

Emblems of Grace in the Ancient Law

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon explores five pictures from the ancient law that reveal the grace of God and the person of Christ, emphasizing the need for Christ's sacrifice, righteousness, and service in our lives.

Scripture: Exodus 20:24, Exodus 21:2-7, Exodus 24:5-12, Psalm 91:1, John 6:35, John 15:4, Romans 10:9, Galatians 3:24-25, Hebrews 10:19-22, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Grace", "Access to God"

Description

A.B. Simpson explores the emblems of grace found in the ancient law, emphasizing that the law served as a schoolmaster leading us to Christ, where we find justification by faith. He illustrates this through various object lessons, such as the altar of sacrifice, the Hebrew servant, and the tabernacle, each revealing aspects of Christ's grace, righteousness, and our access to God. Simpson encourages believers to recognize the simplicity of coming to Christ and the profound love He has for us, urging them to embrace their identity as children of God rather than mere servants. He concludes by inviting all to find their true home in Christ, who fulfills the law and offers a relationship filled with love and grace.

Transcript

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Gal. 3: 24, 25.)

We looked in the last chapter at the dispensation of the law as it was especially significant and symbolical of God's spiritual order in dealing with his children under the Gospel. We shall look now at that which immediately followed the law; growing out of it like a flower growing out of the bosom of a glacier, namely, the types and symbols of the grace of God, so beautifully revealed to Moses by the Lord, and through Moses to the people, after the thick darkness and fire of Sinai had passed. There is no part of the Bible that has so many pictures of the grace of Jesus as this. It has been almost hidden by the thick clouds which are but the curtain of His glory, and behind which there are such visions of grace and beauty.

The law was our schoolmaster: let us this morning sit in the school and have the Master present the lessons. It was a Kindergarten school, not an adult one. It was for the infancy of the church, and so all its lessons are object lessons, and all its pictures painted upon the canvas, or drawn upon the blackboard, and interpreted by the New Testament writings.

I will look with you this morning at five of these object lessons of spiritual truth as they were given by God through Moses for his ancient people, but still more for our learning on whom the ends of the world have come.

THE ALTAR OF EARTH.

The first of these is at the foot of Sinai, before the smoke has cleared away, or the reverberation of the thunder has ceased to terrify the people. This first picture is very beautiful, but you might overlook it, it is so small. The wise have overlooked it; the moral have overlooked it; the deists and the rationalists have overlooked it. The poor sinner sees it, and how he rejoices after he finds it. How glad he is after that awful fire and tempest, and that voice that says, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of law to do them." How he rejoices as he looks at the base of the mount, and there at its foot behold this little object which I am going to show you, and which is so full of Jesus and His grace. Here in the very chapter that contains the ten commandments (Ex. 20: 24) we find it. How different it is. The others are all, "Cursed is he that continueth not." This is, "I will bless." The other is, "Thou shalt do." This is, "Thou shalt sacrifice." The other is, high above our reach: this is down low and everybody can get at it. "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep and thy oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."

I suppose that you have overlooked that a thousand times. You have read the ten commandments, and did not see this. You saw the awful law but did not see God's provision for the men that break it.

This is the first picture. The schoolmaster comes and touches the canvas with a few strokes, and you see this rude altar of common clay. If built of stone it is to be the simplest stone. There were to be no graven tools used in its construction, no figures cut on it as on our fine churches, and there were to be no steps. Some poor and feeble old sinner might come along, and not be able to get up there.

It is the picture of the gospel. It tells them in the first place, that Jesus Christ is going to come to this world to die for the men that are going to break this law. It is an altar where blood is flowing, where death is expiating sin by suffering, where the victim bleeds for the sinner. Then it is a place of great simplicity. It is the salvation that comes down for love of the sinner. It is the salvation that does not require him to carve it out with a chisel. Enough if he can heap a few stones together, and there offer the lamb of sacrifice that can take away his sins. He does not need to go up, or climb into a better state and make himself good; but anywhere and anyhow you may come just as you are, and call upon Him that says, "And him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Thanks to the old schoolmaster for this beautiful picture. O beloved, do not forget its lesson for yourselves and yours. And as you meet the poor and lost, lead them gently to Him. Thank God, I see men here today that have found Him who a week ago did not know Him. They thought it would be an awful task to find Him; they thought they would have to work themselves to some higher place, that they had to fulfill the law ere they could be saved. But they have seen that Christ has died to take their sins away, and all they have to do is to come and take Him. O, tell the lost and discouraged ones to build their altar anywhere, and go at once to Him. You do not need a temple at Jerusalem. You can find it on South street, or the Five Points mission, anywhere in your little room in the tenement house, anywhere that the poor sinner may be. No

stairs to climb. "But whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely."

"Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above.) Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Beloved, are you this morning a poor guilty sinner? Have you known the law of God and broken it? Are you standing, conscious of your wrong, and hesitating what to do? O, you do not need to come as far as this altar, but just where you are sitting in your seat, you can lift your heart and say, "O, Lamb of God, I come."

THE HEBREW SERVANT.

The next picture, for we have to hurry as the canvas is withdrawn, is just as beautiful, but perhaps not so easily understood. It is in the next chapter (Ex. 21: 2-7.) "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve, and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free, then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever."

That is, the servant is to be liberated and go, if he likes. He is a slave, you know; but he is at liberty to claim his freedom. But here are his dear wife and children whom he cannot leave without a breaking heart, for they belong to servitude by the conditions of their birth. He has his choice; he can stay with them and share their burdens, or go out selfishly into liberty. But he is a noble fellow; he says I do not want to leave them, and I will not. So the law provides that they can make a covenant. And he goes to his master and plainly says: "I love my wife and my children and my master, I will not go out free." Then he and his master go to the judges, and the master fastens the awl in his ear to show that he is bound over forever, and is his voluntary slave. The understanding was that it was a willing servitude, and as such, he was honored. This may seem to you a simple thing in the Hebrew code. But as we read the Bible, we see it again and again repeated as the type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, when coming to this world to suffer for you and me, uses this very language describing his coming. He says, "Lo, I come: I delight to do thy will, O my God. Mine ears hast thou bored, thy law is within my heart." Thou hast nailed me to the door. Thou hast made me a slave forever. Thou hast made me a slave of love.

You and I who are called to be the bride of Jesus, the very wife of the Lamb, for that is the picture of the church in the Scriptures, were poor slaves, bound over by our sins to a condition of bondage and servitude. Jesus Christ, the blessed Bridegroom, is free. Had he chosen, he could have stayed in heaven. He was under no obligation to come down and be bound under the law, and endure the ignominies and suffering of the world. What would He do? Would He stay with His Father and the angels in that glorious kingdom? He said "I love my wife and children. Mine ear hast thou bored. I will take up the burden of the law. I will take up the sins of the people. I will take up the tasks of the heavy laden. I will be the righteousness which they cannot provide. I will do for them what they cannot do. I will bear their burdens, and fulfil their obligations." So Jesus Christ was bound in the place of a servant for you and me. And God

in speaking of Him says, "My Chosen Servant in whom I delight." So He says Himself, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." And that is the reason why He was laden and crushed by our weight of sin, He was made a slave for us. He bought our liberty by the loss of His own. As the former picture was the picture of His sacrifice, so this picture is that of His righteousness, His obedience for us under the law, and His assuming for us all the burdens of our state of helplessness and sin.

Stop a moment, beloved, and ask do you understand this for yourselves? Has this been real to you? You and I were under tremendous obligations; have we taken Christ for them? You and I were born under sin; have we taken Him as our Savior? We Were heavy laden; have we let Him take our guilt? Have we thought what it meant to give up all for us? Let us say here to Him. "I love my Master. I will not go out free." Let us be like the slave girl in New Orleans, when her master said, "Go, I have bought you." She said, "No." He said, "I bought you to set you free." She said, "I will not go; I will be your slave, for you redeemed me." And so, beloved, He became a slave for us that we might be willing servants for Him. It is easy to talk about it; but would you go for thirty-three years and drudge your life away for an enemy? Would you become a menial in the kitchen, a toiling slave of the brick field for some one that had never done anything to make you love them? He did it for you and me. He was tired for us. He endured the privations of life. He had no place to lay his head. He was driven from his childhood's home, about to be hurled over the precipice and finally was hung on that cross outside of the city for our sins. Shall we not say, "I love my Master. I do not want to be free from my Savior." As Paul said, "I am His bond slave." He became a servant for me, I will serve him with loyal love. Come, beloved, and let Him fasten you to the door, and the pain that pierces your hands and feet will be sweet; and there will be a joy that selfishness never knew, as you look into His face and say, "I love Thee. Every drop of blood loves thee. Every fiber of my flesh loves thee. Every thought wants to be thine." If you ever want to know a joy sublime just say this from the bottom of your heart. I have said to troubled hearts, "Give yourselves to God;" and I have seen faces flash with glory, when they could say; "I am thine. I give myself unreservedly for thee."

