

Sacrifice of Praise, Sacrifice of Joy, Sacrifice of Service, Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

by Devern Fromke

Devern Fromke's sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's normal order through the sacrifices of praise, service, and dedication exemplified by Abraham's life.

Duration: 1:18:24

Scripture: Genesis 22:9, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Sacrifice"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the true meaning of leaving ourselves as a sacrifice on God's altar. He explains that when Jesus died, we also died with Him, were buried with Him, and rose with Him. The speaker warns against offering sacrifices of the old life, our own strength and energy, as they are not acceptable to God. He highlights the need for a genuine, complete surrender to God, where our sacrifices are not driven by impulsive emotions or willpower, but by a transformed life that is focused on God's glory. The speaker urges listeners to prioritize their relationship with God and allow the cross to do its perfect work in their lives, freeing them from self-centeredness and religious busyness.

Transcript

It's good to be with you. As I was saying, everything is wrong in the religious world today, and God is trying to bring in a right order of things. And we may not have realized it, but the Lord's desire out of his people is to have a priesthood people, a people who are offering up to the Lord, sacrifices of praise continually.

You see, sometimes we get God's normal order. I like to call this his normal order of things. The normal order, as I understand in the Old Testament and what he's wanting to bring about today, is an order we call the priesthood of all believers offering up to the Lord daily the sacrifices of praise.

Now, when this comes short, you see, and God's people are not giving to him, and the Lord in turn teaching them, we have then the priesthood, and we are teaching that it's a primary, it's the normal order. What happens when God's people miss the normal order? That is, they get away from the normal thing that God plans. What happens? Well, when they get down in this condition, God has to raise up a prophet, and the prophet's voice rings out to call them back to what? The normal order, that of praise and worship and thanksgiving, you see.

It used to bother me because I didn't understand meetings like this, and I thought, they're not giving any room for the preacher. And one day the Lord got through to me and said, when I get the normal order of things, there'll just be the priesthood, the people, everyone entering into priesthood, offering praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and out of it comes his teaching. Now, that's a shock to you, maybe.

But don't forget, the prophet, the preaching, is only to bring those people back. Into the normal order of things. And so the more normal, did I just say it? The more normal things are, the less need or room there will be for the priesthood, the prophet.

Priesthood, the priesthood, yes. You see, we've developed a mentality through the years, and it's gotten so far amiss that we don't feel like we've had a good service unless somebody priests. That's just where we are, doesn't it? It's been the last 15 or 20 years that we've moved among the Lord's people, and our ministry has been primarily that of trying to bring them into a worship, a praise, a giving unto the Lord that which he is worthy of, and the teaching.

And when you have a purpose group of people gathered who are more in the normal order, what God wants, the teaching is for it to be. And I used to wonder why, when Sunday morning would come, and I'd get in a place, and the other crowd would come, invariably I'd have a, how do I put it, a real pathetic spirit that would rise and would want to cry out, and I'd say, Lord, what's wrong with me? I'm not, you know, I couldn't understand it. It was because of those who were in that God was wanting to bring them back to the normal order thing.

Oh, I would encourage this now. Don't get the obscenity or the thing that he has to do. Don't get this mixed up with the normal order thing.

Could I go on and give you another little picture of what happens? Sometimes when God does not have his normal order, the priest, men fulfilling their place, and things get down in a condition like this, he has to even use a woman to get things back. I say that for the sisters here. And I say it because I appreciate that when men don't do what they ought to do, God through this picture, look at the book of Acts, look at a number of times, look at the judges, Deborah, different ones.

What did he do? He used a woman, he used a prophet to call things back. But we get so accustomed to living down here that we think that's the normal order. No, it isn't.

This is God's normal order. So sisters, thank God if he's using you if things are below normal. And thank God when he doesn't use you again.

Because hopefully things are worse. Well, I don't know how I get started on that. It's just sort of been growing in my heart for several days that we need to accept that the Lord is bringing into and among his people who are really alive to him the normal order of things.

So you can expect this type, that is, you can expect times when the Lord's people will gather and they will sing, they will worship, they will lift their hearts, they become a true priesthood under the Lord. We've been finding in church in Indianapolis where the Lord's people gather, it's been quite a thing to see less and less preaching. Even though we're there in the last six or seven weeks, I think I've just shared once, the Lord is raising up ministries in the midst of the group.

He gives a burden, causes someone... I don't think ministries should come from outside all the time. In the normal order, here we go again, the normal order of things, they grow right up in the midst because the

Lord is exercising the hearts of his people. When we get professional, we have to bring someone in, and it's not that we don't enjoy coming, but it's not the normal order.

What I want to speak about tonight, I'll take us back, first of all, to a look at Abraham. And I think you will see, as you consider the life of Abraham for a few moments, chapter 12, I think you will see that Abraham is a lovely picture of what I have just been saying. God calls this man.

