

## Sacrifice

When God instructed Israel in the matter of offerings and sacrifices, the instructions He gave were complex and required no small amount of work.

Leviticus 2:1 “And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon:”

vs. 2 “And he shall bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests: and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD:”

Offerings included much more than the tithe. The people were to tithe, but they were also to give free-will offerings, wave offerings, peace offerings, and other similar offerings. Each of these offerings had its own significance and symbolism. One simple lesson we can learn from these offerings is that time and work are involved in giving. These offerings included far more than writing a tithe check and dropping it into the offering plate.

For example, a man wants to offer a peace offering from his herd:

Leviticus 3:1 “And if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offer it of the herd; whether it be a male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD.”

First he brings the animal to the temple area and kills it, gathering the blood. Anyone who has hunted large animals or butchered domestic animals -- such as cows, pigs, or goats -- knows it involves a lot of messy work. Just holding an animal still while you cut its throat is a major task which could (most likely does) result in dirty clothes, to say the least. The butchering of the animal is not yet the offering; it is only preparation for the offering.

Next besides the division of parts of the inwards, kidneys, and fat from one place and another, more procedures were established;

vs. 4 “And the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.”

vs. 5 “And Aaron’s sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice,”

They had to kill, gut, dig through an unbelievable heap of slimy guts, cut off fat here, pull out this part, divide that part, and perform many other tasks. May I simply say, preparation entailed a great deal of work, took a lot of time, and was not convenient. It was a messy, stinky, get-your-clothes-messed-up, “yucky” event.

In New Testament days, the days in which we now live, God asks for offerings as well.

God directs us, as believers, to bring acceptable offerings to Him;

1 Peter 2:5 “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

When Paul was in prison, he regarded the financial help from the church at Philippi an acceptable sacrifice;

Philippians 4:18 “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”

Hebrews says the praise of our lips is a sacrifice to offer to God;

Hebrews 13:15 “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

Most people do not walk with God for the same reasons Old Testament people might have given when they failed to offer their offerings: it is a lot of work, takes a lot of time, and is not convenient. Praise, worship, song (not heartless, but from a heart of love to the One Who is above all glorious), prayer -- offerings like these take time. I am not referring to prayer such as is often offered at meal time: bow one's head, offer a ten-second prayer of thanks. Offering a sacrifice is (are you ready) -- a sacrifice. Wow! Who would have guessed that. A sacrifice is sacrificial; it means giving up time, things, or convenience.

Our Lord's sacrifice was SACRIFICIAL: difficult, inconvenient, messy, yet it is the example God gave for loving one another;

Ephesians 5:2 "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor."

Paul offered himself as a sacrifice in service to the Philippian people;

Philippians 2:17 "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all."

At times, doing good is a sacrifice. The word communicate used here speaks of financial help.

Hebrews 13:16 "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

These sacrifices are well-pleasing to the Lord. We are urged to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice in Romans 12:1-2. So regarding praising, worshiping, giving, serving, and living the Christian life in general -- doing these things is a sacrifice, a pleasant one most of the time, but nonetheless

one that may be messy, time-consuming, inconvenient, and costly; even so, doing these things is a sacrifice well-pleasing to the Lord.

So let's apply this concept to real life. Getting up early to run a bus route is not wrong, but well-pleasing to the Lord. Working as a preacher's wife, mother, and nursery superintendent is not bad, but well-pleasing to the Lord. If starting a church demands a part-time or full-time job, then visiting, soul winning, sermon preparation, loss of sleep and more, that is well-pleasing to the Lord.

Working nights while going to school during the day is not bad. It is not a problem resulting from some hidden sin -- it is a sacrifice well-pleasing to the Lord. In the midst of all this, we should not neglect responsibilities. We should care for our marriage, our children, and our financial responsibilities, even if it costs us time, convenience, sleep or even years off our life? That is not a problem. It is a sacrifice.

I have never heard it said, but I have heard that pastors will whine about not having pensions, retirements, or adequate pay. A man relinquishing financial areas to be a pastor is called sacrifice, not wealth management. I think these preachers I have heard about are probably in some denomination seeking a good job not in solid Baptist church ministries seeking to serve God. We do need to understand that we are entering a life of service, not a life of being served. A life of service is time-consuming, messy, inconvenient, and costly.

When Israel brought their sacrifices to God, they were honored and happy to do so, and so ought we to be when we receive the opportunity to serve God full time.

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