***Christian Sacrifices

Colossians 1:15-20

COL-136***

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Galatians 5:13-16: "For you are called to freedom, brethren. Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word in the statement: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, take care, lest you be consumed by one another. But I say walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh."

Ephesians 4:30-32: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Matthew 7:3-5: "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the spec that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye. You hypocrite. First take out the log from your own eye, then you'll see clearly to take out the spec that is in your brother's eye."

Romans 14:10-12: "But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again. Why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. For is written. 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee shall bow to Me. Every tongue shall give praise to God.' So, then each of us shall give account of himself to God."

Romans 12:17: "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men, if possible. So far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

Romans 12:19-21: "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap bearing coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Please turn with me to Colossians 1:15-20, as we continue our study. Our subject is "Hymn in honor of Christ," segment number 26.

If a person wants to learn to be an auto engine mechanic, he enrolls in a school which trains people in that skill. But suppose the classes scheduled to give this instruction were primarily devoted to inspirational talks on the satisfaction of being a competent mechanic. Suppose class-after-class was spent on challenging the students to pursue a career as an auto mechanic, and being the best mechanic possible with a bunch of one-liner quips. Suppose the instructor centered his efforts on motivating the students to work hard in their trade to enjoy financial rewards. Suppose the mechanic school spent its time, in large measure, recruiting new students to join the school organization. Suppose the mechanic school invested major efforts of time and personnel in meeting the social and recreational needs of the students with various programs. Suppose the school offered an extensive program of counseling to help the students make it through their week. Suppose the school didn't care whether the students enrolled attended class sessions or not, as long as they paid their fees. Suppose the class teacher was ill-trained in engine repairs, and did not prepare adequately to deliver the class lesson. Suppose the instructor kept teaching the same lesson every class period, on some basic procedure of engine operation. Suppose the teacher never explained the contents of the textbook on the operation of an internal combustion engine. And even suppose that the teacher had the students discuss among themselves how they think they should fix some problem in an engine.

In short, suppose the auto engine repair school did everything under the sun except teach the students how to make an auto engine operate properly and successfully, and then proceeded to issue a diploma of graduation to those who had been left in ignorance, or had shared each other's ignorance. How do you think a student would respond to such a school?

In all likelihood, the students in such a school would be outraged at having been cheated in the training they needed, and they were in heap big trouble (we Indians have our way of saying things that catch your attention) – heap big trouble when it came to making an auto engine run right. They wouldn't know how to do it. None of what the teachers had spent their class time on would enable the students to succeed and survive in the work of auto engine repairs. The worst case would be with the students who thought that what the school had spent its time on with them has qualified them to live the life of an auto engine mechanic. That's the worst kind. They think that they're qualified because they went to the school, and were told that this place is going to qualify you. Furthermore, we must admit that it would be stupid to pay for such a fraud and to accept such a certificate of graduation.

This analogy portrays what usually happens in the ministry of local churches. And when I point this out to people, some people get very mad. Some people think that I'm being very bigoted. Some people think that this is not the case. But this analogy to the fraudulency of giving people the impression that they are preparing them to be able to repair auto engines is exactly what happens in local churches. Instead of focusing on teaching the principles of doctrine to train believers in Christian living and service, the churches spend their efforts on inspirational and motivational talks and challenges; on creating visions of prosperity; on recruiting new members; on providing social and fun programs; and, on lists of things to do to meet a problem in life, led by a pastor lacking training in the Scriptures, and devoid of personal study preparation to be able to teach the full counsel of the Word of God, and spending as little time in the church service preaching, and never teaching the contents of the divine textbook on life, the Bible. That is exactly what our analogy portrays for learning how to fix an auto engine. And churches do the same thing, and you know it as well as I do.

In short, Ephesians 4:2, the duty of the pastor-teacher and the local church is never fulfilled, so that the members are never equipped with the Bible doctrine knowledge in order to be qualified to serve God, and in order to build up the body of Christ, the church. Ephesians 4:12-13: "For the equipping of the saints, for the work of their service, to the building up of the body of Christ." The developing of Christians in spiritual maturity and the expansion of the body of Christ."

