

Knowing Christ (Part 2)

The Fellowship of His Sufferings

John W. Ritenbaugh

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In the sermon I gave last week, we saw some aspects of death and suffering as applied to a Christian seeking to know God. We saw that very much of Christ's active redemption He did on our behalf is not just substitutionary. In other words, it is not just taking our place in a death we otherwise would have had to face, but is also representative.

It is representative in that He preceded us in a way of life that we must follow to become in His image in order to be prepared for the Kingdom of God. I called it the "*archegos* principle," because an *archegos* is one who goes before and does things so that others may follow behind and do the same things that he did.

With this concept, death is applied to us in two ways in the Bible. The first is a declaration of a converted person being considered dead by God because we have repented and our sins are forgiven. Thus the law has no claim on our lives. It is as though we are *dead to the law*, like we are non-existent as far as the law is concerned. We then have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

This is really a legal maneuver on God's part. It is a gift from God. We have done absolutely nothing to earn it. All we have done is express faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and maybe we did turn our lives just a little wee bit and began doing some things we were not doing before. But God then looked at us as though we are "dead to the law."

The second aspect of death requires a great deal more action on our part, and this is the putting to death the sins of the members of our body. We went over two words: One was "mortify," appearing in Romans 8, and the other one appearing in Colossians 3. We are to mortify—to put to death—the flesh.

We all understand from our own experiences that this can be very painful at times because our flesh does not want to give up its deeply-ingrained, self-satisfying habits. This of course produces suffering to some degree because denying oneself of satisfaction makes a person uncomfortable, to say the least.

Paul also said that he wanted to know the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10). Now Christ suffered because He was righteous. He did not bring suffering upon Himself

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because of His sin, but because of His obedience to God, which ran counter to the way of this world. The result was persecution. The world does not like someone who lives righteously. Persecution is produced from being right.

In addition to that, Christ suffered because He strove to do good. Because He resisted human nature, Satan, and this world for an entire lifetime, that also brought upon Him a measure of suffering. Now it was into *this* that Paul wanted to come in fellowship. Please do not misunderstand. Paul did not want to suffer. Nobody wants to suffer, but yet suffering is inevitable because of sin, because of evil.

Therefore we are going to suffer either from our own sins, from somebody else's sins, or we are going to suffer because we are righteous, and that is the kind of fellowship Paul wanted to enter into. He did not want to suffer because of his sin. He did not want to suffer because other people were bringing this upon him, unless it was being brought upon him because of his obedience.

Living righteously does not guarantee us a life free from pain. We are going to suffer as a result of the sins of others as well as the hangover from our own sins. That is another thing which is very clearly shown in the Bible. We have to expect that it is going to come.

The solution to eliminating evil, which exists because of sin, is to begin with each individual making the effort to govern himself so as not to produce evil in his own life. Evil will never stop being a presence on the earth as long as people are sinning, and so we cannot wait for the government to do it. That is what the welfare mentality does. It waits for somebody else to do it.

God shows us very clearly it must be done by us, and not by making other people do it. We must make ourselves quit sinning. There is hardly ever an easy, painless way. The Bible shows there is only one way to go, and that is the straight and narrow way—the road less traveled. But then again, human nature always wants to avoid it at all costs.

If we are going to follow Christ, and if we are going to be in the image of God, we have got to exercise our faith that God will be with us, set our will, be courageous, and go on. There is no other course of action that will accomplish the will of God. Do you remember what God said to Joshua as they were going into the land? God said, "Be you very courageous." Those people had to screw up their courage, and set their will to overcome. It is faith that should motivate us to do that.

We may anticipate the pain of denying our body its satisfaction. We can have fear of

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rejection or outright persecution from people we no longer run with because we no longer accept their lifestyle as our own. We can have a fear of the loss of income, and all that might precipitate because of keeping the Sabbath or keeping the holy days, or of tithing. Those things can be of daunting concern, and our courage slips away.

But brethren, this is what is required of us. Is it any different from what Jesus Christ has already faced? Remember, He is called the *archegos*. He went before us, and even though He had faith like we can only dream about, He still had to screw up His courage to go through circumstances and situations of life.

He had to set His will, and He *still* said to God, "Please make this cup to pass from Me." He was frightened, but He overcame. He said, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Your will be done." You can tell very clearly what His will was. That ought to tell us right away that there is going to be a great deal of suffering that is associated with Christianity. Christ went through things like we do, and the only difference is not in principle, but rather in degree, in the intensity, of what is faced.

