

A sermon preached by Mr. J.E. Hazelton on the 10th October, 1909 from the text, Exodus 30.16. "And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls."

About six months after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, a collection was made by the commandment of the Lord. Moses was bidden to number all the men of war from twenty years old and upwards, and, as each man approached the priests, he had to bring with him a contribution, which the Lord had ordained, and which was exactly equal for each man. The sum of each man's contribution was half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel, we are told here, being 20 gerahs, or about a quarter of an ounce of silver; and out of this silver redemption money all the silver that was required for the service of the tabernacle of God was procured. Moses tells us that there were 600,000 men of war of 20 years of age and upwards, and a little calculation very easily shows us that no less than five tons of solid silver were brought by these 600,000 men. They came one by one as they were numbered and written and those five tons of silver were used by Bezaleel and Aholiab for the service of the tabernacle. The main portion of the silver was used by these God-inspired man to construct the one hundred sockets upon which the tabernacle rested. In other words the silver redemption money constituted the foundation of the solid parts of the tabernacle.

Sometimes, I think, we entertain very hazy views of the nature of the tabernacle of the Lord which was constructed for wilderness use. How did it stand? The desert was swept again and again by winds of great fury, but the Lord's tent, the Lord's tabernacle was not blown down. What was the nature of its foundation? All the boards of that tabernacle had a tenon, and those tenons were let down into the silver sockets, which were first of all laid to provide a base upon which the building should rest, so that the tabernacle never swayed about, and the silver sockets, upon which the boards and the pillars rested, never sank very far into the surface of the sand. Sometimes the tabernacle, doubtless, was erected upon a rock; they could not hew out holes in the rock; the silver sockets were laid down, and the tent was fixed to them. Sometimes the tabernacle was fixed on the desert sands, but whether the tabernacle stood on the rock or sand, it was firm in those sockets, which were constructed of the atonement or redemption money.

Now we see here, dear friends, that the half shekel represented the ransomed life of Israel. Every man's contribution was equal (see the connection in our text - the ransom or the atonement for his soul - the word "ransom" being used in one verse, and the word "atonement" being employed in the other.) It was no figure of speech to say that the children of Israel were a ransomed people. The whole transaction by which God had redeemed His people was far too solemn for them to be allowed to forget, His people, and when each man entered his name as a warrior, he was bound to remember by the presentation of that half shekel of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, what he owed unto his God. It was a half shekel presented in acknowledgment of the ransom of his soul. They were not numbered and enrolled just because they were the descendants of Abraham, or because they traced their pedigree back to

Isaac and Jacob, but on the strength of that ransom which each one was bidden to present, - the same ransom for each man. God says here, the rich were not to give more, and the poor were not to give less than half a shekel, all of them typically ransomed by the same price, and all of them bringing before their God the same blessed and beautiful token of ransom.

Now during the journeyings of the tabernacle in all the dust of the wilderness, wherever it was set up, its boards and its pillars always stood upon the same basis, even that which set forth the price paid for their immortal souls.

What was the tabernacle, dear friends? It was the place of access and of communion. No sacrifice was accepted but that which was offered upon the altar of Burnt Offering in the courts of the tabernacle. There was no place of worship but the tabernacle of God. There was no spot where God had said "Here will I meet with thee, and here will I commune with thee," but before the Mercy Seat; and that which led up thereto, and all access, and all communion, all rest, and all refuge are set forth in this blessed figure as resting upon the ground of redemption, upon the ground of the payment of the ransom of silver. And so, dear friends, we trace right through the Word of the Living God, from Genesis to Revelation, Christ and Him crucified, the ONLY ground of access, the ONLY place of communion with God. The atoning work of our dear Lord is like a watermark right through the Scriptures of Truth from the beginning to the end thereof. Do you not know what it is to come into God's chambers from time to time during earth's sorrows and trials, and to shut the doors about you, and to know the peace which comes from Him Whose refuge is the sanctuary of the Lord? It all rests on redemption, on the purchase of a Saviour's Blood. The spouse in the Canticles says, "He brought me into His banquetting house!" (the chamber of refuge, the place of a sinner's access, the spot of communion) "and His banner over me was love." - all resting upon the grand transactions of Calvary, and upon the precious Blood by which we are redeemed, not of corruptible things as silver and gold.