You know what the old English pillory was. A man nailed to a post by his ear. Christ was pilloried for you. O let us return His love.

THE VISION AND THE BLOOD.

The schoolmaster has given us two pictures. Here is another we will just refer to, for we spoke of it in the last chapter morning. It is the story of the blood. The altar tells us of the sacrifice, the servant, of Christ's righteousness and His service for us. And this third picture tells us of our access, and our nearness to God, coming into the most intimate fellowship with Jesus. It is in the 24th chapter of Exodus, verses 5-12: "And Moses came and offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And he took half of the blood and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink."

What a beautiful picture. It was the same mount that was smoking yesterday; but it is serene today, calm and heavenly, like the very gates of glory. And now, Moses and these men are going up that awful mountain; and as they go there is no awful lightning, or muttered warning of terror. They have got basins of blood in their hands; and are all sprinkled with blood as they go. And as they pass the skies get clearer, as a sapphire throne, and as the body of heaven in its clearness. And lo, as they get up to some

sequestered nook of the mountain, they pause and behold a table is spread. I do not know what was on the table, but it was the bread of heaven. And the God of Israel was there. Perhaps it was the softened fire cloud of the Shekinah. There was something they knew to be the presence of God. They sat down around it, "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink." They looked up and it was as clear and blue as the sapphire of His palace. And their hearts must have thrilled as ours shall when we sit down at the banquet of the Lamb. It all meant that the curse was gone, and that the blood had put away the sin; and that the blood sprinkled upon them was the very life of Jesus. They were the sons of God. They had been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and could come as near as they liked. And we can have this blood sprinkled upon our hearts, His very life and nature is in us. We can come fully into the mount. We can eat and drink, and it will be the very gate of heaven.

Beloved, do you understand it? The first is the altar of sacrifice where he died. The second, is the servant taking your task. And the third, is the blessed Intercessor bringing you into the immediate presence of God. The blood shed and the blood sprinkled bringing you nigh.

The exposition of it in the New Testament is this, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh; And having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Beloved, are you living there? Have you come thus near?

THE TABERNACLE.

And now, we have only time for a few moments to refer to one more picture. Again the wondrous schoolmaster changes the scenery, and we look at the canvas and see on it the picture of a little house of skins and boards, a rude tent, but as we look within, it is very beautiful. Outside it is just common boards, and a few rough badger skins for a roof; but inside, it is all glorious. It is hung with costly embroidered curtains of richest colors, and a flashing lining of gold reflects the light from every side. Every article of furniture and the few simple things in this building are all magnificent. We pass in, and as we come to the first opening we enter the court, an altar of sacrifice, and here is the great basin full of water where they washed. We come up to another hanging curtain, we enter that, and are in the building itself. On the left are the golden candlestick and the table of bread. And before us a little altar from which incense and fragrance rise. This is the tabernacle. And had we been permitted to look in once a year, we would have seen another set of curtains drawn aside for a moment. We would have seen the splendidly robed person of the high priest go in, and as we looked in we would have caught a glimpse of the little ark containing some precious relics; and above it the cherubim, and between their wings the heavenly light was the very eye of God. And that Shekinah arose above the tent, until it became the pillar of cloud and fire.

This is the last picture that we will look at. It was the picture of the blessed Christ. It is the most instructive of all the types in the Bible.