Now, since the average Christian is totally oblivious to what he should be rightly receiving in doctrinal instruction from the church ministry, he is conned by the programs that are put on: the rallies; the hoopla; the promotions; and, the stem-winding sermons which happen to be on the same theme of how to get to heaven service-after-service, but which appeal to his emotions, and leave his mind ignorant of the mind of God which can only be found in doctrine. And that is a travesty. And that is the norm, whether you like it or not. If you don't think it is, it's because you're not out there in touch with what is going on. And those people are going to find out someday, when they stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that they have suffered the very thing that Jesus warned about in Mark 8:36: "What shall it profit a man (a Christian man) if he shall gain the whole world, and then lose the value of his life of service," because somebody left him unprepared?

Such a believer, no matter how sincere and self-confident, because he is associating with big-time crowds and prominent church organizations – such a Christian is a sitting duck for the guns of Satan. Such a Christian very easily becomes the friend of the world. And the Word of God, in James 4:4, tells us: "If you're the friend of the world, you're the enemy of God." Christians without realizing it, who are in that position, are very comfortable in saying, "I love my sin nature more than I love God. I want to listen to my sin nature more than I want to listen to God. I want to be part of a world system more than I want to be a pilgrim and stranger in this context of walking with God.

Those people have no foundational structure. That's a great tragedy, when a person is trained in the Word of God, to say, "I love the world better. I love my sin nature's leading more. I love the evil age in which I live more than I love the separated life unto Christ." That's tragic. But the average church person doesn't have a chance. He doesn't have a clue as to what he is supposed to know, and what he is supposed to do, and how he's supposed to live the Christian life. And every time you're in a service like that, it corrodes your sensitivity God. It decreases your ability to respond to the leading of the Spirit of God. It's not just a small, simple thing. And if you think it's stupid to pay for an auto engine mechanic's course that doesn't teach the textbook, and doesn't give you the skills and information to live the life of an auto mechanic, why do you think it's all right to pay for such a church fraud with your offerings, and suffer the loss of your life in God's service now in eternal rewards in heaven? Do you think that God looks the other way when you walk up, and you drop that offering, to sustain an operation like that? Yet, Christians tolerate this deception daily by churches. Though they would not accept the same thing from an auto engine mechanic's school. They would howl with protests if they were treated in such a fraudulent way.

However, when it comes to going to church, and what you get out of it, and then paying for it, they do it like a bunch of ninnies. The Bible is very clear that you support, and you pay for genuine instruction in the Word of God. Otherwise, God will hold you responsible for every dollar you drop into the plate, or the box, and he will hold you responsible for every moment of your life that you spend in the service of such an organization. That's maybe even worse. It's bad enough you give your money. But you give your life to it?

Hebrews 4:12: "For the Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of the heart."

2 Timothy 4:2-4, "Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove; rebuke; exhort with great patience and instruction, for the time will come when they'll not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to fables."

Act 2:42: "And they (the Christians of the early New Testament church) were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' doctrine, and to fellowship; to the breaking of bread; and, to prayer."

Ephesians 4:11-16: "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastor-teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, to the building of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." As a result, "We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, and by the craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we're to grow up in all aspects unto Him, Who is the head, even Christ, from Whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body, for the building up of itself in love."

Matthew 4:4, "And He answered and said, 'It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.''"

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another." This Scripture makes it very clear that you'll be held accountable at the Judgment Seat of Christ for esteeming of a church and a preacher who does not focus upon the exposition of the Scripture text, and who does not give you a knowledge of doctrine. You can only do that one way. You start at the beginning of a book, and you go through it verse-by-verse. That's your biggest clue. And secondly, periodically he stops, and gives you a summary of a doctrine. After a while, under that kind of instruction, you're going to be head and shoulders above everybody else in your knowledge of the mind of God. And that's what we're talking about.

Therefore, you esteem the person who stands up and teaches, and you know that he knows what he's talking about. He knows his job. And it's obvious that he's done a lot of preparation before he stood up. He's not giving you a bunch of one-line zippers in order to make you laugh and make you feel good.

