

Offerings (Part Seven)

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We are going to begin this sermon back in Romans 8 because I want to—well, I think—conclude the series of sermons on the sacrifices. At least, I think that this is a conclusion, but you can never be too sure.

Romans 8:9-11 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

The union with the Father and the Son is what essentially constitutes a Christian. Now, this union is not something that is constantly changing nor is it ephemeral or visionary. It is a reality because we are begotten by the Spirit of God. We absolutely are a part of His Family. But how much a part? Do you really feel as though you are a part of that Family? Do you feel a relationship with Him? Is God a part of your every day, all during that day, when you get up in the morning, as you go to work, while you are at work, when you come home from work, when you are with your family in the evening, when you go to bed at night?

Is God a reality to you all through the day or does He come and go in your thoughts? Is He there part of the time and gone part of the time? Are there times that you go through long stretches during the day and you never even think of Him, you think of other things a great deal more? Does everything

that you do in your life during the day, is it passed through the information that you have received, the knowledge that has been given to you by God? Does everything you do pass the bar of His standard?

How much are you a part of His Family? Are you really a part of His body? Do you feel like you are a part of it? Do you know, do you understand, do you believe so that everything you do is a reflection on the way that that family would do things?

Let us go back to the book of I John, the fourth chapter. John makes a startling statement and it is one of those statements that I think is kind of puzzling to us because we wonder what in the world does it mean? What is its application to my life? And so it is one of those things that we tend to just pass over. If we do get a glimpse of what it means, we still tend to pass over it because we think no, it could not mean that. I mean, that is too great. But is it too great? Really, a very interesting statement. Let us pick it up in verse 15.

I John 4:15-16 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. [Abide. Remember what that means? It means to live, it means to continue with, go on with] And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love [that is, he who continues in love, he who lives in love, abides, continues, lives in God] and God in Him.

In a way, this is nothing more than a repetition of what this same apostle wrote in John the 14th chapter where Jesus said that, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" and I will give you another comforter and that comforter will abide in you, live in you, continue in you. And a little bit later, He removed the word comforter and He said, "I will be in you." And not only that, He said, "I and the Father will be in you."

Has that really happened? Is God in us? Are we so united with God, at-one with Him, that Jesus Christ, our Creator, our Savior, our Redeemer, that He really is in us? Now, if He is in us, does our life reflect Jesus Christ? Well, let us continue. Verse 17 is where this astounding statement—astounding to me anyway—fits, or is.

I John 4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

This is our time of judgment. Judgment is now on the house of God according to I Peter 4:17. Judgment is going to come for those people during the Millennium and those people in the Great White Throne, but we are having our judgment right now.

Do you have boldness? Confidence? The word can be translated either way. In Hebrews the third chapter and I think it is about verse 6 or 7, in the King James version, the exact same word is translated confidence. Boldness, though, is a better translation. It is more accurate.

Now because Christ is in you do you live your life boldly and confidently or are you ashamed of Jesus Christ? Do you hide what you are? I do not mean that you blast it all over the place, "I'm a Christian! I'm a Christian!" I am not talking about that at all. I am talking about still living confidently. Are you really confident that you are doing the right thing in keeping the Sabbath? Are you ashamed to talk about the plain truth? Are you ashamed to talk about your baptism? Are you ashamed to talk about that you are baptized? That you are a part of the church of God?

Is there really boldness? Incidentally, that word literally means freedom of speech. There is nothing hindering you.

"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment because [here it comes] as He is. . ." Now that "He" in my Bible is capitalized. Is it in your Bible? You know why they capitalized it? Because they wanted to make sure that you understood that they are talking about Christ. See, the subject here is the Deity, it is not any other normal human being. It is the Deity that is being talked about. "Because as He is, so are we in this world."

Do you know what he is saying there? He is saying this is the reason why we can be bold—because as He is. What is Christ like? What did He do? What did He accomplish? Where does He stand in relation to us and God? How did He live his life?

Do you recognize what God is saying here? What He is saying through the apostle John is that when God looks at us, He is seeing us as though we were Jesus Christ! Now, you think Christ did not live His life confidently? Was there anybody who ever lived His life closer to God than Jesus Christ did?

"As He is, so are we in the world." He stands in place of us, as it were. It is astounding! It is part of His grace or an aspect of His grace in that we are able to look at ourselves and say, "Wow! We are a weak, sinning human being. We have all kinds of failures. Christ was perfect in His life in every aspect of His life. And yet God looks at us, not because of anything that we have done, but He looks at us as though He were looking at Jesus Christ."

Now, God is realistic, as I am going to show you in a little bit. God does not fantasize and say, "Well, there is John Ritenbaugh, no, that's Jesus Christ." He sees John Ritenbaugh, but John Ritenbaugh is accepted before God *because* of Jesus Christ and I can come into His throne room and I can talk to Him *because* of Jesus Christ. And so I am accepted there just as if I was Jesus Christ.

