

Spiritual Sacrifices

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 2/29/2020

Jesus Christ is our High Priest. In the book of Hebrews, Jesus is shown to be our **Great High Priest**.

Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a **great high priest**, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. [Our profession is Christianity]

We are admonished to seize and retain our profession of faith which is "**Christianity**." How do we retain our Christianity?

Just by proclaiming that we are Christians – **that is not enough**. Being a Christian is tough work – and no one experienced that **rigor** more than Jesus Christ did on earth.

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an **high priest** which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The **trials** of every type experienced by Jesus far exceeded those we will ever experience.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Many of us are not that familiar with the role of the priesthood. But, it is a concept that can help us understand our Christian responsibility.

Hebrews 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behooved Him [Jesus Christ] to be made like unto His brethren [that is us], that He might be a merciful and faithful **high priest** in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

The word "priest" carries a couple of primary meanings. A priest has multiple roles to perform – like **offering sacrifices** – for one. A priest mediates in religious rituals and services. A priest is holy or set apart to perform those services.

You may notice that we are studying in the New Testament – where we do not see very much about the Old Testament duties of the priesthood. The

Old Testament priests were responsible for making intercession to God for the people by offering the various sacrifices—like lambs, goats, bulls and rams...

Jesus became a flesh and blood human, just like us, experiencing everything we suffer, even on our worst day—so that He might be a merciful, understanding, and faithful **high priest** in things pertaining to God.

In God's Church, when we hear the word 'sacrifices,' it usually conjures up a vision of an innocent lamb or some other animal being slaughtered.

That is because of our early foundation in the Old Testament Scriptures. That is what the Old Testament priesthood did – slaughtered animals for sacrifice.

As we **mature** and come into the New Testament Scriptures, we need to expand our understanding of sacrifices to include **spiritual sacrifices**, because that thought is not naturally appealing to us. But we must strive to learn to perform **spiritual sacrifices** because that is what God **desires** of us.

The very first time that Jesus is quoted in the Scriptures using the word '**sacrifice**,' He said that physical sacrifices are **not** what He desires. How can that be? What of the thousands upon thousands of animal sacrifices we read about in the Old Testament—wasn't that what God desired?

Matthew 9:13 You go and learn what it means that, "I will have mercy, and **not sacrifice**:" for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Jesus does not desire Old Testament-like physical animal sacrifices. Of course, Jesus was echoing right here, the inspired words of King David.

Psalms 51 is where David begged God not to remove His Holy Spirit – because David had committed such egregious sins...

David wrote a surprising revelation in his plea to God for mercy:

Psalms 51:16 You do **not desire sacrifice**; else would I give it: You do not delight in burnt offering.

God makes it clear that He is not so much interested in **dead animals** – as He desires something else... What **is it** that is so much more **acceptable** to God by Jesus Christ?

Let's turn over to 1Peter 2:5 to find out what is so much more **acceptable** to God by Jesus Christ.

What God does desire of His people is **spiritual sacrifices**. Notice how the apostle Peter **instructs** the Church brethren:

1Peter 2:5 You are living stones that God is building into His spiritual Temple, an holy priesthood, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

There is the title of today's sermon: **Spiritual Sacrifices**. Let's let this Scripture sink in to our minds and hearts...

First, Peter points out that the Church **brethren** are individual, **living**, building blocks that make up the **Temple of God**. The spiritual implications of God's throne and Temple in heaven are mind boggling in their implications.

1Peter 2:5 ...an holy **priesthood**,

The brethren of the Church of God are now, a **kingly priesthood**. [more on that in a moment]

Here we find the Specific Purpose Statement of today's sermon:

1Peter 2:5 ...[for the purpose of] offering up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God.

OK brethren, most of you have been members of God's church for a good while. Jot down in your notes – just for yourselves – a list... Let's say about five **spiritual sacrifices** you commonly offer up – that are acceptable to God.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Do you need more time? We've just seen that as Christians it is required that we be offering up **spiritual sacrifices**... Is it difficult to come up with

you list. Do we ever think about making **spiritual sacrifices**? Let's read that again:

1Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, **an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Let's establish that the Word of God **applies to us**, brethren—this priesthood is the Church brethren:

1Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a **royal** [kingly] priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you **out of darkness** into His marvelous **light**.

That would make a nice title to a book! "Plan of God – Darkness to Light." We all know that God called us (John 6:44, 65). But **why**, for what purpose did God call us? Drop down to verse 21. Peter tells us why we were called:

1Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also **suffered** for us, leaving us an example, that ye should **follow His steps**:

Remember that brethren - we should **follow His steps** - we'll see that again in a moment. And, you might want to note that in offering spiritual sacrifices - there is **suffering** involved. Christ suffered for us - verse 21.

