

Acceptability

Part 1

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[00:00:00] This is a recording of the afternoon address given by Mr. Alan Tunnely at Wildfell Hall, Catford, on June the 8th, 1963.

His subject, Acceptability.

Reading from the first verse of the eighth chapter of the book of Leviticus.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread.

And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him, and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And Moses said unto the congregation, This is the thing which the Lord commanded to be [00:01:03] done. And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.

And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him.

And he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith. And he put the breastplate upon him. Also he put in the breastplate the urim and the thummim. And he put the mitre upon his head. Also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown, as the Lord commanded Moses.

And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle, and all that was therein, and sanctified them.

[00:02:03] And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times. And anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him to sanctify him. And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and put coats upon them, and girded them with girdles, and put bonnets upon them, as the Lord commanded Moses.

And he brought the bullock for the sin offering. And Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering, and he slew it.

Moses took the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar, round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it to make reconciliation upon it.

[00:03:03] And he took all the fat that was upon the inwards, and the call above the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and Moses burned it upon the altar. But the bullock and his hide, his flesh and his dung, he burnt with fire without the camp, as the Lord commanded Moses.

And he brought the ram for the burnt offering. And Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram, and he killed it. And Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar, round about. And he cut the ram into pieces, and Moses burnt the head, and the pieces, and the fat.

And he washed the inwards, and the legs in water. And Moses burnt the whole ram upon the altar. It was a burnt offering for a sweet savour, and an offering made by fire unto the Lord, [00:04:05] as the Lord commanded Moses.

And he brought the other ram. The ram of consecration. And Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram, and he slew it. And Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot. And he brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toes of their right feet. And Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar, round about.

And he took the fat, and the rump, and all the fat that was upon the inwards, and the call above the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and the right shoulder. [00:05:04] And out of the basket of unleavened bread that was before the Lord, he took one unleavened cake, and a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer, and put them on the fat, and upon the right shoulder.

And he put all upon Aaron's hands, and upon his sons' hands, and waved them for a wave offering before the Lord.

And Moses took them from off their hands, and burnt them upon the altar, upon the burnt offering.

They were consecrations for a sweet savour, it is an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And Moses took the breast, and waved it for a wave offering before the Lord. For of the ram of consecration, it was Moses' part, as the Lord commanded Moses.

And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled [00:06:05] it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him.

And sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.

May God bless to us the reading of his precious word.

We've had quite a long portion of Scripture read from the Old Testament.

Of course, I can't presume to speak of that in detail, but I do, as I have done before, want to

recommend to you as students of the Scripture, not to neglect the Old Testament. If you remember, it was the Old Testament only that they had in the times of the Lord [00:07:03] Jesus, and in the times of the Apostles, and it was the reading of the Old Testament Scriptures, or rather the speaking of them, by the Lord Jesus himself, to those who were wandering away from Jerusalem, that made their hearts burn.

And I feel sure, if you prayerfully read, again, that eighth chapter of Leviticus, and the parallel Scriptures that you get in Exodus, where you get more details about the garments and what they were like, that if you read them prayerfully, you can't do so without blessing to your soul. Well, now, I want to couple with that a few verses in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Reading first of all from chapter one.

[00:08:04] Beginning at the third verse, chapter one of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath [00:09:05] abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. And a verse or two in the fifth chapter of the same Epistle, the fifth chapter of Ephesians, verse eight, For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. You will observe, I expect, a similar word appearing in these two portions in Ephesians. [00:10:07] In the first you get accepted in the beloved, and in the second you get what is acceptable to the Lord. Well now, those are two very distinct and separate things.

Accepted in, that puts us in a position.

What is acceptable to is the fruit of that position in which we are put. And it's quite useless for us to try to reverse the position of those two things.

We can never start from ourselves and look at our lives and say, well that's not quite [00:11:01] right, this ought to go and that ought to go, and I ought to do this. And so try to trim up our lives, so to speak, to make them acceptable to God. We can't do that on our own, and that is absolutely the wrong way to start, and will never, never get us into that word that we get in the beginning, accepted in the beloved.

Well now, the whole question of either of those, the whole point of either of those, depends upon one thing, and that is identification.

And that is the reason why I thought we ought to have a little to say about this chapter in Leviticus, because there you do get taught very plainly, and most beautifully when you [00:12:10] come to look into it, this question of identification.

