

The Fullness of Christ

The Christian's Devout Acknowledgment of God, or, "The Patriarch's Solemn Sacrifice"

By [Octavius Winslow](#)

So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!" "Here I am," he replied.

"I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes." Genesis 46:1-4

It is a holy precept, coupled with a divine promise, precious and priceless above rubies to those who have tested its value- "In all your ways acknowledge *Him*, and *He* shall direct your paths." Here is the eye directed to the true pole-star of the believing soul- *Jehovah*. No light other than that which beams from this source can safely conduct him a solitary step. All other light is but the spark of a man's own kindling, in which he shall lie down in sorrow. But how simple and clear the divine rule, "Acknowledge the Lord in all your ways." Set Him before you, that He may be the one object you have in view. Take not a step without seeking His guidance, consulting His will, studying His glory. Consider that He is ever present with you, shaping your course, guiding your steps, and acquainted with all your ways. If His providences are adverse, bow to His sovereignty, be still, and know that He is God. If prosperous, be humble, be praiseful, and ascribe to Him all the honor.

Thus walking in the precept, He will fulfill the promise- "He shall direct your paths." Those paths, whatever they may be, will be just what He makes them. In things *temporal* and *spiritual*, He will order all and provide all- will keep your feet from sliding in the *smooth* path, and from wounding and weariness in the *rough*.

Such was the spirit and the conduct of the patriarch. Passing into a new epoch of his history, entering upon the last and most solemn stage of life's march, he would commence as he must close it- alone with God. It was, indeed, a new and untraveled path. He had not passed this way before. It was pre-eminently one of *faith*. True to the God he loved, the religion he had professed, the life of faith he had lived, and the habits of communion he had maintained, *before he fully embarks upon the journey, he rears an altar to the God of his father and his own*

God, and offers upon it a holy and solemn sacrifice. How much we may learn of Christ and His Church in this impressive incident of the patriarch's life! May the Holy Spirit be our Teacher while we meditate upon the SACRIFICE- the VISION- the PROMISE.

"So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac." Here was that which marked unmistakably the child of God, the man of prayer, the man who felt that he had to deal with God in all the places and circumstances of his eventful life. He arrives at Beersheba- a sacred and memorable spot in its historic associations, for it was here his father Isaac had once reared an altar and offered sacrifice to Jehovah. It is most refreshing and instructive to mark the elevated sanctity of mind in which this sacrifice originated. God had emptied him from vessel to vessel. He had commanded wave upon wave to surge over him, cloud upon cloud to shade his pilgrimage, until at last his home was broken up, all its hallowed associations buried, as it were, in oblivion; and at his advanced period of life, he was summoned to take a long journey into a strange land.

And yet, though God had thus dealt with him so *strangely, mysteriously*, shall I say, *painfully*? -there seemed not one hard thought of God in his mind, not one rebellious feeling in his heart, nothing which betrayed a spirit of opposition and resentment, which, if interpreted, would seem to say, "You have taken from me blessing after blessing; You have rooted up my resting-place, have visited me with bereavement and with famine, and are now, in old age, leading me into a strange land, and I do well to be angry." Ah, no! the very reverse of this was his holy state of mind. On the threshold of his journey, he rears an altar, and offers upon it sacrifice to the Lord God of Jacob- a sacrifice expressive of a perfect justification of Jehovah in all His dealings, and his full satisfaction with all the way God had led him.

But look for a moment at the import of this sacrifice which Israel offered to God in view of his contemplated journey. In the first place, this sacrifice was *a recognition of God as the God of his pious ancestors*, and especially the God of his father. The words of the narrative are expressive, "And offered sacrifice unto the God of his father Isaac." Here was Jacob recognizing the fact that *Jehovah had been the covenant God of his forefathers*. Beloved, God would have His people ever remember what He has been in years gone by to their pious ancestors. It is good to recount, and gratefully to acknowledge, what He was to those who have gone before us, that we may learn to put our trust in God, and *embalm in our memories and hearts His providential and gracious dealings in their history*.