He's a representative man in many ways. He calls him out of Chaldea, out of the world and all that idolatry has been, and he's calling him out and he's calling him unto something, unto the land, the place that he's going to fulfill his purpose through in. And we read, as Abraham leaves, as he goes out, it says in verse 7, or let's pick it up with verse 6, chapter 12, verse 6, And Abraham passed through the land, unto the place of Sikkim, unto the plain of Barah, and the Canaanite was then in the land.

And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. Beloved, the life of Abraham in his going on in his service for the Lord begins with this simple little thing, he builded an altar.

Now, I don't want to shock you too much, but you search in vain to find one time when he went to church, as we think of it, for church was different then. Church was what? It was building an altar and giving unto the Lord, not just going to meetings, but it was a life that was being poured out. You don't find Abraham preaching a sermon.

Not that I can find. He gives some wonderful statements occasionally. But he doesn't, you see, we've developed a mentality today that's so far away from the real art of things.

Abraham builded an altar. Could I say to you tonight that whether we realize it or not, every one of us have an altar. There is something upon which our life is being consumed, poured out, burned up.

Something has become our altar. Tonight you're giving yourself to something or for something. You have an altar.

And I delight to see that the very first thing that Abraham does in his life unto the Lord is to build an altar. It was the whole burnt offering that he offered. The burnt offering, you remember, is this consecration, the giving of his whole, his total being unto God for what God wanted.

Our problem today is we're so conscious of the sin offering, getting a little peace and a little forgiveness and a little bit of, you know, so that we can feel a little bit better and then we go on our own way. But Abraham, as a representative man, speaks to us, the first thing that God really wants is a whole burnt offering. And of course the sin offering was introduced later with Moses in order that those who have given themselves to the Lord might maintain a closer, might have a fellowship with the Lord.

But first of all, we're a burnt offering. He built an altar. And then it says, having built an altar, we read, and he removed some fence into a mountain on the east, a vessel, and pitched his tent.

Isn't it interesting that most people are tent conscious? First of all, where am I going to live? What's my dwelling like? Young people, let me say to you tonight, if you get your altar right and the Lord develops, first of all, the altar and what it really means, your tent will follow immediately. It's automatic. You dwell with the thing near that which has become the primary goal and object.

I've noticed it for a number of years. When I find a young fellow, a young lady, who's sort of in a dither, they're in confusion. Should I go here to this school? Should I go to that school? Should I, where, you see, where should I dwell? It's true with all of us, but seems to be more evident in young people.

You bring, you allow God to give the full picture of the altar to you, of what it really means. And from that, there'll be the dwelling that goes right along. Oh, you read back in some of the lives of those who've been poured out, really poured out.

Their altar has been very real, given to the Lord, you see. Doesn't make any difference where they dwell. I'm quite interested to see the joy that comes in dwelling because the altar's been established and the tent is pitched accordingly.

So I say to us tonight, and what I would like for us to get a hold of is the fact that basically every individual has an altar. We must realize that the altar should be given to us by the Lord. It's a given thing.

And if we do not accept the altar that has been given, the altar that the Lord provides, then we'll develop our own. What do you mean by that? Well, I've been talking for days now and I keep being brought back to the things that are given and the things that are developed. But God, first of all, wants to have us see that his altar is a given altar.

No other altar will he meet man. And that altar, likewise, has its own sacrifice, which is also given. He accepts no other altar, no other sacrifice.

You know what I'm heading for, don't you? That altar, of course, is the old rugged cross. It's the altar which the Lord Jesus himself has become the sacrifice and he's given. And the altar that we must reckon with, then, is Christ himself, Christ himself.

He is the one where we meet, whom we meet. Now, the thing that's interesting is that man, in their ambition and in their zeal and in their longing to serve the Lord, they go after an altar of their own kind, of their own building, of their own developing. And it's over here that you see individuals beginning to work for the Lord.

The work becomes their altar upon which they're going to die. Or some project becomes their altar. Or some cause that becomes big enough to last with them and they give themselves to it.

I don't know, dear hearts. I have to get more and more pointed. The further along I get, I feel like God keeps saying to me, be very straightforward.

This is an hour when people need to be liberated and set free from some of the things they have given themselves to that are sinkholes for time, and dissipating energy, and bringing tragedy, and their whole life is being wasted. It's too late to waste five or ten years and come to the end and find you've missed the real thing God's after. And we don't see you very often, but God seems to burden my heart in a new way these days.

Brothers, sisters, we must be very clear about the altar on which God is working. When I see in Abraham's life now that he built the altar and he picked his tent, I get a glimpse of the priority of his life. It's expressed several places in the Scripture by others.

