

## The Bond Of Perfection: Sacrifice

### Living Sacrifices as a Sweet Smelling Aroma

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No doubt most of you are aware that the US government shutdown has finally ended. And again, being overseas wondering if it was going to impact our ability to get home, we were certainly glad to hear this, and the airports were somewhat not impacted, so we were able to get back home. But the shutdown was due to concern over the budget, the growing US debt now at \$38 trillion and growing, which is just a fraction, by the way, of the estimated some \$338 trillion debt held worldwide. It is an amazing number.

Now, there are a lot of reasons for the growth of this debt, but underlying them all is one thing. Turn with me to I Peter 1. Now at the Feast, we examined the one thing God wants from us more than anything else. Do you remember what it is? Faith? Hope? Love? Obedience? Well, I contend the one thing that God wants from us more than anything else is that which He first gave to us: sacrifice.

In I Peter 1:18-19, Peter tells us we were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ. We are going to read verse 20 now.

**I Peter 1:20** He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in these last times for you.

This was written much later, but this actually records one of the earliest events in the entire Bible. This is a mic-dropping statement, brethren. Before the creation account in Genesis, God the Father and Jesus Christ made the plan of sacrifice by which they would redeem mankind. And I contend the bottom line on top of the entire Bible could be summarized as God's active plan to recreate Himself through sacrifice. Sacrifice was foreordained, and sacrifice is the foundation for mankind's salvation.

It is only through God's sacrifice that we have the opportunity to even know Him, and it is only through our response of sacrifices that we are being transformed, created into His very image. And as we will see today, there are far more scriptures about sacrifice than anything else, I would contend. Now, they do not outright use the word sacrifice. There is a different English word used throughout the Book that is much better understood as sacrifice. We will see this in a bit, and we will even read some scriptures substituting the word to prove this point.

Now God's advanced plan of sacrifice is first recorded in the Book in order in Genesis 3:15. Immediately after sin occurred, we find a prophecy that outlines God's planned sacrifice to defeat sin and Satan. And then one chapter over, verse 4, Abel offers a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

And now we do not see this recorded, but we know from the fact, that since he was able to offer a more excellent sacrifice in faith, that God had instructed Adam, Eve, Abel, Cain on His requirements for proper sacrifice. We know this from Hebrews.

Throughout Genesis, we see the sacrifices and offerings of our forefathers. All those happen before we get to the book of Leviticus, which actually provides the detailed sacrificial requirements of the priesthood.

As a recap, in Leviticus 1 through 5, we find the instruction for the five different sacrificial offerings. Remember, they are the burnt, the grain or meal offering, peace offering, sin, and trespass offerings. For much more detail, I am going to once again point you to John Ritenbaugh's series on the offerings found on the CGG website.

But the first three offerings—it is very important—these are different. These are grouped together, and they were actually a sweet-smelling offering to God. They had a sweet-smelling aroma. Why? Because there was no sin found in them. They were offered in devotion to God on behalf of the worshipper.

The last two, which are found in Leviticus 4 and 5, were the sin and trespass offerings, which were burned outside the camp because it emphasizes God's

disgust for sin and the fact that sin actually separates. That is what sin produces. It separates us from God.

We know that Jesus Christ is the object of all the sacrificial offerings. The burnt offering pictures His perfect devotion and obedience to God in keeping the first four commandments. We know the meal offering depicts perfect devotion and obedience in keeping the remaining six commandments, which apply to relationships and the service to man. And then the peace offering shows the perfect communion produced with the first two together. To be acceptable, the burnt offering and the meal offering had to always be together.

We have to remember that you could not do one or the other; you had to do both, the burnt offering and the meal offering, and it even talks about the fact that the meal offering belonged to the burnt offering. If you go back and read it, it says, with the burnt offering, with their respective or its required grain offering or meal offering. It is very interesting. It had to be done together.

Now many, including Josephus, estimate the total number of animals sacrificed on a single high holy day was in the magnitude of hundreds of thousands if not millions of animals on a single day. Can we even begin to imagine all the animals that were sacrificed in all those years leading up to Jesus Christ's sacrifice? What was the purpose of the millions, perhaps billions, of animals that were sacrificed across all those years in accordance to the Levitical law?

And we know from Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:11, that whatever things were written before were written for our learning. And all these things happened to them as examples. They are written for our admonition. What are we to learn from all of those sacrifices?

Well, those animals were sacrificed for us in the end-time church as a reminder. They are part of a great cloud of witnesses, we could say, before us. They are a teaching tool whereby we learn about the character, the mind, and the attitude of Jesus Christ.

Long before the ultimate sacrifice, God started laying out this groundwork by which He was going to recreate Himself, a groundwork of sacrifice by

which we are saved and by which we are transformed through our living sacrifices to become just like Him.