But especially is it proper and profitable to remember Him as the God of our godly parents. "Your own friend, and your father's friend, forsake not." Who was your father's, your mother's friend? Who but the covenant God and Father of all the families of Israel? Is there no blessing to be found, no strengthening of our

faith, no comfort in our sorrow, no heart-cheer in our depression, to *remember what God was to those so near and dear to us*, but who are now with Him in glory; to remember His faithfulness, to call to mind His providential interpositions, how they called upon Him and He answered, how He supplied their needs, how He supported them in adversity, how He lavished upon them tokens of His grace and love? Oh, yes, there is a blessing in the hallowed remembrance; and insensible is that individual to the loving-kindness of the Lord who can retrace the history of His dealings with a godly parent and feel, no melting of heart, and no strong emotion of gratitude; who with his sacrifices and offerings to God entwines no filial memories, hallowed, grateful, praiseful.

But Jacob did not forget his father Isaac, nor his father's God. The God of his father was equally his God. All that God was to Isaac, Jacob felt He was to him. There were *precious promises, and rich benedictions, and glorious covenants made with his father Isaac*, handed down to him, on which his faith could take hold and plead with God as sacred heirlooms and precious legacies bequeathed from the holy sire to the son. It is a delightful thought, beloved, that the same covenant of grace to which our pious parents clung, in which they rested, belongs to us. We who believe in Jesus have the same interest in that covenant that they had, the same covenant God, the same covenant Redeemer.

Oh, is it not encouraging to remember that *we are now reaping from their prayers, their wrestlings, their faith in God, a golden harvest of blessing*? Oh, endeavor to realize that the God of your fathers is your God too, and that all He was to them in making good His covenant, in fulfilling His promises, in answering their prayers, He is now to you, the child of many a father's holy wrestlings, of many a mother's weeping and prayers. "O Lord, truly I am your servant, and the son of your handmaid; you have loosed my bonds." Yes, God delights in us when we go to His mercy-seat and praisefully remember His faithfulness and loving-kindness to those loved ones who a little while have gone before us to heaven.

This sacrifice which Jacob offered also marked his personal habit of communion with God. He walked with God in holy converse; he was a man of prayer, a man who lived as beholding the Invisible. He recognized the Lord God of heaven to be his God, and it was his privilege and delight, as it was his obligation and duty, to hold communion and converse with the Lord God of heaven. And in addressing himself to this journey we find him first addressing himself to prayer. *There is not, beloved, a stronger characteristic of the real man of God, the true believer in Christ, than that he is a man of prayer*. Let him be in what circumstances he may, in what part of the world he may, in what troubles, temptations, trials he may, he will always have an altar, and on that altar he will always lay a sacrifice of praise, prayer, and thanksgiving to God.

Prayer with us ought to be an element so natural, communion with God a privilege so familiar, that wherever we are, in whatever society we are thrown, or in whatever circumstances we are placed, there should be this altar and the

sacrifice to God. Oh, be assured of this, that the professing Christian who can leave his closet altar, his family altar, his social altar, his public altar at home when he travels abroad, or who can postpone his sacrifice of prayer and praise to a more convenient season, knows but little, if anything, of what it is to walk like Enoch and Noah and Israel with God. But a man of God is a man of prayer, a man of converse with God, in any place or circumstance or society. O beloved, let this mark you: be men of God and men of prayer, wherever His providence may place you- at home, on a journey, abroad.

Forget not that, like Jacob, it is your privilege to build an altar to the sacrifice of prayer and praise, and maintain close, uninterrupted converse with God.

But above, and more expressive, than all, doubtless, there was in the sacrifice that Israel offered the foreshadowing of the great sacrifice of the Son of God. We have no doubt whatever that the patriarch's faith looked down the long vista of future ages, and in the sacrifice which he then offered up on the altar that he reared at Beersbeba, his believing heart rose above the sacrifice- beheld and rested in a crucified Savior. And this would impart a character, a fragrance, a solemnity pre-eminently significant and holy to the sacrifice he then offered to the God of his father. There can be no doubt that the patriarchal faith rested in Christ at that moment. The words of Jesus with regard to Abraham are significant of this, "Abraham saw my day, and was glad." Now, if Abraham by faith saw Christ's day, Jacob, who was still nearer its glorious dawn than he, must by faith have caught a yet brighter vision of Him; and the sacrifice he now presented would be a solemn profession of his faith in the diviner sacrifice which the Son of God would offer for his sins on the distant altar of Calvary. Thus was Jesus crucified the substance of all the sacrifices both of the Levitical and of the patriarchal saints. Oh, how delightful to find Him who is "the chief among ten thousand," the joy of the saints on earth, the song of the redeemed in heaven, living and speaking and shining amid these twilight shadows, the object of faith and love to the saints who by faith saw His day and were glad!

