

All on the Altar

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon 'All on the Altar' calls for total surrender to God as the foundation of true worship and spiritual revival.

Duration: 51:57

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 29:27, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Full Surrender"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of feeling distant from God and filled with despair. However, he emphasizes that through prayer and trust in the Lord, he was able to overcome his struggles. The speaker also discusses the life of a king in the Bible who trusted in God and followed His commandments, leading to great success. The sermon concludes with a call to dedicate oneself fully to God, not just in terms of talents or possessions, but in surrendering one's entire being to Him.

Transcript

The 1966 Southland Keswick Convention, Dallas, Texas, January 19th. Soloist, Mr. Richard Ayers. Message, Dr. Alan Redpath.

All on the altar. Good morning. Good morning.

Thank you. That makes me feel better. Please open your Bibles at 2 Chronicles chapter 29 and verse 27.

2 Chronicles 29 and verse 27. We shall not, because of the length of this chapter, read a large portion of it, but we shall refer to it from time to time in other parts of the Word of God also. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar.

And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also. With the trumpets and with the instruments ordained by David, King of Israel. Just let us bow before the Lord in prayer.

We thank Thee, dear Lord, for the message which we have just heard, which expresses the concern and longing of all of our hearts, and which we believe is Thy great purpose for us, that we may be conformed to the image of Thy dear Son, more like Jesus every day. Teach us Thy way, help us by Thy grace and by the power of Thy Spirit to walk in it, and to know the gladness and the joy of the life that is yielded up to the will of God. Bless now Thy word to our hearts, and may heaven open upon us, and the Lord Jesus be very real to us.

We ask it in His name. Amen. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.

The events that occurred during the reign of King Hezekiah were of sufficient importance to warrant a threefold emphasis in the word of God. In the historic book of Kings, in the priestly book of Chronicles, and in the prophetic book of Isaiah, the revival of true religion and true worship which took place in his reign received special emphasis. Now, when the Holy Spirit takes the trouble to say something to us three times, He must have some special reason.

And certainly what He says three times over surely demands our thoughtful and prayerful attention. It would be worth your while a thousand times. Reading this story in full for yourselves, in the second book of Kings and the 18th chapter onwards, in the second book of Chronicles and the 29th chapter, and in the prophecy of Isaiah, I don't know sometimes whether to speak in the authorized version or the American revised.

It's very difficult. I got into the habit of the American revised, but now I have backslidden again. I'm recovering.

In Isaiah 37 and 38, and you would find yourself as I have been thrilled at all that took place in the years of his reign, I can just give it to you now in capsule form, a brief resume that we may see the background of the events that led up to this moment, which our text records. Hezekiah succeeded to the throne at a time when the nation was in a desperate plight, morally and spiritually. His father had been about the worst king that Judah had ever had.

He wrought much evil in Judah. Worst of all, chapter 28 and verse 25 tells us, he had made high places to burn incense to other gods and provoked to anger the God of his father. The greatest tragedy which can befall any country is not the loss of face before other nations, not loss of credit, but loss of the fear of God.

And moral conditions in this great land of the United States and in Britain today are what they are, basically, because the realities of heaven and hell are no longer gripping the hearts of the vast majority of people. They couldn't care less. Now, this had happened to Judah when Hezekiah came to power.

He was 25 years old at the time. He lived to be 54. He was not perfect.

That's what I like about the Bible. It doesn't gloss over the imperfections of its heroes. When he was 39, he panicked, because some years previously, when he was 31, a great kingdom and power of Assyria came rushing down into the north and captured Israel and took them off into captivity.

And a few years later, eight years later, he saw that they were threatening to do the same thing to Judah. And he pressed the panic button, and he compromised, and he got into trouble. And then he prayed.

Hezekiah had a great friend, a great counselor, and companion to whom he had constant access, the prophet Isaiah. And Hezekiah had learned how to lay hold of God. And his prayer at that moment of crisis, which is given to us in the 37th chapter of Isaiah, is a wonderful masterpiece of a man who is in a jam but knows how to take hold of God and of God's promises and God's covenant.

