

Sacrifice then Priest

It is good to have the leadership of the Spirit because He will tell you of things that are to come. I walked in this morning and He said *You are not first*. I didn't know, but look what happened. It is good to have the Spirit of the Lord with us. If we put our hand on Genesis and then our other hand on Revelation, there are in this book some very great themes. I want to talk about two of those themes today.

One theme that comes up very early and is a part of every story, every picture, every book of the 66 books in the Bible is sacrifice. It comes up as the first evidence of something that did not involve Adam and Eve. We get an introduction to Cain and Abel, and they had apparently just brought sacrifices. There was nothing written prior to that that indicated that sacrifice was part of God's design. There was not a commandment; there is nothing written. Somehow, these two young men knew that they were supposed to bring a sacrifice to the Lord. We see it all the way through scripture into Revelation: the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. There was embedded, prior to the world's being created and becoming substance out of nothing, that there was a sacrifice that had been made. It does not make it odd that one of the great themes of scripture is sacrifice.

There is another great theme in scripture as well. It's represented from before the time of the law, but it is clarified and identified by the law, and that is priest, priesthood. We can obviously see the overlap between those two themes. It is very difficult to think and consider the ongoing aspect of a sacrifice without a priest or something that a priest would do if it isn't to sacrifice; they are very interwoven. In considering these themes as they develop through the scripture, the sacrifice was defined as a lamb. This is God's preferred sacrifice. For hundreds of years, sacrifices were defined by the law, but you know that sacrifice was offered before the law. Noah got off the boat and built an altar and offered to the Lord. Before there was an official priesthood, he was functioning as a priest and he was offering a lamb to the Lord. Then, defined by the law, was the lamb, a four-legged wooly beast. And it was actually infused – that offering that the priest offered (the sinner came and laid his hand on the offering, and the priest killed the beast), and the blood was an atonement for sin. It was even a progression of the expression of the purpose of the sacrifice as a substitutionary provision that would let the sinner come, go through the prescribed ritual, and go back to his tent forgiven. It says, in

a very real way and for a very real purpose, Paul said *The first covenant had a glory*. I think sometimes we don't look at that and give it the glory that it had. We despise the law but Jesus said *I did not come to destroy the law*. Paul said it's *spiritual*. *The law is spiritual*. It has a function and it has a purpose. It is not the end of God's purpose but it is certainly part of the process.

Gravitating from Genesis toward Revelation, we see John the Baptist looking up on the riverbank of the Jordan. *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*. In that moment there was – “What did you say Ann, this morning? You had a lightning strike?” – There was a bolt of lightning by revelation from the Spirit of God through John the Baptist who said *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*. This was a quantum leap forward in the uncovering of what God really intended in all of these sacrifices. The lamb went in that moment from being defined as a four-legged wooly beast to a two-legged man. That was much closer to what God's purpose had been from the beginning. He introduced it gradually; He even invested in the natural application of something, a spiritual quality. Men's sins were forgiven through the offering of a four-legged wooly beast. It had effect and it had a glory but not the glory that the real sacrifice was designed to bring.

Jesus came and he lived a life; it says that *He pleased not himself*. John 17, *I sanctify myself for their sakes*. Not only did he not please himself but he lived his life for the benefit of others. He spoke concerning himself and he defined himself with words that largely go unheard and un-esteemed even by the Christian population. The world does not hear them and the Church does not take them to heart. That was a good translation there. The Spirit of God revealed Himself in this man, and he began to walk not according to the course of this world or by the authorities of this world but by his Father. He said *I live by the Father*. This was a huge expression of sonship. I don't live by myself. I don't live out of arrogance. I don't fix things myself. I can't fix myself, even. *I live by the Father*. Therefore, it was God enabled to reconcile the world to Himself through Christ. *God reconciling the world to Himself by Christ* because He found a man who had lived not out of himself but out of God. Even Jesus did not have the capacity in himself to effect the impact on this world that needed to be made. His testimony was not going to be enough. It was only going to be if through him was released the authority of God to adjust the mess that this world is.

