

Sermon No. 402

THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE

Hebrews 13:10-17

INTRODUCTION

- Thank Wayne for last weeks message . . . two things stood out for me . . .

1. A comment made

§ Too many define a "GOOD" worship service by what we get OUT of it!

We can be too critical . . . about the preaching, the welcome, the music etc.

This doesn't mean we didn't come to be fed . . . part of worship is that we are going to take something away

§ But we should define "GOOD" MORE by what we PUT INTO it!

It was a good service . . . I applied myself . . . I listened . . . I prayed quietly for this one that one . . . I sang (even though I am a terrible singer) . . . I worshipped!

2. A passage shared . . . Romans 12:1-2

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of GOD

§ Paul urges those who read the Word . . . *respond to it . . . HOW?*

§ By offering their eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet to GOD . . . *as a "living sacrifice"*

§ It is not about what neighbor doing . . . or what you can get out . . . it is more about what you're prepared to PUT IN!

Develop that attitude . . . should come naturally . . .
But if not . . . then work at it!

Q. Is a SACRIFICIAL LIFE important to GOD?

A. Yes . . . Biblical . . . commanded . . . illustrated . . . see the ALTAR of SACRIFICE in the Tabernacle

- 1,000 sermons in the Tabernacle!
- The whole plan of GOD!

In the design . . . the layout . . . the construction . . . the materials!

We see the GODHEAD . . . we see GOD and MAN . . . we see the works of CHRIST

- The details are so precise . . . the lessons so obvious . . . we cannot go past them!

TABERNACLE was dwelling of GOD . . . place of worship . . . “meeting place” . . . place of atonement

- The first item . . . the brazen altar, bronze altar, or altar of sacrifice
- It was situated right inside the courtyard upon entering the gate to the Tabernacle
- Place for burning animal sacrifices . . . sinful man’s first step in his approach to GOD
- For a sin offering, a person had to bring an animal — a male one without blemish or defect from the flock or herd — to the priest at the tabernacle gate

“He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.” (Leviticus 1:4)

- By laying his hand upon the head of the offering, the person was identifying with the sacrifice . . . his sin and guilt was being moved from himself to the animal

It was prominent . . . essential . . . stood between the entrance and GOD's presence

Before we get to the altar we must enter the compound . . . and there is only "One Entrance"

John 14:6

NKJV 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"

John 10:9

NKJV 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture

On entering . . . the first act is that of sacrifice!

- ATHLETE . . . STUDENT . . . EMPLOYEE . . . PARENT . . . ARTIST
- The first thing to greet the Israelites upon entering THE PRESENCE OF GOD . . . the ALTAR of SACRIFICE!

In the same way . . .

- The first thing required of us . . . desire to become a LIVING SACRIFICE!

A relationship with GOD *without* a need for sacrifice will only find a dead Christianity!

- The concept is simple . . . it is more important to give than to receive

Not only is it the first thing to greet them . . . but there is no getting around it either!

- Beyond are an abundance of blessings

- But you dare not continue . . . without coming first to the place of sacrifice!
- If you did you'd be considered "impure!" . . . *because on this altar the sacrificial animal was presented to GOD for GOD's judgment to be removed*
- Jesus took our judgment . . . He became the perfect sacrifice for us!
- So how could we not be willing to sacrifice ourselves . . . that is how we reach the blessings beyond the altar

But some stop there . . . if it is just for atonement (guilt removed) . . . move on!

- But there is so many good reasons not to stop there

Exodus 20:24

NKJV ²⁴ An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you

Quite simply . . . your willingness to sacrifice for Him will be blessed by GOD!

And sacrifice, by its very nature, will cost you!

- The altar was built of high value wood . . . covered with high value metals

The construction of the altar: Exodus 38:1-7

NKJV ¹ He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood; five cubits *was* its length and five cubits its width (2.5m) —*it was square*—and its height *was* three cubits (1.5m). ² He made its horns on its four corners; the horns were *of one piece* with it. And he overlaid it with bronze. ³ He made all the utensils for the altar: the pans, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the firepans; all its utensils he made of bronze. ⁴ And he

made a grate of bronze network for the altar, under its rim, midway from the bottom.
⁵ He cast four rings for the four corners of the bronze grating, as holders for the poles.
⁶ And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with bronze. ⁷ Then he put the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to bear it. He made the altar hollow with boards.

