

The Intense Delight of God

(the Burnt Offering)

I used to think that the five basic offerings in Leviticus were the most boring section in the Bible. I'm not a Jew, I'm a New Testament believer. Why should I even care about these offerings? There could actually be many answers to that question, but one answer that I like comes from the apostle Paul in Colossians 2:17, when he says that Old Testament festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths are a "mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." Paul, several times, gives us windows into the Old Testament when he quotes verses or passages or certain words from the Old Testament in his New Testament letters. He reveals a part of the Old Testament that was written as pictures of Christ. And how many things therein *are* shadows and pictures of the real thing, Christ! Therefore, today, we get to explore in the Word what a Christ we have, even in the Levitical offerings!

The first offering in Leviticus is the burnt offering. To just say that Christ is the burnt offering may sound somewhat nebulous, so I would like to discuss a few details and an aspect we see of Christ in this offering. Leviticus 1:3 says that the offerer should offer a burnt offering "*of his own voluntary will*" (KJV). This phrase, "of his own voluntary will," highlights an aspect of Christ, and specifically His death on the cross, that we don't often observe. This aspect is Christ's unwavering devotion to the Father and His perfect surrender of Himself to the heart of God.

Although this sacrifice was necessary to provide atonement for our sin, there is much more involved in it than the aspect of sin-bearing. In fact, I would venture to say, in the burnt offering, there is almost no thought of sin (of course sin *is* in the picture, but is not emphasized in this offering; that's why we have the sin offering). C.H. Mackintosh says it perfectly, "It was the place where Christ's love to the Father was told out in language which only the Father could hear and understand." This is an aspect of the cross in which Christ could show us His deep love for the Father. The burnt offering does not foreshadow Christ as the sin-bearer, but Christ as the one who so desperately desires to accomplish the will of God. When the offering is finally all burnt up, it produces a "soothing aroma to the LORD." Can you imagine how happy and "soothed" God was after this offering? There is no thought of God pouring out His wrath, but, as Mackintosh uttered, there is the thought "of the

Father's unmingled complacency in Christ, the voluntary and most fragrant Sacrifice." This aspect of the cross does not negate the profoundness of the atonement of sin, but does display another aspect of the cross: the grand thought that the sacrifice simply and purely satisfies God's need for a willing human being to give Himself over completely for the accomplishment of God's will.

The last detail in this offering that I'd like to mention has to do with us. In verse five, Aaron's sons are to "*bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*" Here we see Aaron's sons participating in this offering, specifically in bringing and sprinkling the blood. Since Aaron is a type of Christ, we can say that Aaron's sons are a type of the Church (Heb. 3). This means that we can participate in such a beautiful and sweet fellowship that the Father and Son are having, where the Son is driven by an immense desire to please the Father and where the Father is content and soothed by this perfect surrender of His Son. As we get a taste of this kind of fellowship, we begin to share in Christ's vehement yearning to please the Father. Our lives can even match such an offering. We can have a taste of the intense delight that God has in Christ! By Christ living in us, we actually have a chance to please the Father and accomplish what He wants. As we gaze at this aspect of the cross, which is the perfect surrender that pleases the Father, not only are we cleansed and have our guilt erased, but we can have communion with God in the matter of Christ's perfect surrender of Himself on the cross. I can't help but quote Mackintosh one more time as he says, "But we must remember, it is the blood of the burnt-offering, and not of the sin-offering;— it is the Church, in the power of the Holy Ghost, entering into the stupendous thought of Christ's accomplished devotedness to God, and not a convicted sinner entering into the value of the blood of the sin-bearer."

Not only do we have atonement for our sin, but also for our lack of devotion to the Father. Thoughtfully considering this aspect can elevate our view of the Lord's table (communion), and specifically of the blood. Our elevated gleaning can be this: At the Lord's table, we can be thankful for Christ dealing with our sin, but even more than that, we can share in His unshakable devotion to the Father. We can touch the intense delight the Father has in His Son. We can get a taste of the Father being unutterably joyful in His Son at the Lord's table! Typically, when I observe the blood and take the cup, I am filled with thankfulness for the Lord's death and the shedding of His blood for my sins. Just like in the hymn, "it was my sin that held Him there!..." But now, when I look at the cup, I realize that I can also participate in this deep and profound fellowship between the Father and the Son.

¹ *How Deep the Father's Love For Us*, Songs and Hymns of Life #366

There is atonement to take care of the negative aspect, our sin; but even more there is atonement to propel us forward, to satisfy the heart of God. In fact, we don't have to be occupied by sin and guilt, but we can enter into the same longing Christ has to please the Father. We actually have a chance at bringing such delight to the Father because we have such a One living in us that won't stop until the Father gets what He is after in us and through us.

-Austin Funk

Closing note: *"However, it must be very evident to my reader, that the idea of sin-bearing — the imputation of sin — the wrath of God, does not appear in the burnt offering. True, we read, "it shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him;" but, then, it is "atonement" not according to the depths and enormity of human guilt, but according to the perfection of Christ's surrender of Himself to God, and the intensity of God's delight in Christ. This gives us the very loftiest idea of atonement. If I contemplate Christ as the sin offering, I see atonement made according to the claims of divine justice, with respect to sin. But when I see atonement, in the burnt offering, it is according to the measure of Christ's willingness and ability to accomplish the will of God; and according to the measure of God's complacency in Christ and His work. What a perfect atonement must that be, which is the fruit of Christ's devotion to God! Could there be anything beyond this? Assuredly not. The burnt offering aspect of atonement is that about which the priestly household may well be occupied in the courts of the Lord's house, forever" (Mackintosh, 1861).*