Before passing on, let me point out how very beautifully this truth is developed in connection with David. You remember that Satan tempted David to number the people. He was prompted to do this because of the people's rebellion under Absalom, their rebellion against their anointed king. Absalom's rebellion had been crushed, and David said, tempted by the Adversary, "Number the people." What was David's thought in connection with this? Not God's glory, but to use his own words "that I may know the extent of my dominion, that I may know the number of my people." Said Joab - that worldly minded but far seeing man - "That is against God's commandments." But Joab's remonstrance was of no avail with David. Like many a worldly man he could point out the evil, but knew nothing of the remedy. God had said whenever the people are numbered, every man shall bring the half shekel. That was all left out on this occasion. What was the consequence? A plague raged among the people. God says here, "Let every man that is numbered bring a half shekel that there be no plague among them" (Exod 30.12). Where was the

plagued stayed? David's eyes were opened and he saw the destroying angel. It is enough. Where had he stopped? At the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. And what did David pay for the threshing floor? Fifty shekels of silver - 100 times the value of the redemption money (2 Sam 24.24). And when he bought the whole place he paid 600 shekels of gold - 1200 times more than the half shekel (1 Chron 21.25). And what was the place of Araunah's threshing floor? It was Mount Moriah the very place where God had said to Abraham "Stay now thine hand", and Abraham looked and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket, and Abraham said "Jehovah Jireh, for in the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen." What took place upon Mount Moriah? There the temple of Solomon in all its glory was to be reared, and so we see first of all the tabernacle in the wilderness rested upon the silver money of ransom and redemption; the temple of Solomon, representing Christ and His people in resurrection glory, rested upon the ransom money which David paid and representing in its fulness the ram that God provided as the substitute for Abraham's son Isaac. This was fulfilled in all its glory by the God-provided Lamb, Who came to take away the sin of the world, and Who poured out His heart's Blood upon the cross of Calvary. And so, wherever we look, we see that everything that makes for our eternal peace, everything that ministers to our prospects of bliss, everything that provides a refuge for our souls rests upon the payment, which was represented symbolically by the half shekels of silver, and by the golden shekels that David paid, and the God-provided ram upon Mount Moriah, all being fulfilled by our most blessed Lord and Saviour.

Once more, before we pass on. We get another glimpse of this half shekel in the 17th chapter of Matthew, where the temple authorities go to Peter and say to him "Doth your Master pay tribute?" Peter, without giving it a moment's thought, said practically, "Of course He does", and away he went to the Lord. There was evidently no money in that little company, but the Lord said to Peter, "Go and cast your net into the sea and draw up the first fish and in its mouth you will find the tribute money. But the children are free; you have made a mistake, Peter; nevertheless they have asked, and so pay to them that half shekel for Me and for three." See how our dear Lord identifies Himself with His people! Peter cast his hook into the sea, and the fish came up, and the money was paid. Here we get the last glimpse, before the great fulfilment of the type, of that upon which redemption rests.

Let us now look at our text a little more closely, and first speak of it as setting forth personal redemption, and secondly, eternal redemption. Perhaps some of my friends think I have dwelt a little too long in seeking to point out the meaning of the symbol here, but I am more and more persuaded that we do not have enough expository teaching.

Let us look at the spiritual application of our text this morning. Right through this symbol it is "every man", every man shall pay this half shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary. It was not a lump sum to be paid for the nation as a nation, but each man personally, thoughtfully, intelligently, was to bring before the priest the half shekel, "after the shekel of the sanctuary"; that is, there was paid up in the Holy Place a special shekel, and all these half shekels were to be con-

formed to that sanctuary shekel or the half shekel would not be accepted. Does not this teach us this blessed truth, that there is no redemption experimentally realised, unless personally brought before God by the hand of faith. "Every man shall bring the half shekel", and God's dear people poor, lost and ruined sinners are brought to the point where they bring before the Lord as their own peculiar, personal, special plea, the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true, the glorious ransom price - every man with a half shekel in his hand saying "Lord, I believe that Thou didst love me, that Thou didst give Thyself for me." Satan, never more than in our day, induces whole communities to believe that they are Christians, made such by baptism, made such by mere profession, made such by the proclamation of that lie, the universal Fatherhood of God, our Saviour, our Father. Oh! we are all sinners, but Christ died for everybody, and God is the Father of all, therefore all is well! That is a salvation and a redemption, which are not operative in the soul. Here is a picture - an individual sinner, feeling the burden of sin, a sinner personally realising the weight of guilt, the need of a ransom, and that sinner directed by Divine teaching to Christ Jesus the Lord. Faith is raised up in the heart whereby Christ is appropriated, whereby His precious blood is received, and we see the picture of every man coming with the half shekel of silver in his hand, a picture of a sinner who says

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

"Oh! God, I have no other plea before Thee but the most precious blood of Thy dear Son. Thou hast declared that every poor sinner coming and receiving and pleading that precious blood is saved with an everlasting salvation. O Lord, I bring to Thee by faith the precious blood of Thy dear Son, and I make mention before Thee of His righteousness, even of His only."