And Hezekiah's prayer in the face of all the blasphemy of the enemy turned the scale, and God heard him. But God wasn't finished with Hezekiah. A few months later, he was taken ill.

He had boils, and they were all over him. Huh. And you know what he did? He turned his face to the wall and wept.

Wept and socked. As a matter of fact, it's almost worthwhile, I think I'll do it, reading this man's prayer. At that time, you'll find it in Isaiah again, 38.

This is what he prayed. A man who had laid hold of God in a national crisis, when the nation was threatened with invasion, was now finding himself personally afflicted by the Lord. The pressure was on him, and it hurt.

And Isaiah has recorded for us in verse 9 of chapter 38, the writing of Hezekiah, King of Judah, when he had been sick and was recovered of his sickness. When he was better, he told Isaiah that this is how he had prayed. I said, in the cutting off of my day, I shall go to the gates of the grave.

I am deprived of the residue of my year. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living. I shall behold no man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

Mine age is departed and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent. I have cut off like a weaver my life. He will cut me off with pining sickness.

From day even to night, won't thou make an end of me? I reckoned till morning that as a lion, so will he break all my bones. From day even to night, won't thou make an end of me? Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter. I did mourn as a dove.

Mine eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me. What shall I say? He hath spoken unto me.

He himself hath done it. I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things of the life of my spirit, so wilt thou recover me and make me to live.

Behold, for peace I had great bitterness, but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For the grave cannot praise thee. Death cannot celebrate thee.

They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day. The father to the children shall make known thy truth.

The Lord was ready to save me. Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. And so Hezekiah recovered himself.

He knew what it was to be depressed, to have such depression that he thought his life was to be cut off. I would bear testimony, if I may, without parading it, that I've known something of this in recent months. I haven't been able to pray.

Month after month went. Depression filled my heart. I felt that God had deserted me, that my ministry was over.

It was impossible to take hold of God. It seemed that He had departed from me into the shadow. I was filled with a sense of despair and emptiness.

But there were many other people who prayed, and through all of that the Lord brought me through. He wasn't perfect. He gave way to depression, but the Lord spared him, and lengthened his life for fourteen further years.

But all the events of his life, in all his triumphs, the summary of it in the second book of Kings and verse 18, verse 5, he trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he claimed to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments which the Lord commanded Moses. That was the summary of his life.

And everything that made this man what he was hinged upon the events which are recorded in 2 Chronicles chapter 29. Immediately he came to the throne, without wasting a moment. At the age of twenty-five, when all the nation had turned from God, he refused to lie down to the situation, and he began to lead the people back to true worship.

He began at the center, and worked out to the circumference. That's always how God works. He began at the center, and Hezekiah took two weeks to cleanse the filthiness from the holy place in the temple.

The doors of which had been shut. My dear friend, if we are to see a moving of the spirit of God in reality in these days, do you know where it begins? It begins with the ministry. It begins in the pulpit.

It begins with the leadership. God starts right there. I have seen in my time something that looked to me, once or twice, very often, like a breath of the spirit of God moving among the student body of a seminary, or an institute, or a college.

But I have seen it crushed by the powers that be. God forgive us. We don't want this emotionalism at our seminary.

We don't want it at our college. You must keep within the orthodox pattern of fundamentalism. God forbid.

Sometimes it says dead, dead, orthodox, but sound asleep. The greatest need in our day is for orthodoxy on fire. And it will only take fire when it takes fire in the heart of the And the priests were sanctified.

The temple was cleansed. The sin offering was made, an acknowledgement of guilt. You will find that in this chapter.

But all that was preparatory to something else, something further, about which I want to speak to you this morning. God has spoken to us in these days, and often, about the temple, the door of the temple of our heart, being shut to him. About the defilement of the temple of our body.

About the cleansing of our hands and the purifying of our hearts. But there is still a further step in the royal route to blessing. For it is possible to attend church for years and never really worship.