Oh, let all your sacrifices be associated in faith and praise with the one atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Let us remember that that which gives perfume to our prayers and melody to our praises, which presents our consecrated person to God with divine acceptance and delight, is the one offering and sacrifice of Jesus. And if the patriarchal saints saw in the dimness of their faith, amid almost darkness, the sacrifice of Christ, embraced it, and died in its blessed hope, how much more clear should be our views, and simple our faith, and intense our love, and deeper our holiness, who live amid the meridian light and effulgence of a dispensation whose distinctive history and signal glory is that Christ has come, and that He has died for our offences, and is risen again for our justification! May this glorious sacrifice become daily more precious to our hearts and sanctifying to our lives!

Thus much for the sacrifice that Jacob offered in anticipation of this journey.

Learn from it one practical truth: *embark in no enterprise in life, enter on no stage in your pilgrimage, address yourself to no new epoch in your history, without first rearing an altar, and acknowledging the Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, as your God.* The divine injunction with which this chapter of our work opens stands like a beacon-light amid the rocks and shoals and breakers of life, illumining the voyager's perilous pathway to eternity. It contains both a precept and a promise- the precept of divine acknowledgment, and the promise of divine guidance. Obey the one- God will fulfil the other. Oh, begin your day, your enterprise, your service, your journey with an altar and a sacrifice. *Acknowledge the Lord! And offer the sacrifice of faith; of love; and of praise.* Then may you with confidence trust the Lord to guide, shield, and prosper you. This God of Israel will be your God forever and ever, and He will be your guide even unto death.

Having thus considered the state of mind with which the patriarch addresses himself to his journey, let us now study the HEAVENLY VISION with which he was favored. After he had built an altar, and offered up sacrifice to the God of his father, to! the heavens opened, and a glorious vision burst upon his view- "And God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of your father: fear not to go down into Egypt." Each particular of this *divine response to the patriarch's solemn act of worship* is replete with deep spiritual truth. It would seem as if this must have transpired, as though it would have been impossible that there should have been no immediate response from God to an act of devotion, of gratitude, of praise, and faith so marked and precious as this.

God did not lose a moment in acknowledging the sacrifice and petition of His servant. The altar had scarcely been reared, the incense of the sacrifice had scarcely ascended, when, lo! a heavenly vision bursts on the soul of the worshiping patriarch. Now, there is much that is spiritually instructive in this heavenly vision, to which for a moment we will turn our thoughts. The first thing that strikes us is the close and intimate nearness into which Israel was brought to God. Jehovah and the patriarch stood face to face. There could not have been the shadow of a doubt on his mind that he was now in solemn audience with God- the God of his father Isaac, and his God. O privileged saint of the Most High! to be so near the Infinite Fountain of light, life, and love. Honored man of God! to be favored with a vision of the Divine glory and power such as angels might have coveted. But is not God as near to His people now? Most assuredly! What does the Lord himself say? "He that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Oh, we live at too great a distance from God! We forget how close, filial, and precious may be the communion of the believer with the Invisible One. I speak not of visions like those of Jacob or of Paul, bursting with splendor on my eye- I ask not to hear audibly the awful voice of God- but, with the blood of atonement in my hand, I can penetrate the mysterious veil, and enter into the holiest, and

talk with God and commune with Him as really- as closely- and as blessedly as when Jacob uplifted his eye and saw heaven open, and God talking with him from His glorious throne.

The way into God's presence is more fully opened by the sacrifice and blood of Jesus than it ever was, even when by vision or dream or voice God spoke to His saints of old. The blood of Christ is so powerful, the atonement of the Son of God is so glorious, the intercession of Christ at the right hand of the Father is so prevailing, and faith is so much more far-seeing an eye than that of sense, that a man of God coming into His presence by the blood of the everlasting covenant may enjoy fellowship and converse with God more close, more filial, more real and holy, than that which marked Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Seek, oh, seek it, then. Be not content with standing in the outer courts, when the blood gives you admission into the holiest. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near."

