

A Sacrifice Is An Investment

Offertory

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I gave an offering sermonette on the Day of Atonement that was built around the concept that God wants us to make a spirit of generosity, especially in the making of a sacrifice a vital and consistent part of our life. Now included in that sermonette was the mention of the principle of reciprocity, which literally means give and take. And this principle of reciprocity is actually part of the larger, broader principle of “whatever one sows, that shall one also reap.”

Now in regards to reciprocity, God deals with us then in pretty much the same manner that we deal with Him or with other others of mankind. And this principle, when it is combined with the spirit of generosity, produces an assurance that we will be provided for because what we are doing is in alignment with God's will.

This sermonette is part of that same general subject, but it carries the thought through into another aspect. And that aspect is that sacrificing, which often comes into play when a spirit of generosity is involved, is generally thought of as being a loss. That is, something that we give up, and once it is given it may very well be gone forever. Now brethren, that thought can be a grave misconception. Rather closer to being correct is that a sacrifice may indeed be a loss at first. A sacrifice, though, is very often, in fact, most often, an investment that produces greater rewards later on.

In II Corinthians 9:6, we are just going to look at that verse briefly, make a connection with it and sort of use it as a springboard as we go on. Paul wrote:

II Corinthians 9:6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Now I want you to consider for a moment the Lance Armstrong illustration that I used during my Trumpets sermon. He sacrificed his time and his energies, conditioning himself through a rigorous discipline for what he considered to be a far greater future reward of winning the race. He gave up, that is, he made as an offering, a major part of his life in this rigorous training in order that another part of his life would be greatly enhanced.

Now not everybody sacrifices a portion of his or her life to the degree that Lance Armstrong did, but I would say that virtually everybody does follow the same principle very, very often. Now in his case, whether or not making such a tremendous degree of sacrifice, for what is in reality a sheer vanity, needs to be weighed in the balance. But the fact that he made a very clear sacrifice that consisted of many, many smaller individual sacrifices, was done in order to produce what occurred. Something that I think only one other person in all of the history of bicycle racing has ever done.

That is, in a nutshell, what this sermonette is about. And I want us to see that in most cases, sacrifice is in reality something that can produce wonderful rewards for many if it is done in a spirit of generosity and of wisdom. And that part means that it is done in accordance with God's will.

We are in still in II Corinthians so we will turn to chapter 4 just to give us another little overview.

II Corinthians 4:7-10 But we have this treasure [meaning this knowledge of God] in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed [but he says of himself and the rest of the ministry], but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our body.

Already you can begin to see that see that he is talking about sacrificing. He made an investment in order that the life of Christ might be seen in him, and not in him only, but all of those people that he was sacrificing for, that Christ would be seen in them as well. Now would that ever have been produced if

someone like Paul had not done what he did? You know, he had to make choices too, but he chose to make a sacrifice of his life, giving his time and energies so that others would profit from what he did.

II Corinthians 4:11-17 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Now Paul applied that whole thing to himself and the ministry that was serving with him, but in principle, it applies to anybody who is following the way of God and sacrificing themselves for it. So the apostle Paul's entire life, after he was called, was a sacrifice on behalf of the church, and I do not think that there is any of us who would call what he did, including martyrdom, a loss either for himself or the church. And almost 2000 years later, that is, after he died, we (mankind) are still receiving benefits on his investment.

His faithful life given in service to God and man, was a huge investment in the growth and continuity of the church for all those at that time and all who were brought salvation after his death, including us. And it goes on and will include those in later judgments who will also be receiving the benefit of his sacrifice.

Let us go to Philippians 2, and we will take a brief look at the life of Christ.

Philippians 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God [notice this sacrifice], but made

Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now Jesus was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth, and the offering of His life began before earth was created. It continued after He emptied Himself, and it did not end until His resurrection. Now what *huge* dividends it has paid for all again, including Himself, as these verses show. We will not turn to Romans 8:29, but that tells us that what Jesus did was done that we might be conformed to Him and that He also then becomes the firstborn of many brethren. And that is one of the major dividends that accrue from the offering of His life.

Now in sports there is a broad principle that covers what I am saying here. It is very brief: No pain, no gain. In other words, without an investment that on the surface carries some risk of loss there is no reward or profit.

I think that we all generally understand this broad principle. We are in Philippians; we are going to turn to chapter 3. Back to Paul again, beginning in verse 8. He says,

Philippians 3:8-16 Yet indeed I also count all things loss [there is a sacrifice] 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 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith [why did he do this?]; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 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. 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 [just like Lance Armstrong] for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, 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.

In the first part of the chapter, Paul states his pedigree as a Benjamite Jew. This was of course before his calling and conversion. And he sacrificed it, he gave it up, he counted it as garbage, and that sacrifice was actually the investment that freed him to offer his life to an opportunity with a much greater potential to it. The prize of his high calling in Jesus Christ.

Now this same opportunity and challenge is placed before us. But like Paul and like Jesus, it requires the sacrifice of our old man that burns all the bridges that lead back to this world, and we are called to be a living sacrifice so that we would not be conformed to this world. That sacrifice is our investment to be totally committed.

Now think of this in terms of the stock market and money for just a bit. Why is it that people commit money to an investment in stocks and bonds issued by a company or the government? Is it not because they expect to gain from what might be a very considerable investment (a sacrifice on their part.)? You know, people do not willingly invest in something that they know is going into the tank and turn belly up in a very short time. They invest in what they feel is safe and will give them an adequate return. They invest because they believe in that company.

Brethren, we are employed by a work that is sure fire and it cannot fail to bring a return on the investment even though it might cost us considerably in terms of sacrifice. God wants all of us, I mean the totality of each life fully committed to the product that He is producing and the way that it is produced. Nobody can do it better, nobody has a higher success rate, and nobody can out-give God. Our present apparent losses because we are sacrificing in order to do things His way is but for a short time, and the

payoff will be immensely greater than the puny amount invested when we look back in retrospect from the Kingdom of God.

This same principle is involved in every act of faith. That is made in accordance with God's will. So brethren, it is time to change your thinking, to change your concept of sacrificing for God's work, God's way, and His Kingdom from giving up, to investing in.