You just extend that out into other aspects of life. And you see, we have the sacrifice, the life of Jesus Christ preceding us in what we do. That is why you can be bold. You are accepted. We worry so much about sin. Does it astound you that God is not so concerned about sin? *He is not so concerned about individual sins as He is the trajectory of our life.* I will explain that I think a little bit further as I go along.

There is one modifier here and that modifier is whether or not we live in love. And I will explain this as we go along because that is going to determine whether or not we are going to have this boldness and whether or not God is going to see us as He sees Jesus Christ. It is going to be determined by whether or not we live life in love. Practically the whole purpose of the sacrifices is to show you and me how to live in love, how to love God, how to love our fellow man. That is their purpose, see, their intent. So I think they are pretty important.

Now, how closely are we identified with Christ? That broad statement that was just made there by John in I John 4:17 but it needs to be modified. Let us look a little bit more specifically and see how close this identification with

Christ is. Let us go back to Romans again this time in chapter 6. We will continue to lay a foundation here to show you how close this union is, how close this identification with Christ is. And if there is anything that ought to give you confidence in living your life before God, before the world, it ought to be something like this; to see how God sees you, how you stand before Him.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

I want to draw your attention to the word "with" because that is what we are going to be looking at here for a while. We are identified *with* Christ. We were buried with Him. Now He literally was buried in the heart of the earth in a tomb. We were buried with Him, though, in baptism.

Now the word with. Have you ever look it up in a dictionary? I never did until just this week. It is one of those words you take for granted. A little preposition you always stick it in front of something else. And what does it mean? Interesting. It means in the company of. So you are with somebody, you are in the company of Christ. Let us apply that definition to this: we were in the company of Him when He was buried, you see.

Another one is a member of or associate of; another one, having or characterized by; another one, possessed of. That is an interesting one. Look at verse 6,

Romans 6:6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him.

That is quite a close identification. For as He is, so are we in this world." You were crucified *with* Christ. Paul says that in Galatians 2:20, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." That is how close that identification is.

Let us look at another place, just a number of scriptures to just give you the idea, those scriptures that we read before in regard to the Passover.

Colossians 2:12-13 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through the faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

Are you beginning to see why God can look at you and me and say, "I see Christ," that we are identified with Him, our sins are forgiven. It is an amazing thing.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Let us go back to John the 17th chapter, verse 14. Jesus making this prayer to God just before He was taken to be beaten and crucified. He says in the midst of that prayer,

John 17:14 "I have given them Your word [meaning the disciples]; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

Now, this was before these men ever received the Spirit of God. He is saying, the world is being used here in the sense of being a system, a way of doing things apart from God, it is actually a system antagonistic to God. Now, the disciples were not of that system, but rather they were of the same system as Jesus Christ. They were identified with Him, they were accompanying Him. They had the characteristics of.

John 17:16 [just to re-emphasize it] "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

Let us go back to I Corinthians 12. Take off in a slightly different direction. You could build a whole sermon just around this idea showing us how clearly we are identified with Christ. All kinds of different categories that it appears in, so much so that when God sees us, He sees His Son.

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

We are being identified with Him as being a part of one body. And we understand that He is the Head of that body and that we are the members of the remaining portions of that body. Now, you see how close that union is. We are one with Christ in that body, which is the church.

I Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jew or Greeks, whether slave or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

So we have in common, we share, we are identified with the Spirit of God, which is also the Spirit that Jesus Christ has. We are in one body, we have one Spirit. We have been baptized together, we have been raised together, crucified together, we are identified with.

Let us go to one more just to hammer this in, Ephesians the fifth chapter, verse 30. We are going to pick this up just as if we were jumping from verse 13 in I Corinthians 12 to verse 14. But we are actually in Ephesians 5.

Ephesians 5:30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

Oh, you cannot get any closer than that. What a clear identification.

Now drop back one verse verse 29.

Ephesians 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

He loves us, He loves us like we love our body. We do not want to separate ourselves from our body. I mean, anybody who is thinking normally, somebody might think, Well, I am all misshapen and everything. But really,

you see, what it is saying is we love ourselves, we do, we love ourselves. Well, Christ loves us the way we love ourselves. You cannot get any closer identification than that.

Ephesians 5:31-32 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh [Are you getting the idea? Who were the two? Christ and His body]. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

What close identification! That is why John could say that, "As He is, so are we in the world." Our union with Christ is so close because we are in Him and He is in us. You cannot get any closer than that. Is that reflected in your life? Would you willingly, would you knowingly take Christ into all of your activities knowing that you are carrying with you the Great God who is the Creator and the Savior of all of mankind? Would you speak the words that He speaks? Would you allow your thoughts and His thoughts, are they the same?

