

The Ceremonial Sacrifices Superseded by Christ

Preached At Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Lord's day morning September 2nd, 1923

by J. K. POPHAM

"Wherefore when He cometh into the world He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God! Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God! He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second; By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:5-10)

I have read these verses because they form a wondrous, a beautiful whole, and set forth that gospel which we must know in some degree of light and power in order to our reaching, entering into heaven. These words respect and set forth Jesus of Nazareth, "a Man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him." O sinner, if this Man, true Almighty God as well as Man, should come and do in you miracles of grace, wonders of love, signs of His goodness to you, of your acceptance in Him, then He will be to you "more precious than gold; yea, than fine gold, than the golden wedge of Ophir." (Isa. 13:12) The doctrine of Christ is a practical doctrine. It is intended to come into the hearts of wicked people to make them holy; intended for the justification of the guilty, for the sanctification of the polluted, for the salvation of the lost. Therefore, "bring no money, price or ought; no good tempers, no pleasing frames." Christ and Christ alone will do the thing that is needed. O but it is hard, difficult, to be squeezed through this "eye of the needle!" "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye can in no case enter into the kingdom." (Matt. 18:3) The Spirit in this passage and the context has an eye to the ineffectual, the perpetually repeated sacrifices under the Levitical rule; the carnal ordinances and divers washings, the daily, the weekly, the monthly, the annual sacrifices of that law could never take away sins, and therefore could never make him perfect as pertaining to the conscience that did all these services ordained for types and shadows. They passed away when the body came; the body is of Christ.

We have in the first of these beautiful and important verses, the words of Christ and concerning Him. Because the law was but a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things, not a perfect form nor shadow, giving only that which had some disproportion in it; still a shadow of good things to come, "the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man; which things," the Apostle, continuing in that passage in the

Corinthians says, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." (1 Cor. 2:9,10) That is how you must know these things--by the Spirit. Not by dint of diligent effort, good as that is in its place, but by revelation. When He cometh into the world He putteth away all these types and shadows, being their wondrous, glorious, Anti-type, realizing in Himself and in His death, that which had been dimly shadowed all those generations before He came. He saith, "Sacrifices and offering Thou wouldest not." Wouldest not take that infinite pleasure in them which Thou tookest in Me, Thy son incarnate; didst not desire them because Thou knewest they could not take away sins, nor make a poor sinner perfect; could never remove guilt, never purge away pollution, never justify the ungodly. For these blessings you will be led by the Holy Spirit, as being God's children, to the Lord Jesus. From the shadow to the substance; from the form to the power; from that which was just set forth dimly into the beautiful blessed light of the everlasting gospel.

"But a body hast Thou prepared for Me." This is a quotation and free translation of the word in the 40th Psalm: "Mine ears hast Thou opened," the ear, a part of the body being taken for the whole; and God digged or bored into that ear and spoke into it in eternal counsel the things which the Lord Jesus was to come and speak into the ears of His children. It sets forth His cheerful, His solemn willingness and undertaking to and with His Father. This body prepared by God is so perfect, so absolutely sinless; it is so also the only true representative of sinners before God, that the people of God shall ever have their eyes turned to Him; our eyes turned to Him. The Galatians saw Him as crucified in that body prepared for Him; and how they loved Him for the moment! Yet their eyes were soon bewitched and turned away. Are your eyes set on this Person? For it is none other, none less, than the Person of Christ intended here: "A body hast Thou prepared me;" for Me, Thine only begotten Son, Thou hast prepared a body; for Deity could not in itself save a sinner. Human nature sinned; human nature must suffer. A man sinned, a man must be punished; and this is the Man Jesus Christ. This is that Man whose name is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12) He addresses His Father in this wondrous willingness. As the Father had prepared in the eternal counsel of peace a body, so now in the fullness of the time appointed of God, the Son of God became incarnate.

Let us look a little at this mystery, this mercy. "Without father, without mother." The blessed Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, the holy act of God the Holy Ghost upon her. So that holy Thing that was born of the virgin Mary was called the Son of God. Do you realize your unfitness to stand before God? Do you believe that you may not come unto God in your own names? Do you believe that God can never be pleased with you whatever you do? If you do believe and confess all that, then as you see this mystery--a perfect Man united to the eternal Son of God, how welcome to your hearts will be Jesus Christ! How your faith, seeing Him in the light of the Spirit, will go out to Him and cry, "Come in, come in to my heart, Thou much-desired, Thou oft-sought Guest!" God prepared a body for His Son that He might, that He could, that He would accept sinners in Him. "Accepted in the Beloved," (Eph. 1:6) in no other; in Him and Him alone must you be accepted. O, "bow down sense and reason, faith only reigns here!" That a pure Man is given for wicked men is a truth of the everlasting gospel. May it continue with us and be in our hearts. The least taint of corruption inherent in Christ, if it had been possible for that to be, would have disqualified Him as a Representative to God of His people.