Identification with whom or with what? Well, I think that the first portion we read in Ephesians puts

that clear. Accepted in the beloved.

Who the beloved is, I don't think we need to question, because we are dealing with God's matters, and he has one and one only beloved son.

And the whole of the Scriptures is used for the purpose of exalting that beloved son.

[00:13:04] In the Old Testament Scriptures, and in this chapter that we read in Leviticus, we get Aaron and his sons.

Aaron is representing to us the beloved son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And his sons, they represent the Church of God as we know it today. And you will find in this chapter, where it's so easily spoken of by the heading at the top of the page as a matter of consecration, you will find that it is a matter of identification of sons and of with Aaron.

But you find, as we must always find, that Aaron, the representative of the Lord Jesus, [00:14:01] must be dealt with as a representative of him, separately from his sons. You will find, if you look at the portion in Exodus, where these garments in which they are arrayed on that day are described, that there are garments very similar, provided for the sons, as for Aaron himself. But, as we may see if we have time, there are certain features which make it unmistakable who is Aaron and who are the sons.

Although there is a similarity in their dress, yet one can never mistake Aaron for the sons or the sons for Aaron. And it must ever be thus, surely, with our Lord Jesus Christ. There must always be those marks that separate him from us. [00:15:05] Always must there be those wonders and glories which set him above all and make him the one before whom we bow in worship. Well now, in this chapter, the eighth chapter of Leviticus, we have at the beginning the setting forth of Aaron as a representative or a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If we are going to think of being accepted in the beloved, then first of all we must have a picture of who and what this beloved is.

And so we find, to go briefly through it, that there are garments which are spoken of as garments of glory and beauty. Garments of glory, yes, and we get the various colours and details outlined which [00:16:11] lead us to certain points in connection with this beautiful picture. We get a robe which is all of blue. It's easy to understand what that means. It connects the person with heaven. We get that introduced, don't we, in the Gospel of John, the Son of Man speaking of himself upon earth who is also in heaven. And the one who came down from him. Not the one who has gone up from earth to see what is up there, like men are trying to do today and then come back and tell us. That's not the way God does it. But he sends down one, his own beloved son, who belongs to heaven, who knows not only [00:17:02] heaven but the one who dwells there. The word was with God and the word was God.

Who more suitable than he to come down into this world and tell us about what is up there. And most of all, about the person who desires that we also should be with him in that place which his beloved son was going to prepare. And so we get the blue. And then we get the gold. Oh yes, there's divine righteousness there. Must be. And everything that comes from heaven and everything that goes into heaven must bear that mark. It must have that standard. There's no lowering of the standard. And

that's why we can't start at the other end and see first of all whether our works can be made acceptable and hope to enter into God's presence. [00:18:02] It must be up to that standard which God himself has set of absolute divine righteousness. And then there's the purple which speaks of that which is royal. Oh yes, he's going to be a king. He's going to be a ruler. He is the one who will rule. He does rule now in the universe and he will rule here on the earth yet. God has said through the psalmist, I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. And when that day comes there's nobody who is going to keep him out. He is coming and he will rule.

He is the royal king. And then there is the fine linen which speaks also of righteousness. And then you will find if you read the account in Exodus that there are, shall I say, decorations [00:19:02] around the hem of the garment. There are the pomegranates and the bells. And we are told there that when he goes in before the door to minister there is the sound of the bells. Isn't that beautiful? When we come to think what it could mean that there is that in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is that in him and his ways which are sweet music to God. And there is the pomegranate, the fruit also, which bears the same story and tells us of him and what he was and what he did so perfectly.

But here we find that this person, this beloved person, is taken first and he's brought along by Moses and he is anointed with the oil.

[00:20:01] He only.

Why? Why? Why surely it's immediately apparent that we're dealing now with a picture, a symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ. The attributes, some of his attributes we have had in the colors connected with his garments and now we have this anointing of him quite separately from his sons.

He is unique. He is in a class. He is by himself in that he is anointed first and only.