Now this union with Christ, first of all, effects our standing with God. In the sacrifices we see Christ by His offering meeting all of God's holy requirements. He meets God's claim on man. God is lawgiver. He is governor of this universe. And whenever we sin we break *His* law. And when we break His law, He has a claim on us. And that claim, according to Romans 6:23, is that the wages of sin is death.

He has a claim on our life now through Christ because He was a burnt offering, because He was a meal offering, because He was a peace offering, a sin offering, and a trespass offering. That claim is completely met for everyone who has faith in it. And thus, those who believe are reconciled to God. And so the standing changes in this sense from God having a claim on this person because of sin to the person standing free before God because of Christ's sacrifice, because the claim has been met.

So having faith in this, you ought to be able to understand why Christ's place before God is also our place before God. I am not talking about rank or position. I am simply talking about being free to be in His presence, the fellowship with Him to be a son as His Son is.

There is a purpose to all of this. I mean, this change of our standing before God so that we are identified with Christ. And it is this purpose which the rest of the sermon is about. We are identified with Christ and because of that identification, our standing before God is such that we are there as Christ would be there.

Now, what is the purpose of it? Let us go back to the book of Romans again in chapter 8, verses 28 and 29. This is an overall statement, broad, and it will be refined.

Romans 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined. . .

Here, it is to be conformed to the image of His Son. Now, there is the purpose for all of this. That is the reason that our standing before God is as Christ. I said earlier that God is realistic and when He looks at us, He really does see John Ritenbaugh but in standing, I stand before God as Christ and I am able to come into His presence, but I am not yet like Christ, I am not yet conformed to the image of Christ. But in order for me to be conformed to the image of Christ, I first have to be able to stand before God as Christ because the work is not done yet in me and in you because I am not yet conformed to the image of His Son. I stand free and clear and I am accepted, but I do not have the same nature as His Son yet. I do not have the same character as His Son. I do not have the same mind as His Son yet.

In Romans 6, just go back a couple of chapters, and verse 4 once again.

Romans 6:4 Therefore [here comes the reason for the identification with Christ] we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.

There is the reason right there. That is why He has altered our standing before Him, that we might walk in newness of life. Now that walking in newness of life is going to issue forth in us becoming conformed to the image of His Son.

Let us look at the word "walk." Interesting little four letter word, but think about it. Walking requires effort. I want you to see what is implied by this walking in newness of life. Are there any works connected to salvation? The very reason why we are identified with Christ is that we might walk in newness of life. Certainly there are works connected with salvation. The salvation itself is a free gift, but God expects that we walk in newness of life. So there is effort required.

In addition to that, whenever you walk anywhere, there is a goal that is implied. You walk to turn off the light, you walk to turn on the faucet, you walk to go to the bathroom, you walk to move from one room to another. You walk to go out to your car, you walk around the block in order to get exercise. Whenever you walk, you are moving purposely from one place to another in order to carry something out, right? That verse implies, then, that this walk is purposeful. It is headed somewhere, it is not aimless drifting around. It requires effort and it is going somewhere.

Not only that, it also implies that the walking is voluntary. Certainly there are times when we are given orders to do certain things. But most of the time, I think that you will agree with this, when you walk anywhere, it is because you want to accomplish something. The great overwhelming majority of the times the reason you make the effort to move from one point to another is because you have made the decision to do it. So you see that walking also implies the conscious making of a decision voluntarily to move from one point to another. A lot implied in that one little verse.

So we might reach a little conclusion just on this one little verse. Christianity is a way of walking, not a way of talking. It has to do with moving from the point of a resurrection to the Kingdom of God. This is why God identifies you and me with Christ. He allows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to take the place for the claim that He has on us in order that we might be restored to fellowship with Him. Because this fellowship is absolutely essential to providing us with the strength, with the motivation, with whatever it takes to make the walk.

You see, that is the one thing that man has not had—contact with God. It was cut off when Adam and Eve were put out of the Garden of Eden and God put

the flaming sword to protect the way of the Tree of Life. Mankind has not had fellowship with God and thus, he has been unable to draw the strength that comes from God to live the walk. That is how we come to perfection.

So God has to alter our standing before Him. And He does it legally and graciously, with generosity and kindness, in order that we might be able to have fellowship with Him through prayer, through Bible study, through fasting, meditation, through obedience, that we might be conformed to the image of His Son. We might use this walk to accomplish with Him the creation of His heart, His mind, His character in us. Because what He is creating requires our participation. It cannot be impressed upon us without us consciously making decisions to do that walk.

Romans 6:5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.

That word united is also very interesting. It is the same word that in other occasions has been translated, grafted or engrafted. We are branches, as it were, that have been grafted in to the vine.