I want you to notice with me sacrifice in worship. I know, of course, there can be a danger of pressing detail of lessons of these Old Testament pictures. But no lover of the Bible can doubt that God taught Israel some essential things about himself, and about the way that sinful people can approach him, by pictures and by types, of which Jesus Christ himself was a perfect fulfillment.

There can be no doubt about this. We can't choose our way of coming to him. We must learn God's truth about holiness and about sin.

And among these great lessons of the Old Testament, the five Levitical offerings stand up as full of spiritual teaching. And the first of these, and the one referred to in this chapter, is the burnt offering. Now, this is not the occasion for a detailed study of it, which you can read for yourself in the first chapter of the book of Leviticus.

But let me just say this. If the key word of the book of Leviticus is holiness, the key word of the burnt offering is, all on the altar. To be a burnt offering, a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord.

Leviticus 1.9. This was the special feature of the burnt offering. All on the altar. Now, many commentators speak as if this only referred to the Lord Jesus.

Granted that it has a principal reference to him, but not exclusively so. Surely it has a very real application to all who claim to be identified with him at Calvary. John 17.19, for their sake I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

The great danger is that many of us think only of laying our gifts upon the altar. We talk about offering to Jesus our talents. We go to school to be educated to do his work.

For the development of our talents, my friend, you don't get anywhere until you begin to realise that the flesh profiteth nothing, and that we do not go into training in order that we may be perfected to do his work. But if we get the right kind of teaching when we're there, we go into the training to be shown that we by ourselves are absolutely helpless without the power of God coming upon us. Let me explain what I mean.

You will recall Francis Ridley Heathcote's lovely hymn of consecration, of dedication. It's dangerously familiar. I was thinking of it again this morning.

You remember it. And reading through the verse one after the other, take my moments, take my days, take my hands, take my feet, take my voice, take my lips, take my silver, take my gold, take my intellect, take my will, take my heart, take my life. There are five and a half verses and you still haven't come to the burnt offering.

But then, listen, in the last two lines, take myself and I will be ever, only, all for thee. It's not your talents Jesus wants, it's you. That is the burnt offering.

It's terribly possible to give our gifts but to withhold ourselves, to give our possessions, even our children, yet to hold back ourselves and never make a burnt offering a sweet savour unto the Lord. My dear brethren in the ministry, I am seriously questioning in my mind whether this transaction with God is not, in fact, largely disappearing from our preaching and therefore from our Christian living. Do you know that in a world with unprecedented challenge to missionary work, in days when at any moment on some fields the missionary may have to pack up and go elsewhere, in days that call for all-out attack on every front and all-out sacrifice if we're to reach, if we're to evangelise this generation, do you know that there are four women to one man on the mission field today? That's a sheer disgrace.

Can it be that men are satisfied with giving some of their cash and giving a missionary offering but never offering themselves? Willing to work in business and give a share of what God gives to them but never laying themselves upon the altar for anything that God would dictate. We're so concerned that our children should marry happily, should settle down comfortably, should go into Father's business and therefore perhaps step right out of the will of God. Hezekiah commanded that they should offer the burnt offering on

the altar, all on the altar, without reservation or restriction.

That's worship. I met a lovely couple some time ago in Chicago. They had been married for 25 years and this was a story that was told.

For some years the husband had been very concerned about his wife. She was gradually getting more and more frigid toward chilly, cold and he couldn't for the life of him think why. For during the course of the years he had bought her mink coats and automobiles and fur and new houses and dresses.

He'd given her everything. So he thought he'd take the opportunity of a 21st anniversary wedding party to ask her why. Now he said, my dear, we've been married 25 years and during all those years I've given you such a lot.

In fact everything has been yours. Cars, coats, everything that you, that any woman could ever want. Why is it that you're so cold towards me? And she, her answer just about flattened him out.

She looked at him and said, I'm so glad that you had the courage to ask me that. Yes, you have given me beautiful clothes, lovely houses, lovely automobiles and I'm so grateful. But through all those years you've never given me the love of your heart.