And so in the beginning of this chapter we have got in figure a picture of the beloved son of God, where he came from, heaven, what he is, a royal person, and we get the evidence, the picture of his perfect work and also the picture of his being anointed with the [00:21:06] Holy Spirit. Well now that is just a brief sketch and when we consider who and what the Lord Jesus is, I think we can fill in the details and we can admire the figure. But that is not where we stop. That's only where we start. And I'm sure as we go on now we shall see what it means to be brought into contact with this precious person, our Lord Jesus Christ. It says in the 14th verse onward of that chapter that the sin offering is next considered. Well now this is where I think we all want to stop and ponder because here is where we [00:22:02] begin to get something which is most telling, most essential, and most precious if we are to have a proper understanding of being accepted in the beloved.

We know our own standard, don't we? We know where we live, groveling like earthworms down here. We have no comparison with the one that we've just been speaking about who comes from heaven. And yet there is here this wonderful question of identification presented. And it's presented in this way that the sin offering is brought and it says Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock of the sin offering. Laying on of hands is a question of identification. [00:23:05] And don't you think it's a marvellous thing when we come now to speak of a sin offering that we get Aaron as well as his sons being identified with that.

It concentrates our view, it brings us down to the fact that there is a meeting point where the sinner and the Lord Jesus the Saviour, they come and they meet together.

We don't find that the Lord Jesus, though he came down from heaven, and though he was royal, though he had the power to do anything and everything he wanted, though he was divine, he had that divine righteousness as an essential element of his person, we don't find that he swept the men of earth in front of him and told them you should do this and you should [00:24:05] do this and you should do that, you're not doing what you ought to do. No, he came down in infinite grace and in the language of this chapter he puts his hands upon the sin offering and he says to you and me, you come and put your hands there too. To put it another way, he doesn't come down and stand beside me shoulder to shoulder and say I can tell you what you ought to do. Oh no, he doesn't do that. But he comes right where we are and in a very special way, so to speak, if this is me and this is the Lord Jesus, he just doesn't stand like that, my two hands side by side, but as you look, as you behold, there is just that [00:25:03] merging of one into the other so that as we look the figure of one disappears, my figure disappears and there in our gaze is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has come from glory to take our place and he stands there instead of me and as I watch, I see that one put up upon the cross. Where am I? I'm there. That's what we get with identification and here in the sin offering, we get them both putting their hands upon the sin offering and they are identified the one with the other. In infinite grace, this one who has come from the glory, the word of God, the word made flesh, he has come down for that very purpose that he might be identified with us and we with him. What immense condescending grace that he comes down thus [00:26:10] to take our place and we in him are merged together there in that sin offering.

Then there's another beautiful thing here. We go on to the burnt offering and if you look at that too, you'll find that the same thing is true. Now with the burnt offering, if you study the offerings, you will find that the burnt offering was all put upon the altar. God claimed it all. There was nothing that was not put on the altar and there we find that which is most precious to God the Father in the sacrifice of our Lord [00:27:02] Jesus Christ. It is that which he accepts, he takes for his own so to speak. It is all his and he delights in that which his beloved son has done in carrying out his purpose. Now here in the record, we find exactly the same as with the sin offering. He brought the ram for the burnt offering and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram. Well now that's wonderful grace because with the sin offering, we get the Lord Jesus coming down, we get the sinner meeting him there and on that common level, the Lord Jesus having an infinite grace come down to that level, the sin offering is offered. [00:28:02] But when we come to the burnt offering, what a different picture. There's no coming down. There's all the fullness of the perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ acceptable to God. All that he has done, all that he is, every bit of it accepted of God and we identified with him in that acceptability. Well now that is what I believe we should understand when we speak of made, being made as we get in Ephesians, accepted in the beloved. We are first of all identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in the sin offering that our sins may be dealt with and our sins taken away forever and lost sight of and then we are introduced to the presence of God in the [00:29:04] complete and absolute acceptability of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And if we look at things like that, can we possibly imagine that any breakdown could occur? Can we imagine that the Lord Jesus Christ having come down and entered into that question of sin with us, for us rather, and with God. Can we imagine that he hasn't made a complete work? Oh no. What do we see? We see the Lord Jesus on the cross. Myself is there with him. And what do we hear out of that darkness? That cry, it's finished. It's finished. What's finished? The work that he came to do. In anticipation he had said so in his prayer to the father in the 17th of John, I have finished [00:30:04] the work that thou gavest me to do. There was all the work of his life and now the work in his death and all of it there is finished and there's left not