Turn with me to Hebrews 10. Now we know God's people were called to a covenant of sacrifice. We see this in multiple places, including Psalm 50, verses 4 and 5. It reads,

**Psalm 50:5** "Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by My sacrifice."

Jesus tells us Himself in Luke 22,

**Luke 22:20** "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."

Let us pick up Hebrews 10 and read a few scriptures here.

**Hebrews 10:1-6** For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered, for the worshipers, once purified, would have no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure."

The repeated sacrificial offerings of animals found in Leviticus could never take away sins, brethren. The penalty for mankind's sin is mankind's death. The value of the life of an animal was not even close to the value of the life of a person.

And we could tie back to our beginning here in the world's debt problem. Why does it exist? Because of lack of sacrifice to put others first, delay gratification, and live within our own means.

But all that monetary debt is *nothing* compared to all the debt of the world's sins. Before the foundation of the world, God planned for a payment so large it cannot be measured in trillions or even quadrillions or even centillions. God brought an investment measured in googolplex. Probably never heard that word. I had to look it up. It is a number so large it is impossible to fully write it out.

This one payment was so large it will satisfy the cost of all the sins of all mankind, for all of the world, for all of time. When Jesus Christ, God the Son, came into the world, God provided Him a human body, we read here, which enabled Him to serve God's will and be our sacrifice once for all.

**Hebrews 10:10** By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Over three chapters now to Hebrews 13, as we are again reminded of our covenant of sacrifice, and *Jesus, who is the offerer, the offering, and our faithful High Priest*. It is a lot to get our head around.

Let us pick up Hebrews 13, verse 11 and 12.

**Hebrews 13:11-12** For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

So we know Jesus personified the intent of the Levitical sacrifices as He lived each day as a living sacrifice in devotion to God and service to man. He was a perfect burnt, grain, and peace offering, which are the sweet-smelling savor offerings to God. And His perfect life as a burnt, meal, and peace offering qualified Him to be the once-for-all sin and trespass offering. So how are we to respond to such a great sacrifice?

Picking up Hebrews 13, verse 15.

**Hebrews 13:15** Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

We respond to God's unmerited sacrifice with our sacrifice of praise, thanks, and humble repentance. We acknowledge our sins. We ask for forgiveness, and we join a covenant of sacrifice with God as we obey His law and work hard to overcome our carnal, human, selfish nature. When we respond to God's ultimate sacrifice with our daily sacrifices of obedience, prayer, praise, and mindshare, we then receive His presence and enabling Spirit.

You can jot down I John 3:24, which reads, "Whoever keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." And we can tie into Ronny's message on our flourishing relationship with God. It starts first with God's sacrifice, right? And then it is our sacrifice, our burnt offerings in devotion and obedience to Him, which allows Him then to come and dwell with us, which sets the stage for the next sacrifices.

So these daily acts of sacrifice are how we overcome, actually how God *helps* us overcome and transforms that self-focused carnal nature that is enmity against God into a God-focused nature, into an others-focused nature. And little by little, with each sacrifice to Him, we gradually put to death our carnal nature. This is why it is so important for us to give daily acts of sacrifice to God: prayer, thanksgiving, meditation, obedience. Each and every act of sacrifice is helping us to overcome that carnal nature and become more like God. Sacrifice is how God creates us into His image.

Let us read next about the sacrifices to others.

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

Here is the other side of the coin, so to speak. Our required sacrifices in devotion to God through the service to man. All of our sacrifices are to be in devotion to God, brethren. Our sacrifices or devotion to God and the service

to God are the burnt offerings. Our sacrifices and devotion to God and the service to man are the meal or grain offerings, but they are all done in devotion to God.

Remember, the burnt offering, devotion to God, and the service to God, was *unacceptable*, it was *worthless* without the proper grain offering, sacrifices of devotion to God, and the service to man. Our sacrifices to each other—daily sacrifices—include controlling our mind, bridling our tongue, giving of our time and resources, forbearance, and forgiving for any wrongdoing. And the hardest one, sacrificing our egos and accepting the loss of self-esteem to always keep the peace.

Here in Hebrews 13:12-16, Paul is outlining the proper order of sacrifice in our life, which is interesting in that it is slightly different from the initial order given in Leviticus of the burnt, grain, peace, sin, and trespass offerings. Why is that? Well, the order here in Hebrews 13 is the same found in Leviticus 9, which records the first observance of the Aaronic priesthood.

In both Leviticus 9 and in Hebrews 13:12, we see that first comes God's sacrifice. The sin and trespass offering has to come first to open a door and enable our relationship with God. We could never approach God as a whole burnt offering in complete devotion to God until Jesus Christ's sin offering suffered outside the gate, opened the door to our relationship with God. That had to come first.