You remember David? He said, One thing have I desired of the Lord. One thing. That's sharpening you down, isn't it? How many desires do you have, that's honest.

Can you narrow your desires down? Can you narrow them down? One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may what? Do well. Now, I believe his tent followed because he had already come to want to really be poured out as the man who would fulfill God's purpose in his generation. God looking down says, Here's a man who fulfilled his purpose in his generation.

And he speaks of this desire, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord, to inquire. I see something of a priesthood there. A life that's given unto God.

You read of Mary when she sat at the feet of Jesus. Remember? Martha was busy and cumbersome with many things. She sticks her head out of the kitchen door and says, Lord, don't you care that my sister isn't helping me? And Jesus said, Mary hath chosen that one thing most needful.

He sharpens the priority down. What was Mary doing? Working for the Lord? Getting his dinner ready? Washing? No, not necessarily. Mary was occupied with the Lord, seated at his feet.

One thing most needful. And our reasoning says, Yeah, but about supper time, the Lord always has the markers. Don't worry.

He's called you, if you have seen and heard, to the one thing most needful. And I love the words of Paul when he sharpens his life down to a sharp priority. He says, this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth and pressing forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Somebody says, praise the Lord. That's my goal to make heaven my home. Isn't what he said? The heavenly calling, the high calling isn't to get to heaven.

Do you know why I know that? Because he's talking about a prize. And eternal life is a what? Yes, don't get your prizes and gifts mixed up. You'll be in awful shape.

A lot of people are. There's a difference. The gift of God is eternal life, and that includes heaven.

That's just thrown in. But I'm so glad that God's challenge and something that he lays out before us of a prize, and Paul is pressing toward the prize for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. There's a high calling.

Not as though I have already apprehended, he says, but I want to apprehend that for which I am apprehended. Oh, let me, let me, with all there is in my heart tonight, stir your sisters, your brothers, to remember you can settle down and just play along, but you'll be sorry. God's word, God's word.

Here's a prophet coming out now. God's word is to lift us out of our plain sorts of playing around and bring us to the place where we want to be more in the order of things. And that's a life that is learned at worship and a life that is being burned out, as it were, on the altar, the altar for him.

All right. We've said then that there's a difference between man's developing his own altar where he's going to sacrifice, give some time and some energy and some work for the Lord, or the recognition of the real altar where God meets man. Think just a little further before we leave Genesis.

Verse 8 again, chapter 12. It says, And he removed his tent unto a mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. I've been interested in the names of those two places.

Quite a thing to have your tent pitched, building an altar unto the Lord, and two things to remind you. Bethel on one side, Ai on the other. I believe it speaks very pointedly of the life that is really being poured out on an altar for the Lord.

You know what Bethel means, don't you? It means the house of God. And I believe while Abraham may not have fully grasped all that it meant, it's significant to us today because the life, the individual who is really poured out unto the Lord for his full purpose has one interest, and that is to accomplish the thing that's God's real interest. What is it the Lord will have? A dwelling place for himself.

A corporate habitation. Living stone. Somebody says, I've just one goal and that's to get people saved.

And I say, well, praise the Lord, that's a good gateway. What are you going to do with some veins? God wants living stone, but he doesn't want just piles. That straightforward enough? He doesn't want just piles of stone.

Praise the Lord, got another one, pile, another one, making a big pile. So it's after us. He's wanting to make living stones that are shaped and framed and fit into a lovely house, a dwelling place for himself.

And way back here, this early in the book of Genesis, God is fastening the priority by saying in the life of Abraham, his altar, his dedication unto God, the house of God. Now we know what that means tonight, I trust. The Lord cannot be satisfied just in having individuals.

But he wants to build us together as a corporate dwelling place. And this means taking stones and shaping them and fitting them, working them together until they have their relatedness in the Lord, one to another. And they function, they're coordinated, all that this means.

That's the vessel that was on one side. And I believe it stood as a constant reminder, it does to me, the altar is right. This will be the thing that God will produce out of a life.

You know what Ai means? H-A-I? That was on the other side. God has hidden some things in his words. I'm told, by those who know the Hebrew, that Ai means a heap of ruins, many a life, in serving the Lord.

Many an individual in serving the Lord is going to come down to the end. The twilight hours of a lifetime having served, sacrificed, all the rest. But I wonder if it'll be Ai to keep a ruin, our vessel.

I stood in an office of a missionary who had come back after many, many years in Japan in the mission field. He'd been well known for about 25 years in our area back in Missouri as a radio preacher. I dearly loved him.

One day I slipped into his office and we were sitting, chatting. And he opened his heart. I don't know how often he had done it to others, but he opened his heart to me.