And mark the time of this divine vision. It would seem as if God almost invariably selected the *night-season* of their experience for the marvelous manifestations of Himself to His people. Night-visions of God were familiar to Jacob. How vividly would he remember the memorable night when, a fugitive from the vengeance of Esau, and an exile from his home, there appeared to him in his sleep the vision of the ladder, God speaking to him from above it in words of comfort and promise! Would he not, even in that early part of his eventful life, behold in this ladder an impressive symbol of the incarnate Son of God, the Mediator between heaven and earth, on the mystic rounds of which his faith would ascend to God reconciled in Christ?

Yet more vivid and hallowed would be the remembrance of the long night at Peniel, when the Divine Angel, with whom he wrestled and whom he overcame, knighted him as a prince of God, mighty and prevalent in prayer. A third time God appears to His servant in the night, by an extraordinary and gracious vision, at a most important crisis of his history, as if the Lord would close the patriarch's earthly pilgrimage, as He had commenced it, with those glorious and consolatory manifestations of Himself, so timely and so precious to the heart in seasons of sorrow and despondency.

There is much to us that is precious and soothing in this thought. When our mental and spiritual exercises are with us as though it were night; when our path is shaded; when soul-depression and heart-crushing sorrow, loneliness and dreariness, drape the landscape of life; in this night season when most need a word of comfort and a ray of light, the most need some assurance of His faithfulness and love- lo! the gracious vision transpires, and a blessed manifestation takes place, and God in Christ draws near, reveals Himself, or speaks a promise, and so gives a song in the night.

Such was the season in which the Psalmist strengthened himself in the Lord his God. How affecting his language, "I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak. I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; I remembered my *songs in the night*."

Yes, the sweetest songs that ever flowed from pilgrims' lips are those of the night. The Lord Jesus knows your night sorrow, loneliness, and widowhood; and He will come at that season and graciously manifest Himself to your soul, and you shall know what it is to meditate on your bed in the night-watches, and your meditation of Him shall be sweet.

Then mark the divine call: "And God spoke to Israel and said, Jacob, Jacob!" There is something very beautiful and touching in the truth that God has an especial knowledge of the personal names, places, and circumstances of His people. "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His." He knows you personally, your position, your individual infirmities, trials, and needs. *The names of His people are engraved on the palms of His hands, and are worn upon His heart*. Is it not a delightful thought? Do not overlook God's personal transactions with you. Do not lose yourself in the crowd of saints, for your God and Father does not. The child of God, pursuing, perchance, a path which isolates him from his fellow-pilgrims, is *as profoundly dear and precious to God as if he were the only being He loved and cared for in the universe*. Try and realize that your personal circumstances, your individual needs and heart-sorrows, God takes cognisance of, cares for, and feels an interest in. And often, if the ear of faith is but wakeful to His voice, you will hear Him as if calling you by name, and addressing Himself to you with all the yearning tenderness and loving familiarity of a gracious father to his child.

Now, mark the immediate response of Israel: "And he said, Here am I" God spoke, Jacob answered; God called, Jacob responded. Are we as ready to hear and to respond to God's voice when He speaks to us in instruction, in doctrine, in precept, in rebuke, as in comfort, in guidance? Verily, I fear not. How often has God spoken once, yes, twice, and we have not heard! Oh to have an ear wakeful to the still small voice of His Spirit dwelling in us- an ear so hearkening, so exquisitely harmonized to His voice, that though it may speak in the subdued tones of some overwhelming trial, or in the gentle accents of love, we may hear it! "My sheep hear my voice."

Another instructive feature in Jacob's reply was his willingness to do whatever God enjoined. The *promptness* with which he responds indicates the willingness of his mind to obey. Let us cultivate, beloved, a willingness to obey the voice of the Lord our God. "Here am I, Lord; what will You have me to do? Speak, for Your servant hears. I stand ready to go where You bid, to stay where You require, to do what You command, to yield what You ask, to suffer what You

send; I am Your servant, Your child; Your will is my will, Your pleasure my pleasure." O holy, blessed state of mind! Cultivate it in the spirit of prayer and dependence upon the all-sufficient grace of Christ.

We now reach the DIVINE ASSURANCE. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes." If ever the kindness and love of God towards His dear saint was manifest and palpable, it is now. Let us gaze upon the picture until our soul melts into love and admiration before it. Here was His aged servant in a new position, begirt with strange and trying circumstances. God appears at the very juncture to succor, support, and assure him of an interest in His faithfulness and love.