One more: 1 Timothy 5:17-18: "Let the elder (the pastor-teacher) who rules well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing, and the laborer is worthy of his wages.'" It is upon this Scripture that you have heard me, from time to time, say, at the end of a service, "If we have instructed you in the Word of God, then we invite you to participate with us in supporting this ministry with your offerings at the box. If you have not received anything of instruction in the Word of God, you should not be putting anything in the way of offerings in." And if you've been doing that, for every time you've done it, it's blown off and lost forever, no good to you, and all it did was sustain an organization that is failing to perform its duty. You came there because you thought you were going to be instructed in the Word of God. You came there because it was a school that was going to enable you to know how to live life under the blessing of God. And if you have not received doctrinal instruction, which means that somebody says, "Here's the word in the original, and this is what it means." So, you are not listening to the cutesy-pooh opinions of preachers, but you're listening to the mind of God.

The problem with so many Christians is that they are all living the experience of the exodus generation all over again. The exodus generation came to Kadeshbarnea, the land flowing with milk and honey, and all they had to do was step across the line, and enjoy the greatest life they've ever known. But instead, because they were slaves to human viewpoint, and did not understand what great information God had given them in the revelation on Mount Sinai and the 10 Commandments, the basic principles of freedom, they turned their backs on the land of milk and honey, and went out there for 40 years, and wandered in the desert.

That's where most Christians are. And they're there because that's where their churches take them to. It is the preachers in the pulpit who are taking the people and wandering out in the desert. And yet, what do people do? Instead of saying, "I'm not going to pay for that, and walking out, they go right up to that offering box or that offering plate, and they can't give enough to sustain what is under the judgment of God.

**Grace**

Now, you will not come to this understanding on your own. You put these verses together that I've shown you this morning and read in your hearing, and you should be able to get the drift. It is the Word and the Word and the Word. That's what you live by. You do not live by all these barnacles of legalism, and all these barnacles of public relations that preachers and churches have attached to the Christian faith. They do not understand the grace of God. And they don't understand the grace of God, because they don't understand the principles of doctrine pertaining to the church age.

One man recently told me of the occasion when upon, attending church many many times, the meaning and the significance of grace suddenly hit him. Suddenly, it became clear to him. What had happened was that he made the connection with the distinctiveness of the church and the distinctiveness that was his position as a member of the royal family of God. Then he understood what grace was. But in the average church, you'll never hear about the distinctiveness of the church age and the distinctiveness of the Christian. What you'll hear will be all kinds of barnacles of Judaism, like tithing, placed on the Christian faith (the human effort) – the trying to be good instead of the power of God to make you good. The whole bit – the degrading of the person of Jesus Christ because He is treated as something less than the God man that He is.

It was the association with frankly grasping the difference between Israel and the church and the unique privileges; the distinctive powers; and, the position of the church-age believer that helped that man to grasp what grace is all about. This is a word which is spoken among Christians, usually without any sense (without any grasp) of the significance of that word. Anyone who does not understand the total separation of the church from Israel is forever attaching the debilitating barnacles of Judaism onto Christianity. Once the nature of the special creation of God, the church, is understood, grace becomes a thrilling, overpowering reality by which we can live our lives.

**Biblical Analogies between Israel and the Church**

We have pointed out to you that the Word of God makes several analogies between Israel and the church by comparing relationships between Christ and the church in a variety of comparisons, in order to make clear what it is to be a Christian – what it is to be in the body of Christ. First of all, we looked at the figure of Christ as a Shepherd and the Christian as His sheep. That figure conveys to us the personal guidance and care that Jesus Christ gives us. The Jew never had that kind of personal guidance from God.

Second, we had the figure of Christ as the vine and the Christians as the branches. The life of Christ flows through us. The Jew never had that in his experience.

Third was the figure of Christ as the chief cornerstone, and the Christians as living stones forming the temple of God. The Jew never had anything like that. He had a building out there that was called the temple of God, in which he acted in a certain way, to be in a holy attitude of life when he was engaged in that building. But here, we (Christians) are the holy temple of God. And the person who understands the position of grace that gave him that great privilege is the person who's going to say, "Wait a minute. I am a sacred vessel of God. Christ is my Lord, and my body is His temple. Christ is the cornerstone of my life. He is the one upon which I build everything.

