

Qualifications for Worship

Hebrews 9: 24 - 10: 23.

from **Memorials of the Ministry of G. V. Wigram.** Vol. 1.

[Notes on Scripture; Lectures and Letters.

Second Edition, Broom 1881 (First Edition 1880)]

Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

These two chapters bring out in a very simple way true worship. The Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father," etc. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." At first sight it may appear as if this merely applied to the children of God; but not so, for in the question of worship, the question of the standing of the soul of him who would worship, and the question whether the conscience has been purged and purified, is involved.

There is a strong contrast between the epistle to the Hebrews and that to the Romans. In that to the Romans (the book about man down here on earth), man is taken up as a creature against whom the wrath of God from heaven is revealed. The Spirit passes the mind of the apostle through the whole condition of man from the day of creation, without law, under law, the effect of which was that every mouth is stopped, and all brought in guilty before God. Then he shows God in heaven, having arranged that the Son, who was sitting at His right hand, should give light in the world, and contain in Himself the answer to the ruin down here, and so on, but it is always man down here, and how the evil in man is to be met.

Hebrews does not take up man only down here, but the question rather whether it is possible for man, acting under law, ever to be able to worship God in spirit and in truth; and shows that so far from this being the case, that even the Hebrews had to have the gospel of Christ preached to them, and a new tabernacle had to be pitched in heaven. And in connection with this new tabernacle we get a High Priest, the Lord Jesus in heaven, and in Him eternal redemption, and eternal salvation. And if any person can really have a conscience fit for God. and enter into what the soul wants, the heart must rise from earth to heaven, and know what has taken place there, and become one who dwells in heaven, where the Lord Jesus is.

In Romans we get the light shining down, not man going in. In Hebrews it is not only the throne of God in heaven, and light shining down on earth, but it is the veil rent; and people that have faith can go in boldly and simply into the holiest of all, meet God, and become connected with all the wondrous worship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the true tabernacle.

One more striking contrast I would look at between the feasts of the law, and the feasts, as it were, of Christianity. The first feast in Judaism was the Passover; the second, the feast of Pentecost; the third, the great day of Atonement. In the Passover there was no service for the priest; it rested on the head of the family. And the two truths taught in this feast were the blood of ransom, and the blood of association; but not the blood of propitiation. God said, When I see the blood, I will pass over you. "The people have got the blood, marking subjection and obedience to Me in My ordinances. As My people they are in association with Me, and the destroying angel shall not enter." And there was the blood of ransom; but there was no connection with the dwelling-place of God. In the blood of atonement it began with the presence of God on the mercy-seat. Association with God we get in the

supper, and the ransom in 1 Peter: "Ye are redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ." Then Pentecost was a very peculiar feast. When the high priest was actually waving the sheaf, the Lord Jesus was getting up from the grave; and as, after so many days had intervened, two loaves with leaven in them were presented before the Lord, and then they might be eaten, so after the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2) was the Church brought out; and by the Holy Ghost dwelling down here all the riches of Christ could be displayed.

At the end of the year came the great day of Atonement. Then we get the joy of the camp, and two things connected with this joy; the blood was taken into the holiest as marking the way to God, and was put on the mercy-seat in His presence. There was everything to mark feebleness in connection with this feast. It was only for the circle of twelve months; they began to sin again next day. If the scapegoat carried off the sins into a land of forgetfulness, they would want another next year. The priest was a man who could sin like Aaron. The man set up over them, Moses, was a man who could be cut off before entering the land.

All were beggarly elements, and only temporal, and upon earth.

Just see the contrast in connection with the feasts of Christianity! We begin at the other end, and at the other end of the last of them. We are not to believe that Christ has gone into heaven, and *will make* atonement. If I say, "He is gone in, and there is a Person in heaven who is able to accomplish all," it is not Christianity. The basis of Christianity is, that He has by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified. That is the starting-point. If Christ was crucified, is risen, and gone to take His place at God's right hand, it is most natural for me to believe, that though I have nothing, yet in the power of what Christ did I am presented before God perfected. It is most natural if I say, "My conscience is fit for God Himself, He has bought me with a price; I will only live to Him who died for me."

Now we turn to the portion here before us. The first thing we notice (as being that which has priority of importance in Scripture) is, that the work brought before us in connection with our faith is a work with which man had nothing whatever to do. The Father wrought by the Son, and proved it by the Holy Ghost. For me to look up and see that God has done something, is very different to looking inside myself. The work of the Spirit in us, is in proportion to our understanding the work of Christ for us.