Philippians 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

From what we just read that Christ did arises another representative act of Christ—one that is extremely important in this process of bringing us to true holiness, of knowing God, and being in the image of God. Christ's sacrifice began when He voluntarily gave up the right to the power, the glory, and the privileges of His office as Creator and second in command of all the universe. That was quite a sacrifice, because He could have died and lost it all. He could have sinned, and that would have been "all she wrote."

Would there ever have been anybody who ever gave up more than He did, who put more on the line, who had to trust by faith in the One that was going to be remaining to save Him, to empower Him, to strengthen Him, to be with Him, to help Him set His courage, to help Him resist sin, to help Him overcome His fear?

If you think that you have feelings, just imagine the acuteness of the feelings of One whose mind was absolutely perfect and clear. He understood the ramifications of

everything He did, and what was going to happen as a result of what He did. He knew that as He acted, He was consigning Himself to a terrible death at every step. I think that would dog me. It would be such a burden to carry that I do not think that I could.

This began when that decision was made by Him, and then it proceeded through all that is encompassed within His volunteering—like being subject to place and time to be the Messenger of the covenant, to be mankind's sinless Savior, and all the preparations He had to go through to be our High Priest. He learned all this through suffering. That was what completed Him for the job that He had never held before.

He had never been High Priest, so *They* deemed it necessary that He be trained for that position. That training was going to require Him to become a man and have to experience life as a human being. What He would go through then would be a suffering circumstance, but out of it would come a preparation.

John 4:23-24 But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

This concept of the sacrificial element in Christian life runs all through the New Testament. This particular episode must have taken place very early in Jesus' ministry, and I am sure that when it took place the disciples did not grasp the concept He was putting forth at the time. The undercurrent of the conversation between Christ and the woman involved was who had the better religion, or where was the better place to worship.

Consider what we understand about the religions of that day, whether it was the Samaritan, the Greek, the Roman, the Babylonian, or the Hebrew religion. Every one of them was similar in some regards. First of all, they were focused on a place of worship. Usually that place was a magnificent temple such as the one in Jerusalem, or the many temples that the Greeks and Romans built. Some of these survive to this day, such as the great temple of Diana in Ephesus, and some in other cities of Asia Minor. There was always a central place of worship.

In addition to that, there was also a magnificently garbed "closed" priesthood. For instance, Israel's was closed to anybody except from the family of Aaron. You not only had to be a Levite, but even if you were a Levite, that did not guarantee that you could be a priest. If you were not of Aaron's family, the priesthood was closed to you. They

were regal in all of their finery. It was the same in the other religions as well.

So we have a place of worship, and we have a magnificently garbed and closed priesthood. In addition to that there was an elaborate and sometimes bloody and often sensual ritual. Now, except for Judaism, there was no concern in these religions for morality and ethics. There was no concern for peoples' relationships with each other. To the pagans, religion was only a means of getting something from a god, and making people feel good.

Now into that circumstance steps a new religion: Christianity, with no temple, no altar, no priesthood, no sacrifice, no unique clothing on those who were the ministers, no ritual, and no appeal to the senses. Instead it focused on a unique Individual, and a vision of a kingdom that He was going to establish sometime in the unspecified future.

That message said it was of the spirit if the flesh (mankind) is going to be saved. That is what Jesus said here. That was His answer to this woman who said, "You people worship in Jerusalem, but we worship in Mount Gerizim." By that she was implying, "Our religion is better than yours [Judaism]." Maybe in many ways it was. That is the sad thing there.

What Jesus is teaching here is that God is more concerned with the *content* of the religion, what it produces, and how people worship, than He is about *where* they worship. I am here to tell you that it only appeared on the surface to those who did not understand what to look for in Christianity, that it had none of these elements, because it *did*. The New Testament is literally filled with the accoutrements of sacrifice, but those accoutrements for the New Testament church are most assuredly there, but they have been shifted from the physical to the spiritual.

This sermon is going to concern itself with this principle of sacrifice because it is very important to suffering as Christ suffered. If we do not sacrifice, I can guarantee you we are not going to enter into the fellowship of Christ's suffering. It is the key element that is so important to God's way of life He intends we live, that God introduced sacrifice in the third chapter of the Bible, when you understand the prophecy about Christ. It is foundational to God's way of life.

