

SIMPLE TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

by

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With an Introduction by Wilbur M. Smith

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CHAPTER ONE

HANGINGS OF FINE TWINED LINEN

“Thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen of an hundred cubits long. And the twenty pillars and their twenty sockets shall be of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver. And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings of an hundred cubits long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver. And for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits: their pillars ten, and their sockets ten. And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits. The hangings of one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three. And on the other side shall be hangings fifteen cubits: their pillars three and their sockets three” (Exodus 27:9-15).

“WHAT must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30)

The jailer's question was no new one. From the very beginning it has risen from hearts which were burdened by their sins. Sin separates from God. There is a wide gulf between sinful man and a holy God. How can this broken communion be restored? Throughout the ages the cry of the soul convicted of sin has been: **“What must I do to be saved?”**

The answer can only be the one Paul gave to the jailer — not by doing, but by believing.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

The tabernacle was intended to show the believing Israelite the way to restored communion, the way into the sanctuary, the way to the throne, and the way to the Father's heart. There is only one way. Our Lord says: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).** It is clear, therefore, that when we study together the tabernacle, our blessed Lord is the subject of our studies. The tabernacle, its vessels and implements, all speak to us, of the Lord Jesus.

But again, there is a close union between our Lord and His Church — I mean those who by regeneration have become members of His body. He is the head; we are the members of His body. Head and body belong together; you cannot separate them. If you do, life would be extinct. It is clear, therefore, that tabernacle and Israel belong together, and it follows that the tabernacle is not only a type of Christ, but also a type of His body, the Church, whose head is Christ.

Paul's greatest desire was to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. May this be the deepest longing of our hearts as we reverently study the tabernacle as a type of Christ and what He wants His followers to be.

“Let them make me a sanctuary; that *I may dwell among them*” (Exodus 25:8).

What a wonderful condescension; how the hearts of the people must have thrilled with joy!

Not only should God's presence go with them, but He actually promised to dwell amongst them. The tabernacle was to be made according to the pattern Moses had seen in the mount, unto the most minute details.

The tabernacle had to be placed in a court which was to be separated from the desert by curtains, hanging from pillars, and to be entered by a wide gate.

The court was to be an hundred cubits long and fifty broad. The cubit is the length of the forearm; and most Bible students agree that the average length of the forearm is eighteen inches, which would make the length of the court fifty yards and its breadth twenty-five yards.

The boundary wall consisted of fine twined linen hangings, suspended from sixty pillars placed at a distance of two and a half yards from each other; twenty standing on the south, twenty on the north, ten on the west, and ten on the east, from whose four central pillars hung the hanging for the gate of the court: of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.

The material of the pillars is not mentioned; most probably it was acacia wood, and wholly or partly overlaid with brass. The sockets, the bases of the pillars were of brass. Their capitals were overlaid with silver, also the rods or crossbeams extending from pillar to pillar all the way around. Near the top of every pillar were two silver hooks to which the ends of two cords were attached, the other ends being attached to brass pins, which were fixed in the ground to keep the pillars steady and erect.

Looking at those sixty pillars, resting in sockets of brass standing as sentinels guarding the tabernacle, capped with silver, and joined together by silver rods; and the dazzling white curtains, three facts are suggested for our meditation:

1. The curtains are of fine twined linen.
2. The pillars rest in brass sockets.
3. The rods, hooks and capitals are of silver.

I. The hangings for the court shall be of fine twined linen (Exodus 27:9).

What is the message, O curtain, which you have for our age? If the curtain should answer it would say:

“My whiteness and purity is only a faint type of the spotless purity and holiness of the Saviour.”

If there had been only one spot on His stainless robe; if He had stumbled only in one temptation, He could never have been my Redeemer to redeem me from the burden of my sins. Only a lamb without blemish could be offered as sacrifice on the Passover.

There are teachers that teach sinless perfection. Our Lord Jesus is the only human being that ever lived on this earth without sin.

In Cambridge is a statue of Lord Byron, the great poet. If you look at the statue from a certain angle you see his noble face, the high forehead of a deep thinker with his rare imagination. If you look at it from a different point, you see a man mentally afflicted, incapable of noble thought, a declared enemy of the holy God. If a great artist would express your personality in marble, would your friends say: “What a pity that along with so much goodness there was so much sinfulness”?

Nobody would say this of our Lord. From whatever side you contemplate His deeds or words; no one would be able to detect a fault in His character. He is the only one who could say to His foes:

“Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (John 8:46).

He only could respond to our need. **“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens”** (Hebrews 7:26).

Pilate, you were His judge; of what crime did you convict Him? And ashamed the answer comes:

“I find no fault in him.”

Judas, you betrayed Him; was the fair white linen tarnished? In despair the traitor answers:

“I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Matthew 27:4).

