but it had been given entirely to God.

How many can say anything that faintly resembles the truth of these words of Paul? Even in writing such words in this article, it is with the realization that the writer has to number himself among the readers. WE ALL fall short of expressing in practical living the kind of response to His Lordship that we should.

One only has to listen to the normal conversations of believers to recognize this. If we listen to what occupies our conversations, we would quickly learn that, in the main, they center around ourselves, or own interests and activities, our things that we possess, or what we have done in the recent or distant past. Why don't we be honest about this? What we talk about is a reflection of what we think about! Our words are a direct link to our minds and thoughts, and our actions follow closely. It is a joy to be in the presence of a man or woman whose thoughts are directed toward the Lord, and who meditates on those words day and night (Ps. 1:2). They are like a artesian spring that is continually bringing out of the depths that which is refreshing and satisfying to the spirit. The Lord said that "out of the heart, the mouth speaketh," (Mt. 12:34), so that what we say expresses what is in our hearts. If we really want to know if our hearts and lives entirely belong to the Lord, we only need to consider carefully what we speak about and we will know.

What would Christian testimony be like and how powerful would be the message of the gospel if all believers were living to express the reality that they belong entirely to the Lord! Christian history is dotted with those whose lives were devoted to the singular purpose of living Christ and yielding to His control entirely. It was, for them, "Not my will, but Thine be done." They are the ones who stand tall on the horizon of Christian testimony, who brought joy to the heart of their Lord, and were used of Him effectively in whatever sphere of service was His will for them. They are those who lived for Christ, suffered for Christ, and died for the sake of their absolute dedication to Him and His will. It is the inconsistency in our lives that takes away from the power of the message and hinders its effect in the unsaved. We have a God-given responsibility to live Christ before the world, so that they might not be occupied with us, but with our Lord, who we represent. May the Lord help us more and more to devote our lives to Him, as those who have been "bought with a price." Jim Elliott's famous quotation is applicable, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."