

TRUE SACRIFICES

By Paul Caram

The very nature of God is that of sacrifice! He is a giver. “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,*” Jn.3:16. God gave us His best and desires that we give Him the same. Coming to intimately know God and gain eternal reward requires sacrifice. Christ Himself walked the road of self-denial, and yet the pathway of sacrifice releases life and brings us to great joy.

King David was a man who understood sacrifice. He said, “*I will not offer sacrifices to the Lord my God which cost me nothing,*” 2 Sam.24:24. David was a man after God’s own heart who was determined to accomplish all of God’s will, Acts 13:22. This is what God is looking for today—men and women who are willing to be a living sacrifice, Rom.12:1. King Saul, whom David replaced, was only committed to doing part of the will of God—the convenient part. Let us be like David, not Saul.

Are we willing? Those who lose their lives for His sake shall find it. The rewards gained for doing God’s will are awesome. In comparison we are making no sacrifice at all, as the prize is so much greater than the price. I have heard young Christians say, “I want God’s highest and I will pay any price to have it!” Then, when God deals with some small situation in their lives, they complain with frustration and anger. Let us have godly character and mean what we say!

GOD DOES NOT ACCEPT EVERY SACRIFICE

Before we go any further we need to understand that God does not accept every sacrifice. God does not want our sacrifice if our heart is not right with Him. Sacrifice is also not to be a substitute for something else that God is requiring of us. We must be in the will of God or He will not receive our sacrifice. We must be doing things His way, not our own.

Saul's sacrifice was rejected because it was a substitute for doing God's will, 1 Sam.15:1-3, 9, 22.

God does not want our sacrifice if we have not tried to be reconciled to a brother, Mt.5:23-24.

The Lord ignores the sacrifices of those who treat their marriage partners wrongly, Mal.2:13-16.

Ananias and Sapphira's offering was an abomination because it was done deceitfully, Acts 5:1-10.

SACRIFICES THAT PLEASE GOD

The following are spiritual sacrifices that will lead us to joy, eternal reward, and victory over Satan:

1. THE SACRIFICE OF OBEDIENCE: *“For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey my voice,’”* Jer.7:22-23. God made it clear when He brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt that His heart was not concerned with the offerings and sacrifices of animals. He was interested in another kind of sacrifice—obedience. *“Obey my voice,”* Ex.19:5! He wanted a people who listened to His voice and then obeyed out of an attitude of love. This is true sacrifice.

King David also understood this truth, for he declared, *“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened,”* Ps. 40:6-7. David knew the heart of God. He realized that God had no pleasure in the ritual of animal sacrifices, but in men with listening ears and responding hearts. King Saul never learned this. He was in the habit of partially obeying, then offering sacrifices to compensate for his incomplete obedience. God would accept none of his substitutes. Instead, He admonished Saul, saying, *“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,”* 1 Sam. 15:22.

The sacrifice of obedience is the key to Christian growth. When God puts His finger on an area of our life to correct it, He expects a response. As we respond, we are changed. However, if we evade or reject His correction, our problem remains unfixed and we cease to grow; in fact, we go backwards. Sacrifice can never take the place of obedience. We may say, “Lord, you cannot have this area of my life. This belongs to me”! But in doing this we come to a standstill in our Christian walk. We cannot bargain with God, He will not accept a substitute for something that He is requiring of us.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL SACRIFICE: *“Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see, but in the place which the Lord shall choose,”* Deut.12:13-14. God is particular where we offer our sacrifice and service. He will only accept our sacrifice in the place He has chosen for us. We cannot say, “I will leave the location where God has placed me because I like the people, or the salary, or the food in the other place better.”

“Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will announce My words to you,” Jer.18:2. It is important to be in the right geographical place because it is “there” that God is able to speak to our hearts. Awaiting us there are just the right people and just the right circumstances which are designed for our perfecting and learning. If we plant ourselves somewhere else, certain areas of our lives will remain undeveloped and unredeemed. In the place of His choosing, God has unique tools prepared to reach the “hard to get at” places in our lives. God may require us to leave an organization or perhaps the church we were raised in.

Sometimes a total geographical move is necessary to go on in our walk with God. It could mean leaving friends, relatives, or others. Abraham could not go any further with God and fulfill his divine call until he left his father's house, Gen.12:1, Ps.45:10, Mt.10:37-38.

Where we are planted is very important. We will end up where our church or denomination is going. We will be under the same blessings or judgments. In Revelation 18:4 God commands those who are joined to a wrong religious system and covering, *“Come out of her, My people, that you may not partake of her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues.”* Some of us may need to forsake the old religious places and traditions that we were raised in.

Provision, too, is found in the place God chooses. In 1 Kings 17:2-9, Elijah was sent to a brook where he was fed by the birds. Then he was sent to a poor widow who fed him. When God is calling us to follow Him, He will not accept the excuse, “I can’t afford it.” Let us move when God’s clouds moves, Num. 9:16-23. The safest place on earth is in the center of God’s will.

3. THE SACRIFICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: In Psalm 4:5 we are exhorted, *“Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.”* The sacrifice of righteousness means we do what is right regardless of the consequences. Making a stand for right is a sacrifice because it is often not popular and we may be criticized. Sometimes doing what is right makes us lose financial support, especially when we are in the ministry. However, in the end, God vindicates those who offer the sacrifice of righteousness and who put their trust in Him, not man. God Himself is righteous and He delights in the righteous, Ps. 84:11-12.

4. THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING: *“I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call on the Lord,”* Ps.116:17, 107:22. The praise and thanksgiving that God appreciates most is not what He receives from those who live in the glory of heaven, but from those on earth who are under terrible pressure. It is easy to give thanks when we are prospering on every side. But thanksgiving and praise become a sacrifice when our blessings have diminished and we are facing the blackness of the night. When Job was reduced to ashes, he fell down in worship saying, *“The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord,”* Job 1:20-22. How this blessed the heart of God! This is the most expensive worship of all. Thankfulness also keeps our hearts free, and right responses to injury give us victory over Satan.

5. THE SACRIFICE OF LOVE: *“And to love [God] with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices,”* Mk.12:33. This is the real sacrifice God looks for—our love. God desires our affections, thoughts, emotions, and all our energy to be placed upon the altar, and He wants us to love and serve others unselfishly out of a pure heart. This is the true sacrifice. Love is the completion of the law, Rom.13:8-10.

The above scripture in Mark 12:33 is the fulfillment of the burnt offering of Leviticus chapter one. This sacrifice was cut up into four parts: the head, the fat, the inwards, and the legs, Lev.1:6-9. All four sections had to be placed on the altar and totally consumed

by God's fire. In order for our lives to become a sweet burnt sacrifice to God, these four parts of our lives must be spiritually upon the altar:

The head – signifies our thoughts. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,”* Is.55:8.

The fat – our energy and strength. Is it spent on fun, hobbies, and sports, or is it used for God?

The inwards – our affections and passions. The things we love or hate have to be on the altar.

The legs – our walk, the places we go, and the trips we make must be consecrated to God.

Our affections must be placed upon the altar or we will miss God's mark for our lives. If we only do the things we like to do, we will never be a noble person. One woman would not go to a particular church because she did not like their style of music, even though that church was more spiritual than the others. In order to be effective in God's kingdom our personal likes and dislikes have to often be nailed to the cross.

6. THE SACRIFICE OF JOY: *“Now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies around about me: therefore I will offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy,”* Ps. 27:6. David was under pressure. He was surrounded by his enemies. David turned his focus away from the situation and offered the sacrifice of joy to the Lord, trusting completely in His protection. God respects the sacrifice of joy. It moves His mighty hand of deliverance. Depression and discouragement can be resisted by the sacrifice of joy. Rather than allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by a dark cloud as we look at our circumstances, we can turn our attention to our Deliverer and begin to offer the sacrifice of joy. This response brings faith and deliverance. Again, this is a sacrifice because we may not feel joyful at first and it requires effort. In addition to this, we should learn to offer the sacrifice of joy to our marriage partner and to others. We should discipline ourselves cheerfully to those around us and not drag them down with the heaviness that we struggle with.

7. THE SACRIFICE OF BUYING A FIELD: The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:16 bought a field. We should buy a field too. Jesus said, *“the field is the world,”* Mat.13: 38. God has a mission field for all of us, but we have to pay for it. Some people will buy their mission field by sending financial support to their missionaries. Others will buy their mission field by praying- *“Ask of Me and I will surely give the nations as your inheritance,”* Ps.2:8. Others will offer their own life as a living sacrifice as they obey the call of God to go as missionaries. But people who do not invest anything in missions will gain no reward. How much have you paid for your “field”?

8. THE SACRIFICE OF OUR ISAAC: *“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering,”* Gen.22:2. Isaac represents the thing that is dearest to our hearts—a person, a call, God's promises, or perhaps a ministry. God tested Abraham to see if he cherished Isaac more than Himself. God said, *“Give it all back to me.”* Abraham's willingness to sacrifice

Isaac was a blow to Satan, and so are the other sacrifices we have discussed.

Lucifer had an idol. His ministry was an idol that was more important to him than his relationship with God. All Lucifer wanted was more for himself—more position and more self-exaltation, Is.14:12-14. He wanted the very throne. His only desire was to be the center of attention. He was serving God only for the benefits, and today he accuses the brethren of doing the same. This is seen in Job chapter one. Satan accused Job of only serving God for the blessings. When Job had all of his blessings removed, he fell down and worshiped. In this way he defeated Satan. God proves and tests everyone to see if we are passing the tests Lucifer failed. When Abraham gave up Isaac, he won a great victory over the Accuser.

9. THE SACRIFICE OF A BROKEN SPIRIT: *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise,”* Ps.51:16-17. A broken spirit is that quality of spirit where self-will, hardness and resistance have been removed from our inner life. This is the end result of offering all the previous sacrifices. This is the kind of heart God wants to give us, Ezek.36:26.

This kind of heart overcomes the world, the flesh, and the devil. A broken spirit is the exact opposite of a man with an offended spirit, Prov.18:19.

FRAGRANT SACRIFICES TO GOD

Following the Lamb requires our all. It means that our life will be similar to His, Rev.14:1-5. Therefore we should not selfishly hold on to anything, but be openhanded to the One who has freely given us all things. Sometimes following God requires sacrifices with our home, living conditions, money, security, choice of mate, life-style, delays, and other experiences. It is a privilege to make these sacrifices to the Lord for they are like a sweet smell to Him, even as Christ's whole life was a fragrant sacrifice to the Father, Eph.5:2. Joy is the end result of all sacrifices made to God out of a pure and willing heart.

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