Centurion, you could watch Him in the darkest hour of suffering; you were there when others turned their faces from Him; did He utter bitter recriminations against His enemies, His murderers? You witnessed His last moments; people say: “People do not wear a mask in their last moments.” Centurion, what is your judgment on the crucified One? And he spoke:

“Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

Peter, you once were His disciple; you lived with Him for three years. It is said: “You only get to know a person when you live with him.” You have seen Him weary after a long day's work, longing for rest. It was impossible for Him to be hidden.

- People thronged to bring Him their sick. Peter, have you ever seen Him impatient?
- He was misunderstood by His nearest kin, disappointed in His chosen disciples.
- Peter, you denied Him thrice. Tell us, did you observe spots on the fine linen?

The hand of the old man is slightly trembling when he is writing to the strangers scattered through Pontus and Galatia. Would you like to know why he lays down his pen, why there is a tear in his eyes? Read what he has just written:

“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (I Peter 2:22-4).

Through whose stripes I am healed!

Reader, I want you to look thoughtfully at that fine white linen. I want you to kneel at the foot of that rugged cross. Look at your Saviour dying for you on that cross. Remember, there is life in a look at the crucified one; and as you look up at Him, the holy Son of God, who died in your stead, softly repeat the words of that simple children's hymn:

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven and let us in.

The tabernacle, its vessels, its court, is not only a type of Christ, but should also be a type of Christ's followers — as the head, so the members. As He walked, so ought we to walk.

The natural man has no white garment. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

“We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

Is it possible for me to become fine twined linen? Thanks be to God, it is. The righteousness of God, the white garment, comes **“by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference”** (Romans 3:22).

We began this chapter with the old question: **“What must I do to be saved?”** The answer is: **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”** Accept His finished work for you. He died for you; He is our righteousness. **“This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness”** (Jeremiah 23:6).

“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of garments” (Zechariah 3:3, 4).

Repeated actions become habits. Habits grow into character. The Lord can change your character. He has done it for thousands; He can do it for you. By looking unto Jesus, your character gets changed (II Corinthians 3:18); and He not only gives you the white garment, but He is able to keep it clean for you (Jude, verse 24).

He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars, promised the overcomers in Sardis that they shall be clothed in white raiment (Revelation 3:5). The bride shall **“be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”** (Revelation 19:8).

The righteousness of the saints rests on God's righteousness.

II. The sixty pillars of the court were resting in sockets of brass.

The altar of burnt-offering was overlaid with brass; it was called the brazen altar. Before the priests could enter the sanctuary their hands and feet had to be cleansed in the *laver of brass*.

Brass was the characteristic metal used outside the tabernacle, gold inside.

In a study of the different passages in the Old Testament in which the word copper is used, we see that its symbolic meaning is strength and power: applied to God it declares His unchanging character, the impossibility to escape His righteous judgment, the security of being under His protection.

Brass is the symbol of God's Righteousness and Power.

“As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21).

Grace is on the throne, but its foundation is the righteousness of God.

“Rest on God's grace and mercy only,” said a minister to his dying elder. In broken words the answer came, “I have a surer resting place still — Father's eternal justice and righteousness.”

III. The rods, the hooks and capitals of the pillars were of silver.

This silver was part of the redemption, money: the half-shekel which every Israelite of twenty years and beyond, as a ransom for his soul, had to offer in the sanctuary. He could not join the host of Israel without having paid the ransom money; neither can we be Christ's soldiers, if we have not been redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Peter says: **“Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”** (I Peter 1:18, 19).

I am well aware that modern theology looks down despisingly on what they call *“blood theology,”* but the Bible teaches that redemption through the precious blood of Christ is the only way for a sinner to become reconciled with God. Like a red current it runs all the way through the Bible. God promised it in Paradise to fallen man, it spoke through Abel's sacrifice, from Noah's altar, in the lamb that God provided instead of Isaac, in the Passover lamb and God's promise that the angel of death would pass the house where there was blood on the lintel and side-posts.

We follow that red current in the story of Rahab, in the sacrifices on the brazen altar in Psalms and Prophets. Isaiah points to that lamb that was brought to the slaughter that was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5, 7).

We open the New Testament and Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist, pointing his disciples to the Lord, says: **“Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”**

Study the teaching of the apostles. They had only one theme: **“Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.”**

I have been a minister of the gospel now for fifty years. I was crossing the ocean in a big liner and had preached in the morning. As we were going down for dinner a steward called and asked me to go to the hospital as a sick man wanted to see me.

In a few words he told me his story. He had lost his wife six months ago; he had an inward complaint and felt it was fatal. He made up his mind to say good-bye to a married daughter in New York. Up until Friday he had done all his duties. On Saturday he went to the surgeon and was examined. It was too late for an operation. He knew he was going to die.

I ask you, could you suggest any other message of comfort than the one I could bring that dying man? I told him of the Saviour who loved him more than any friend, who had borne the punishment of his sins in his stead; that he had nothing to do but accept the pardon, and that the same Saviour was waiting for him and had prepared a home for him.

In simple faith he put his trust in the Saviour. He asked me to give him Holy Communion, and an hour after he went peacefully home to his Saviour. I know no other comfort for a dying soul.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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