And he said, you know, I wish I could go back and recall 50 years of serving the Lord. I said, what do you mean? He said, I've just discovered what Romans 12.1 means, where God speaks of the good, the acceptable, and the perfect love of God. Tears coursing down his cheeks, he said, I hope I qualify for the good.

You know, I feel like all the people in that whole high state area would have said, surely, brother, of all the men we know, yours should be the perfect. And it really spoke to my heart. May the Lord get through to us in the life of Abram, the altar upon which we are being consumed will either produce that which God can really be pleased with, or that which is being done, but it could be failed.

Well, let's look at it a little more closely. He said, what do you mean? Every man has an altar. Let's just consider for a little bit some of the sacrifices that are produced, that are brought from people's bills or when they are working from this is their altar.

Let me ask you to read, first of all, in Ecclesiastes. Your turn, please. Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verse 1. Keep thy foot, Ecclesiastes 5, verse 1. Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools.

Now, just stop for a moment and ask yourself a question. What's the sacrifice of fools? What is the sacrifice of fools? I feel like it's over in this altar right here. It may sound strange to you, but if I would reinterpret it, I would say, now be careful when you go to church.

Do you know why? You could get all enthused with something that you hear. You could get all enthused in the realm of your soul with something that you hear, and out of the impetuosity and the state of the moment, you could say, I won't. How many of you know what it's like to get all enthused in a meeting? And you pound your fist and you say, I'm going to go home.

And after the whole thing is over, about six hours or a day later, your willpower isn't producing it anymore. Your mind's no longer challenged. Do you know what I'm trying to say? This is that impetuous sacrifice of fools when people say, I need to do something for the Lord, and they're challenged.

But it's the soul that gets challenged. The motion, the mind, the will responds, and the individual makes what we call the sacrifice of fools. I don't wonder that the religious world today goes through its times of enthusing.

They get the boiler all stoked up, really is hot for a while, said it hardly lasts till next Sunday, Frank. Stoke the boiler again, get everybody enthused. Is that the best? Is that what God wants? How many of you have ever been through that? Oh, I'm not wanting to just be negative and play, but we have to realize there's a vast difference.

The altars that we develop, and the causes, and the challenge, and the projects, the programs, the things that men use to carve out kingdoms and all the rest. It's working for God, and I'm not saying people aren't sincere or zealous, but the religious world tonight is cluttered with it. And I think this is why it says, Keep thy foot now careful when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to what? With your inner ear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.

For they consider not that they do evil. Be not last with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, and therefore let thy words be few.

For a dream cometh through the multitude of business. Oh, the dreams today. And a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

When thou vowest a vow unto God, be sure not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools. Pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.

Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin. Can you understand why the life that God's dealing with speaks less and less, doesn't get so immediately enthused in the realm of the soul, but knows how to hear in the inner? There's the sacrifice of fools, and we've all been through it in our zeal and working for the Lord. I was out in the West some years ago.

After a morning service, some of the businessmen asked if I'd have lunch with them. We got a private room, and after we were through eating, one of the brothers sitting next to me said, Do you believe you should pay vows or fulfill vows when you've made them? Well, that was a loaded question. And I said, Tell me your story.

He said, Well, we had a high-powered speaker come about a year ago. He said he'd had a dream the night before that God was going to help him raise \$200,000 for a certain project. And the best part of the dream was that everyone who would give, everyone who would give, would be blessed.

And he told the stories of other situations where uncles had died and aunts had died, and they'd all gotten inheritances. And before it was through that night, I guess he got pretty close to his \$100,000 in pledges. And the dear man, director of Episcopal Church, sitting right next to me, looked up.

He said, Do you think I should pay the vow I vowed I'd pledge \$1,000? He said, For six months now, I've been giving \$20 and \$30 and \$50. I said, Well, what do you think? Twenty men sitting around the circle, every one of them looking back rather seriously said, We all pledged. We've had a hard time.

What was it? What was it? A man's project. A man's dream. And some men had made the sacrifice of gold.

I'm sorry, but I'm sure that's what it was. Because after they opened their hearts, I couldn't help. And it happens all the time.

I meet people who have been merchandised at the hands of religious experts, and I've come to grow and within. Now I'm sort of negative in this, but I have to say to us, brothers, sisters, people will use us for their ends, make merchandise out of God's people. And this is why the religious world looks on, and the situation today is what it is.

Oh, it's a wonderful thing when we get over on an understanding of God's ways and the building according to Christ. There is the sacrifice of fools because of men who have never found the right altar, but they are working for the Lord. And they get the sacrifice of fools.

I'll have to go on. I'll just give you sort of an outline. There's another sacrifice, as Scripture calls, the sacrifice of the wicked.

Because the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination under the Lord. What is it? It's men, those who are sacrificing, who have a hidden and an ulterior motive back of it. It's not really for God.

