

Sacrifice-Preparation

You will observe an element of character common among every great servant of God past and present from Moses and Abraham, to Peter and Paul, to Lottie Moon and Billy Graham. It is one of the beautiful and profound personal qualities exhibited by our Lord while He walked the earth among us. It is a trait that each of us must possess and exhibit if we are to be truly devoted followers of Christ. It is the divine and much desperately needed attribute of sacrifice. But of course, no one in their right mind would just start making random sacrifices without reasonable preparation and understanding of its purposes and usefulness to the kingdom of God as well as their own spiritual progress.

So today, we begin a journey through the scripture examining this challenging and difficult but very rewarding growth element of our faith-sacrifice. Today we're going to talk about what steps of preparation we must make to be sure our sacrifices are reasonable, worthy and acceptable to God. Next Sunday, in consideration of Veteran's Day, we will talk about the nature and cost of sacrifice. On the third Sunday we will discuss the attitude or spirit of sacrifice and then on the Sunday following Thanksgiving, we will examine what the scripture says about the joy of Sacrifice.

Preparation for Sacrifice:

Assumption- you are already saved, you have been on a fairly steady track of growth and maturity in your faith, and you want to experience a deeper level of spirituality than you already are.

Obedience

We need to understand that sacrifice, as a necessarily integral and meaningful part of a growing and influential Christian life, means little to nothing without being preceded by a life of consistent obedience to God's commands, every one of them, the whole package.

Would the magnificent act of Christ's sacrifice on the cross have had the same meaning and impact for us if He had given in to Satan's temptations in the desert three years prior? No. The power and impact of Christ's sacrifice rests totally on His perfect obedience in His fleshly form, to the will and purposes of the Father.

30 "I can do nothing on My own. I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. **John 5:30 (HCSB)**

David understood this. He had rebelled against the commands and will of God by bringing Uriah's wife into the palace, sleeping with her and then having her husband killed. When confronted by God's messenger Nathan, David repented and sought the Lord forgiveness and restoration. His understanding of the need for obedience to precede sacrifice is reflected in his Psalm 51.....

14 Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness. **15** Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. **16** You do not want a sacrifice, or I would give it; You are not pleased with a burnt offering. **17** The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. God, You

will not despise a broken and humbled heart. Psalms 51:14-17 (HCSB)

What does a broken spirit, a broken and humbled heart have to do with obedience? Everything. A person with a broken spirit, a broken and humbled heart before God, has come to the place of realizing that sin has caused a division, or maybe more accurately, a chasm, to develop between him or her and God. Being broken and humble is not proof but it is a really good sign that one is at least aware of his sin and is experiencing Holy Spirit conviction which leads to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Once this has taken place, then one can be at least getting prepared to offer some sort of sacrifice worthy of God's approval and acceptance.

Much of the sacrificing of animals in the Old Testament Jewish worship system was tied to sin offerings. The sacrifice of an unblemished animal was symbolic of the realization of and repentance from understood disobedience to God's commands.

²⁷ "Now if any of the common people sins unintentionally by violating one of the LORD's commands, does what is prohibited, and incurs guilt, ²⁸ or if someone informs him about the sin he has committed, then he is to bring an unblemished female goat as his offering for the sin that he has committed. Lev 4:27-28 (HCSB)

The priest will burn it on the altar along with the fire offerings to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement on his behalf for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven. Lev 4:35 (HCSB)

Today, we need to realize that the first step toward Christ-like, Christ honoring sacrifice is to make the sacrifice of our wills. Our own stubborn rebellion has led us many times to return to the bondage of Egypt, symbolic of our return to the old life of slavery to sin. We need to get right and stay right with God. We have no right to even hope for God's provision, protection, and blessings if we are not willing to live under the light and shelter of His commands. We are wasting our time, and God's, offering sacrifices of any kind that are tainted with rebellion, sin and unfaithfulness. We must obey God.

Consider the **Object/purpose** of sacrifice

No one in their right mind would just randomly sacrifice anything- money, time, safety, energy, or resources without first determining the value or worthiness of that which is being sacrificed for. You could sacrifice your mortgage and grocery money to go to the casino and gamble it away or to buy drugs or alcohol. That technically would be a sacrifice but not one that is worthy of anything good much would it be Christ honoring. That would be down right foolish and sinful! For example.....