"Faith is a precious gift
Where'er it is bestowed,
It boasts of a celestial birth
And is the Gift of God."

But someone says "Is my faith the right faith? Have I come in the way that God has ordained?" What is in the hand of your faith? I take it that as every man, gathered one by one, went to the priest with his half shekel, he was not looking at his hand, but at the half shekel in his hand, and he said to himself "This half shekel in my hand is according to the shekel of the sanctuary; there is no dross in it, and I will bring it to the priest." Into the balance the half shekel that the poor man brought was put; it was true, the balance was even. His name was written among the Lord's people, and he passed on to be numbered among the 600,000 whom the Lord had redeemed and appointed to be the men of war of the people.

What is said in the 11th and 16th chapters of Proverbs? "A false balance is an abomination unto the Lord (Prov. 11. 1) "All the weights of the bag are His work (Prov. 16. 11)" And what are the weights of the bag? The ten commandments; they are God's work. "A false balance is abomination to the Lord", but we preach an atonement and redemption which is commensurate with all the claims of God's most holy law. We preach

an atonement which "has magnified the law", made it, if possible, greater than it was before, and as I come, a poor, poverty stricken, polluted sinner with the precious blood of Christ in the hand of my faith, with the plea for mercy based upon that precious blood, I bring the half shekel of the sanctuary. The balances of the sanctuary are held out, and the weight is fair and true.

What is in your hand? Do not look at your hand, remember that when Mephibosheth sat at the King's table, he did not keep looking under the table at his poor lame feet, but he looked at the face of his King, and his heart was made glad. What is in your hand? Thine own righteousness? Is it something gained in some earthly mine? But if it is something with which God is well pleased, the Blood, the Righteousness, the Ransom and the Purchase, which our blessed Lord has wrought,

Come and welcome, sinner come

for Love's redeeming work is done.

Does your faith lead you to the cross, to Christ Jesus? Then it is the right faith. Does your faith lead you to grip the ransom price, each man for himself? Eating and drinking we cannot perform for one another; it is a personal act. Health we cannot confer upon one another. Alas! alas! disease we can! Each one for himself. What is Christ to you? What do you realise yourself to be in the sight of a holy and heart-searching God? Personal redemption, personal salvation, personal purchase. Particular Baptists! I underline the word "Particular"; it means the half shekel, the half shekel for every man according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

But notice again, dear friends, this personal redemption is very definite. It was the same whether an Israelite were poor or rich; whether he were ignorant or educated, despised or (as we designate it) respectable. One could not pay for another, but each was estimated at the same price. Where are we by nature? The Apostle Paul by the Holy Ghost describes that to us in the 3rd chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: God is no respecter of persons; there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; both alike are guilty, both under sin and "there is none that doeth good, no, not one," educated or uneducated, rich or poor. Just as all are guilty, under sin, so all the Church of God are ransomed by the same definite and special price. There must be personal redemption.

What is said in the 31st Psalm? The words were used by our blessed Lord upon the Cross, and they have been used by thousands of God's dear people since. "Into Thy Hand I commit My spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Is this how we come - Head and members there? Head and members one. "Peter, pay that half shekel for Me and for thee." "Into Thy Hands I commit My spirit." This is what the Apostle Paul said, in effect, when he declared "He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." "Lord, I would commit myself to Thee, my soul to Thee, my affairs to Thee, for, "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." I bring to Thee the half shekel, after the shekel

of the sanctuary, the emblem in those Old Testament days of the precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The weight is described, 20 gerahs, literally about half an ounce, after the shekel of the sanctuary. God, as we have pointed out, kept a just weight and balance. The true-hearted Israelite, as he brought that half shekel, would ring out the silver sound, and would know that it was corresponding to the shekel of the sanctuary, and so nothing but the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is of any avail. How does the hymn run which exactly expresses the thought I am endeavouring to convey?

Just as I am, without one plea,
 But that Thy Blood was shed for me
 (there is the half shekel in your hand)
 But that Thy Blood was shed for me,
 And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
 O Lamb of God I come.

Moses - here the type fails - Moses was busy numbering, and writing up the people as they came one by one with their half shekels, but the number of God's people has been written, the list is complete in God's Book of Life; the Book is open before Him, and when a poor sinner, burdened with sin, thirsting for Jesus, resting alone upon the precious Blood, comes with that "one plea", there is the sign that his name is in the Lamb's Book of Life, written therein from before the foundations of the world.