They somehow are giving that they might. The heart is mixed in this motive, and it's abomination to the Lord. The sacrifice that pleases God is the heart that gives to him, just for him, nothing else.

I'd like to go into that, but I can't. I believe God is very careful. I believe he's very careful.

I'll illustrate this way. Numbers of years ago when we were back in the West Coast and this was our altar, we were building projects and things for God. We had a lovely youth center trying to do something for the

Lord's people and had a group of businessmen, and they were capable.

And our annual drive came for fun. And as they went around to the various businesses and the various places to meet our budget for the year, one of the men came in real excited one night. He said, I have a real place, \$25,000 from the sixth brewing company.

In five minutes we had a real division right down the middle of the board. One of the men said, Oh, God could not be, God could not, we just can't receive something from the wicked. And quoted this verse, the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.

Others of the men said, I'd take money from the devil if he'd give it. That's human reasoning. For everybody it can.

Why? Because the end justifies anyone. You'd be surprised how much of that goes on in the religious world today. The end is big enough.

There's any means to get there. But God doesn't go along with that. Oh, I thank God for one of the men in the group.

I was such a young fellow, I didn't know any better. I didn't know anything in those days, but I never got over the story when he stood up and he said, Man, God will provide. We don't have to go out like this.

He'd been against it. And it sort of settles the cracks of all of this. Oh, let me just reemphasize to us tonight, if we're working for the Lord, and we've got our project, and we've got our ambitions, and carving out our little kingdom, we'll be prone to use some of these methods.

But I believe in 25 years, God has proven to this heart again and again, his work done in his way, noticed in his way, never lacks his commitment. I believe it is so. It's been proven.

Well, there's another sacrifice. I call it the sacrifice of the blind. You remember when Samuel spoke to King Saul, and he said, Go down and slay all the Amalekites and all that they have.

And King Saul put the army down, and they slayed the best of the sheep and the oxen. They slayed all of those things that were vile and refuse. Why not? The reasoning of the mindset, get rid of that.

But they spared, they slayed the bad, they spared the what? Now he comes back, and he meets Samuel the prophet. And Samuel gets this kind of a testimony. Yea, Paul says, we have performed the commandment of the Lord.

Stands up in person, he gives his testimony. He had a great battle. What a great victory down against the Amalekites.

My, how they fled. Except that every testimony has an undertone. And Samuel has a sensitive ear.

He says to Saul, What is that bleeding of the sheep and lowing of the oxen that I hear? What is that? Where is that coming from? It's quite a thing to come in before a man of God like Samuel, who doesn't listen to your words, he listens for the undertone. Oh, how we need it today. Our words are so bleak.

Our testimonies have such empty reign so often. We announce victory, but defeat cries out so loud. The bleeding, the lowing of the sheep and the oxen.

And what does King Saul say? Well, he says, you see, it's like this. The people spared are the best of the sheep and the oxen. We thought we'd just take it all down here to Gilgal and we'd have a great sacrifice for the Lord.

A sacrifice for the Lord. There's a lot of that going on today in the lives of people. We're ready to get rid of the bad things, our bad habits, our bad selves, our bad flesh, all that.

But somehow in the black... And I look back on it all now and I see how merciful and wonderful the Lord was when one day he came in and put a mirror before a proud young man and I for the first time began to see the work of the cross. It all happened one Monday morning when I went to my office. There in the middle of the desk was a church bulletin and the dear pastor had put in his bulletin that Sunday this little article by Tozer, the old cross or the modern cross.

And as busy as I was that morning, I remember starting to read it. I got so irritated that everything he said just unveiled all of my youthfulness. I thought he had put it in just for me.

I went out to my secretary who was a member of his church and said, Where did you get this? Did you bring this in? Yes. I thought you'd enjoy reading it. He was quite innocent.

The pastor was too. God had his gun loaded for a proud young fellow. Oh, I never ceased to thank the Lord.

I read that over. I laid it aside. A couple hours later I read it again.

I couldn't get away from it. Hegel calls it the strange radium working of the cross. Once it starts, you're caught.

You can't get loose. That was the beginning of the end. What am I trying to say tonight? Beloved, Oh, if we could see that the flesh profiteth nothing.

If we could see that that which God has condemned to death slay utterly before the Amalekites. You can't take reputation. I know the religious mentality today is wonderfully, wonderfully, so and so would become a Christian.

What an influence they'd have for God. You ever hear that? That's just exactly what it is, is influence. And that's all.

God alone draws men by the way of the Lord Jesus. There's influence. We don't doubt that.

But the real working, the real working of the Holy Spirit that slays and straightens. Well, as long as men have their vision of working and serving the Lord, working for him, you have what we call the sacrifice of the blind. Saul thought he could spare the best, take it down and give it to the Lord.