one iota to be done after that. It's finished. And then when he is put in the grave, does he remain there? Where am I? In the grave with him. And when he comes out, where am I? I have no existence apart from him. That eternity of woe which was mine to go on endless in endless ages bearing the results of my sin, all that ended with the Lord's cry. It is finished. That eternity of mine has been collapsed into that short space of time on the cross. And the Lord Jesus has done for me what nobody else could do. He's defined infinity. And that eternity of woe which was mine is collapsed [00:31:05] and finished. And now the only existence I have is in him. And as the apostle says, the life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. The old number one self is dead and buried, dead on the cross and buried in the grave there, finished, lost sight of. And we who have life in Christ, what does it tell us about that? If we look at the Ephesians, there's a place for us. It says there, when we were dead in sins, he's quickened us together with Christ and hath raised us up together. What for? And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So the scripture doesn't see us now as those who belong to this life, belong down here. We've got a life now [00:32:05] in Christ. We are accepted in the Beloved, and we're seen as sitting down in the heavens with him. And in the language of the Colossians, we read, if we have died with Christ, let us, if we then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Well no, we are then accepted in the Beloved.

The sin offering has been offered, perfect before God. It has been accepted, the burnt offering is accepted of God, and we, because the sin offering and the burnt offering are accepted, we also are accepted. And in the language of that first chapter, [00:33:05] having predestinated us according to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. Well now what else?

We still have to be identified with our Lord Jesus Christ, if we're going to bear fruit, if we are going to prove what is acceptable to the Lord, as the fifth chapter tells us. What do we read in Philippians? Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, [00:34:01] but made himself with no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in passion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That is the pathway that he followed. And if we are now going to be identified with him, as we must be surely to be consistent, God has identified us with him, and it should be our desire to be like him in our pathway now through this world. Well now just to be brief, we get a little about that in the middle of the epistle to the Ephesians, the fourth chapter. I'll just read you a verse or two there. It says in the 20th verse, ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as [00:35:04] the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. It's a question of putting off and putting on. If we now know that our sins have been put away, and that the life we now live is lived in the power of the son of God, who has loved us and given himself for us, then we have no business to deal with that which is natural to us, which belongs to us as our natural fruit. But we have only to commit ourselves into the gracious hand [00:36:03] of God to be guided by the spirit, and then we will produce the fruit of the spirit which will be acceptable to God. When we look at the Lord Jesus in his pathway here, his pathway of grace, he as a perfect man was one who was led continually by the spirit of God. You get that, you notice that frequently mentioned in the gospels if you read them carefully. He was one who was led of the spirit, and if we want to produce the fruit which is acceptable to God, that is the fruit of the spirit, we must yield ourselves to the spirit of God

that he may usefully operate us for his praise and glory. As the apostle Peter says in his epistle that we should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth, and so on. [00:37:07] He didn't revile when he was reviled, and so on. He was a perfect one in the pathway that he followed. Well now then, the way to prove in the language of that verse, the tenth verse in the fifth chapter, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord, it can only be done in that way, in putting off the things that belong to nature, and fostering that which belong to the new nature, the new life which we have through Christ. Let the spirit of God lead and rule in our lives, that he may produce out of these poor vessels that he picks up in grace, may produce some fruit for God. Well now then, that is just the difference as I see between these two verses [00:38:02] in the beginning and towards the end of the epistle to the Ephesians, to be accepted in the beloved, is that which God accomplishes in his infinite grace, through his own beloved son, coming down into this world to bear our sins. And only thus can we be made accepted in him, and if we are accepted in him, then it is absolute and perfect. But the other, proving what is acceptable to God, that is our part experimentally here, step by step, stepping by the spirit, under the guidance of the spirit, and taking our Lord Jesus Christ as a model, showing us the way in which a walk should be followed through this scene. [00:39:01] We say, oh yes, he was perfect, he couldn't sin, that's perfectly true. But if we are energized, as Peter says, partakers of the divine nature, guided by the spirit of God, have we any excuse? Or you say, I just made a mistake, have we any right to make a mistake? I know it's human to err, but the power is there, and the only trouble is that we don't take advantage of the power and provision that is there. Well, may God in his grace just lead us to think over this question of identification with our Lord Jesus Christ. To me, it's the most precious thing to find that we're identified, not only with the sin offering as such, and he with us at that point, but we also are identified with him in the burnt offering, and in the acceptability of the burnt offering. [00:40:02] We have all that as the gift of God for us. We are now, through Christ, acceptable to him.