Unless we, by faith, are willing to screw up our courage, step out, and be willing to suffer, I can guarantee you that we are not going to enter into the fellowship of Christ's suffering, and we probably will not ever be in the image of God, and we will not know Him.

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I Peter 2:4-5 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, you [brothers, fellow Christians] also, as lively [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

In verse 5 Peter piles up his metaphors in a profusion, almost careless of how it might sound to our ears. Please do not be misled into thinking that he is not serious about his instruction here. It is *very* important that we understand the practical ramifications of this spiritual reality. It is of the spirit if the flesh is to be saved.

In one sentence that contains only 43 words (in the New King James, anyway), Peter implies the existence of a High Priest—the One we come to—and he shows that Christians are the temple *and* a priesthood. Connect those two together. Christians are the temple and the priesthood that offers up spiritual sacrifices. Peter refers to us a *living* stones in a *spiritual* house.

Ephesians 2:20-22 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

That clarifies some of what Peter said. Here we are collectively referred to as a *spiritual* temple. We are fitly framed together, and we grow into a holy temple—a spiritual temple.

From the Old Testament, we can understand that God was considered to live in the Temple, that it was His dwelling place. In verse 22 Paul makes that apply to you and me directly—"In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." You can begin to see why Jesus said, "You do not have to worry about Jerusalem anymore. God is looking for people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth." This reinforces what He Himself said on that last night before His crucifixion. He said "We will come (meaning the Father and the Son) and make our abode (our dwelling place) in **you**." And so God is not dwelling in a material temple anymore. He is dwelling in His people, and that begins to make us the temple.

Peter refers to us as living stones in a spiritual house. Now whether these men used the illustration of a body or a building, what they were trying to get across is the concept that God has put us into a community—a community that is interdependent, and it interacts

with each other. The stones are *living*, see, so we affect one another with our lives. We affect one another with what we do.

There is no doubt that Paul, in making this description, had the Jerusalem Temple in mind whenever he wrote this. In I Corinthians 3:11 Paul used the term "foundation" for Jesus Christ. Peter says Jesus Christ is the corner stone. You can see they shifted the metaphors around and put Christ where they felt it will do the best good as a teaching vehicle. In Ephesians 2, it was that the apostles and the prophets become part of the foundation.

In Ephesians 2 there is a significant use of a specialized word, and it is very helpful to understand this. Paul uses the word *naos* (as transliterated into English) to indicate "temple," rather than the word *heiron*, because *heiron* indicates the *entire* temple; whereas we are shown to be built into the *naos*, or the *inner shrine* of the temple.

This is important to understand in your relationship with God, because it was in the *inner shrine* where the priesthood performed its functions. Remember, we are a *spiritual* priesthood. It is necessary that the priesthood be there, because it must have the closest of access to God in order to perform its duties. God's temple is actually a group of people.

I Corinthians 3:16-17 Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Paul shifts the metaphor here so that the individual Christian is seen as the temple of God, even as Jesus had taught earlier that God would dwell in us individually. You put the whole context together to come to understand this.

I am going through this so that when you study the Bible you will understand the apostles sometimes seemingly played fast and loose with the way they worded things. You might not get the right instruction out of it if you do not understand that they shifted these metaphors around as it pleased them to illustrate something.

Paul's concern here is that each Christian has to see that though God is putting together a community, each Christian is personally responsible for the purity, for the strength, for the holiness of that community, and he says that we are not to defile *our* temple. We are responsible for keeping *us* holy. If everybody carries out their responsibility, then the whole temple will be holy because it is a community interacting with one another.

God does not dwell in us for no purpose at all. He is using us, and also requiring of us that we carry out functions empowered by His Spirit in order to fulfill His purpose. Something is being built. We can see this when we examine I Corinthians 3 a little bit more carefully.

I Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.

That is how I know the temple in verses 16 and 17 is the individual, not the whole temple; not even the inner shrine. It is the individual, because that becomes the subject—"Let every man take heed how *he* builds thereupon." Paul uses, then, master-builder, foundation, building, and admonishes us to take care how we build. Then he makes comparisons in the next several verses as to the quality of the construction, and he warns that the quality of our work is being tested. That is a responsibility of the priest—the priesthood.

II Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Here the metaphor shifts back again, and the temple is seen *collectively*. What is being built, or developed, is further described by Peter as being *a royal priesthood, a holy nation*. He did not say it there, but we add to this *a family*. So in one sense we already are a temple, a priesthood, and a nation, but the completion of the project has not yet been reached. It is a work in process.