And once that happens, our response of sacrifices and repentance and devotion to God found in Hebrews 13:15 represent the burnt offering, our complete devotion and obedience to God. That comes next and results in God with His enabling Spirit to come right into our very temple, our body. We can jot down I Corinthians 6:19-20. And then right on top, just like the burnt offering and a meal offering happened always together, right on top, enabled by His Spirit, is Hebrews 13:16, our sacrifices and service to man representing the grain offering.

The result is seen in the peace offering of unity and peace in our relationship with God the Father, Jesus Christ, and Their extended Family, the Body of Christ. And these sacrifices on God's table symbolize a complete meal that is indeed a sweet-smelling aroma to God.

Let us read on here the conclusion in verses 20 and 21.

**Hebrews 13:20-21** Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Over to Ephesians 5 now as we tie something together that might help us unlock the innumerable scriptures on sacrifice.

**Ephesians 5:1-2** Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

So sweet-smelling aroma here is a clue; it tells us this is referring back to the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering.

Now, there is an underlying Greek word here that I contend would be much better translated sacrifice. You know what it is? I am going to reread this verse substituting sacrifice to see how it fits. And I am going to put sacrifice in brackets as I do this throughout these scriptures, so that you will know that I am actually making a substitution here. Here we go.

**Ephesians 5:1-2** Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in [sacrifice], as Christ also has [sacrificed for] us and given Himself for us, an offering and a [sacrifice] to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Fits pretty good, does it not?

Our modern English word love is so watered down it is practically worthless. It reflects mere emotion and a word that is conveniently and carelessly thrown around with no backing action. That is why we see marriage failing so many times. It is failing so well in America, I should say. But even worse, love is often confused with the sin of lust.

Over to II John 1 now, please; we are going to look at another scripture. God's sacrificial love extends far beyond emotion and reflects a constant action of sacrifice to always do what is best for the God Family.

How do we become imitators of God as dear children? Paul tells us we walk in sacrifice as Christ [sacrificed], as an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. We complete the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the peace offering. That is how, brethren.

John is going to tell us to do some walking here too. The last scripture was about walking, following Christ. Let us pick this one up.

**II John 6** This is [sacrifice], that we walk according to His commandments.

God's love is sacrifice. His sacrifice, the sin offering, comes first, and then our sacrifices to Him, the burnt offering of obedience and devotion, come next.

Let us go back to I John 4.

**I John 4:19** We [sacrifice for] Him because He first [sacrificed for] us.

Fits pretty well, does it not?

We can exchange love for sacrifice for there. And remembering a burnt offering was not acceptable without the corresponding meal offering, our sacrifices to each other come right on top of the foundation of the burnt offering and His enabling Spirit through our relationship with Him.

Let us look at a few more now.

**I John 3:16** By this we know [sacrifice], because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Let us go to I John 4:9 through 12.

**I John 4:9-12** In this the [sacrifice] of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. And this is [sacrifice], not that we [sacrificed for] God, but that He [sacrificed for] us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so [sacrificed for] us, we also ought to [sacrifice for] one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we [sacrifice for] one another, God abides in us, and His way of [sacrifice] has been perfected in us.

Well, we could do this all day, by the way, but we are going to stop with one more.

**John 15:12-13** This is My commandment that you [sacrifice for] one another as I have [sacrificed for] you. Greater [sacrifice] has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Brethren, sacrifice is not just the one thing; sacrifice is *everything*. Sacrifice by definition requires a cost: the giving up of something valuable to us for a greater benefit of something or someone else. Sacrifice requires a denial of what we want, a loss of something we value, and/or a suffering we would much rather avoid. Our carnal self-focused mind absolutely hates sacrifice.

Whenever we have self-concern, it creates a fear of losing that thing we value the most: our self-esteem. Our daily challenge, brethren, is overcoming this fear of loss and learning to reframe sacrifice as an investment to focus on the spiritual outcome of sacrifice as it produces lasting spiritual dividends of eternal life. This is what God the Father and Jesus Christ did before the foundation of the world. They made a huge commitment to the greatest investment of all time to cover the sins of the entire world for all time.

And remember, each of us is a gift to each of us in the greater church of God. How so? Well, it is through our imperfections, our misunderstandings, our many mistakes that we actually create the opportunity to learn how to make spiritual investments to give unmerited sacrifice.

You see, we cannot learn how to give unmerited sacrifice to God. Every sacrifice we give to God is absolutely merited and that much more. We have to learn unmerited sacrifice by giving to people who are undeserving, who are imperfect, who have done something they should not have done. That is how we become like God. God beings by definition give unmerited sacrifice.

It is what Jesus Christ did for us. We did not deserve His sacrifice. We still do not deserve His sacrifice. We fall far short from it, and we always will.

