

The Brazen Altar

and

Four Unbreakable Cords



By F. W. Mehl

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FOUR UNBREAKABLE CORDS

The brazen altar and what took place thereat is a most vivid type of the Lord Jesus in connection with the cross.

In seeking to write on such a subject help is needed from on high, an enlightened mind, a sensitive spirit and a loving heart. For this we pray.

The word Altar means: "High place" or "That which lifts up." What a striking picture this is of the cross where Christ died. How significant the words: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." (John 12:32, 33.) It was a high place indeed. It was so high that it was seen all over the earth. It was seen by people that were saved by that sight, in Africa, China, Japan, Europe, the United States, Canada, and the Islands of the sea. It was so high that it was seen by the writer of these lines in Washington, D. C. in the year 1913, to the saving of his soul. And the reader of these lines, if saved, can testify of a place and time where he or she saw it also.

Furthermore the word altar also means; that which lifts up. It lifts us up from the dunghill and puts us among princes. It lifts us up from degradation and shame to realms of glory in the midst of His saints. It lifts us up from the lowest hell to the high-

est heaven. Lord Jesus we thank Thee, Thy wonderful love as displayed upon the cross has lifted us up and drawn us to Thy bosom.

The brazen altar was made of wood and covered with brass (Copper). The wood speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus, and the brass speaks of His Deity. Here is one of the internal evidences of inspiration. The thing is from God. For had Moses been left to choose the materials for this vessel certainly he would not have put wood in it. It was upon the altar the fires raged fiercely as the sacrifices were consumed. While the laver which merely contained water was made of solid brass.

However, had the altar been made of wood only, the fire would have consumed not only the sacrifices but the altar itself. Just so, had the Lord Jesus been a mere man, pure and holy that He was, He could not have become our Saviour. The awful fires of the wrath of God against sin would have consumed Him. But as the brass protected the wood and caused the altar to stand, so the Deity of the Lord Jesus enabled Him as a man to endure the fire of the wrath of God.

The altar had four horns. The purpose of the horns was, that while some of the sacrifices were being slain others were tied to the horns of the altar. In Ps. 118 verse 27 it says: "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar." The altar must have been a gory place; for most of the blood of the sacrifices was poured at its

base. With all the slaying and blood shedding the tied animals no doubt struggled to get away. But they couldn't.

Someone may ask, "Is this a picture of Christ?" Our answer is, a perfect picture. The Word of God tells us of His awful struggle in the garden lying **prostrate** upon the ground. He prayed: "O my Father if it be possible let this cup pass from Me" (Matt: 26:39) And in Luke 22:44 we find these words: "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was, as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The word agony here includes pain but it really means conflict. And what a struggle it was! But He couldn't get away. An unbreakable cord held Him fast. But it was a cord of His own weaving—the cord of His wonderful love. In Exodus 21:2-6 we find a beautiful picture of Him as God's perfect servant; who when he could have gone out free said: "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free." Just so, the Saviours love to God and to the church held Him fast. This cord could not be broken.

"O BLESSED Saviour! is Thy love
So great, so full, so free?
Fain would we give our hearts, our minds,
Our lives, our all, to Thee.

We love Thee for the glorious worth
Which in Thyself we see;
We love Thee for the shameful cross
Endured so patiently."

Before leaving this section I would like to note the fact, that the conflict of the Saviour lying prostrate upon the ground was so great that doctor Luke said that He sweat blood. There are those who think it wasn't blood. If not what was it? It does not say: He sweat as it were great drops of sweat. No, the word is blood. Furthermore a more literal translation is: "He sweat, as it were, clots of blood falling down to the ground." To use the words, as it were, to modify blood I submit is erroneous. They rather modify "great drops" or "clots". In John 21:8 we find the words "as it were" again. "They were not far from land, but as it were, two hundred cubits" Would anyone say the words, as it were, modify cubits? I hardly think so. They certainly refer to; two hundred.

Let us ever with our finite minds contemplate with awe the sufferings of Christ; whether it be when He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, or when prostrate upon the ground He was in such a conflict in anticipation of what lay ahead that His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

"LAMB OF GOD! when we behold Thee
Lowly in the manger laid,
Wand'ring as a homeless stranger
In the world Thy hands had made;

When we see Thee in the garden
In Thine agony of blood—

At Thy grace we are confounded,
Holy, Spotless Lamb of God!"

If the first horn suggests that the Saviour was tied to the cross with the Cord of His love; the second horn would bring before us His absolute obedience. His obedience was another unbreakable cord.

Long, long ago, it is written that He said: "Lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40: 7, 8.) And when He came into the world He said: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34) Even when He was lying upon the ground in that tremendous struggle resisting sin unto blood (Heb. 12:4) when He cried: "Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me" He added: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39) Thank God He could not fail; He did not fail. With a loud voice He cried: "It is finished" (Matt. 27: 50. LK. 23:46. John 19:30)

After His death and resurrection and ascension the Spirit of God bears testimony to this unbreakable cord as follows:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and

took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2: 5-11.

Blessed Saviour we thank Thee for coming from the bosom of the Father into the world. Thy condescension is beyond our understanding. Thy blessed feet trod the dusty roads of this earth in deepest poverty as thou wast drawn by the cord of Thy obedience ever to the cross, that we who were bound by the cord of our sins to the curse of a broken law might be free. Thousand, thousand praises be blessed Saviour unto Thee.

Briefly, the third horn of the altar is brought before us by Hebrews 12:2 "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of (our) faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The Lord Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it; that in a coming day He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing. (Eph. 5: 25, 27) He was the heavenly merchant man seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt. 13: 45, 46) The pearl of great price was the church. The Lord Jesus was the only one rich enough to buy it; but even so He had to go to the cross and sell all that He had to buy it. He gave His life; He shed His precious blood to make the church His own.

Upon the earth the Lord Jesus was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He ever looked ahead to the moment when he would come for the redeemed and when He would present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24).

What a thrilling moment that will be when we shall see Him, whom our souls adore, coming into the joy that tied Him to the cross. When with loud voices every creature shall say: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12)

The fourth horn of the altar would suggest the cord of His zeal. From Bethlehem to the cross He set His face as a flint. He let nothing turn Him aside. Even as a lad

of twelve He said to His parents when they found Him in the Temple: "wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business" (LK. 2:49) On another occasion when He cast the mercenaries out of the Temple, "His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17)

It was at the first mention of the church in Matthew 16:18 that it says: "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day "And when Peter sought to hinder Him, He said to him: Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:21, 23)

On and on the Saviour went drawn by the cord of His zeal which could not be broken, until He hung upon the cross as the ascending offering but also as the descending offering when the judgment of God came down upon Him as He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree.

Lamb of God! Thy bleeding wounds,
With cords of love divine,
Have drawn our willing heart to Thee,
And linked our life with Thine.
Our longing eyes would fain behold
That bright and blessed brow,
Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear
Its crown of glory now.

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