This word indicates something that takes place over a period of time. We are attached, but we are not completely grown together. And it is implying that what is taking place takes place gradually over a period of time. The engraftment or the grafting, if we want to put it that way, takes place gradually as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Eventually, of course, we are going to be completely united with Him. But right now because of repentance, because of faith, because of the receipt of God's Holy Spirit, we are now united with Him, are we not, in heart, in Spirit, in will, in outlook. Are we not traveling in the same direction He is? I sure hope we are. But you see, we are not done yet. And so that engraftment is gradually strengthening.

Let us go back to I John 2, beginning in verse 3.

I John 2:3 Now by this we know [here is where boldness comes from, here is where confidence comes from] that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

See, there has to be something that verifies that we are at-one with Christ. There has to be something that identifies that we are united, we are engrafted, that we are in union with the Father and the Son. And what the Bible shows very clearly is that which verifies is the way that we conduct our life. Now, John is making it very specific that this verification is shown in whether we keep the commandments or not. And if we do not, we show that we are not engrafted into the Son. If we do, that is the verification.

There is something else that needs to be added here too. And that is the love of the Bible is not intellectual. I do not mean that there is no intellect involved within it, but it is not something that is completely intellectual. I know that very many people are attracted to us because the things that we teach are logical, and certainly they are logical. But that is not the whole story. That is only a part of the story. Their intellect tells them that this is right because there is logic to the things that we teach. But your relationship with God better not be entirely intellectual. If it is, I can tell you where it is going to end. It is going to be sterile. It is not going to produce anything because the other aspects are also needed.

Neither is it emotional. I do not mean that there is not any emotion involved within it. Certainly there may be emotion involved within it. But I can guarantee you this, that if your relationship with God is based upon emotion, you are eventually going to run out of feeling because human nature is like that.

The love of the Bible is *always* moral. It is the *doing* of something—the keeping of the commandments. That is the basis of our relationship with God that proves, verifies, that we are yielding to Him. Jesus said this, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." That is the proof that we love Him. It is not the feeling we have or it is not that we identify with Him because of our brain. The verification of our identification with Him is moral. It is keeping the commandments.

Let us go on.

I John 2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

You just cannot get any clearer than that. There are people who will say, "I know Him," and it is nothing more than an emotional response because they are filled with this feeling of awe or whatever. It might be because they recognize that He indeed is the Creator, the Savior, or whatever, but it will not last. There are those who intellectually say, "Yeah, I've got it all figured out here. Jesus Christ indeed did live and He lived between such and such a date and He did such and such a thing when this particular individual was alive," and they have got it all programmed out. It is all so logical; there it is.

Well, that is fine. And those things might lead to something, but it better lead to the keeping of the commandments. Otherwise God says there is no verification that you are attached with Me, that you are united.

I John 2:5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. And by this we know that we are in Him.

See, this is what gives the boldness; it is that we know that we are in Him. And if God is looking at you in the same way that He looks at Christ, boy, I will tell you, what a great thing that is! That ought to be so encouraging. We do not have to be afraid, concerned, fearful, because we are Christians and because we are marching to the beat of a different drummer in a world that is antagonistic to God.

I John 2:6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Now we are beginning to get specific. You tie together Romans 8:28-29, that God has called us in order that we might be conformed to the image of His Son. Romans 6 said that we have been resurrected, as it were, out of this watery grave in order that we might walk in newness of life, our sins are forgiven. Sin is the transgression of God's law. God has a claim on us so He allows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay that claim. And now we are in new standing with God. We stand before Him as Jesus Christ for the very purpose that we might live life as exactly as we can the way He did, that we ought to walk as *He* walked. That is the reason for your standing before God. That is why you are identified with Christ.

Can you say that you walk just as He walked? Well, if you cannot, it is a good thing there is a Passover every year. Because I cannot say that. It is my actions, my reactions, you know, my tempers, my feelings about this and that, I know are not in accordance with Christ. And I know that I take Him into situations that He never would have gotten into. That is, just in the conduct of my life. But you see, because God sees us as Christ, it continues to give me time to change, to yield, to become more conformed to the image of His Son.

You know, there is an interesting contrast to this back in the book of Titus, in chapter 1, verses 15 and 16. Paul is giving instruction to Titus. He says,

Titus 1:15-16 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their minds and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him.

What is the verification of our union with Christ? It is that we walk as He walked. And there are those who profess that they know God, but their works deny that they are in union with Him.

So to know Christ is to walk as He walked. Because in doing the things that He did, we identify the experiences of our life with what He went through.

Let us go to the book of Philippians, chapter 3 and let us begin in verse 7, see the example of the apostle Paul.

Philippians 3:7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

Gradually, I am going to turn this back to the offerings but I felt that I had to begin with this so that you could identify yourself with the sacrifices and begin to see practical applications of them in your life. If we are to walk as Christ walked, it then means that we have to strive with all of our beings to meet the requirements of the sacrifices in the way that He did.

Remember how that when we went through there I told you that Christ *is* the burnt offering; Christ *is* the meal offering; Christ *is* the peace offering. He did all of these things. They were part and parcel of His life. That was the way He walked.