Do you know why? Because he had never seen what a sacrifice was. I believe Saul lived in the outward. I don't know, but I think he must have for years looked on every time there was a great ceremony of sacrifice.

Imagine bringing in hundreds, sometimes thousands of bullocks and lambs and sheep. Platter, platter. And unless you have spiritual perfection, everything within your natural triumph, that's a waste, especially when so many people are going hungry.

Then tell me you don't. That's a waste. Why is this waste when so many are going hungry? What does it mean? He's living in the outward.

He doesn't understand sacrifice. Now David did, by contrast. You remember after David had sinned, numbering the people, he goes out to the edge of the city to make an offering unto the Lord, atonement for his sins.

He meets the farmer there. He recognizes him and says, Good old King David, what have you come for? And David says, I've come to make an offering. He says, Then I will give you wood for the altar and I'll give you an animal to sacrifice.

What does David say? What does he say? I will not sacrifice that which has cost me. What is an offering? What is a sacrifice? David had been schooled. God had been getting through to a young lad.

What was it? Beloved, a sacrifice is something that begins, as David said in the 51st Psalm, the sacrifices of God are a broken heart, a broken and a contrite spirit. Listen, a sacrifice is first of all an inward reality and then it manifests itself in something outwardly. If I merely give something outwardly, I can go over to the Malachites and steal their animals.

I can go to my neighbor's purse and get something out, give it to the Lord. That's just how crude it is. Is it an outward thing? The end justifies any what? Me.

Anybody doing that? All the time. The sacrifice of the blind. Why? We're working for God, working for the Lord.

The sacrifice of the blind. Finally, Samuel said, Have the Lord his great delight in burnt offerings and in sacrifice. Is this what he wants? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.

Oh, dear Lord, tender it home to us tonight. The religious world is filled with outward serving, people giving their time and energy, and God trying to get a hold of the news and say, Listen, listen. What's wrong? You think from all our work for God, we siphon out satisfaction.

It's our kingdom, it's our project, and we get a return from it. Our satisfaction should be from the Lord, the Lord alone. Not from the worthless, not from the things we do, not from... Obey.

From inward, the spirit of the heart that's broken in contact. Oh, let no one think we're going to put any cold water on serving the Lord. It's all revealed today without spiritual knowledge, without understanding the ways of the Lord, and what really pleases, what really fulfills God's work.

And we must be very clear ourselves that we get swept along in the trend and the method of things today. I know that there can come a sense of satisfaction in working for the Lord, doing things for God, but God wants the obedience of our heart. Listen to me again.

Well, one last thing. Sacrifice of fools. Our enthusiasm.

The sacrifice of the wicked. Hidden ulterior motives. The sacrifice of the blind.

Outwardness without inward reality. The last one we will call the sacrifice unto the net. Ever read about that? Turn to Habakkuk.

Habakkuk. Chapter 1. Habakkuk. Mixed with Haggai.

Zephaniah, rather, and Nahum. Hard book to find. We don't usually use it very much.

Habakkuk. Chapter 1. Verse 16. Here is a very interesting verse.

I pondered it for years, and suddenly it took on some real meaning. Habakkuk 1, verse 16. It says, Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drive, because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.

What is this? Those who are working for the Lord finally get to the place in their service and in their work where the very tools they have, the very tools that they use for the Lord become so wonderful to them that they begin to sacrifice to the tool. Here's the net. Wonderful net for catching what? Nothing wrong with the net, but it's the net that's too important.

Do you hear me? If the net gets too important, first thing I know, I'll begin to glory, and I'll fall down, and I'll begin to worship the net. Lord, don't let us see somebody else's net. Let us see our own.

What is the net? It's whatever I have come to use for catching fish or doing the work of the Lord. Pretty soon we begin to burn incense, sacrifice unto it, because it becomes the end. Many a dear man of God who wanted a lovely building, a lovely church edifice for the work of the Lord finally got his eyes open to see that he was sacrificing unto this.

Do you know what I mean? I think I've met some of the Lord's servants who've had the net really unveiled before them. God wants us to hold very loosely any tool that we have, lest it become far more important, and we begin to sacrifice unto it. The organization, the tool, the place, it even could be an individual's ministry that gets more important than the Lord, and you begin to burn incense unto your ministry itself.

God-given? The tool? Yes. I was sitting out in the West Coast a couple of years ago with a group of young people. It was a hippie commune.

The kids loved the Lord. They loved the Lord. We were fellowshipping after the meeting that night.

They invited me over to a place and about 20 of them sat in a circle, and I took the liberty to just point out each one and say, tell me your history, your background. How'd you get here? What's involved? One by one we went around. Very lovely time.