That's why I came down so hard in summer camp with both the boys and the girls, in trying to distinguish association with human pigs and human princes and princesses. And the kids who took me seriously – they're not going to back into a grievous situation in their lives. They decide they understand that there's a difference, and that you can make it either way. But why would you want, as a person with Christ as the cornerstone of your life, and you physically His holy temple – why would you want to be associated with a pig? Where is that going to lead? And it starts with very small associations. It starts up here in the head, which accepts society as good as Jesus Christ. No, it's not as good. They accept that society's views are as good as God's views. No, they're not. They accept that there's no difference between one religion and another. Yes, there is. And Satan is very clever in that deception. And a Christian who does not understand that grace gives him the power to be led by the Spirit of God, is a Christian who knows nothing. And that Christian is a great potential for some great personal harm.

The next comparison we have, trying to clarify what Christ is to us: Christ, the high priest and the church-age believers are a kingdom of priests. Please notice what 1 Peter 2:5 says, "You also (you Christians), as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." You are in Christ. You are a born-again person. You're now a priest of God. This applies to both men and women. You're a living stone in the temple of God. You are His temple: "And you are being built up day-by-day as a spiritual house in which you serve as a priest of God, a holy priesthood, and in which you offer no longer animal (material) sacrifices, but spiritual sacrifices. And these are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, because you are in Him."

1 Peter 2:6-7: "For this is contained in Scripture: 'Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone. And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed (referring to Christ). This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected; this became the very cornerstone.'" The Jews rejected this Cornerstone. And the Jews, therefore, fell as a nation.

1 Peter 2:8: "Is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense? For they stumble because they are disobedient to the Word. And to this doom they were also appointed." How can you be obedient to the Word if you're not taught the Word of God? You can see the travesty of what's going on out there. So, don't come to me, and get all upset, because I'm identifying what is commonly observable with anybody with half a brain. You visit around, and you see what's going on in local church ministries. Satan, the public relations man of all times, has had a great victory. Sincere people? Yes, but sincerely wrong.

1 Peter 2:9: "But you, in contrast to these people, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." And only you, who are Christians, can really proclaim the excellencies of the power of God – the love of God, because only we know what it is to be brought out of darkness, out of sin, and into the enlightenment of the Word of the God. The Jews never had an experience like that. What an honor it is to be a priest of the Most High God.

Revelation 20:6 refers to this also, when it said: "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection. That, as you know, is the resurrection only of believers: "Over these, the second death has no power;" that is, second death is eternal separation from God in hell: "But they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him for 1,000 years."

Israel had a specialized priesthood. The church is entirely a priesthood. There is a big difference. Now, this is one thing the Reformers did get right. They understood that Israel had a specialized priesthood. If you're not of the family of Levi, you could not be in the priesthood. If you were not directly in the family of Aaron, you could not be a priest. The rest of the nation was out of it. And their access to God was through this specialized priesthood. Now along comes Christianity, and this whole room is filled with the priests of the living God. Every person here (every believer) is a priest of God. How can you mix up Israel and the church? How could you make that kind of a mistake? Because the preacher is sloppy, and he hasn't clarified the structure of Scripture to the people. That's how you make that mistake. Every believer in the church age is a priest, as we've just read in 1 Peter 2:5-9.

In the Old Testament, the priest entered his office with a ceremonial bath, signifying spiritual cleansing. The New Testament, a priest enters his ministry with the cleansing of regeneration comparable to that physical bath. Colossians 2:13: "And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of the flesh, we made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all of our transgressions." The regeneration was our spiritual cleansing, such as was symbolized by the physical bath given to a priest at a certain point of his inauguration into the priesthood.

Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing by the Holy Spirit." There, the New Testament entrance into priesthood is also by an act of washing. It is an act of washing, here, of regeneration – coming alive spiritually by faith in Christ.

Now, the Old Testament priest received this whole bath once. And the New Testament priest receives the bath of regeneration once. It never has to be repeated – once for all. But in the Old Testament, the priest was required to practice partial cleansing every time he went to minister to serve God. That's why that laver of brass containing water was out there in the courtyard. Before every priestly service, that priest had to go and wash his hands, and wash his feet. And this symbolized what? A new salvation. No. It symbolized temporal fellowship. And the New Testament requires the same kind of cleansing before we serve God: partial cleansing for temporal fellowship.

1 John 1:9 is the verse that points that out. It is comparable to the physical hand-washing and foot-washing of the priests in the Old Testament temple. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The Old Testament priest was appointed for his lifetime. Then it was over. But the New Testament priest, we are told, is a priest unto God forever. You people will never cease being the priests of the Most High God. You will be the priesthood in the millennium, and you'll be the priest of God forever.