Now, the apostle Paul made some tremendous sacrifices to become a part of this work. What did he have to sacrifice? What did he have to give up? Well, he was a rabbi. No doubt about that. A member of the Sanhedrin so he had both political and ecclesiastical power being a part of the Sanhedrin. He had a wife, but she is not mentioned in the book. What happened to her? Did she leave him? Did she die? Maybe he had to give her up too. There is no doubt that Paul had many distinctions. He just gives a small amount of his pedigree, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," and yet he walked away from it.

Brethren, our Savior has sacrificed more than anybody to become a part of this work. He sacrificed, He gave up being God. He has experienced all of these things. You name it, He has done it. Our father Abraham probably gave up more than any other single human being to become a part of this work. And maybe right on his heels was Moses. What if you had to give up anything comparable to what those people gave up: houses, lands, families, jobs. I do not know. You can answer that. Paul said he lost everything.

Philippians 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

Many of us are like the rich young man of Matthew 19. When Christ asked him to give up the thing that was close to him, he could not do it. Money was close to him. He could not do it. But all of us are like that rich young ruler. There is something that we try to hang on to. I do not know what it is in your life. All of us are wealthy like that in something, vanity, pride. What is it? You have a pedigree? I do not know.

Philippians 3:9-10 . . . which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him. . .

And that is what we are here for. We are here in this life to come to know Christ, to be intimate with Him. Do you understand what that word means? It is actually a sexual term. Adam *knew* his wife. He did not know her across the road because there was Cain and Abel, at least, and Seth. That is what that word means, to be intimate with. And when used in the context of a man and woman, it means to have sexual intercourse. Are you that intimate with Christ? Is He really in you? Is He really sharing your life's experiences? And what are you sharing with Him?

Philippians 3:10 . . . that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, . . .

Paul is talking about two things here. Looking back on baptism because he says in Romans 7, when he finally understood the law, that sin revived and he died. So he was buried in the waters of baptism. Do you think that Paul might also have been looking forward to his death as a martyr, that he was going to strive with all of his being to conform to the life of Christ, even to the point of giving his life, literally, as a martyr.

Philippians 3:11-12 . . . if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

You see, we are beginning to see here why God has called us, why He sees us as Christ. Paul was not yet perfected. Neither are we yet perfected. But God sees us as He would see Jesus Christ in order to give us the time to be perfected. So Paul knew that he had a part to play in walking the walk. He had a part to play in voluntarily yielding to God in the keeping of His commands, whatever ones might apply to the apostle Paul.

Now, it is interesting that that word which says that Jesus Christ has also laid hold of me, it literally means that Christ grabbed him, almost like He grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, jerked him out. And you know, Paul's conversion was pretty rough. Most of us just kind of float into the church. Paul did not have that pleasure of floating into the church. God yanked him!

Philippians 3:13-16 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind [the same mind that he is talking about there]; and if in anything you think otherwise [that is, if your mind, if your thinking is not in harmony with God yet], God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

To know Christ is to be so united with Him that day by day we share the life that He lived, we suffer with Him, we walk the way that He walked; His hopes, His joys, His dreams, His disappointments, His sadness, His sorrows; we bear the cross that He bore as well. And maybe brethren, the death that He died too.

Now, when we come to these things, you can say, then, that we are sharing life's experiences with Jesus Christ.

So we are not complete yet. We have got the press on. God has grasped us as well, maybe not in the same well way, but He has a hold on us. And right in the same book, in the first chapter, the sixth verse, he says that what He started, He is able to finish—He *will* finish it. If we will give him half a chance, He will finish His creative work.

Now, you ought to be able to see that you are accepted of God. And also you ought to be able to see, at least to some degree, the standard which God expects us to live up to. See, that is the standard of the life of Jesus Christ, that we are to walk as He walked.

The acceptance before God should give peace. That should be its first fruit. You can live confidently, the death penalty is not hanging over your head. You do not have to feel guilty. You have access before God. You are able to come to Him through Jesus Christ. You can keep right on going. And the standard gives us goals, brethren, that are always beyond our reach. We will never fully come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. No

matter how much we accomplish as a Christian, He is always going to be one rung higher. And so it gives us something always to strive for so that you do not get to the place where you are content in the wrong way, self-satisfied like the Laodicean, "I am rich and increased with goods." They have need of nothing. So there is plenty there.

Let us go to Hebrews 10. We need to turn this back to the offerings.

Hebrews 10:11-14 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

That is you and me.

Now, it does not mean there that we are morally perfected but that His sacrifice was perfectly adequate to assure our standing before God. Christ is the object of the offerings. They set Him forth. They show us the way that He lived His life. They also show not only what He did but also their impact, you see, the consequences of what He did as well. So we see, then, man sinning and imperfect becoming at-one with God through Christ. That is what the offerings show us.