We are priests by virtue of our calling and our consecration to function for men in behalf of God. The word "priest" is not a Hebrew word. It is not a Greek word either. It is an English word that comes to us from the Latin, and it means "a bridge-builder. That very aptly describes what a priest's responsibility and function is. The function of a priest is to intercede for men so as to build a bridge to God so that there can be access to Him, and to have a relationship with Him. II Peter 2:5 confirms that we were called to be priests, even as Israel was called to be a nation of priests in Exodus 19.

Hebrews 9:6-9 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood,

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which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure [symbol] for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.

We all understand that under the Old Covenant ceremonies, God placed His presence in the Holy of Holies, and He was perceived to live there. You understand that the Tabernacle and the Temple later on were divided into two rooms. There was the Holy Place, which was the first room, and the Holy of Holies, which was the second room. They were divided by a curtain that fell down between the two of them.

We also understand that the priests sacrificed animals, but maybe we did not understand that only priests could function in the Holy Place—the first room. Only priests could function there. In fact, only *priests* were permitted in there, and only the High Priest could go into the Holy of Holies, and he only one time a year, on the Day of Atonement.

The ramification of that is it left everybody else on the outside looking in. Those people—all the rest of Israel, at least physically—were out in the cold. They were not permitted to enter the Tabernacle or the Temple, let alone the Holy of Holies, so they were effectively cut off from access to God. The priest could intercede for the people. He could come near because of his consecration as a priest, but he could not bring them there personally.

Brethren, in principle, it is no different today, except for one thing—God is no longer operating with the single nation of Israel. He is operating with the church in terms of a worldwide basis, but still only through one single spiritual entity. That spiritual entity is the church of God—which is the temple, which is the spiritual priesthood. The unconverted world still does not have access to Him even as the unconverted Israelite, or the unconsecrated Israelite, had no access to Him except through the priests. The rest of the world, brethren, is still on the outside looking in.

Only a very tiny group of people—His spiritual priesthood—actually has access to God. That is mind-boggling! We can know this is true because He took the pains in the Old Testament to write these things down so that we can see the pattern. As I said earlier, God has not done this for no purpose. He has not extended this benefit to such a small group in order to see them fritter it away, lazily doing nothing. They have to be

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employed, functioning as a priest, and a priest has to sacrifice. He has to do it in order to build bridges, and he has to lay down his life, as it were, in order to make it possible for others to have access to the same God that we serve.

We are going to go back to Matthew 27. This tells us the story of the crucifixion

Matthew 27:50-51 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.

We all understand there is symbolic meaning to that supernatural act, but I wanted to begin this section of the sermon with something we were all familiar with and was very clear to us.

Next we are going to turn to Ephesians 2. Remember Paul is writing here to a congregation that was part Gentile and part Israelite.

Ephesians 2:13-18 But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near. For through him, we both have access by one spirit unto the Father.

What Paul clarifies here is that neither those who were far off—the Israelites—nor those who were near—the Jews—had access to God before Jesus Christ. So what good was the Temple in Jerusalem? For all practical purposes, as far as bringing a person close to God, it was useless. It was an instrument God used to teach us spiritual principles. God went to a lot of trouble to have that Temple built in order to give us understanding of what our relationship with God is, and what our function is, both to Him and to the world.

What a tremendous privilege has been given to us, that we actually have access to Him! For a thousand years, even the Israelite people did not have access to Him. So neither those who were far off nor those who were near had access until Jesus Christ's death.

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Even those who **do** have access to Him (that would include these people when they were alive) only had access because God called them. These people acknowledged their sins, they repented, they came under the blood of Christ, and then God consecrated them as part of *the household of God*, and therefore access to the Head of the house.

Let's carry this with a little bit more explanation:

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

This "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" in verse 2 is that we will be God, and we will possess the glory of God. We only have this hope because we have access to Him. What preceded it was the crucifixion of Christ, and that gave us access. So you can see a chain that developed here. One event after another has to occur in order to provide for us the access to God so that we can function in our responsibility. This is so very important, because we are never going to get to know God unless we can get close to Him. That is the picture that we are to understand by this.

Hebrews 7:18-20 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law [the ceremonial law] made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw near unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest.

Part of the subject going through Hebrews 7 is that Christ is our High Priest by which we are able to draw near God.

Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he [Christ, because He is High Priest and is always in the presence of God] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. [Without the access there would still be no salvation.] Seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them, for such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needs not daily, as those high priests [the physical ones], to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's, for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Christ is there providing access for us on a continual basis. You will remember we read in I Peter 2:5 that we are called to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God **by** Jesus Christ. In other words, that is an admission that the sacrifices we are going to do are not going to really be perfect, acceptable, and of the quality that would normally get us into God's presence, but He will accept them because of our High Priest—Jesus Christ—being there.

Hebrews 6:18-20 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation [hope, encouragement], who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedec.

The illustration that Paul uses here is unique, even in the Bible. It is really, in a way, strange, but it gets the point across. What he pictured here is you and me—the Christian—hanging on to a rope that has an anchor on the other end. That anchor has been thrown into the Holy of Holies and it is grabbed onto something there. If we do not hang onto our anchor, who is Jesus Christ, we are going to slip away.

All of this, at least to this point, has to do with preparing a priesthood to be able to function in the office. In other words, we have to have access to the Father first. Then our Savior and High Priest, who is at the right hand of the Father, takes a hand in preparing us so that we can operate as a priest in the Kingdom of God. That is when our *real* work is going to be done. But if we did not have that access, and if we do not hang on to that anchor, we will not be prepared. So we are still, in a way, dealing with personal holiness so that we can function as a priest.

Hebrews 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

There is a command. We are to take advantage of the access we have to God because our salvation rests, or lies, within that access.

Following the typology of the Old Covenant and the elucidation by Peter and Paul, we are seen as part of the temple. We are also seen as having access to God through Jesus Christ because we have been sanctified or consecrated to the office of priest, but we have not yet seen a great deal of what is required of us.

Peter said that we are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, acceptable by Jesus Christ. That is what qualifies our sacrifices as being acceptable before God. There are spiritual sacrifices required and expected, because that is what God has empowered us by His spirit to do, and that is a function we must carry out.

Our most vivid understanding of what a priest did was that he killed animals. He cut them up, and then he burned them either upon the brazen altar, or outside the camp, if it happened to be a sin offering. Now we are not required to do that, but we are required to do something much more difficult and painful.

Leviticus 1:1-4 And the LORD called unto Moses, and spoke unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. If this offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

I will just mention briefly that these sacrifices were voluntary, but what I want to get to at this point is in verse 4. Notice that the one bringing the offering (the animal) had to lay his hand on the beast. This was done to express identity of the offerer *with* the offering. The offering, whether it was a bullock, a goat, or a lamb, stood for and was looked upon as being identical with the offerer, so that they were one and the same. The animal merely substituted for the person. The giving up of the offering represented the surrender of the offerer's life. That is the crux of verse 4. The offering represented the surrender of the offerer's life.

In the case of the burnt offering (whose instructions we are looking at there), it represented the offerer's surrendering himself *wholly* upon the altar of the Lord as a *sweet smelling savor*. It was sweet smelling because it was something that pleased God that the person do this.

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Contrary to popular belief, only two sacrifices portrayed death. Those were the *sin* and the *trespass* offering. The other three—the *burnt*, the *meal*, and the *peace* offering portrayed a life given in service to God in the manner in which it was lived. So it is the *giving of a life*, not the *ending* of a life. Maybe it would be better to say that it represents the giving of a life lived rather than the giving of a life in death. From this arises the term "living sacrifice."

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be you therefore followers of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

Jesus Christ was a *living sacrifice*, even as we are called to be. Again, He is the *archegos* in this regard. Paul is not thinking of His crucifixion as a sacrifice, because sacrifices for sin were not sweet smelling. They were an abomination to God—a disgusting necessity He put up with only because it was absolutely necessary for that to be done.

What Paul is saying is the manner and quality of the life that Jesus Christ lived. Paul says to live and walk in love. To walk in love is to be a living sacrifice. That means, of course, keeping the commandments. In the case of Christ, He was a whole burnt offering to God. It says there, "Be you therefore followers of God as dear children."

I Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were you called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps.

It is verses like this that tell me I can teach you dogmatically that if we live as Christ lived, we are going to suffer. There is no such thing as painless Christianity. If you are catching the drift of the sermon here, God is actually encouraging us to sacrifice ourselves and *invite* the suffering to be a living sacrifice. We already saw the command to "walk in love." That is a command to be a living sacrifice. If you are a sacrifice, you are going to go through pain, but it will be the kind of pain, the kind of suffering, Jesus Christ went through.

