

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 90 What is Faith?

Reading: Leviticus 1. 1-9

1 And the Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock.

3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord.

4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

5 And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons,

shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

6 And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces.

7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire:

8 And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar:

9 But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.

Address

It has been said that Leviticus is Hebrews prefigured and Hebrews is Leviticus fulfilled. As we read this account tonight, we need to look beyond it all to the Person and finished work of the Saviour. Here is an Israelite, conscious of his need, and he is permitted to go to the priest and bring with him his burnt offering, and there that animal had to be slain and its blood shed, and the offerer was commanded to lay his hand on the head of the sacrifice, there confessing his sin, and the promise is, "It shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." We think of that line in one of our hymns: "He" – Christ – "the great atonement made."

But in this particular account here and this particular offering there is a very beautiful illustration of what true faith really is. The offerer saw the sacrifice slain and as he saw it bleed and die, he had to place his hand upon its head. In a sense, he was confessing his sin and transferring it to the head of the lamb slain. He was identifying with that dying lamb. Here was his hope. He was a sinner; he deserved to die; but he is spared and the innocent lamb suffers and dies in his place.

But above all, this is an illustration of true faith in this resting his hand upon the head of the sacrifice, and those who understand the original Hebrew tell us that this word in most places is translated *to lean*. “He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering” – he shall lean his hand upon the head of the burnt offering. That is what faith is. It rests on Christ; it depends on Him; it hangs completely on Him; it relies on Him; it has no confidence in self, no help in self or in anything else. It is Christ as the burnt offering, holy, acceptable to His Father in heaven, His Father well pleased with the sacrifice, and this is all our hope; this is all our plea.

And what a beautiful picture of faith this is, a sinner laying his hand upon the head of the sacrifice. That is what living faith is; that is what God-given faith does; that is where the Holy Spirit leads the sinner; that is what it is to “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” So we beautifully sing,

“My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.”

“And it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” When we have these Monday evening prayer meetings, the thoughts in my mind are usually completely different from the Thursday evening addresses. This evening is for prayer, and I like to think the reading and the few things I have to say are connected with our prayer meeting, and in three special things, the things I have said to you this evening.

First of all, thanksgiving. O how thankful we should be for God’s mercies and especially for the atonement! As the Psalmist breaks out, “How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God!” Or as he breaks out again: “How great is Thy goodness!” And here to see the wonders of finished redemption in the blood of

the Lamb. May there be the spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving.

And then secondly, as we meet for prayer, this is the ground and foundation of prayer. This is the only ground on which we personally are accepted and our prayers accepted. It is through the merit of the slain Lamb, through the merit of the blood that He shed.

And then the third thing: these Monday evening prayer meetings, how we lovingly pray for those in our congregation, the older ones and younger ones, that the Holy Spirit might work where there is no concern, quickening them into newness of life and blessing them with grace. But with many who do fear the Lord and who are concerned, that they might be blessed with this venturing, appropriating faith, nothing in self, everything in Christ, feeling their helplessness, O but sweetly to reach out that hand of faith, however weak, however trembling, and for it to rest on Christ and on Christ alone.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 31st March, 2014