Look in your mind's eye at the burnt and the meal offerings, and at Christ, and what you see are all of God's holy requirements satisfied. The burnt offering means the keeping of the first four commandments toward God, loving God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, with all of your being. We see the meal offering in Christ, where He lived His life to God for the benefit of men. And so He completely met the requirements of the last six commandments as a meal offering. You look at the peace offering. We see God, man, and the priest satisfied in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, all in fellowship. The sin and the trespass offerings, they show us Christ slain, outside the camp, laid, and burned so that God's claim is satisfied and that we might be quickened by the Spirit of God.

So the consequence, then, is that we are accepted in the presence of God. That is the overall effect.

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to the adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

That is the consequence of the sacrifices, that not only are we accepted, but as John adds, we are accepted as Christ would be accepted. Now because we are accepted, what do we do? Well, we have been told that we have to walk in newness of life. We have to become conformed to the image of the Son. But I want to put a new slant on it. Not a new slant, but just show you different words that really add up to the same thing.

I Peter 2:4-5 Coming to Him [see, accepted in His throne room] as a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Now there is your answer. Because we are accepted, we are expected to sacrifice. And what is the standard? Christ. We are expected to offer up sacrifices in the way, just as He did. That is why all the identification. That is why I say it begins to get, oh boy, mind-boggling that always He is one rung ahead of us, that no matter how we overcome, there is always more to be perfected in.

Let us look very briefly at the offerings. Understanding this, that though our offerings are going to be poor, weak, and certainly by comparison with Christ going to be worthless, the sacrifices nonetheless are still acceptable to God *because* of Christ. I will give you a practical example.

It is like a little child, maybe a child that is just one year old, and you are that child's parents. Now, do you expect that one year old to be able to run the 100 yard dash in nine seconds or to be able to understand Einstein's theory of relativity? No, you do not. In fact, at one year old, it is hardly likely that that little child is going to be able to walk all the way across the room without falling a couple of times.

But when the child falls, do you lose your temper? Jump up and down, pick that baby up and throw it out on the front yard, just throw it right out of the house? You do not do those kind of things. Why? Because it is just a baby and you know that, and you know that it is going to get better. First thing you know, it is going to be able to toddle all the way across the room and make no mistakes, and maybe someday in the future it will run 100 yards in nine seconds. That would be pretty fast.

Well, it is the same way with God. When we are first in Christ, He looks upon us as a little toddler. But as far as He is concerned, that little baby is perfect for what it is right there and it is acceptable to Him because of Jesus Christ. And so because we are acceptable, He gives us time to grow and grow and grow and grow. And even though we make mistake after mistake after mistake, and He sees the general trajectory of our life is one of improvement and growth and becoming conformed to the image of His Son, He still keeps looking at us as though we are perfect. A wonderful gift.

That is why I said earlier, if you understand it, He is not worried about individual sins just as you are not all that worried about your child tripping and falling across the living room floor. Because what are you going to do with that child? You are going to pick them up and you are going to dust them off and you are going to comfort them and you are going to say no, this is the way you do it, "walk you in it." Even though they fall many more times, you may have to do it over and over again. But you see the child growing.

It is the same way with God. And so that acceptance before Him gives time for us to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Now, in the burnt offering, back in Leviticus 1, I just want to give you the main thought in the burnt offering. It appears in verse 9 at the conclusion of those four verses 5, 6, 7, 8.

Leviticus 1:9 But he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water.
And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice.

A burnt offering is one that is totally and completely consumed. Now, here is the standard of our devotion to God. That God expects that because we are accepted in the Beloved, because we are allowed to have this fellowship with Him because we have access to Him by grace through Jesus Christ, God expects that we will then begin to live our life like Christ and that our life will be a complete and total sacrifice, a burnt offering to Him. That nothing is withheld, nothing is held back, that we have given our *all*.

Now this is the hardest of all of the offerings because, like I said earlier, we want to have reservations. Like the rich young ruler, we want to hold back something, we want to reserve for ourselves, keep it like a security blanket, we love it, whatever it is.

Let us go to II Samuel chapter 24, verse 24. Just one example out of the life of David. David understood God. David understood sacrificing. The episode that is given here is at the conclusion of the purchasing of the land that David bought in order that the Temple could be built near the end of David's life.

II Samuel 24:23-24 "All these, O king, Araunah [he was the man who owned the property] has given to the king." [he was giving it offering it free] And Araunah said to the king, "May the Lord your God accept you." Then the king [David] said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing."

The burnt offering, brethren, is painful. It costs. And the reason it is so costly is that it costs our life. Did you realize that that is what we give in exchange for the forgiveness of sin? Read it in Luke 14, beginning in verse 25. We give our life.

There is an interesting example from Christ's life in Hebrews the fifth chapter because it helps us to understand how devoted and dedicated that He was to God. And this is just one little episode, but Paul was giving to give us an idea of the entire direction of Christ's life.