There are at least four areas of life that Christians are directly called upon by God to offer up spiritual sacrifice. It is very needful to pay particular attention to these, because it is in these areas that are the major elements—the experiences that bring us to *knowing Christ*. The first one you know well.

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Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The word "present" is a technical term indicating "to give, exhibit, proffer, bring before, yield." When he says "to bring the body," he means just that, because in verse 2 he addresses the mind separately as being in need of transformation, thus dealing with both body and mind in this part of the sacrifice.

You might wonder why it had to be done this way. It was probably because of the Gnostics. They felt that they could worship God with their minds and that it did not matter what they did with their bodies. I am afraid there are some who still think that way today, or at least they begin to feel that the body does not matter. But Paul said in I Corinthians 3 "to not defile the temple of God's Holy Spirit."

The Bible sees the body as separate from the mind, but most of the time it looks upon it as body and mind as being *whole*. The body is the instrument the mind uses to carry out its will, and is therefore very important that it too be totally surrendered and yielded to God's use. But it is through the body that the will of the mind becomes visible and active, and so it is the instrument of the mind. There is a direct connection between the two of them.

What Paul is writing out here is the hallowing, the setting apart, the sanctifying of body and mind. There is an important principle here, and it leads us to understand that the annihilation of the offending part of the body—(like Christ said "Pluck out your eye" or "Cut off your hand")—is not the true sacrifice, but rather the suppression and the proper direction and the control of its needs and appetites is what God is after. That is hallowing the body, and that is what will occur *if* we have surrendered to Him inwardly.

God wants every action of the body to be linked to Him. Our foot, our hand, our eye, tongue, and brain should all be working for Him in constant consciousness of His presence in our lives.

If you go back to Ephesians 1:3-7, you will see very clearly what Paul had in mind. This same apostle said that the flesh lusts against the spirit; that it is always seeking to regain its dominance that it once held over our body and mind. It is our responsibility to fight it, to bring it under control, to govern it so as not to allow it to dictate how our life is

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to be lived. This one all by itself might be a very painful sacrifice. This is a big one. I mean it is a sacrifice of major consequence.

There are three others. These other three are actually contained within the first one. I think you will agree that if you are following the first one, and if you get the first one right, you will have a handle on the other three.

Did you know that we are commanded to praise God as a sacrifice to Him?

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.

Psalms 50:23 Whoso offers praise glorifies me; and to him that orders his conduct aright will I show the salvation of God.

What I think is so interesting there is that *sacrifice of praise* and *conduct* appear in the same context. I will not explain that any further. You can think about it. Maybe in another sermon we will expound upon that.

The third sacrifice is also shown in Hebrews 13.

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

Now this is the service to others. Remember, when a priest acts in behalf of God to aid men in having a relationship with God, he is doing a service to others. Included in this, brethren, is even the preaching of the gospel, but there is much, much more. For the lack of time I am going to have to go into that at another time, but there are many scriptures in regard to this. James 1:27 says: "Pure religion and undefiled is to visit the widow in her affliction." Matthew 25:34-35 tells the sheep are those who did the service to Christ's brothers and sisters. In I John 3:16-18 is where we are directly commanded to take care of the needs of our brother when we see that he is in need.

Number four is one we do not like to face, but it is *the sacrifice of a martyr's death*.

II Timothy 4:6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

Well, Paul was a little bit premature. He got out of prison on this one, but they got him again on some other charge, but he was ready mentally to suffer a martyr's death.

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

Paul did go through a martyr's death, along with countless others. We have no idea how many people have suffered a martyr's death for the name of Jesus Christ. We may never have to face this. I know it is something we do not look forward to with great anticipation or any kind of feelings of exhilaration, but it is there and it is a reality. There is, in reality, no better way to die than in the faith, rather than desperately grasping for life lived in this world.

Philippians 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

That is pretty clear. God has ordained suffering an integral part of our preparation for the Kingdom of God. It is inevitable that if we live as Christ lived, we *are* going to suffer. The only question mark is the degree, or the intensity. Paul's objective was "to know the fellowship of Christ's suffering." This is accomplished by becoming *a living sacrifice*, wholly dedicated to God, and functioning as a priest under our great High Priest.

Then our suffering will largely be for righteousness' sake, and we will share in Christ's experiences—the kind He had when He suffered by resisting temptation to sin, serving others, being persecuted, and praising God. Perhaps we might even be selected to suffer a martyr's death, but we will know Christ, and we will have eternal life.