He must be in Himself inherently, absolutely pure, incapable of sinning, yet capable of laying down His life of Himself.

This mystery stumbles human reason in its pride, but rejoices faith in its exercise in the power of the Holy Spirit. Why, sinner, if you believe you are a sinner, if you feel you are a sinner, I can say this for you--you can never attempt to approach God in your own name. You know that you would not be accepted, but rejected, entirely rejected as a reprobate silver. O then to see Him who is pure, holy, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens; a true Man united to eternal Deity! This, this will attract your heart. This, this will strengthen your faith. This will enable you to come to God with humble boldness. And I think this point of experience is expressed most beautifully in this Epistle, where in an earlier chapter the Spirit says that "the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" (Heb. 4:12) neither is there any creature that is not open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Is not there a terribleness in that truth? Is there not a despair in that truth, as you view yourself, as you see yourself dissected and laid open to your own pained gaze? Is not there a kind of feeling: "Now I am lost and must be?" And the more you meditate on this condition in which you find yourself, the lower you sink. But says the Spirit in that same chapter, continuing that word: "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15) Are you suffering a sense of sin? Do you feel the pollution of your sin? Does the guilt of your sin depress you and burden you? "O," says the Spirit, "there is a High Priest in the presence of God." He knows the pain of sin because though He had no sin of His own, though He did no sin, though no guile was found in His mouth, yet He had sin imputed to Him. This is the Lord Jesus. When faith lays hold of this in the power of the Spirit it has a wonderful effect. It brings a person to walk in humble obedience to the exhortation that follows in that passage: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16)

What did the rain accomplish when it fell so copiously the other day? This, it soaked down into the root of things, and the root crops that had languished without rain revived by that. The gospel, likened to rain, soaks and percolates and reaches the root of faith, so that faith is drawn up into a divine growth and lays hold of eternal life; comes to the Lord Jesus and the sinner says: "for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." (Ps. 130:7) This is the effect of seeing by faith the Lord Jesus, who here speaks so beautifully: "A body hast Thou prepared Me." Dear friends, hold fast to the perfection of the human nature of the Saviour. Hold fast to that sacred nature prepared for the Son of God by the Holy Ghost: "A body hast Thou prepared Me." Do you want, that is need, a Representative? Do you need one to atone for you, for sins that you could never atone for yourself? Do you need one who should, having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, be able to "open His mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction?" (Prov. 31:8) Then I would say, "Behold the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God." The Man of whom God speaks in the Psalms: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen One out of the people;" (Ps. 89:19) This is the Person in our text, and O, should the eternal Spirit, whose great and beneficent office it is to manifest Jesus Christ to sinners and turn their eyes to Him, turn your eyes and my eyes to

Him, we should see there in His Person and in His work everything that we can possibly need and ask at the hand of God for time and for eternity.

"In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure." They were ordained by the Lord for a purpose. They accomplished a national acceptance for that covenant nation and people. They accomplished also for every believing Jew this great thing set before him--a sacrifice perfect. They approached in shadow and type Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. But when the time, "the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." (Gal. 4:4,5) Hence this gracious word: "Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, to do Thy will O God!" In the volume of the book, in the roll of the Pentateuch, of the prophets, of all the blessed intention of the Father respecting Him. The volume of the book bears a clear testimony, and "now the time is come, I have come to fulfill and realize in My Person and in My work and in My death, all the things that were spoken of Me." The volume of the book. We have it here, this blessed Book. O may we thank God if we do believe in inspiration in the inspiration of the Scriptures! All Scripture was given by inspiration of God. Never let this go, my dear friends, you to whom the Whom the Word of God has been made indeed the Word of God, to whom the perfect inspiration of it is a blessed truth. Hold this fast. Satan would take it from us if he could. Learned men take it from us as far as they are able to do. They destroy all the authority of the Bible as they destroy a cable by putting a weight on it that its weakest link will not bear. They stain it and the link snaps, and so men take away from us this Book.

