

Sacrifice

Have you ever given up something that you desperately wanted in order that someone else may get what they want? Chances are you have. If you have, then you have an idea of what sacrifice means. God commands us to sacrifice, and that is difficult for most. In Romans 12:1-2, Paul exhorts the brethren to *"present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* Sacrifice is a noble act. But God wants sacrifice to be the correct sacrifice, so let's see what the word of God says about sacrifice.

The first element of sacrifice is self. This point is well established in Romans 12:1. However, self is the hardest of all objects to give. The Macedonians were a great example of self-sacrifice (2 Corinthians 8:5). Jesus was the finest example when He said, *"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"* (Matthew 26:39). The sacrifice of self has many practical ramifications. First, your feet will avoid wrong places. Go to the needy, sick, sinners, and worship services (Matthew 25:31-46). Second, your hands will work at honest labor (Ephesians 4:28). Third, your tongue will avoid evil. Use your energy to teach men and praise God (Ephesians 4:29-31). Fourth, your eyes will avoid evil and look for good (Matthew 5:28). Any acceptable sacrifice will include time (Ephesians 5:15-16; 1 Peter 4:2), talents (1 Peter 4:10-11), and money (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

The second element is that one must sacrifice acceptably (Romans 12:2). Cain's offering was not acceptable (Genesis 4:5). Hebrews 11:4 explains the difference between the brothers as one of faith -- Abel by faith offered a better sacrifice. Cain's offering as well as his reaction to God's displeasure did not reflect faith. Moreover, Saul's offering was not acceptable because God never authorized the sparing of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:21-23). Any offering that God has not authorized IS not authorized, period!

The third element is that one sacrifices by not conforming to the world (Romans 12:2). This may mean unpopularity. Peter said, *"Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you"* (1 Peter 4:4). Dancing, drinking, cheating, profanity, promiscuity, smoking, etc. are all not of this world (1 John 2:15-17). Therefore, they should be rejected! Sacrifices were rejected because of flaws under the Old Law (Deuteronomy 15:21). What will God say if we offer Him our bodies filled with nicotine, alcohol, and drugs?

The fourth element is that sacrifice is produced by a renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). The mind (or heart) directs the life (Proverbs 4:23). A changed mind means a changed life. Jesus said, *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh"* (Luke 6:45).

The fifth element is that sacrifice illustrates the will of God (Romans 12:2). You effectively prove the will of God, not so much by argument (although that is very necessary [1 Peter 3:15]), but mainly by doing it (Philippians 2:14-15). You must let your light shine before men (Matthew 5:16). Teaching usually does no good unless someone is willing to live it! How can you teach someone about the effectiveness of baptism if you have not been baptized yourself? How will you teach someone about the necessity of faithfulness if you live like "once you were saved, you will always be saved"?

The final element is that you must sacrifice yourself and enter God's grace now. Paul wrote, *"For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2). Henry Ward Beecher once said, "In this world it is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich." If you have not obeyed the gospel, why delay any longer? Paul, in Acts 22:16, was asked, *"Why tarriest thou?"* Why do you?

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