Now surely, anybody here this morning can see that that's a vast difference between the way it was in Israel under Judaism and the way it is in the church under Christianity. The two are not the same. The Lord Jesus Christ rules as our high priest over a hierarchy of priests. Those priests are the church. Christ, as high priest, appoints, and He directs the Christian priests in their service. He tells us what our mission is. The priests of the Old Testament were told by the high priest: This is what you'll do. This is what you'll do. This is what you'll do." And at a certain point of your life, Christ, the High Priest, will tell you what to do.

Another point is that He may change that, and do something else, but the orders come from Him. The Christian, as a priest, will, in the millennium, also reign with Christ, Who is the high priest. You'll be the priesthood of the millennium. Israel's priesthood failed, but the Christians' priesthood is sustained by Christ, so it can never fail.

Now, since every Christian is a priest, and since Christ appoints what duties you will perform as a priest, it is clear that every one of us is in full-time Christian service. This term is used improperly when it talks about a missionary who is in full-time Christian service, and when it talks about a pastor who is in full-time Christian service. That term applies to all of us. If you are all priests, from the point of your salvation, then you are all part of the full-time ministry unto God.

**Christian Sacrifices**

Now, as we read a little a moment ago, we Christian priests do not sacrifice animals. We do not sacrifice these animals as a symbol anymore. We have spiritual sacrifices, not material sacrifices, though materials are used in the process of the sacrifices. You should know what the sacrifices are that you should be performing as a priest.

1. **The Sacrifice of Your Body**

Number one is the sacrifice of your body. Romans 12:1: "I urge you therefore, 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." And the idea of a spiritual service of worship means that it's a rational thing to do: "I urge you by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice:" "Here I am, Father. What do you want me to do? Do you want me to serve in some religious operation which is a rat hole – a rat hole, because it's not productive of spiritual maturity development and doctoral instruction? It's a rat hole because my money goes to support something that is not under the favor and the order of God. Where do you want me to invest my life? And how do you want me to use my body?

"Yes, I know you have the 10 Commandments, but they're very irritating, because they're negative. Anybody knows that what's negative is bad. We should be positive. And here you have all of these negative things: "Don't do this. Don't do that." And yet, those commandments deal with your body. And you will say, "You bet. God has it right. That's the way I'm going to do it." Or you can say, "Oh no, I'm surrounded by all these intellectual, sophisticated people. I see them up in the highest echelons of government, and in the lowest garbage dumps. Here, when we take our stuff to the dumps – they don't think the commandments of God have to be kept. I want to be part of what's out there – the sophisticated. That's the world, and it's very hard to understand why Christians want to be part of the world. Part of it is that they get tricked because that world comes into religious context. And when it's in a religious context, they lose sight of the fact that it's still the devil working. They can't believe that here it is, in this big church room, and it's the devil working a religious game.

However, if they'll remember the truth of the Word of God, and their doctrinal understanding, they'll get the difference. Your body belongs to God. Elsewhere, Scripture says, "You are bought with a price, the blood of Christ. You don't belong to yourself." Therefore, what you do with your body is of utmost concern to God. That's one of your sacrifice.

1. **The Sacrifice of Your Lips**

Second is the sacrifice of your lips. Hebrews 13:15:, "Through Him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God; that is, the fruit of lips that gives thanks to His name." Now this is something that you should be doing all the time: offering up the fruit of praise, and offering up thanksgiving to God: when you see that He has come to your assistance; when you see that He has brought to your mind something you almost forgot to do; when you see that He helped you find that thing that you can't find; and, when He comes through and makes a provision that you critically need in some way. You should not forget to continually be thanking Him. And one of the most loving, effective, honoring ways to thank Him is that on that Sunday, when we have the Lord's Supper. We have some people who never have a word of testimony of public thanksgiving. They have some reason: this reason; that reason; and, this reason. They kind of come for the entertainment: the show. Who's going to have something to say? They never would think of standing up and saying, "Here I am. I'm a priest and a prince of God. And I wish to thank Him before this congregation of believers, and the angels gathered here, for this thing which God has done for me." Sit down. "I'm a priestess of God, and I'm a princess of the Most High God and His royal family. And I'd like to praise Him before this assembly of believers, and the angels gathered here, for this thing that God has done for me – for this enlightenment, and for this good sense that He's finally brought to me: whatever."