Then we prayed. Never forget it. They were just as pointed with me.

They know how to. And when we were praying, I heard one of the fellows say, in a very sweet and loving way, and help our brother Vern to know how to lay down his own ministry so that the Lord Jesus can be all. Well, you serve the Lord until pretty soon you begin to what? Sacrifice unto it.

Burn incense to it. You read back through many lives, men who've gone along with the Lord, there came a time when I believe they had a choice to make. Did they want to live unto the Lord or unto their ministry? Well, we leave that.

What are we trying to say tonight? Forgive me if it seems negative, but sometimes the cross has to deal with all that's wrong and expose. There's an awful lot of this today, and I believe it produces in the end a heap of ruins. Men live down upon a whole lifetime working, slaving.

Do you believe some men can be pretty sacrificial? With their time? With their money? Their honesty? Their family? All of this for the Lord? And yet it's not built according to Christ? It's not in the way? It's not that God is going to give any a cup of cold water given in his name will not return. It won't be unrewarded. But are we self-interested in that? Or do we want the ultimate thing, the real thing that God has laid hold of us for? This is the burden of my heart.

Well, let's quickly look at what it means over here. We'll just take four quick pictures, and I think you'll get, then you can amplify it yourself. What does it mean when we meet him at his altar? What does it mean when we discover that he is the sacrifice, the only one that can ever really be acceptable under God? It is true, it is true that when Jesus died, we died with him.

When he was buried, we were buried with him. When he rose, we rose with him. And it's on resurrection ground now.

It's on this side of the cross that we are identified to the Lord. And the living sacrifice that we present is not something of the old life, our old energy, our old strength. It is nothing on the other side that can ever serve God or please God.

God condemns it to death. The only thing that can ever be given under the Lord as a living sacrifice is that which is passed through the cross on the resurrection ground. And it's in this basis in Romans 12, it says, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.

I am identified to the Lord. In him the altar and the offering is made. My offering would be nothing in another child.

I'm identified to him, a part of him. And as I bear in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus, again, this whole process, then life flows unto others. So what does the Lord do? Well, it seems to me that when we get a glimpse of the real altar and the offering that's been made and I identify, I being one with him in it, then we get a glimpse of the sacrifices that please the Lord and what they're not doing.

The first is what we call the sacrifice of praise, working myself to the bone. You'd almost think the way some people go at things that God really hired up for help. He could call a million angels to do his work with a lot less fussing, a lot less squabbling, so little difficulty.

But he is chosen to use a principle, a way by which he does it, and that is to exhibit and reveal himself. It is really God who is doing the working in us and through us. And while we're occupied with the work, and I suppose that's right in a sense, God is occupied with the worker.

And I think this is something I'm really doing for him. And that's just the way by which he creates a platform to reveal himself and to work in the lives of his people, that he might work through them. Now you know that all the things that are done, that the preoccupations we have with this work itself, it's really quite insignificant.

It's the reality of the Lord Jesus that's revealed through a life. That's what tests you. That's what brings fruit.

That's what brings to God. So the Lord says, how can I get through to the neighbors of a certain brother? How can I really reveal and speak to hearts? He creates a platform sometimes in difficult circumstances. You're in trouble.

You're in trial. And in the midst of this, he allows that life that he's working in to give the sacrifice of praise to the Lord. And there's someone who looks on and has to say, my, I'd write and complain if I were in that.

But the real sacrifice is what? In the midst of all the questions and circumstances, the Lord himself is revealing, exhibiting himself. Let us offer therefore the sacrifice of praise to God continually. That is the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto his name.

The sacrifice of praise in the midst of what we go through. In the real estate, here's a Philippian jail. Remember the two fellows who got cast in? Paul and Silas.

There they are in the middle of the night in the innermost stocks. And the scripture says they were praying and singing praises unto the Lord. You suppose Paul was saying to Silas, now we've got to give a testimony to the jailer.

Remember when he comes in the morning now, got to give a testimony. What about the fellow in the next cell? And the next cell. No, I don't know.

I believe they were just alive for the Lord. They were fulfilling priesthood in the jail. What was it? Singing, praising, thanking the Lord in the midst of these circumstances.

This is where the sacrifice is revealed. It costs. You don't feel like it.

Right? The circumstances. This is the sacrifice. And I've thought so often while we try to put the pressure on people, the Lord says, no, no.

I'll put the pressure on in my own way. You just praise. You just give thanks.

And in the midst of this, the Lord sends an earthquake. Now the pressure is on on the jailer. Full power.

Gates wide open. He comes rushing in. Paul says, we're all here, don't worry.

Where's the pressure? God himself knows how to precipitate the circumstances. And that night, out of the sacrifice of praise, do you know the sign? You can go study it. The Old Testament, the Psalms, it speaks of the sacrifice of joy.