We also want to consider the red letters as being the more important aspects of the Bible. Jesus said *I go to the Father and you should rejoice. I go to the Father because greater things must you do. The same things and greater* is actually the way he phrased it. There is a consideration that I have had over the years of living as a son. We live by the son. We have no righteousness; we do not start this path because of something that is in us. *When we were without strength* is the way it is described. *In due time, Christ died for us.* When he did and I received the benefit of that because, you know, just because he died it didn't mean much on an individual basis until I received it. You have to receive it. *To as many as received him gave he the power. When I was without strength, he died for me.* What that changed was that it gave me a little strength. We actually have a little strength. That strength is called *anointing*. We have been *anointed with the oil of gladness above the rest of the Adamic race, the oil of gladness above our fellows.* Not above one another. We esteem one another as greater but we have certainly been anointed with an oil that brings us out of the earth. Romans 8 says it this way: *The world is in bondage. Creation is in bondage.* It goes on and it defines another group *that still groans within itself but is not in bondage to corruption; those that have the firstfruits of the Spirit. We ourselves having the firstfruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves, waiting.* Even though we have started, we are not finished. We have begun; we have a little strength but it is not enough to do what we are called to do.

There are a lot of similarities. It can be said and it can be objectionable. There is a consideration for all of us though we are born again and baptized in the Holy Spirit; I think in most cases. We have come a ways. We have walked with the Lord to the point where we are able and secure enough in God to be able to be hit by a bolt of lightning. I mean if we are young, we cannot hear; we are arrogant. As soon as that is an indication to some level of maturity, we can hear the things that are contrary to us still. We are secure enough to be able to hear that. There is still a lot of similarity to the life that is Christ, which we have been birthed into from above, and the life of Adam. There is a lot of difference but there is still some similarity. We cannot of ourselves accomplish this. Adam proved it; he could not keep one commandment. Jesus never failed to keep the commandment of the Father. So it was different, but he did not do it out of his own capacity. He did it because he was yoked to the Spirit of God. He was dependent upon his Father to

enable him to be victorious, not because he was a devil-destroyer, but he could withstand the enemy through his dependency upon God. Paul learned this lesson and he said *Up until now, I was glorying in my status that I am one of God's children and as one I have an inheritance that involves revelation, authority and insights, but I have come to recognize that those are not profitable to glory in. They are just part of my lineage. I am a child of the King and there is evidence of that. If I am going to finish my course, I have to glory in my inadequacy.* Is that what he said? *In my weakness, in my infirmities.* When I focus on them, then the power of Christ rests on me. The power of Christ was not an inherent capacity that he had. The power of Christ was his measure of dependency upon God. To release omnipotence in the face of a little strength instead of glorying in a little strength, saying I can do this – boy, that is a paradigm shift.

One of the take-aways from this is a consideration of sovereignty. My impression of sovereignty was that God is what He is and He can do what He wants. *He works all things according to the counsel of His good pleasure.* God is moving sovereignly means that He does what He does independent of man. That was my definition of sovereignty. I realized that that's not God's definition of sovereignty. God has reserved His sovereignty to be perfectly expressed through man, not independent of man. When I consider the picture of this book and the priest aspect of it, I find that there is so little in here that God has done independent of man. One of the only things that I can think of is Sodom and Gomorrah. He did counsel with Abraham but He did not destroy through Abraham. Certainly through Moses, although God was the one who caused the plagues, it was brokered or mediated by Moses. God had reserved Himself from doing it to the point of taking Moses out 40 years ahead of time to prepare him to be the mediator. He did not want to be sovereign independent of man. His sovereignty is designed to be perfectly impactful and have its way through man.