Hebrews 5:7-8 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, and though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

Christ felt His sacrifice, and I am not talking just about His sacrifice on the cross. I am talking about the entirety of the sacrifice from the time He gave up being God to the 33½ years He *lived* as a burnt offering. Verse 7 tells you how He lived.

The meal offering. The meal offering shows Christ offering Himself to God for man's benefit. And what it shows is that man has a claim on man. Remember what the second of those two great laws is: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." That is what the meal offering shows. It shows that we indeed are our brother's keeper. Man has a claim on us. We owe things to others. So in Leviticus 2:2-3, again it shows that this offering was completely consumed. Part went on the altar, the remainder of it was given to the priest. So the offeror had nothing left. He was completely consumed, either on the altar or by the priest.

Now, there are many examples of people offering their lives for the benefit of others. There is a fine example in Acts the fourth chapter beginning in verse 32 and carrying through verse 35. It shows how the New Testament church, the brand new church just begotten of God's Spirit, and what their reaction was toward one another. How that they had all things in common, that if anybody had need, somebody came up with what that person had need of and provided it for him.

Let us go to Philippians 2. We will look at just one example of the apostle Paul.

Philippians 2:17 [Paul says] Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Paul considered himself an offering to the people of Philippi. The drink offering, incidentally, was an adjunct to it. It went with the meal offering, it was done with it. So Paul considered himself a drink offering poured out for the benefit of those people. He is talking about his life being poured out, about him not being able to live the way that he chose to live, as it were, but rather that he was always at the service, at the beck and call of the brethren. So his life was sacrificed for that.

There are many verses that I could give you in regard to how the brethren were serving one another. You read about Phoebe who often refreshed the brethren in the book of Romans; in Philemon about how they refreshed the brethren with their hospitality.

Now, one of the difficult things about this is that the Bible also shows very clearly that the people that we are serving are leavened and because they are leavened, their reaction is not always what we would like it to be. For example, whenever Mary made the offering of the perfume to Christ, Judas, who was in a bad attitude, "Why could not this thing be sold and given to the poor?"

Services, sacrifices that we do for one another are often misunderstood because we do not do them perhaps the way that they should be done and people do not receive them the way that they should. And so they are offended, they take offense because somebody wants to help them, serve them. We might take offense at what somebody else does because we say, "What are they trying to do, earn a position?" And so we find reactions are not always the way that they should be.

We find that we might offer ourselves to our mate and the mate does not appreciate what we are doing. Expectations are high. The realization is not always what we expect. And so there is pain with this. You have to remember that it is a sacrifice to be a meal offering.

The peace offering. This offering shows the fruits of the other offerings, that is, what is produced, the effect, the consequences. And it shows that God and the priest and the offeror are all partaking of a meal and they are satisfied, they find satisfaction, they are full. There is a sense of well being.

Now, what we have to do here is find places in the New Testament where it shows God happy with the sacrifices of His people, or the high priest happy with the sacrifice, pleased, satisfied with the sacrifices of His people, and then of course, those who are giving the offerings who are happy, satisfied, rewarded because of the sacrifices that they make.

God. Hebrews 13:16 makes it very clear that God is pleased with the sacrifices when we share and communicate with one another. Philippians 4: 18 again shows that God is well pleased. And in fact, Paul even says that because you brethren are serving one another, helping one another, and in this case, it was the people in Philippi had made an offering of money to the brethren in Jerusalem because they were undergoing a famine or something, they were in need, and so they made this offering, a sacrifice of money, and Paul said that God was well pleased with their sacrifice. He was satisfied with it.

One of the more familiar scriptures.

II Corinthians 9:7 . . . God loves a cheerful giver.

Everybody in here wants God to love them. He loves a cheerful giver, somebody who is giving, somebody who sacrifices. You want to get on the good side of God? Give.

II Corinthians 8:5, the greatest gift of all. You see the gift of our life. And of course, Romans 12:1, which says that God finds the offering of ourselves acceptable to Him.

I will give you one for Jesus Christ, our High Priest. Matthew 25:35-40 where it shows that He is fed, He is satisfied, His thirst is slaked, His appetite is full because of the satisfaction that He receives because the brethren serve one another. You see, this is the one where He says, when

were you in prison and when were you hungry? And when were you naked? And He said, "Because you did it to the least of these My brethren, you have done it to Me."

And so when you give to your brother Christ is telling you it is exactly the same as giving, serving, Him and that gives Him satisfaction.

Now what about the offeror? You might say here that this is the payoff for Christianity. Are there any verses that show that when we sacrifice, when we give, when we yield to God, that He is going to reward us, that we are going to be blessed? Oh, there are so many of them there—beyond count. I will just give you a few. The reason I chose these ones is because it shows that the satisfaction that comes back to us is going to be spiritual.