- High quality products cost!

2 Samuel 24:18-25

NLT ¹⁸ That day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." ¹⁹ So David went up to do what the Lord had commanded him. ²⁰ When Araunah saw the king and his men coming toward him, he came and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. ²¹ "Why have you come, my lord the king?" Araunah asked. David replied, "I have come to buy your threshing floor and to build an altar to the Lord there, so that He will stop the plague." ²² "Take it, my lord the king, and use it as you wish," Araunah said to David. "Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and you can use the threshing boards and ox yokes for wood to build a fire on the altar. ²³ I will give it all to you, Your Majesty, and may the Lord your God accept your sacrifice." ²⁴ But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on buying it, for I will not present burnt offerings to the Lord my God that have cost me nothing." So David paid him fifty pieces of silver for the threshing floor and the oxen. ²⁵ David built an altar there to the Lord and sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings. And the Lord answered his prayer for the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

A faith not worth sacrificing for is faith not worth living for!

- Don't allow your Christianity to be "shallow" or "cheap"
- The world will judge our Christianity by the way we live . . . like they do everything else
- Examples . . . he/she loves their family, their job, their car, their hobby, their pets!

Five Lessons

- Lesson 1: there is only ever one way to reach GOD
- Lesson 2: nothing of real value comes to anyone without real sacrifice
- Lesson 3: there are no shortcuts!
- Lesson 4: there is a direct correlation between sacrifice and blessing
- Lesson 5: You cannot do Christianity on the cheap . . . it is going to cost you plenty

How should all this manifest itself in our lives?

Romans 12:1

NLT 1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him

- Paul speaks out clearly what is symbolized by the altar of sacrifice

But there is one subtle difference

- In the OT sacrifices were killed . . . but since Christ paid the price of death we do not need to physically die anymore . . . thus we can become "living" sacrifices!

One problem with this: dead sacrifices don't leave the altar . . . living ones tend to want to crawl off it all the time . . . especially when they feel the heat!

This is truly the way to worship Him

Heart of the Matter: Meaningful worship services . . . are attended by those who have truly grasped what it means to be a living sacrifice

- For them it isn't about what they can get out of it . . . but what they can put in to it!
- That doesn't mean church isn't a place where you come to be fed the Word of GOD
- But it is extra special when the entire congregation are all willing to contribute . . . yes they came to be fed from the Word . . . but they were all ready to give of themselves
- And in fact 'giving of themselves' is their daily routine!

How does it manifest itself in us?

- It is seen in our motives . . . focused only on serving GOD
- Heart attitude . . . humble, Christ centered
- Faithfulness . . . to services
- Listening attentively . . . to the message, irrespective of how polished the preacher is!
- Meditating . . . on the Word . . . on what it means to worship . . . on Christ's love
- Prayer . . . privately or outwardly
- If necessary . . . encouraging others . . . engaging with others

We are here to worship Him . . . not the preacher . . . and the preacher cannot worship Him on your behalf

The beautiful thing is this . . . if our goal is NOT to GAIN . . . but to GIVE . . . the more we give, the more we gain!

- The sweetest gains come from giving!

Romans 12:2

NLT ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect

- The world says "GIVE IT TO ME" . . . but we are not to be conformed to that
- We are to be transformed by GOD and to change the way we think
- We don't say "GIVE IT TO ME" anymore . . . to "WHAT DO YOU NEED"
- GOD says . . . that is how you will get to know HIS WILL

What are you prepared to sacrifice in order to be all that GOD wants you to be?

- Time . . . money . . . advancement . . . prestige . . . your wants?

Are you willing to live a sacrificial life?

- Those who began with the altar of sacrifice end up in the very presence of GOD!
- Those who try to bypass the altar bypass the highest quality of faith . . . they will miss out on the real presence of God in their lives!
- Our service to God includes frequent sacrifices
- Jesus' sacrifice of Himself was the greatest and costliest ... but it also brought to us the greatest and most valuable gift, eternal life!

Hebrews 10:10

THE WORD ¹⁰ By God's will, we are made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus the Anointed once and for all time.

- There ARE NO easy or cheap ways to give the finest gift
- Your faith and the quality of your spirituality will only be as good as the sacrifices you make because of it!

Those whose faith always seems vital and real are those who have learned the service of sacrifice!

There are no good substitutes for that kind of faith!