

The Blessedness of

The Altar

Part Two

“The Altar is In Us”



In our last article, we discussed how the sparrows and swallows had found the altars in the temple so wonderful that they chose them as the place to make their homes and lay their young (Ps. 84). This particular location in the temple was so blessed that these birds were said to be found praising God well beyond all others. For the next few months I would like to explore just what makes those altars so blessed! My prayer is that the Holy Spirit could refresh and re-awaken us to the true spirit of His Cross at work in our hearts and lives. So many pray for an “open heaven” that they might see the Lord with utmost clarity, but my prayer at this time is for “an open Calvary” that we might with utmost clarity see and enter into the beauty of the Cross, embracing our eternal oneness with the Lamb our Life. May we each take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to open our hearts to His Cross in a greater measure than we have known.

Our Inward Altar

Without the altars in the house of God, there would have been no place of actively applying and releasing the Life of God into and out from the temple. God’s presence may have been found in the Holy of Holies, but at the altars the life of the sacrifices were poured out, offered up, feasted upon and distributed to the needy, hungry, and desirous ones (Leviticus). Now, our first step towards the practical application of the altar is to comprehend that WE are the Temple (II Cor. 6:16). We are God’s house, the place where God dwells. Just as there were altars in the Old Testament temple, there is meant to be an altar in us. **There must be a place in our hearts where what we hear and believe in is applied.** Christ must not just be in us, but offered up as we allow Him to pour out, give of Himself and lay down His life through us. As we yield to the nature of Christ within we find the cross continually at work, releasing the life of Christ as the old is consumed away. Without the altar, Christ may be in us, but the flow of His Life through us is restricted.

Such Intimacy

At the Old Testament altar there was constant activity. Nothing was stagnant. It was not the place of searching the scriptures or teaching the laws. All was practical application at the altar. Here the sacrifice was opened, applied, offered, eaten and effective. This was the place of hands-on experience with the Lamb. The only doctrine or philosophy that had place at the altar were those that were being lived out in front of your eyes. This realm was where the spirit and life of it all was being manifested and released. These same principles are true for us today as those who bear the Sacrifice (Christ) within (Col. 1:27). No amount of knowledge will be able to replace a heart willing to reject its own life in order to bring forth Christ instead, to the glory of God! In a classroom, the height of experience comes with the comprehension of a truth. At the altar, the height of experience comes as one knows the Lord in conformity to His death, fellowship in His sufferings, and being filled with the power of His resurrection. What incredible intimacy! Paul sought to know the Lord in this way above all else (Phil. 3:10). Here we are partakers of the Divine Nature. Here we walk what we once only talked.

We may know many things in our brains and accept as truth many realities in our mind, but none of that comes forth as the sweet savor of Christ until we allow it to pass through the altar of a circumcised heart (Rom. 2:29). The heart that has accepted the cross embraces that “I am crucified with Christ, therefore not I, but Christ is to live through me” (Gal. 2:20). **This “cross heart” has become an altar that will willingly offer up the Lamb in the circumstances and trials of our daily walk.**

Misconceptions About The Altar

One of the great misconceptions about those who choose to embrace the way of the cross is that they have decided a path of suffering that basically requires them to torture and afflict themselves to be more holy! Now, if you really think about that concept, that would make US the sacrifice as we offer up our own personal virtues, suffering, works, and goodness. HELP!!! In Israel, when it was time to go to the altar, the people were required to find a lamb from their flocks without spot or blemish to be offered up (Lev. 1:3). God had them do this to symbolize that HIS SPOTLESS LAMB is the only acceptable sacrifice that we are to offer up. **Why would we offer up our blemished attitudes and prideful actions when we already have Christ, the spotless sacrifice, in us?** The scriptures are so very clear concerning this point. The bible says that we are to “bear the dying of the Lord Jesus in our

mortal flesh (II Cor.4:10). This speaks not of our dying... but of His dying IN US. It is HIS SUFFERING that we fellowship in as we bear HIS DYING in our mortal flesh. We PARTAKE of the DIVINE nature rather than trying to imitate it in our own flesh and power. HE is the Life and the LAMB/(Sacrifice), and we are the temple that houses Him. Because He is in us, as He lives and gives and suffers for others we experience the intimacy of knowing Him in these deep and eternal ways. Hallelujah! Who would want to miss out on that?



Because many have not seen the blessedness of the Cross from the heart of God, they run from allowing the Holy Spirit to ignite the altar in their hearts. Many believe the way of the cross is a torturous, abusive and shameful thing. Unlike the singing little birds, they despise the altars and cast reproach upon them, running far from their reach. Many Pastors refuse to preach anything that might lead their sheep in the path

of the applied cross, while the scriptures clearly state that the altar is the ultimate destiny for any true sheep of God's fold (Rom 8:36). People want to stand near enough to the altar to receive the bounty of its resurrection without being touched by its death. And yet, if only we would give the Holy Spirit a chance to show us the true spirit of the cross, we would gladly drop our defenses and excuses and join with those who have found the sweetness of bearing Christ's Life in this way.

Our Relationship With God Relates To The Altar

All throughout the history of God's people right up to the present, you will find their true spiritual state was in direct relationship to how they approached the altar. From Father Abraham and his altars, to Paul and his daily deaths..., those who have truly been with the Lord in their generation have done so by opening to the Lord in this way. Is there loss involved in the way of the cross? YES. Does pain and hardship come when the heart becomes an altar upon which Christ is offered up? Almost always. How about persecution? Most certainly (II Tim. 3:12). There is a cost to walking in this manner, and bearing the Lord's dying in our own bodies in this way. We may experience all these things and more, but none of



that is worthy to compare to the BLESSEDNESS of CHRIST LIVING THROUGH YOU to the glory of God and the care of others. To those who love the Lord and long to be the courts where His life lives... this way of the altar is the answer to their deepest hearts cry. To those who want to live for self and only receive blessings from the Lord without participating as the Body of His Divine Nature, the preaching of the cross is horrifying and the living of it is unthinkable. In ourselves, we are selfish and afraid of loss. But in our hearts we love Jesus and want to be with Him in this way. It is the work of God's Spirit to even make us willing to embrace Christ in this way. Only the Spirit can truly communicate the blessedness of the way of the Lamb in a manner that will saturate our hearts with softening oils. And so we must turn to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to soften us, to speak to us, to prepare our hearts to be the place where Christ can live through us as an altar that is ever offering up the Lamb. Amen!



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