Hebrews 10: 5. There are two things in connection with this, as bearing on the subject of the divine work connected with God dwelling in heaven. The apostle had been proving the impossibility of a Jew, by the Jewish ordinances, getting his guilt blotted out. Here he takes up the Lord Himself, who comes forward, saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not." "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." From the time that man sinned, the death of a victim was brought in, and prophet after prophet vindicated God's word in favour of Abel's sacrifice in preference to Cain's. At last a system was set up — God in the tabernacle where everything turned on sacrifice. He would dwell among them; but not only were there certain sacrifices offered daily, but there was a great day of Atonement linking all together, and the whole ritual of sacrifices in connection with it. A Man comes on the scene, and He looked upon as a carpenter's son, and He never spoke against the services of the temple; but when the Holy Ghost comes to explain His mind, it was that the whole ritual of services was now discovered to be all in vain, and He had come to set them all aside. And who was He? The One who was the Word of God. And what His thoughts were before He came into the world is here set before us: "I come to do Thy will; I set aside all sacrifices and establish Thy will." Did the prophets ever speak like this? No; they prophesied by fragments. When the Son came, He said, "I am in the scene, and everything turns round Me as the centre. I will set all aside, and establish Thy will." All was done by the Son, but all was done according to the Father's mind. Here we have attributed by the Spirit of God to the Son all

that was in His mind — the accomplishment of the expression of that which had been in the mind of God.

The second thing to be remarked as to the work, we get in verse 15. When it is done, the Holy Ghost is witness to it. Another covenant is to be brought in that will stand and be efficacious. Really everything, when God was dealing with man merely as a ruined creature, brought out sin. When the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to witness of the work done by the Son according to the Father's mind, it is not bringing sin to remembrance, but "their sins and iniquities will I *remember no more.*" There is only one other thing presented in connection with that, and that is what is said of the blessed Lord as to His coming again — "He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation" — and as to the people looking for Him. He was a holy, harmless, undefiled Man, but He had a baptism to accomplish. When He comes again it will be, "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation." When the will is done in connection with the heavenly people, He will appear "without sin unto salvation."

Can you understand that the grand doctrine of Christianity is the question of what were the hidden counsels of God in the wicked act of man. Man — Jew and Gentile were connected in putting the Lord Jesus to death. God let them do their worst, but had in His mind the blood whereby the conscience of the poor sinner could draw near.

Christ is upon the throne. I am clean. It is eternal salvation, not temporal as to Israel in Egypt — eternal redemption, not temporal as promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is a work done by the Son according to the Father's mind, witnessed to by the Holy Ghost, and not a work inside us. Is the Lamb as the accepted sacrifice on the throne of God? Is it the testimony of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost, according to the mind of God, that any Jew who had dipped his hand in the blood of the Lord Jesus, believing in that blood, might be saved? That is the gospel! And no soul that looks up at the Lord Jesus on the throne of God, but will see how God in His own eternity has a testimony. The One that is filling heaven, and the Light from heaven breaking through the midst of things down here, and testifying to the heart — He says: "Go with boldness right through the veil into the holiest of all, the place where God dwells, where God has expressed in His Son, sitting at His right hand, what His thoughts are of the children of men, and how only man can honour Him." He is showing out how He has met the ruined creature.

Are you walking according to God's present plan? Are you answering God's present mind, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy"? Are you of God's mind about it, that the only thing you can give to God is your sins? The only connection that man had with the cross of Christ was his sin in crucifying Him. If I am a ruined creature, one of whom God has said, "dead in trespasses and sins," one whom Satan had in the vortex in which he turns the world, with lusts working in my heart, what can such a creature give to God? The last thing that in nature the heart is willing to give to God — his sins. Oh, give God your sins! Go in before Him, and give all that self so anxious, so restless to be doing something. Give it up to God, and do not let yourself be your centre, but God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! The throne of God is the mercy-seat; if you do not want mercy you will not go there. If God's present plan is to show Himself out, and His eternal redemption, the riches of His stores, go in for it just as you are, right into the holiest of all. And if you ever get there, I can assure you you will find that nobody shines there but the Lord Jesus Christ! You will not shine, not a thought, not a desire of your own; you will leave all the shining to the Lord Jesus, and you will be bright in His light.

