**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**2 CHRONICLES-008. AMASIAH by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Amasiah, the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the Lord."*

*2 Chronicles 17:16*

This is a scrap from the catalogue of Jehoshaphat's mighty men of valour; and is Amasiah's sole record. We see him for a moment and hear his eulogium and then oblivion swallows him up. We do not know what it was that he did to earn it. But what a fate, to live to all generations by that one sentence!

**I. Cheerful self-surrender the secret of all religion.**

The words of our text contain a metaphor naturally drawn from the sacrificial system. It comes so easily to us that we scarcely recognise the metaphorical element, but the clear recognition of it gives great additional energy to the words. Amasiah was both sacrificer and sacrifice. His offering was self-immolation. As in all love, so in that noblest kind of it which clasps God, its perfect expression is, I give Thee my living, loving self. Nor is it only sacrifice and sacrificer that are seen in deepest truth in the experience of the Christian life, but the reality of the Temple is also there, for Ye also ... are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Only when God dwells in us, shall we have the nerve and the firmness of hand to take the knife and slay before the Lord, the awful Guest in the sanctuary within, the most precious of the children of our spirits.

The essence of the sacrifice of self is the sacrifice of will. In the Christian experience willingly offered is almost tautology, for unwilling offerings are a contradiction and in fact there are no such things. The quality of unwillingness destroys the character of the offering and robs it of all sacredness. Reluctant Christianity is not Christianity. That noun and that adjective can never be buckled together.

The submission of will and the consequent surrender of myself and my powers, opportunities, and possessions, so that I do all, enjoy all, use all, and when need is, endure all with glad thankful reference to God is only possible to me in the measure in which my will is made flexible by love, and such will-subduing love comes only when we know and believe the love that God hath to us. There is the point at which not a few moral and religious teachers go wrong and bewilder themselves and their disciples. There, too, is the point at which Christ and the Gospel of salvation through faith in Him stand forth as emancipating humanity from the dreary round of efforts and vain attempts to work up the condition needful for achieving the height of self-surrender, which is seen to be indispensable to all true nobleness of living, but is felt to be beyond the reach of the ordinary man. There, too, is the point at which many good people mar their lives as Christians. They waste their strength in trying to bring the jibbing horse up to the leap. They try to blow up a fire of devotion and to make themselves priests to offer themselves, but all the while the mutinous self recoils from the leap, and the fire burns smokily, and their sacrifice is laid on the altar with little joy, because they have not been careful and wise enough to begin at the beginning and to follow God's way of melting their wills, by love, the reflection of the Infinite love of God to them. God's priests offer themselves because they offer their wills; they offer their wills because they love God; they love God because they know that God loves them. That is the divine order. It is vain to try to accomplish the end by any other.

**II. This willing offering hallows all life.**

No syllable is left to tell us what Amasiah did to win this praise. Probably the words enshrine some now forgotten memory of his cheerful courage, some heroic feat on an unrecorded battlefield. Particulars are not given nor needed. Specific actions are unimportant; the spirit of a life can be told with very incomplete details, and it, not the details, is the important thing. Sometimes, as in many modern biographies, one cannot see the wood for the trees, and misses the main drift and aim of a life in the chaos of a bewildering mass of nothings. How much more happy the lot of this man of whom we have only the generalised expression of the text, unweighted and undisturbed by petty incidents! It takes tons of rose leaves to make a tiny phial of otto of roses, but the fragrance is far more pungent in a drop of the distillation than in armfuls of leaves. Every life shrinks into very small compass, and the centuries do not tolerate long biographies. Shall we not seek to order our life so that Amasiah's epitaph may serve for us? It will be blessed if this--and nothing else--is known about us, that we willingly offered ourselves to the Lord. My friend: will that be a true epitome of your life?

**III. This willing offering is accepted by God.**

We may hear a mightier voice behind the chronicler s, and the judgment of the Judge of all pronounced by His lips. It matters little what men say of one another, but it matters everything what God says of us. We are but too apt to forget that He is now saying something as to each of us, and that we have not to wait for death to put a final period to our activities, before our lives become fit subjects for God's judgment, Moment by moment we are writing our own sentences. But while it is good for us to remember the continuous judgment of God on each deed, it is not good to let dark thoughts of the principles of that judgment paralyse our activity or chill our confidence in His forgiving and accepting mercy. There is often a dark suspicion, like that of the one-talented servant, which blackens God's fair fame as being an austere Man, making demands rather than imparting power, and the effect of such an ugly conception of Him is to cut the nerve of service and bury the talent, carefully folded up, it may be, but none the less earning nothing. If we call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, let us be sure that it will be a Fatherly judgment that He will pass upon us and our offerings. There is a wonderful collection on His altar of what many people would think rubbish, just as many a mother has laid away among her treasures some worthless article which her child had once given her--a weed plucked by the roadside in a long past summer day, some trifle of rare preciousness in the child's eyes, and of none in any others than her own. She opens her drawer and brings out the poor little thing, and her eyes fill and her heart fills as she looks. And does not God keep His children's gifts as lovingly, and set them in places of honour in the day when He makes up His jewels? There are cups of cold water and widows mites and much else that a supercilious world would call trash stored there. Thank God! He accepts imperfect service, faltering faith, partial consecration, a little love. Even our poor offering may be an odour of a sweet smell, ministering fragrance that is a delight to Him, if it is offered with the much incense of the great Sacrifice and through the mediation of the great High Priest.

The world forgot Amasiah, or never knew him, an obscure soldier in an obscure kingdom, but God did not forget, and here is his epitaph, and this is his memorial to all generations. Men's chronicles have no room for all the names that their wearers are eager to have inscribed on their crumbling and crowded pages, but the Lamb's Book of Life has ample space on its radiant pages for all who desire to set their names there, and if ours are there, we need not envy the proudest whose titles and deeds fill the most conspicuous pages in the world's records. Then shall every man have praise of Christ, and he who wins that guerdon needs nothing more, and can have nothing more to swell his blessedness.