Let us go to Romans 12. The next time somebody slights us, I want us to reframe that as an opportunity for an investment in an unmerited sacrifice. That is exactly what it is. That is what forgiveness is. It does not have to be merited, right? Forgiveness is often an unmerited act that we are extending to someone else who made a horrible mistake.

**Romans 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren. . .

I beg you, Paul is saying here. That is the meaning behind that word beseech. I beg! He is yelling, I beg you, brethren!

**Romans 12:1-2** . . . by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 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 is telling us how we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, and it is through our daily sacrifices in the service to God and service to fellow man. And then for the remainder of this chapter, actually starting in verse 9 through 21, Paul expounds on the daily sacrifices that will help transform us to be like God. And I am going to pull out just a few of these. You can kind of follow along here as I go through these, starting in verse 10 all the way to the end of the chapter.

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another. Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be steadfast in prayer.

Give to those in need. Be given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Maintain positive thoughts that generate good works even to those that are undeserving.

Do everything possible to submit to others and live peaceably with all men. See any conflict as your fault, not their fault—your fault—and do good works to those that do not deserve it to create an environment for reconciliation and peace. Do not avenge yourselves. Do nothing in wrath or retaliation, but give the sacrifice of prayer and forgiveness for the person that has wronged us.

Do good to all people, even to those that do evil to us, to give them unmerited good works to promote peace. Overcome evil with good.

There is so much packed into those scriptures.

Summarizing, do not let any injury received from others allow you to abandon your calling to become like God, to give unmerited sacrifice. Be mild, kind, forgiving. Let any injury or wrongdoing be an opportunity to demonstrate God's Spirit in you, and that spirit of unmerited sacrifice in you. Do not become enraged or engaged in words or actions or attitudes of retaliation. Overcome evil with good. Demonstrate God living in you by walking in His Spirit of unmerited sacrifice and loving kindness.

Over to Colossians 3. I realize it is easier said than done, brethren. It is actually easier for us to mimic the burnt offering—easier in comparison, mind you—in that God *deserves* all of our sacrifice. He has done so much for us. He is so perfect. We cannot possibly give Him enough. It is a lot harder in comparison to give unmerited sacrifices to people who have treated us badly, to people who do not deserve it.

But that is what being like God is. It is tough. It is a high bar. That is what we are called to do.

**Colossians 3:10** and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

**Colossians 3:12-15** Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on [sacrifice], which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Godly love is unmerited sacrifice. Unmerited sacrifice is indeed the bond of perfection. Our carnal nature hates sacrifice, and we especially hate unmerited sacrifice. But we must remember, our burnt offerings are of no value to God without the right underlying attitude which drives the required grain offering in the service to man. All our obedience, prayer, praise, devotion, and service to God is of no value without the required sacrifice and service to man.

We must learn the way of God, which is to give both merited sacrifices, of course, but unmerited sacrifices as well. This is what Paul is actually summarizing in I Corinthians 13. If we have not [sacrifice], then we are nothing. In fact, in verse 3 (I just picked this up this morning) Paul says, "Though I give my body to be burned, but have not love [sacrifice], it profits me nothing."

Is he literally pointing to the burnt offering in service to God, suggesting it is nothing without the required grain offering and sacrifice and service to man? It is pretty interesting when you read that verse. Though I give my body to be burned, but have not love [sacrifice], it is nothing.

Over to Galatians 5, where we will start to conclude. We will start in verse 13.

**Galatians 5:13-14** For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through

[sacrifice] serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: you shall [sacrifice for] your neighbor as yourself.

Brethren, when we walk in God's Spirit of unmerited sacrifice each day, we are gradually putting our self-focused carnal spirit to death. That is the sacrifice that is happening, right? We are becoming more God-focused; we are becoming more others-focused, and we are putting that carnal selfish spirit to death as we become more like God.

Skipping to verse 22 now.

**Galatians 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is [sacrifice], . . .

**Galatians 5:24-25** And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Those who are Christ's, those who have been crucified with Christ and thereby Christ lives in them, they have crucified and sacrificed their carnal selfish spirit. They have replaced Satan's way of get in order to live in God's sacrificial spirit of give. We could actually describe all of the fruits of God's Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 as the fruit of humble sacrifice, devotion to God shown through the service to man. And God willing, we will tap into that maybe in the future.

Brethren, we will end where we began. The one thing God wants more than anything else is that which He first gave to us: sacrifice. We must follow Brother Peter's admonition in I Peter 2, for we are being built up as a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. With each and every daily sacrifice of devotion to God through our service to God—our burnt offerings—and through each daily sacrifice and devotion to God through the unmerited service to man—our grain offerings—we are being transformed into the fullness of Jesus Christ.