Now to come down from the higher ground of the eternal salvation of God in heaven, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — of the light shining down — what as to one's self? "Christ died, then I am

clean — not a spot within." The Lamb, the accepted sacrifice on the throne of God, where the heavenly hosts can behold Him, where the Father sees the Son in His accomplished work, and the Holy Ghost bears witness of Him. What can a poor sinner say to that? "God's mercy and love — not a cloud above!" That sacrifice has been accepted for me. Has God met all the claims of His throne in that way? It is humility to say it, not the arrogancy of the heart of man that will originate things for himself. God has done a work by the omnipotent power of the Son of His love, and I dare not call it in question! All His character is wrapped up in it. Many are occupied with the work of the Spirit in them, and not the work of Christ for them, and the result is, that they have no peace, no holiness. Instead of saying "God has done a work, and God calls my attention to it," they turn to themselves. Conscience is like the balance of a beam, without any certainty whatever. Brahmins, Jews, Saul of Tarsus, all act according to conscience. Conscience is a poor thing. Aye, but what will God do with one who presents himself before Him without a purged conscience? Nothing! Oh, how God is saving souls to enable them to say, "Christ died, I am clean!" But, on the other hand, He comes down in testimony to the conscience — the blood of cleanness!

There are three distinct things — to take away the sacrifices, to display the perfect work of God, and that the sinner may know the place He has made manifest. The presence of the blood is one thing, the appropriation of it another thing. What is the meaning of my being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, but that what is there in the work of Christ before God has come down on my heart and conscience? I speak of the work of the one sacrifice. A thousand persons might stand round a light, and the effect might be on each one. The whole work is done if the Holy Ghost has stirred the conscience about the blood. What an immense effect if faith be simple! "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It is the value of the work brought, and not the value of the faith. It is either that the sacrifice of Christ has settled the whole question, or that it never can be settled. It is done; He has sat down.

Then the effect on the heart of a believer is that he says, "By one offering perfected for ever." In what sense perfected? In what sense sanctified? People make great confusion between sanctification and purification. Sanctification is the setting apart of a thing, a person. We are put apart to walk as Christ walked apart in body, soul, and spirit. Christ Himself was put apart, but we cannot apply "purifying," to Christ; but we are called to purify ourselves. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is that in this epistle which separates unto God. When the Red Sea flowed between Egypt and Israel, Israel was cut off from Egypt; and when the blood is known by a person it separates him from the world. Did Christ die for you, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him"? And do you in the world live for yourself, and profess to be a Christian? Impossible. The Christian's complaint is, "I believe I am put apart; but I am not practically as apart as I should be."

Oh, the wonders connected with that expressed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, the one sacrifice never to be repeated! It not only puts the conscience in peace with God, but it forms the conscience. If He is satisfied with the blood, I will be too. In every way it has lessons. It teaches the character of the whole system of iniquity out of which I have come — teaches the enormity sin, as none but God can. It shows another thing in connection with the journey through the wilderness — the imbecility of man, and the imbecility of Satan. When all their malice came out against God, God stands by quietly, having deep counsels in His own mind. They should slay the Lamb that was to atone for sin! What profound wisdom! What a revelation of what man is! What does it tell about all connected with the scene where man is on earth? He whose blood speaks from the throne was here once. He is up there now, and His murder rests on the earth, and calls for vengeance from God.

Oh, the contrast between Him who has shed His blood and one's self! There is something

marvellous in this. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. No other man is so. What gave its effect to the blood? The very God against whom man sinned in Eden, against whom all self-will and independence have been, was the very One who executed judgment when His Son was on the cross. Without a purged conscience it is impossible to worship God in spirit and in truth. A scene where all worship goes on is where God is, and the Lamb is. Can you say, I am there, my conscience bearing witness "? Can you say, Christ is the accepted sacrifice, and I have staked all on Him because He cannot fail "? It is perfect peace. God rests in love with Christ there before Him, and the soul of the sinner can therefore rest on Christ.

Now we are called to act worthily of what Christ has done. If God has purged our conscience with the blood of His dear Son, we must take care not to contract stain or soil as we go through this world.

Oh, that God would act on souls so to stand as reflectors down here of that work God has done, — really, practically separated from the world, reflecting the light we get up there in Him! We are not what Pentecostal Christians were — not as to gift, but should be as to moral character and individual devotedness to Him.