Philippians 2:17; there is going to be a spiritual prosperity, joy, a sense of well being, peace. Colossians 1:24 shows that we rejoice. Acts 20:24 and Acts 20:35, it is more blessed to give than to receive. He is telling you that if you give, you are blessed. I Corinthians 3:8, talking about rewarding us for our labors. II Corinthians 6:10. That is an interesting one because it implies that what we receive back is tied to the costliness of what we have given. That is, the costliness to us. See, in quantity we may not give as much as the next person but proportionally what we give may be *more* than the next person. Therefore, he shows that what we give in proportion is what we receive back. It is greater. That is why the widow who gave the two mites, just a little wee bit, but I am sure that what she received back from God was far greater than what these other fellows who were blowing the trumpets and giving large amounts of money received back from God. You see they already had their reward.

The sin offering. This is the offering in which the victim bore sin and died for it; and is it applicable to you and to me? I am just going to go to one place and then give you several scriptures.

I Peter 3:18 [Is it possible that we too can be a sin offering?] For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

What is the inference here? Is the death of Christ for us a reprieve for our flesh so that we do not have to suffer? Is that what it is for? Think about that. Did Christ suffer so that we do not have to suffer? You ought to know the answer to that. Christ suffered so that we can suffer *with* Him. So that we can be a burnt offering, so that we can be a meal offering—and they are painful!—so that we can be a peace offering, so that we can be a sin offering.

You see, on the contrary, His death in the flesh is our example because we are to live just as He lived, to walk just as He walked.

I Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourself also with the same mind [that is so plain], for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

You know, when Jesus said way back there in the book of Matthew, "If your hand offends you, cut it off," "If your eye offend, pluck it out," do you think that would not be painful? Boy, that would be painful! Christ did not give us a reprieve from suffering. He gave us a reprieve from the death penalty, I mean, the second death, in order that we might live life like Him. And so we should get out of our mind the idea that Christ gave us a reprieve from any kind of suffering.

Now, what this is going to lead to is that Paul and others show very clearly that overcoming sin, overcoming the flesh, overcoming the world, hurts. It is not going to be done without suffering, without pain, though he says in places like Colossians 3, "Mortify, therefore, your members on earth." That means kill, put to death. In Galatians 6:14 he says that he is crucified to this world. Not only says that he says, I am crucified with Christ and I am also crucified to this world. Crucifixion is painful!

In Galatians 5, this is interesting because it follows right on the heels of the fruits of God's Spirit. I want to turn to that because I want you to see, because most of the time when we read these scriptures, we stop at the end there where it lists the fruits of the Spirit. Read the next verse. It is really interesting.

Galatians 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-

control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

That is the sin offering and it is painful too.

The trespass offering. This is the offering in which restitution is made for wrong and that one-fifth is added to the price of the object that was stolen or whatever. Now, when we died, we only met a part of the debt. The claim that God had on us was death. According to the law of the trespass offering, He not only gets our life but one-fifth more. How in the world is that ever going to be met?

The law has to be satisfied. But what he shows in other parts is that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient not only to meet the claim of the death penalty, but also to restore the one-fifth thereof. You know what this does? It puts an obligation on us. And as I mentioned as we went through the end of that sermon, that what this is designed to do is to teach you and me to go above and beyond the requirements of the law (Luke 17:10-11).

But more importantly, more specifically, places like in Matthew 5:38-44 where we have to not just love our friends, but also have to love our enemies. That is pretty hard to do when your feelings are showing you otherwise. Mark 11:25-26 where He shows that we have to forgive even though the person has not asked us for forgiveness. It is so important that God says we will not be forgiven unless we forgive those who have offended us. In Luke 6:32-35 where He shows that we have to become not only moral and ethical in our dealings with people, but forgiving, generous, and gracious on top of it.

That is the law of the offerings and we have to be very careful that we do not use our Christianity, the understanding that we have, as just a mere crutch to make us feel good because that would not accomplish God's purpose and we would find ourselves very much like the Laodicean.

Let us conclude this series back in Matthew the 16th chapter, verse 24. Maybe this scripture will mean a great deal more to you. I think I have

mentioned to you before that this is recorded in six different places in the ministry of Christ. You know that if it appears that much, it must be pretty important.

Matthew 16:24 Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, . . ."

See, to walk the walk that He walked, to go in the direction that He is toward the Kingdom of God, to fulfill the purposes that He fulfilled as a human being, to glorify God, to magnify God.

Matthew 16:24-25 "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself [sacrifice], take up his cross [whatever the burden might be along the way], and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses [sacrifices, offers his life] for My sake will find it."

That is very clear. And it ties directly back into the offerings which present us Christ and the way that He lived His life.

Well, I hope that you have learned a few things here prior to Passover from the offerings, and that you will make good use of it in examining yourself before you take that Passover.