1 When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don't know what has happened to him!" ² Then Aaron replied to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring [them] to me." ³ So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and

brought [them] to Aaron. ⁴ He took [the gold] from their hands, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf. Then they said, "Israel, this is your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!" Ex 32:1-4 (HCSB)

The generations, from the youngest to the oldest, that were alive at the time of the exodus had all been born in slavery. Wealth and possessions were something they knew nothing of except for what they took from the Egyptians as a type of plunder while they were leaving. Remember that by the tenth plague, the Egyptians were so grief stricken and afraid of the God of Israel that they basically paid the Israelites to leave Egypt with gold and other valuables.

It should probably be considered a fairly notable sacrifice the Israelites made giving up some of the first real possessions of value that they had ever known. But their sacrifices were for the purpose of erecting a golden calf, an idol! They had very foolishly and sinfully sacrificed some of their new found wealth to form an idol that would stand against the God who delivered them from slavery and delivered every bit of the wealth they possessed right to them.

The object of our sacrifices must be worthy, righteous, and honorable. We can't assume that just because we gave up something that it is right, good, and brings glory to Jesus. We must search the scriptures diligently and pray fervently to discover the purposes of God for our lives and for our church, then we can wisely proceed with offering sacrifices to God that are pleasing and acceptable to Him.

Output/cost

Jesus was addressing the cost of becoming a true follower, a disciple when He asked....

28 "For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Luke 14:28 (HCSB)

You're not going to take on a children's Sunday school class if you don't have heart for kids. You're not going to sign up for mission trip if you don't have the skills to do the assigned work. You're not going to write out a check for the building fund if you don't have the money. It is reasonable and wise to first consider the total cost, emotionally, spiritually, and physically, of the sacrifice you are considering making before you even take the first step of seeing it through. We will talk more about the cost of sacrifice next week.

Conclusion: Let's make this series of message a practical as possible. What are some reasonable and righteous, life-changing, Christ-honoring sacrifices you and I could make if we were willing?

Sacrifices:

Worldly affections- turn away from sinful habits and actions-lying, gossip, anger, substances, language, money wasting eating habits

(Age 19, delivered drugs, apple pie an chocolate milk, quit)

Time and energy- witness, minister, serve and work- we all have 24 hours each day to live how we choose, to keep our selves so busy that we truly don't have time for the Lord and His work. You may need to sacrifice a secular activity for the sacred. Sacrifice your time/energy.

Money and resources- support church and mission causes. We, as a church, have survived the three year financial disaster that our community and nation have gone through because of the sacrificial gifts of so many of you. Some of you have done little or nothing. Maybe it's time for us all to make a sacrificial gift.

I have heard and read through many resources throughout many years that in the average church, 20% of the people do 80% of the giving and work. Though I have not calculated, my guess is that here at New Hope those numbers are better than that. So many of you give and serve and have sacrificed so much, maybe even to the point of physical and financial exhaustion. That's why we are still strong and healthy today.

It is time for the whole church to step up! In light of all Christ has done for all of us, we should all be making some sacrifices for Christ and His church. If we all would, no one would have to sacrifice so much that it cost them their health or well-being. I am asking that every one of you who claims to be a truly devoted follower of Christ spend the next few weeks praying about and considering what areas of your life that God would have you make a sacrificial offering to the Lord. The opportunities and needs are many and great. Please consider

making at least one **sacrifice** from each of the three categories I mentioned-

Worldly affections-

Time and energy-

Money and resources-

If you would be so bold to think or say, “There is nothing I need, should, or am willing to sacrifice for Christ’s sake” in light of all Christ has done for you in dying on the cross to pay for your sins, offering you the gift of eternal life, the privilege of being called a child of God, and a home in heaven for all eternity, maybe you need to rethink who you are in Christ, if you are in Him. TRUTH- We could never sacrifice enough, thank Him enough, give Him enough, or serve Him enough to even begin to repay Him for what He’s done for us. Jesus deserves our best, our all, our everything, our very life. What will you sacrifice for Him?

Nature/cost of Sacrifice- Veteran’s Day

Attitude of sacrifice

⁹ As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, **“Follow Me!”** So he got up and followed Him. ¹⁰ While He was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came as guests to eat with Jesus and His disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors

and sinners?" ¹² But when He heard this, He said, "Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick do. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: **I desire mercy and not sacrifice.** For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."^l Matt 9:9-13 (HCSB)

Joy of Sacrifice- Thanksgiving