It's not a small thing. I've had people who missed the point on Lord's Supper meetings and testimonies, who have come to our church, and they were very happy about the instruction. That was what they were looking for. That's the first thing. They should find that. And it's okay if you want to come in; listen to instruction; and, go out. And some people were like that. They don't want you to talk to them. They don't want you to greet them. And that's all right. Most people never talk to me after the service, but I don't get hurt about that. They come; they get the Word; and, they leave. That's it.

However, I've also had different reactions from people. I remember one man came and said, "Dr. Danish, we want to be instructed in the Word. The Lord's Supper is a big waste of time. Just do it, and get it out of the way." I said, "No, it's not a big waste of time. It's a practical opportunity for Christians publicly to offer the spiritual sacrifice of their lips of praise. And those who do it are ennobled for it. And they ennoble our hearts when they do it." And he didn't come back. He threw everything overboard because that one little phase of our operation was not pleasing to him. He didn't have an appreciation for the spiritual sacrifice of praise.

1. **The Sacrifice of Your Substance**

Then, there is a spiritual sacrifice of substance. Philippians 4:18: "But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance. I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent: a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." The apostle Paul is in prison. He is still carrying on his ministry. It is dependent upon financial support from the churches. Epaphroditus comes from the church in Philippi with a big offering. And this is what Paul, at the end of this letter, says: "I want to thank you for sending the money. It's just what I needed. It unties my hands. And this is an acceptable sacrifice on your part to God." This is one of the spiritual sacrifices – the sacrifice of your substance.

Now, what would you have thought if an Old Testament priest took an animal and sacrificed it on the altar of Balaam? You'd recoil with horror. "How can you do that – performing this holy ritual of God on a pagan altar? And how many Christians drop their money in the offering plate or in the offering box where they have not been taught the Word of God in that service, and where the whole ministry is one program and one device and one deception and one substitution for everything but the thing that people need – to have the mind of Christ. And only born-again people can have that mind. What a tragedy that, once you're capable of receiving the mind of Christ, you still go El Stupidoso through your life, and tolerate it, and pay for it, when you ought to be saying, "That's it. If you don't teach me, you don't get my money."

Some churches do not pay a pastor any salary. This is a biblical thing to do. Paul, in another place (1 Corinthians 9:14) says, "I have a right to live by the returns of the gospel that I preach." Some churches do that. Everybody gives a preacher something according to how good the sermon was. That's his salary. I'm not fond of that method. I'm not bold enough to do it. But they're on the right track. They have the right idea. It's to be connected with what God has done: sacrifice of substance. This is one of the greatest spiritual sacrifices you can make. And I'm always humbled when some Christian comes up, like one man did at the picnic, and said, "I just want to tell you: this is in my plan. This funding is coming. I'm setting it up, and I want you to start thinking how to use it. You can count on it." That is the sacrifice of substance.

1. **The Sacrifice of Your Good Works**

Then there is the spiritual sacrifice of good works. Hebrews 13:16: "And do not neglect doing good, and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." This is divine good works. This is the product of the Holy Spirit leading you – not just everything just because it's good, but because it's God's providing and leading you in a divine good work. That is a spiritual sacrifice. And that is the core of what we do. We serve God by all these divine good works of service that He has enabled us to have the capacity to do (the ability to do). And then He guides us to do it with competency.

Now, there is a factor here that requires our closer attention. The New Testament priest is appointed to worship God. And boy, do we go far afield here. What is worship of God? Here's where the professional preacher has his heyday. Here's where he plays it to the hilt, and enriches himself beyond his fondest dreams. And here again, the Old Testament priests were always fearful of strange fire – that which supposedly was the holy fire of God, and the burning of the sacrifices, when, in fact, it was the fire of man, like the Pagans would create. And it was called strange fire because it was a fire of Satan. The New Testament priest is appointed to worship God. That is a primary reason for living. Please join us tonight as we pursue that.

Father, we thank You for Your grace and Your care upon us that has enabled us to be something that we could not be without that grace. We thank You that we have the Word of God – these principles of guidance that reflect to us Your thinking.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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