

TOPICAL: Rom. 12:1

TITLE: HOW VALUABLE IS YOUR SPIRITUAL SACRIFICE?

BIG IDEA:

THE LORD DESIRES SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES THAT ARE VALUABLE IN HIS EYES

INTRODUCTION:

Rom. 12:1 – “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

Example of generous giving on the part of the Macedonian believers: **2 Cor. 8:1-6** “they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God”

What type of sacrifices are we offering up to the Lord Jesus?

Cf. Jewish OT system – very elaborate; very specific instructions; we have such freedom; but what thought do we give to our sacrifices? Writing a check is so much less painful than giving of ourselves and having skin in the game; personal involvement

Def. of Sacrifice: to suffer the loss of something; give something up; a surrender of something for the sake of something else; offering to God something precious

9/11 Reference: Today we are remembering the awful loss of innocent lives in the terrorist attack of 9/11 – the people in the Twin Towers were not intentionally making a sacrifice for the cause of freedom; they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time and tragically had their lives snuffed out by the evil of hatred; but the firefighters and other rescue personnel that counted the cost and still rushed in to try to do their duty to save lives did make an intentional sacrifice; much more so the civilians who took down flight 93 to deny the terrorists completing their intended mission – they sacrificed their lives to save the lives of others

What types of sacrifices does the Lord commend? First offer yourselves and then whatever else you have at your disposal; but your gifts are never given independently of the submission of your whole being to the will of the Master

VALUE OF SPIRITUAL SACRIFICE CAN BE MEASURED IN DIFFERENT WAYS

I. WORTHLESS SACRIFICES = Have no value in the eyes of the Lord

A. Must be the sacrifice which the Lord has required and commanded – not based on human initiative; but approach God in the manner in which He wants to be approached

- o Cain failed in this area – **Gen. 4:3-8** “Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground . . . If you do well will not your countenance be lifted up?”

You must first be a genuine believer or God cannot even look upon your sacrifices; you must have put your dependence on Jesus as the lamb of God who was offered up as the only sacrifice that could take away your sin and restore you to right relationship with God
Heb. 11:4 “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain,”

- Remember God's judgment against the sons of Aaron Adab and Abihu who offered "strange fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai" – **Num. 3:4**
- **Proverbs 15:8** "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,"

B. Must be associated with obedience and faith in God's Word rather than rebellion and rejection of God's Word

- Samuel rebuked Saul for his failure to totally obey – **1 Sam. 15:22-23** "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, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry."

You can't try to compensate for some level of disobedience by offering some type of sacrifice or spiritual service

- Attitude of reverence and fear of the Lord with respect to our sacrifices – not flippant or overly casual
- **Psalm 51:16-17** "For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." Ritual without genuine repentance is useless
- **Prov. 21:3** "To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD rather than sacrifice."

C. Must be sincere and from the heart – not hypocritical

- **Isa. 29:13** "Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote" [Matt. 15: 7 "You hypocrites"]

D. Must be purposeful and voluntary and cheerful – not out of sense of grudging obligation

- **2 Cor. 9:7** "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."
- **Acts 5** – Example of Ananias and Sapphira – sacrifice rejected and they were executed

E. Must be designed to please God rather than to impress men

- **Matt. 6:1** "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."

F. Must be from a motivation of thanksgiving rather than trying to earn God's favor

- **Psalm 50:14** "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High,"
- **Psalm 50:23** "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me;"
- **Heb. 13:15** "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."

VALUE OF SACRIFICE CAN BE MEASURED IN DIFFERENT WAYS

II. HOW PRECIOUS? -- PRECIOUS NATURE OF THE SACRIFICE – ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC

Gen. 22:2 *“Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”*

Longing for a son; difficulty of bearing a son; became the son of promise; imagine the love of Abraham for Isaac

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*

1 Pet. 1:18-19 *“Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”*

Kids, you want to know what you inherited from your parents when you entered into this world? Total Depravity / futile way of life – so that each of you needs to be redeemed; apart from redemption by the precious blood of Christ you will continue in a path of futility that ends in God’s judgment

You are not offering the sick or the lame or the blemished; you are offering up what is most precious to you and what is irreplaceable in your affections.

