

For Dominion Presbyterian.

The Gospel in Exodus.

Sweet Incense: The Type—The Reality.

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Bible Study—Exodus XXX.—1 to 10.

Shittim Wood—A Type.

Verse 1.—Shittim wood is a thorny tree somewhat larger than a ordinary hawthorn. It is the only tree that grows in the desert in dry sandy places. It is only found in the peninsula of Arabia and on the shores of the Dead Sea.

Shittim Wood—A Reality.

This tree may be said to typify mankind in his natural and ungenerate state. His dwelling place is a moral desert, the borderland of the Sea of Death. Of man's moral degeneracy there can be no possible doubt. The Scriptures refer to it in the blackest terms and experience confirms the Bible statements. "They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one."

The shittim tree, however, has its uses. It produces gum arabic. This shows that human nature unsanctified is capable of some service and may even be moral in its conduct.

God proposes to make this moral desert shrub useful in His own service. To sanctify it as an altar unto Himself. "Of shittim wood shall thou make it."

Second—This altar was to be made symmetrical in shape and exact in dimensions. Read verse 2.

Rough material for such holy, useful and consecrated service, yet patience and care will produce the desired result.

Is not this God's purpose as it regards fallen and sinful man? He must be cut away from the roots of sin which draw their vitality from the earth, and then by the Hand Divine be fitted and prepared for holy uses.

Type.—The horns shall be the same. The horns of the altar have their uses; 1. They are an ornament. 2. They are useful, preventing sacrifices from falling off the altar. 3. When used for living sacrifices the victims are tied to them.

The horns of an altar may typify Christ's human nature. 1. Made of a woman. Bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. 2. He is the horn of our salvation. 3. He is a root out of a dry ground. 4. No beauty that we should desire Him.

He assumed our sinful nature that He might be one with us and thus exalt us to be like Himself—meet for God's service and Sons of the Highest.

3. Type.—This valueless wood was to be covered with pure gold to make it precious in the eyes of God and worthy of so high a service.

This covering of gold may be typical of the Righteousness of Christ which is the covering of God's Saints, their "Robe of Righteousness."

Gold cannot be consumed by fire, but how soon wood is destroyed.

Covered with this pure gold of Christ's righteousness the Saints of Shittim wood may with calmness survey the destruction of all earthly things.

"Jesus Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed
With joy shall I lift up my head.
Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge shall lay;
Fully absolved through these I am,
From guilt and fear, from sin and shame."

4 Type—Crown of gold. This typifies the supremacy of Christ. He is above and around about His Saints. He is crowned "Lord of all."

As He is our righteousness, our covering, so we are partakers of His glory. If our hearts are altars for God we shall be crowned. Paul when reviewing his life could say: "I have fought a good fight etc. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown Heb. 4: 7-8."

Verse 4.—Two golden rings suspended from the crown to bear the staves of Shittim wood. This indicates the sustaining power of the grace of God.

Just as rings are continuous and endless, so the grace of God will sustain His people not only in time but throughout Eternity.

Thus the altar of incense becomes a type of the substitutionary and redeeming work of Christ.

Verse 6.—Notice the position of the altar. 1. Before the vail of the testimony. 2. Before the mercy seat that is above the testimony. What more suitable place for God's saints than to be before God's mercy seat?

"This is the place where Jesus shed,
The oil of gladness on our heads;
A place above all others sweet,—
It is the blood brought mercy seat."

Divine Communion—"There will I meet with thee."

Verses 7 and 8. The uses of this altar. For burning sweet incense. What is sweet incense? read verse 22 to 25. This is figurative of the prayers of God's saints. Read Rev. viii.—3, 4, 5. Incense thus represents the prayers of saints. It is to be burned every morning. It is to be burned every evening. It is to be perpetual before the Lord—"pray without ceasing." The prayers of God's saints are a more acceptable incense than the incense of oil.

Verse 9.—The abuse of this altar. Strange incense. The prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord. Those who offer strange incense will not go unpunished. Note Aarons sons, Nabab and Abbia Lev. x: 1 to 3.

Verse 10.—Aaron, the high priest, shall make an atonement on the horns of the altar. Christ is this atonement. He is our High Priests, combining in Himself both priest and sacrifice. Christ's atonement more efficacious than that of Aaron and needs not to be repeated. Our great High Priest had passed into the heavens having obtained eternal redemption for us and He is now our mediator and advocate.

Unanswered Prayers.

Are the promises of Christ in regard to prayer sustained by the experience of Christians? The promises are very broad: "Ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." "Ask and ye shall receive." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." And yet there are many aching hearts from which the cry comes, "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" It is true that many petitions are offered which are not granted, and many good people are perplexed thereat.

In thinking on this subject we should not forget the nature of prayer. It is petition, petition by the dependent and subordinate to one higher, whose will is

absolute. It is not a command. Much injury to faith has been done by speaking of prayer as an order on the faithfulness of God, an order which will assuredly be filed. In its very nature prayer implies that the request may be refused. We are limited in our knowledge; God is infinite, and therefore to his larger wisdom our petition may be folly. He knows all our wants, and his love requires that he give us what is best, rather than what we ask.

He is a hearer of prayer, but God does not surrender his sovereignty to anyone, not even to his redeemed. The prayer of faith is always heard in that it comes before Him and is considered, if we may so speak. A blessing in some form is given to faith, even though the prayer may not be granted. The person who prays is nearer to God, and receives his grace, but as he comes nearer he sees more clearly that the infinite love may often withhold from us the desire of our hearts.

There are certain limitations to prayer. "For things agreeable to his will," is one of them. The sphere of prayer is within the divine purpose. If we go beyond that we go beyond the promise. One may pray for recovery from sickness, but if he should pray that he may never die, he will pray in vain, for it is appointed unto men once to die. The purpose of God in working out our redemption is another limit. We may pray to be protected from the evil, but to pray that we may never be tempted would be to pray for what lies out of God's method of grace, and for what was not accorded to Christ.

And sometimes we must wait long for the answer. The cup did not pass from Christ, but he was strengthened and though on the cross he seemed to be forsaken, his life was not left in death, neither was he permitted to see corruption. We must often wait until the "afterwards" comes.

And we should remember that we often ask and receive not because we ask amiss because we ask for that which is not proper, or in a wrong spirit. In our minds we may enlarge the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," into "Give us great riches," and he who loves us may refuse to grant the desires of our hearts.

And still further, we should remember that in the mystery of grace that from which we would be exempt is often God's means of greater grace. Paul prayed in vain for the removal of his buffeting, because God knew that the distress was necessary to development of the higher life within him.

It is for us to offer our petitions in the true spirit of prayer, always with the limitation, "Not my will, but thine be done." So living, so accepting God's will, so waiting for his grace, we will find that our unanswered prayers are replaced by blessings better than we have asked, and, equally with his gracious answers, the withholding of what we ask is in the fullness of his love.—The United Presbyterian.

There is no uncertainty in the invitations of Christ. He says, "Come unto me." And his promise is, "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." Rest on that word and come to Him without delay.