The Hebrew word that is translated here "ransom" and "atonement" is rendered right through the Old Testament in a great variety of ways. Sometimes it is "covered", "covering up", "blotting out", "payment", "pardon", "forgiveness", "cleansing", "reconciliation". All these words are represented by the same word in the Hebrew. What does it all signify? Why, that Christ and His precious Blood contain everything we need to minister to our immortal souls.

Now, briefly, a word or two about ETERNAL REDEMPTION, as set forth here. We see that the tabernacle, the place of communion and of refuge always had the same basis wherever it was placed - one day on the sand, another on the rock, and on a third upon the grass of the wilderness. Silver sockets, five tons in weight, were carried everywhere, and so God has laid the beams of His chambers of grace here upon the atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the beams of His chambers of glory above rest upon the same strong and immutable foundation, the precious Blood; the atoning work is the sole foundation on which God's Church and kingdom rest. Does not this shine very brightly in God's Word? Here are the two great and glorious verities on which everything reposes - Christ Jesus the Lord, Son of God and Son of Man; Christ Jesus the Lord, Son of God and Son of Man shedding His most precious Blood. Everything is wrapped up in those two great verities - all God's covenant purpose, and all the blessedness and tenderness of the love of God. If we are favoured with the Spirit's teaching to have scriptural and lofty views of the PERSON of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall have deep and lofty views, at the same time, of the power of His Blood. What must

be the value, the preciousness, the power of that Blood - the Blood of Him, Who, in His own Person, is Son of God and Son of Man! And yet today the death of our most blessed Lord in its substitutionary, vicarious and sin-atoning efficacy is neglected on the right hand and on the left. Atonement is disallowed, the Word of God is impugned. The Atonement has to do with the salvation of immortal souls, and one who preaches and is not sound on the atonement is NOT sent of God. I would be clear of the blood of you all by declaring that, by nature, you are lost, condemned, and going to Hell, but, by Christ, God has provided a full and all-sufficient sacrifice, and there is no other foundation, upon which a poor sinner can rest, than the foundation of Christ's own Blood, His atonement, His substitutionary work, and His suretyship engagements. O brethren and sisters, let us hold fast to this truth! I am a dying man, and you are dying men and women, and I declare to you that the silver sockets of a Saviour's redemption are those alone which constitute the firm foundation on which the soul shall rest. The redemption of the soul is precious. Peter says, "Unto you who believe He is precious." Why? Because it is under the value of His death, it is on the ground of His atoning work, and it is by the might, the power and life of His High Priestly intercession, that my heart is filled with a hope that nothing can ever extinguish. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." He rescued me from the depths of sin,

"And fixed my standing more secure,
Than 'twas before I fell."

Oh! our blessed Lord has not only undone for His people the mischief of the Fall, but He has given us more than we lost, for He says, "I restored that which I took not away." The Israelite looked at his half shekel, and knew that it would be accepted by the priest. Bunyan represents this, when in the Palace Beautiful, Prudence talks to Christian and says, "Are you ever glad?" "Oh yes!" he says, "I am." "When are you glad?" asked Prudence. "When I think of what I saw at the Cross; when I look upon my brodered coat; when I read my roll, then my thoughts wax warm concerning the place whither I am going." When the Israelite looked at the shekel, he knew he would be accepted. When a poor sinner gazes by faith upon the precious Blood of Jesus, and feels its power in heart and conscience, his thoughts wax warm.

Once more, Christian said, "I love Him because I was by Him eased of my burden, and I am weary of my inward sickness; I would fain be with the company which cry Holy, Holy, Holy." O dear friends, the value of the Cross is unspeakable; the value of every drop of Christ's most precious Blood is unspeakable! A drop of blood upon ear, hand and foot; a drop of oil accompanying it, was part of the setting aside of the priests of Israel; and the day will come when the unspeakable value of the Cross will be proclaimed from every part, and from every feature of the new creation, because all the foundations of heaven - the foundations of the kingdom which cannot be moved - derive their stability and firmness from the ransom which Christ our Lord has paid.

May He by His blessed Spirit lead us to the true Temple, to the true Tabernacle, to Jesus Christ our Lord, our place of worship, where God dwells, where God meets with us, where He receives us upon the footing

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of the redemption wrought by Jesus, and the salvation, which can after all, be but inadequately represented by corruptible things, but which in its fulness is declared by the precious Blood of Christ. Amen.