That's worship. Has Jesus got that this morning? Look, sacrifice and worship is followed by song in worship. Verse 27.

Oh you may say to me this is being very hard, but those who know at least something of this place of the burnt offering will support me in saying it isn't hard at all. True, it is a complete and total demand which the Lord makes, but the one who makes it is love incarnate. Nobody ever facing this issue and paying the price has regretted putting all on the altar.

And so as in his name I would humbly claim from you today a burnt offering of yourself. I ask you to notice that when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also. Hezekiah was prepared for that.

He had instructed the Levites to be ready with cymbals, psalteries, hearts. He'd probably heard of a previous revival under Jehoiada, which is recorded in chapter 23 and verse 18, when the priests and Levites were told, instructed by David in the house of the Lord, to offer burnt offerings to the Lord as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and singing as it was ordained by David. The burnt offering was according to the law of Moses.

The song was according to the ordination of David. The burnt offering is worship associated with a song, and when the one began, the other began also, and indeed we're not told how long it continued. It reminds me of the story of the prodigal who returned home sick of himself, weary, and whereas we read, he had begun to be in want, when he got home, we read, they began to be merry, and we're not told that it ever ceased.

He began to be in want, the awful loneliness of the man out of the will of God, ah, but back home, offering himself, they began to be merry. And in our Lord's time, a tax gatherer hears the call of God, shuts his books, takes his pen to write his gospel, gathers a few friends and invites them to a feast, and Matthew, grasping, greedy, offers himself as a burnt offering, and celebrates with a song. Ephesians 5, 18, be ye filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and songs and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord.

My dear friend, wherever in a life there's been all put on the altar, then in that heart, he hath put a new song in my mouth, and as long as all remains on the altar, the song continues and deepens as the years go by. Oh, how eagerly we wait for that. We wait for it this week.

Do you know, you notice the difference in the singing of the congregation when the burnt offering has been made? There's a lilt to it, a joy to it, a liberty in it, a spontaneity in it. It's not entertainment. It's not merely a hateful word.

Preliminaries. The sound of the organ and the piano and the singing of the congregation, when revival breaks out, there's a new note in them. Perhaps there's someone here, and God has been speaking to you, asking not merely for your money or your children or your sweetheart, but yourself.

And you are starting to train, to yield your talents, but what about you? However severe the struggle is, once that burnt offering is made, the song of the Lord begins also. For you see, with the yielding of the burnt offering, you enter into a new life of liberty. The heart that has been torn and divided by many rivals, many different allegiances, is now united in the grand freedom of the will of God.

The Christian is rejoicing, for he is saved, and he has yielded himself, not for license, but for liberty in the will of God, for obedience to the word of God, and he finds the greatest liberty. He's delivered from self-control, delivered from bondage. There's a new regime now, a new liberty, a new psalm, and a new worship.

In 1952, Princess Elizabeth and her husband, as she then was, went to Kenya Colony, as it then was. A few days after she'd left, her father, George VI, died. Immediately she returned home, and the moment she stepped onto the tarmac at London Airport, she stepped on it as queen in her own right.

But for 15 months, she was uncrowned. And on June the 2nd, 1953, almost ancient history now, but it was recorded on television in this country, a day which was chosen by the weather experts as most likely to be the finest day of the summer, a day when it poured cats and dogs all day, she was crowned queen. And in the person of their representatives, every member of the British Commonwealth kissed the scepter, bowed before her, and acknowledged her as their rightful queen.

She had her coronation day. Has Jesus had that in your heart? Oh, he is king by his own right, by virtue of his blood, by virtue of his empty tomb, by virtue of his ascension to the right hand of God. But has he been crowned? Come, your undisputed sovereign, and notice that this worship began suddenly.

Verse 36. The thing was done suddenly. I wouldn't press you to any hurried decision, but I believe God has been preparing us for this.