A lot of people expected **good fun** and **good times** when they came in among God's people. They do not understand that our bodies are the **spiritual sacrifices** God desires! They do not understand that the life of a Christian involves **much suffering** - it is to be expected.

That is why we are admonished to **count the cost** - prior to baptism.

Luke 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and **counts the cost**, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

Counting the cost is asking us to make the lifetime commitment to make every spiritual sacrifice possible in life - without ever relenting. One person wrote me last evening saying - And, I Quote:

"At the time of my baptism I couldn't imagine the deep meaning of that question - "**count the cost**" -

"I thought at the time that nothing could be **that bad** that I couldn't handle things.

“O.K. I'm so glad that I couldn't see into the future and what it held in terms of the many, many trials I've gone through over the years. Trials are an ongoing part of our [Christian] life, but now I understand what “counting the cost means.” End Quote

The life of a Christian involves **suffering** in the offering of spiritual sacrifices.

Brethren, at baptism, God expects us to say to Him that we will remain faithful - no matter what He sends our way.

Let's go back to the subject of our being the priesthood of God. The True Church of God brethren are now, a **kingly priesthood**.

It is the apostle John who **conveyed** the truth about being a **royal** [kingly] **priesthood** to the Church of God directly from Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:4-5):

Revelation 1:6 And [Jesus Christ] has made us **kings and priests** unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

We saw a moment ago in 1Peter 2:5 that our **spiritual sacrifices** are to be **acceptable to God**. How does a Christian offer to God that which He takes pleasure in—namely, **spiritual sacrifices**? What is the difference between the blood of bulls and of goats in the Old Testament, and the **spiritual sacrifices** that God so much desires of us today?

Paul explains that **if** it is our intent to fulfill the perfect will of God, [and it is] our very lives **must** be spent in the service of offering **spiritual sacrifices** – just as Jesus Christ offered up the supreme **spiritual sacrifice—that of Himself—His very life**. Let me say that again:

If it is our intent to fulfill the perfect will of God, our very lives **must** be spent in the service of offering **spiritual sacrifices** – just as Jesus Christ offered up the supreme **spiritual sacrifice of His life**. Jesus offered the sacrifice to satisfy the Law of God when He **offered Himself** for our sins.

Paul and then Peter show how the Old Testament priesthood was changed from the tribe of Levi to encompass the Church brethren.

Hebrews 7:11 If therefore perfection were by the **Levitical priesthood**, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest [Jesus Christ] should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

Hebrews 7:12 For the priesthood being changed [to include the Church brethren], there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

Hebrews 7:13 For He [Jesus Christ] of whom these things are spoken pertains to another tribe [Judah – not Levi], of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

Hebrews 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Hebrews 7:15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there arises another priest,

Hebrews 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

Hebrews 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

Hebrews 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Hebrews 7:20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

Hebrews 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec:)

Hebrews 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Hebrews 7:23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

Hebrews 7:24 But this man [Jesus Christ], because He continues ever, hath an unchangeable **priesthood**.

Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:26 For such an **high priest** became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Hebrews 7:27 Who needs not daily, as those high priests, **to offer up sacrifice**, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when **He offered up Himself**.

Jesus offered up Himself, setting us an example that we should follow in His steps – as we saw in 1Peter 2:21. How many brethren take their faith **seriously enough** to follow this Godly mandate of offering acceptable **spiritual sacrifices** to God through Christ?

We've seen these verses many times before. But, let's read them – keeping in mind that it is a Christian's duty as a member of the **priesthood**, to offer acceptable **spiritual sacrifices** to God through Christ.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable [**spiritual**] **service**.

Holy means that we sanctify ourselves by being a **spiritual sacrifice**.

It is "reasonable" for God to expect us to **sacrifice ourselves**.

And isn't it interesting how Jesus shows that we, as His brethren, are **both the priest** making the **spiritual sacrifice**, and we are the **offering** that is being sacrificed. We see in Hebrews 10:12 that Jesus is also **both**—the High Priest **offeror**, and the **offering** that was sacrificed.

Hebrews 10:12 But this man [Our High Priest Jesus Christ], after He had **offered one sacrifice** [Himself] for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.

Romans 12:2 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.

Transformed shows that we are changed to be more like God when we are being a **spiritual sacrifice**.

God has formed us into a holy priesthood, the purpose of which is to offer up acceptable **spiritual sacrifices** to God through Christ.

Christians are a royal priesthood (1Peter 2:9).

This is important with regard to **spiritual sacrifices**, just as physical sacrifices were the duty of the Old Covenant priesthood.