And the Scripture bears testimony to Him who is the Sun in the firmament, in the Scripture; bears testimony to Him in whom the Father is well-pleased; to Him who sacrificed Himself and realized all the types and the shadows; to Him who suffered under Pontius Pilate, who was crucified, who gave up the ghost, who died a voluntary death, died not of any physical necessity then upon Him or at any time, but voluntarily yielded up the ghost, dismissed His spirit when He knew that all things written of Him and concerning His sufferings were accomplished; of Him who was buried, who was raised again the third day according to the volume of the book that was written of Him, and who, often having showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs to His apostles and to over five hundred brethren at once, ascended into heaven; of Him who is there: "A Man there is, a real Man." Do not pretend to understand it; God give you faith to believe it--a real Man, true almighty God.

"With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands and feet and side.

'Tis no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak.
The same dear Man in heaven now reigns.
That suffered for our sake.

"How happy is he in his state, whatever he may be now in his feelings, who believes this! "Then said I," lovingly coming, engaging Himself with all the solemnity of a divine undertaking; "Then said I, Lo I come." What a coming! What an appearance we have here! Beloved friends, the

incarnation of the Son of God was the greatest event the world ever witnessed or shall witness. The Son of God did not disdain this stoop, this infinite stoop; for such it was undoubtedly, when He left His Father's throne, when

"Aside His royal state He laid,
Came down to earth, a Man was made;
To make poor men the sons of God,
And pay the debt His brethren owed."

"To do Thy will, O God." The will of God, which in Christ is a good will to the church, was to Him a will of suffering. This is wonderful, and He knew it when He said: "Lo, I come; I delight to do Thy will, O God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." He knew what was before Him. His undertaking was not blind; He fully saw, absolutely knew what was before Him. The burden of sin imputed to Him He foresaw; the guilt of sin He knew would depress Him into the lowest state of ignominy, shame, and death. The cup which His Father had prepared for Him and which now He came to drink was before Him. He absolutely knew it. He resigned His will here. He said to His Father: "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." He resigned it absolutely, that all His poor guilty children, whom He here represented and for whom He laid down His life so freely, so lovingly, might come at last to be with Him in endless bliss. "To do Thy will," to do it perfectly. When a saint does the will of God by submission, there is still some imperfection about it, for his will is still human and belongs to his fallen nature. When you submit yourself to God, who fear Him, you find that there is still something of the old man attaching to you, and the affections and the inclinations and the projects of your nature show themselves, again and again assert themselves; so even in respect of that you could not stand before God in your own name and in your own obedience. No, nature is a bad piece of corruption, utterly wrong; and when the Holy Spirit comes and takes up His abode in the child of God He does not remove this terrible root. He cuts down its fruit from time to time, but the root remains. But here is a Man, the Man Christ Jesus, Almighty God, who submits Himself to His Father; who says in the near view of what He had to suffer. "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." What a wonderful thing this is for us, for any person to be taught to believe!

The will of God was this--that He should lay down His life. "No man," says Christ, "taketh My life from Me." They did their utmost in that direction when they took Him and by wicked hands crucified and slew Him; but in truth He said this: "No man actually, really taketh My life from Me. My hands they nailed to the tree, My side they pierced with the spear, but I laid down My life. I lay it down of Myself; I have power to do it, and I do it. It is Thy will O God, and I do Thy will; I delight to do it." He laid down His life, and He had power to take it up again. Now if you see that this will of God respecting Christ, and Christ doing this will of God, has reference to you; if in the light of the Spirit it should dart into your heart and conscience and persuade you that the Lord Jesus had you in His heart when He so spoke; O what a heaven of peace will come into your heart! What, did the darling Son of God deign to lay down His life for such a person, such a sinner? I am persuaded of this, that nothing less than this persuasion of the Spirit will ever give solid peace to any regenerated person. You can never enter into the peace of God without the witness of the Spirit that the Lord Jesus did really lay down His life, voluntarily yield it unto His Father according to His Father's will.

He poured out His soul unto death. When the sacrifices under the old dispensation were offered, the blood of the beast was poured out. The life is in the blood, and this sets forth the great truth that the Lord Jesus Christ should pour out His soul unto death. The blood was poured out by the side of the altar. Some of it was put on the horns of the altar; the remainder poured out at the side of the altar. My friends, the Lord Jesus poured out His soul unto death, and this is expressed in this Epistle by the word, "He offered Himself without spot to God;" had a definite, an immediate reference to God in His death; offered Himself for His people. He offered Himself to His Father, and His Father was pleased with that: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

"I delight," as it is in the Psalm: "I delight to do Thy will, O God." "Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law." God had pleasure in those things as they were a dispensation and a commandment. The Jews did not displease Him, when they punctually obeyed Him in bring those ordained sacrifices, but He had no pleasure in them with respect to the removal of sin; for those things could not make him perfect who was exercised in them. But now said the Lord Jesus, "Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God," and in doing that "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second." The first is the unsatisfying law of sacrifices. The unsatisfying law, and there are two things in this unsatisfying dispensation. First, God was never satisfied, His justice was never appeased, His holiness was never honoured, His law was never fulfilled; and second, the conscience was never satisfied. No enlightened conscience ever got satisfaction from the sacrifices of the old dispensation. So Christ took that away because God must be satisfied, and as this sacrifice could not satisfy Him, the dispensation must go. He took away the first.