I have been to a good number of these local Keswicks now in my time. Some of them have lost the vision that they first had. But somehow we sense, as we come to this beloved convention, the sound of a going on the tops of the mulberry tree, the hungry heart, the eager response, the responsive listening, the thirsty crowd, all this, the evidences of the hand of God.

He has been preparing us for it. And as a great leader said long ago, ye sought for David in time past to be king over you? Now then, do it. Let me conclude this morning by reminding you of some men who did this.

You've heard of George Whitfield, an associate, of course, of John Wesley. On the day of his ordination to the Church of England in 1738, George Whitfield said, my heart was melted down, and I offered my whole

spirit, soul, and body to the service of the sanctuary. And the record has it that his first sermon was so powerful that complaint was made that fifteen people were driven mad.

Have you ever heard of Christmas Evans? Born on Christmas Day in 1766, converted at the age of seventeen, ordained to the Baptist ministry at the age of twenty-four, but he became involved in controversy, and power departed from him. Oh, I wish I had till one o'clock. You don't.

But there's no more deadly, killing, soul-destroying thing than for a man in the pulpit to be involved in controversy. Some people think we oughtn't to have fellowship with anybody unless they dot their eyes and cross their T's like we do. That's evangelical potpourri.

And I refuse to be a part of that. I want to have fellowship down here on earth with everybody who's going to heaven. I don't care what label they've got.

I don't care whether Baptist or Brethren or Episcopalian or Presbyterian, what pond they choose to fish in, even Plymouth Brethren, bless their hearts. We'll love them all. But I'm not going to set myself up as the one to interpret scripture on every point as the basis of my fellowship with them.

Christmas Evans was involved in controversy, and his power left him. And convicted of sin and coldness of heart, he climbed up one of the mountains in North Wales, and he says, Heaven drew near, and my heart grew tender, and streaming with tears, I wrestled with God for three hours, and I gave myself wholly to Christ, my body, soul, and spirit, talents, labors, life, all my care, every day and every hour that remained to me. And I felt as if I had been removed from the cold region of spiritual ice to the pleasant land of the promises of God.

And wherever he prayed and preached, he brought revival to Wales. And Francis Ridley Hevigel, whom I've already mentioned, says it was on Advent Sunday, December the 2nd, 1873, I first learned the blessedness of true dedication. I saw it like a flash of electric light, and what you see you can never unsee.

There must be full surrender before there can be full blessedness. And God admits you by the one into the other. And I just utterly yielded myself to him, and utterly trusted him to keep me.

And the remaining years were the richest of her life. And then she wrote her dedication hymn. And Hudson Taylor, the founder of the great mission, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, well, do I remember? As an unreserved dedication, I put myself, my life, my friends, my all upon the altar.

The deep solemnity that came over my soul followed the assurance that my offering was accepted. The presence of God became unutterably real and blessed. And well, I well remember stretching myself out on the ground and lying there in unspeakable awe and unspeakable joy for what service I was accepted.

I knew not, but a deep consciousness that I was not my own took possession of me, which has never been a thing. Church of England minister in a cathedral on the day of his ordination, a Welsh Baptist on a country road, Francis Ridley Havegill on Advent Sunday, Hudson Taylor in the quiet of his room. History will never know, but heaven will reveal what God has done through men like that.

Oh, but you say we're never in their class. But listen, all who give themselves as a burnt offering are accepted. And the fire falls upon the burnt offering and the Holy Spirit comes in fullness upon the life that is utterly yielded to him.

And it burns with unquenchable flame. And the song of the Lord begins. Oh, that the hallelujah would ring in your heart today.

Shall we pray? When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also. Lord Jesus, thou who has offered thyself as a burnt offering for us, grant that we here today may offer ourselves to thee without reservation, that all may be on the altar. And blessed Spirit of God, let the fire fall.

Oh Lord, come, come with all thy fire upon the offering and consume the dross, the sin, the unworthiness, and flow through us in power, in blessing. May we be men and women, fellows and girls, whom thou can view anywhere, at any time, at any cost, because we are all together thine own. We ask it in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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