God requires us to understand the spiritual concepts with regard to sacrifices because we are being built up into a spiritual Family whose function is to glorify God by offering **spiritual sacrifices**. Our sacrifices must be **wholehearted**. Ancient Israel's offerings to God were not **wholehearted**.

Malachi 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee [no way!], or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

We are **transformed** when we study the Word of God – we are **transformed** when we offer **spiritual sacrifices**.

Hebrews 4:12 The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and **intentions of the heart**.

1Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but **the LORD looks on the heart**.

The quality of our **sacrificial offerings** must be most excellent. God desires to see the image of Jesus Christ formed in us. What are some examples of spiritual sacrifices? Why do we need to make spiritual sacrifices?

Because God's people are cultivating **His spiritual characteristics** including kindness, self-denial, empathy, compassion, and the willingness to serve others to the point of laying down their life in **self-sacrifice**.

We saw in Hebrews 7:27 that Jesus Christ offered up the supreme **spiritual sacrifice—Himself**.

Hebrews 10:12 But this man [Our High Priest Jesus Christ], after He had **offered one sacrifice** [Himself] for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.

That was His **self-sacrifice**. We are called upon to do **the same thing**.

1John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we [too must] to **lay down our lives** for the brethren.

Being a **spiritual sacrifice** is not optional for a True Christian. We must **lay down our lives** just as Jesus did! Except as we saw in Romans 12:1 – we get to go on living day by day as a **living sacrifice**.

Our bodies are the **spiritual sacrifices** God desires! Are we addressing the spiritual needs of our brethren in God's Church? Are we helping one another into the Kingdom of God?

1John 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need [especially **spiritual** needs], and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

It does not. It is only through the power and motivation of God's Spirit that it becomes possible for mankind to become similar to God. It is only by God's Spirit that the saints become God-like:

1Corinthians 15:49 As we have borne the image of the **earthy**, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

The characteristics of God's Spirit must be in our minds and in our hearts, replacing all of the sinful and wrong thought patterns, wrong attitudes and especially wrong deeds and actions which once **defined us as earthy**.

The apostle Paul said that for our hope of eternal glory in God's Kingdom, **"Christ must be within us"** (Colossians 1:27).

God's Spirit is able to bring every characteristic of God to His saints, His righteousness, gentleness, peace, compassion, excellence, generosity, mercy... the list is endless.

We are totally unable to grasp all of the features of God's Spirit with our human intellect, because God is far too great. And yet, it is absolutely necessary that we "grow in Spirit" in order to put on the Godly character that is essential to being in the Spiritual Family of God. We grow in Godly character when we offer up spiritual sacrifices – as Jesus did.

God's Holy Spirit is the Life, Mind, Love, and Power of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Brethren, are you truly led by God? Do you seek to do God's will in every thought and action you perform? A Christian is one who is led by God's Holy Spirit.

If we do not have the Spirit of Christ, we do not belong to Him (Romans 8:9,14). We begin to find the attributes of spiritual sacrifices:

Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Colossians 3:13 forbearing one another, and **forgiving one another**, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Matthew 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother has anything against thee;

Matthew 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first **be reconciled to thy brother**, and then come and offer thy gift.

Matthew 6:12 And **forgive us** our debts, **as we forgive** our debtors.

Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

Matthew 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, **neither will your Father forgive** your trespasses.

Colossians 3:14 And above all these things put on charity [‘agape’ – Godly love], which is the bond of perfectness.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...

Those are Godly characteristics and attributes that man must put on before he is given **eternal life**.

We will not have eternal life unless we offer up spiritual sacrifices as Jesus did.

God’s character must become our character. That takes place when God’s characteristics are emulated by us – and we begin to resemble both Jesus and our Father in heaven. “Good fruit” will have been produced in us.

There is another set of **Godly characteristics** listed that when anyone has made them a part of themselves, they have begun to put on the mind of God:

Galatians 5:22-23 The fruit of the Spirit is [Godly] love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

God's character, epitomized by His Holy Spirit, is perfect and unchangeable.

He determined that His Godly relationship with others would always be ideal and unspoiled in every way; always directed by His flawless, righteous character.

Let's close with Matthew 16: It is about **Taking Up Our Cross** and Following in the steps of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 16:25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

If it is our primary motivation to preserve and **serve** our physical lives – we will lose out on eternal life.

However, if we are willing to **be spiritual sacrifices** – denying the **self** – laying down our lives daily for Christ's sake, surrendering to God in everything—our wills, our bodies, and our lives, we **shall** inherit eternal life.

End: Spiritual Sacrifices