Consider the twofold acknowledgment: First, "*I am God.*" Could Jehovah place before him a higher trust of faith than this? Only let God speak that word to your heart, my beloved, and however low that heart may be, however deeply immersed in sorrow, adversity, and trial, your faith stands upon the Rock that is higher than you, and higher than the highest billow through which you wade. The truth with which Jehovah here met the position of His servant is that with which He would meet yours- *His own all-sufficiency*. Is He not constantly challenging you, "Is anything too hard for me, says the Lord God?" Now, take the loftiest mountain that casts its deep, long shadow on your path, or the weightiest stone that seals the grave of some buried blessing, bring it in contact with the infinite sufficiency of God, and, lo! the mountain falls and the stone is rolled away! *Oh we deal too little with the power, the infinite sufficiency of our God!* Lord, increase my faith in it! Let me not limit You, Holy One of Israel! Oh, then, let your faith realize that God is your God in Christ, your Father, your Friend, your God all-sufficient, and you shall laugh at impossibilities, you shall overcome all those impediments that seemed to intercept the blessing for which you have long prayed and looked.

The second assurance of God was still more calculated to strengthen the mind of His servant in the anticipation of what was before him: "I am the God of your father." What touching words are these! Perhaps you are ready to ask, "What connection had this with Isaac? His was a past and bygone victory." True, but though dead, he yet spoke. The interests of Isaac and of Jacob were closely entwined. *The promises God had made to Isaac, the prayers Isaac had offered, were now to be fulfilled and answered in Jacob's experience.* We have much to do with God's dealings with our pious parents. Their personal and bygone history is a part of our own. They still live in us their children; their good name is entrusted to our keeping; their honor is confided to our hands- it is in our power to preserve undimmed the luster of their lives, and to preserve, embalmed in our holy walk, the fragrance of their memories unimpaired.

Under what responsibility, then, are we placed, and by what solemn obligations are we bound, in consequence of God's dealings with our parents! When God

would comfort us, when He would strengthen our drooping faith, and cheer our depressed and desolate heart, is it nothing that He says to us, "Fear not, be not dismayed, my child; I was your father's Father, your mother's God. All that I was to them, will I be to you." Is there nothing for faith to take hold of here? How touchingly does David recognize this truth in his dying charge to his son- his successor to the throne. "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever."

These words of God to His servant were well calculated to allay all his trembling and timidity: "Fear not to go down into Egypt; I will go down with you into Egypt." Just the timely assurance that he needed. And thus, beloved, does our God seek to prepare us for duty, for trial, for service, by prefacing every new chapter in our history with divine assurances of His faithfulness, power, and love.

"Fear not." What a favorite expression was this of Jesus when He tabernacled in the flesh! How often He breathed it in the ears of His timid disciples! "Fear not, it is I." And still He speaks it to you- this same Jesus! Lord, speak these soothing, assuring words to my trembling heart, and my soul shall be quiet and trustful as a weaned child!

"The billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky;
Out of the depths to You I call;
My fears are great, my strength is small."

"O Lord, the pilot's part perform,
And guide and guard me through the storm;
Defend me from each threatening ill;
Control the waves; say, Peace, be still!"

"Amid the roaring of the sea,
My soul still hangs her hope on Thee;
Your constant love, Your faithful care,
Is all that saves me from despair."

Having thus allayed his fears by the assurance that His presence should accompany his emigration into Egypt, God then gives him a threefold promise: "I will there make you a great nation; I will surely bring you up again; Joseph shall put his hand upon your eyes;" -all of which God literally and faithfully performed. God increased his seed in Egypt greatly; Joseph closed his eyes in death; his bones were borne back to Canaan and interred in Machpelah, and, after four hundred years, his posterity were brought up out of Egypt back to Canaan with a great and glorious deliverance.

Thus, and this shall be the closing lesson of the chapter, however low God may bring His people, though it be as into Egyptian exile, bondage, servitude, He will yet lead them out of this earthly Egypt up to the heavenly Canaan, into which no "Pharaoh" shall ever enter, and from which no "son of Jacob" shall ever depart. And when the time arrives that you shall be gathered to your fathers, Jesus, your true Joseph, will come, and closing your eyes in death, will gently lay His right hand upon you, saying, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

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