How did He take it away? In two ways. He took it away by realizing in Himself, in His death, everything that was typed out by those sacrifices. He took it away with respect to all future observations of those sacrifices. No more offering. "Once in the end of the world He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. 9:26) Now this answers two things; it answers God's requirements; it satisfies God's justice; it fulfills the desire of His heart; it answers every purpose of His heart. He put away the sin of the church by the sacrifice of Himself. And then the other thing is this, it satisfies the conscience, and I think it is a beautiful and a wonderful truth, that an enlightened, a quickened conscience has the same requirement in it that God Himself has in respect of the removal of sin; and as God designed the removal of sin by the death of the Lord Jesus, so an enlightened conscience desires and seeks the removal of sin from it by the very thing, that very thing that God Himself designed and provided--the death of His dearly beloved Son.

Now here, you who are blessed with grace, and a holy God, will meet together in such amity, such harmony, such friendship as shall endure for ever and ever. Here God will be free with you, you will be free with Him. Here He will bless you and you will bless Him. Here you will be one with Him. His holiness will be honoured in your happiness; His goodness will find a vent to your heart to satisfy you through the death of Jesus Christ. Here every fear will be taken away; every corruption will be mortified, the power of all sin broken; the dominion of all sin taken away by the death of Jesus Christ. He has taken away the first dispensation, the Levitical law; taken it out of the way. A Jew offends now when he religiously observes the sacrifices imposed on his nation before Christ came. The best of a Jew's life, as a Jew today, is an offence, an infinite offence.

And at the same time a poor Gentile sinner pleases God when he is led by the Holy Ghost to look on Christ and by faith embrace that blessed, that efficacious death on the cross. The death of Christ is the life of the church, the peace of her conscience, the joy of her heart, so that she sings: "O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortest me." (Isa. 12:1)

"That He may establish the second," His gospel. And this He establishes in two ways, or two places. It is established in heaven: "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." (Ps. 119:89) The word of the gospel shall never be altered, it is an everlasting gospel. Christ's righteousness brought in is an everlasting righteousness. Justice is infinitely, that is eternally satisfied. It is all settled there. O the effect of Christ's death in heaven, the effect of Christ's death in respect of infinite justice and all the perfections of God!

And what an effect this death has in the church, in individual hearts and consciences! Why sinner, that death let down into your heart by the Holy Ghost will remove every offence, every bar to your approach; bring perfect salvation and ultimately perfect happiness because perfect holiness. "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second" in His people. By little and little sinners become established in the death of Christ and in their interest in it. They see it frequently, and again and again get a divine application of it to their souls; then they are happy.

"By the which will," the will of God which Christ came to do, "we are sanctified," set apart for this great purpose through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. Once for all the conscience is made perfect. It could never be made perfect by all the sacrifices under Levitical law, as says the Apostle in the first verse of this chapter; "For the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers therefore perfect; for then (in that case) would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made again of sins every year." But now when the Lord reveals to a sinner the perfect, the vicarious atonement of Christ, it fixes that sinner for ever. He gets tossed about in many ways and about many things; but says his conscience, "The only thing that I need, the one things that will satisfy me, is the death of the Lord Jesus. There my heart is fixed. I know and am persuaded that that is all I need." Divine teaching settles this. You will have plenty of shaking; many removable things are shaken as the things that may not continue because God has not designed their continuance. Many, many things have to be removed from us; but we are not to be removed from this, that the death of Christ is to be the life of a sinner, the peace of a sinner, the holiness of a sinner, the happiness of a sinner; and the Lord Jesus brought all these blessed perfections in.

Now I have just in a very cursory manner--for who can enter much into it? At least I cannot, into this great subject; but if what one has said should be the means of guiding any of you into this, should be the means of causing you to desire to know this, one will not have spoken in vain. May the Holy Spirit open this mystery and apply it to us. Amen.