Deut. 15:21 *“But if it has any defect, such as lameness or blindness, or any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.”*

17:1 *“for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God”*

Do we offer up our children to God in sacrifice so that He can use them according to His will – cf. Hannah giving up Samuel and taking him to the temple to be raised under the tutelage of Eli

Do we tell God that we will put our career ambitions on the altar and follow His leading in our life;

Is our home and neighborhood so comfortable and precious that we would never consider that the Lord might have to relocate for the advancement of the kingdom? How far are we willing to go in giving up what is precious to us??

III. HOW COSTLY? -- MATERIAL COST OF THE SACRIFICE – MARY AND BOTTLE OF OINTMENT

Matt. 26:6-13 *“a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table”*

Issue: Is Jesus worth it? You should offer up something extravagant to the King of Kings

When you get a costly gift for your wife – Is she worth it?? Not based on whether this is the most pragmatic use of the money

Not just “the thought that counts”

IV. HOW HEROIC? -- DANGER AND COURAGE INVOLVED – DAVID’S TROOPS BRING HIM WATER

Courageous Display of Loyalty – **2 Sam. 23:16** “*So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David.*”

Consecration of the Sacrifice to the Lord

2 Sam. 23:13-17 ‘*Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord; and he said, ‘Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?’*”

Deffinbaugh: Lessons About Heroes – (certainly thinking about heroes today in context of 9/11)

Heroes emerge in times of crisis.

Heroes emerge when others fear and fail.

Heroes have been prepared and predisposed to their heroism by their way of life.

Heroes are not frightened by the odds which appear stacked against them.

Heroes are willing to die, if need be.

Heroes work and train very hard, but in the end they look to God for the victory.

Heroes take their duties and responsibilities seriously.

Heroes go above and beyond the call of duty, out of faith, loyalty, and love.

Heroes emerge where heroism is modeled, valued, and rewarded.

Heroes are those who have the courage to identify themselves with God’s anointed.

V. HOW DIFFICULT? -- DIFFICULTY AND PERSEVERANCE NEEDED TO ACHIEVE

Look at the worship and sacrifice of Noah in building an ark according to the Lord’s commandment – took him **120 years** (Gen. 6:3)

You must see your work as a spiritual service offered up to God as well

Heb. 11:7 “*by faith . . . in reverence prepared an ark*”

1 Pet. 3:20 “*when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.*”

2 Pet.2: 5 “*but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly*”

The old bull fighting analogy – in one sense if you are in a rodeo contest you want to draw an easy bull to stay on; but you will never win the competition that way; you need the degree of difficulty points from riding a tough bull

Dr. J. R. Miller: Things we do through cost, self-denial, hardship, and hindrance are far dearer to us and more sacred than things we do with ease, without feeling the burden or the cost. . . Our joy in doing God’s work, and in making gifts to God, is measured by the real cost of the things

we do and give. The more heart's blood there is in them, the more precious will they be to us and also to God. The richest treasures of our lives are those which have cost us the most.

If our sacrifices are too easy and quick, they lose some of their value. Don't complain when you are called to persevere through some difficult times and still maintain the testimony of praise and thanksgiving for what the Lord is doing – *"Count it all joy when you fall into various trials"* – **James 1**

VI. HOW GREAT? -- COMPLETENESS/TOTALITY OF THE SACRIFICE -- WIDOW DONATING HER LAST COIN

Mark 12:41-44 *"this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on"*

Why doesn't the Lord criticize that as irresponsible??

Phil.2:17 *"But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith"* – Paul pouring out himself as a drink offering

Some like the first Christian martyr Stephen sacrificed all that they had down to their very life for the cause of Christ

Can't **compartmentalize** worship or spiritual sacrifices or faith – your entire life must be part of your dedicated sacrifice to the Lord as we saw in Rom. 12:1-2

CONCLUSION:

Example of the Lord Jesus – who for the joy set before Him offered up Himself on the cross

Heb. 12:1-2 *"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Ephes. 5:2 *"and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."*

Preparation for the Lord's Table – meditate on the Lord's sacrifice for us:

- How Precious
- How Costly
- How Heroic
- How Difficult
- How Great