Paul speaks in Philippians from his prison cell, and he says, and if I be offered or poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice of praise, will you face some joy? Joy? In the midst, he says. You can't do this. You can pound your fist and say, I'm going to be joyful.

I'm going to pray. You'll never do it until you know the supply of the Lord. Your union with him, death, burial, resurrection, and on resurrection ground, he's my supply.

And the only living sacrifice is my joining to him in resurrection. Otherwise, you'll grumble. You'll moan.

You'll complain. You see, he's the reservoir from which we live. Our joy is the joy of the Lord.

Our praise is that which he, otherwise it's an empty well. When circumstances are right, you're in church, you can praise. How many of you know that? Well, what about tomorrow? You see? All right.

There's the sacrifice of thanksgiving. All of this is what we call the living sacrifice under the Lord. But I just say now, we must conclude.

I say, beloved, that God is interested in our lives becoming the means by which he reveals himself and veils himself. He's the only one that really works it. And he does it as we find the right altar and ourselves identified with the living sacrifice himself.

And it is this way that God brings the fragrance out of a life that's burned out, pouring out. It makes such a difference when I see that I've been working but now that it's Christ who himself is doing the work in us and through us and in the midst of it, the sacrifice by which he works. Oh, we get caught every now and then by the reality of some individual whose life is poured out and in the midst of it there's a sweet fragrance to the Lord.

Isn't that what caught you? Wasn't some man's building, some man's doing, some man's great work for God? It was that reality of a life that was laid hold of and you got caught. I marveled so many times that day when Stephen was standing being stoned. One who stood there holding his garments consenting unto the death of Stephen.

I tell you, Saul of Tarsus thought he was right. He was working. He was zealous.

He was getting rid of this fact that had created so much trouble. But oh, he got caught that day when Stephen, a sacrifice living under the Lord in the midst of that awful hour of death looks up with a thankful praise of something as joy in his heart and he says, don't lay this to their side. Forgive them.

The preaching of the cross is not a vocal declaration of words. The preaching is the word logos, the word of the cross. The expression of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.

But unto us which are being saved is the dunamis, the power of God. And that day when Stephen was poured out, the sacrifice was made unto God. And God got a hook in Saul of Tarsus.

He had his fish on the line. He never got away. He started to run.

On the Tarsus road that day, the Lord stopped him. Begins to reel the line in. Beloved, this is the reality of a life that allows God to do the working.

Stephen saw the glory. The glory was revealed to some others. My heart keeps crying for that kind of a reality where the cross has done its perfect, its full work, its complete work.

Nothing for self. God's glory. A willingness.

Now, we don't want to get a martyr complex and get our soul stirred up and back where others are. We can do it the same way, in a subtle way. Do you know that? What are we saying tonight? The hour has come when God is calling some lives to dare to stand with the Lord and let the working of the cross in them cut them loose from just lots of activity and lots of religious doing.

It isn't that you'll do less. That'll be from a whole different start. It'll be the Holy Spirit and it'll be of a different kind when God really gets a life.

It's not that we become passive, indifferent. Our spirit is burning but we come in letting the Lord do the work. And thus it is.

I hope you've caught it now tonight. The highest calling that a life can have is that of priesthood. Offering unto the Lord the sacrifices.

Abraham's life, our life, the life that we are called to, the normal order of things is the life that's given to the Lord all the time. And in and through it, God is pleased and satisfied. Shall we pray? Lord, I thank you for my brothers and my sisters tonight.

And thank you, Lord, that I sense in each a real longing for fullness, for reality. Oh, Lord, we've all spared a time, something that we thought we could use for you. We've offered the sacrifice of fools.

Sometimes our motives have been that of the wicked. Sometimes we've been blind and out trying to do things for you, thinking that the flesh could profit, we could spare something and give it to God. When you've condemned it to death with the cross, oh, I thank you, Lord, that it is you who works in us.

It is your working through us. We thank you that we don't turn in. We keep our eye on the work that you've called us to.

But while we do, we want to be careful that we don't let that end cause us to do any means, things that are not glorifying to me. Sometimes we can get so eager to build the church that we allow things to take place, to happen, that are not for your glory. Our end seems to be the church, but the real end is your glory.

Your glory. Don't let us see anything lesser. If what we produce does not bring glory to me, we pray, dear Lord, thou wilt hold us in check.

I thank you for speaking to my own heart tonight again. Oh, Lord, the long of us, we pray individually, thou wilt, oh, that thou wilt let ours be. The sacrifices that really please, maybe two or three others, before we dismiss, we just pray, commit your heart.

The groaning, the long, it'll be expression for someone else. We just wait a little bit. God has spoken.

You tell him the long in your heart tonight.

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