I have told you that the other three pictures present Christ to us in different aspects. A sacrifice for sin, a provision for our righteousness, and our access to God; and I think this last picture is the sweet thought of home. It is a house; and the idea was that God was going to be the home of the children. He was going to make for them a home in this homeless wilderness. He was going to spread for them the Father's table wherever they were. Through that trackless, homeless desert with its loneliness, He was every night to pitch his tent and be to them a sanctuary and a rest wherever they were. O, I think it was of that Moses

sang one day when they had been going on so long, and they had been dropping, dropping, dropping to bleach upon the sands as they passed and leave their bones on the desert. He got so tired He said, "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as asleep; in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told," etc. And then as he saw the tabernacle with its sweet refuge and rest for the weary, he thought of the God whose wings were spread over it; and whose bosom was within to shelter them, and he sang; "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all the generations." Or, as it is in the more beautiful Hebrew, "Lord, Thou hast been our home in all the generations." And the next Psalm, I should not wonder if Moses wrote it, it is so beautiful, and fits so perfectly with the ninetieth Psalm. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Yes, there is a home for you. We may, even here, dwell at home and sing, as we are going home, " Abide with me from morn till eve, for without Thee I cannot live."

That home had three departments. First, the porch outside. And in that porch there was provision for the guilty to put the uncleanness off their souls and off their garments. There was a fountain where they left their stains. But that was not home; that was only the porch. What a pity that so many Christians live in the porch. They do. Lots of Christians never get any farther in. They sit where the servants are, and the scullions. A great many Christians come to Jesus to get their sins forgiven so as in some way they could go to heaven. But it is not the Father's house.

Putting aside the next curtain, you go in where God's chosen servants always dwell. It was called the tabernacle. There was the golden lamp, and table of bread fresh every week; and the sweet altar of perfume, exquisite and homelike all the time. There they fed on God's bread, and breathed the sweetness of heaven. It was where God's children banqueted on His love. Some of you understand this. You know what it is to go in with Christ into the inner chamber, and have a light shine on your heart, that is not revealed to the world. To such, it is meat indeed, and drink indeed. You are in the secret place of the Most High; dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty. That is what Christ meant when he said: "Abide in me, and I in you." Do not be so foolish as to dwell in the court. Suppose the prodigal had said, "Let me dwell in the kitchen, I do not want to go in there;" that would have been an unworthy thing; and if he had appeared to be so unworthy that father's love would have been checked. You are nothing in yourself, but Christ has provided the sacrifice, and he wants you to get the benefit. It would be a very foolish thing if you went to some great store in this city, and deposited a hundred dollars, and said, "Mr. X can have all he wants," for me to go down and say, "I don't feel free to take this; I will only take two dollars and seventy-five cents' worth," and go off. The merchant would say, "It will do me no good, you might as well have the good of it." And so, beloved, Christ has paid for the very luxuries of grace; He has paid for the best seats in his palace, do not let him feel that his fulness was wasted.

Then there was a third chamber beyond this so glorious that they of the old dispensation could not go in; could not even look in. But when Jesus died on the cross, the curtains of that inner chamber were rent asunder; when His heart-strings broke, then there was a great rent opened, and they could see it open; the curtains burst asunder in a moment, and every one could look in and see the holy of holies. Even heaven itself is now opened up to you and me, opened up so you can look in and not be afraid; so you can look in as He goes in before. You can look in and see your seat prepared, and know that you shall go in where the Forerunner has gone; may not only look in, but you can live under its light and glory; making your pathway a little heaven as you go. Blessed, blessed home! it tells us how the Christian is not merely a toiling servant, but a child at home. And it spreads its curtains for you when there is no other comfort and

joy, and you can abide with Him until the time comes when it shall be said, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men; he shall dwell with them. God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more sorrow or crying or death. For the former things have passed away. And He that sat on the throne said, "It is done; I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of life. The Spirit and the Bride say come; and whosoever is athirst, let him come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

Come home, dear friends; come home to God's love, and stay at home. God grant that may be true for you. "Blessed are the homesick; for they shall find a home." There is one. Are you tired today? is your soul lonesome? is it weary? come to Christ. He has got more than pardon. He can love you until you can feel it warm your heart, and know that it is not you, but He, that loves your love back again. Eye hath not seen, nor have we dreamed what it will mean bye and bye. God be your home, and give you the blessing of Him that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High.

We bless God for the old schoolmaster, but we say "good-bye." Lord, it is good to be here on the mount, there is no man but Jesus here. The ministry of Moses is gone. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." We have been looking at the pictures on the blackboard, and while we looked the Master has stepped in. He is here. O that we may go forth in His presence.

We will find it is not the Tabernacle now, it is a person, it is Jesus. And so we retire into the secret of our hearts, and say:

"Blessed, gentle, holy Jesus,

Precious Bridegroom of my heart,

In thy secret, inner chamber,

Come and whisper what thou art."

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