That is the baseline of what priesthood is all about. We start with offering and there is a lot of history concerning it in the Bible. We get forwarded all the way to Moses, coming down off the Mount with the law, and the commandment that established a priesthood. Up until then we offered sacrifice without a priesthood – without an official, ordained priesthood. Sacrifices have been around longer than priesthood has been. Paul or at least the author of Hebrews talks about this and he said *That priesthood that was Levitical was ordained after the authority of a*

commandment. I know that for a lot of us it has been a long time since we were kids, but this is what a commandment sounds like: “Do this; don’t do that and the sooner the better.” That is a commandment. The Levitical priesthood was established by a commandment that came from God. What does a commandment do? It leaves it up to the one commanded to perform, and the ones who were commanded kept dying. Hebrews says the problem with Levitical priesthood was that the authority was a commandment and what was commanded kept dying, so it was not profitable. It was not effectual.

There is another priesthood and it says *This priesthood was not ordained by commandment; it was ordained by an oath*. The difference between the commandment that has already been mentioned and the oath is that the oath sounds like this: *I will do this, saith the Lord*. That is better. Something God is going to do as opposed to something man has to do. There is a big jump there. It says *We have a priest in the heavens and his name is Jesus, and he is able to save those that come to him to the uttermost; completely*. One of the reasons for this is *He ever lives*. He is not going to go away; he is not incapable. The authority by which he is established is the authority of an endless life. We heard this morning that a disorganized retreat caused defeat. I think I know what the definition of an organized retreat is. It is called repentance. It is what lets you, when you fall, not fail because you are willing to be picked up again. The goal is there. You are not disobedient to the heavenly vision; you just were not capable of doing it, yet. We get arrogant, and we know what goes before a fall. Arrogance. Sometimes when we fall, we are broken. Sometimes, we are not broken. I think broken is better.

Sacrifices were ordained for a long time before a priest was defined. I want to take that picture of the Old Testament and overlay it in my soul, and then I want to compare it to Jesus’ life. Then I am going to sit down. In my soul, what I find God requiring of me is to present myself to Him. My capacity to do that and my awareness of the need to do that was based on my offering a substitutionary sacrifice: the blood of Jesus. What God accomplished for me in the sacrificing of His Son on my behalf (I am taking this personally.) was something that could not be accomplished any other way because I was without strength. Even had I known, I couldn’t do anything about it. In fact, I did know before the benefit came. The Holy Spirit started to work on my heart and I recognized that I was a sinner. That recognition did not save me; it just arrested me. I can remember one time reading

one of these lists that Paul makes in the New Testament. Paul was one of the better list makers in the scripture. I was reading where it talks about the works of the flesh. I started reading through them and got about halfway through and I was crying. Literally crying. I said, "I'm all of these." I could not do anything about it; the awareness didn't help bring a solution, but it brought a problem to the surface. Then a glorious thing happened. The same Spirit that had convicted me of my inadequacy did so, not just to leave me guilty, but so that I could accept the provision that would solve the problem that had been introduced. I accepted that sacrifice and it was a substitutionary sacrifice.

As I have continued to seek to follow the things of the Lord, I am seeing that there is something developing out of this. It is that, in my bringing myself to Him, I am becoming a sacrifice. Yah. The offering of ourselves to God is a sacrifice. In presenting ourselves to Him not because we have a problem, He does not have to address the problem, but He can begin to address the purpose. Whoa, this is good – not addressing the problem but bringing forth the solution without a problem which would then be a benefit to others instead of having to be a benefit because of my problem. Does that make sense? I have been sacrificing for some time. What I find when I sacrifice is that the provision of God meets that sacrifice. One of the more notable scriptures is that *A broken spirit and a contrite heart, I will not despise. I will not set it aside, and I will not ignore it.*

In fact, it is a little bit more aggressive than that. *I will actually move heaven and earth to prove my acceptance of that sacrifice.*

I am beginning to suspect something. The same way the progression through the Old Testament had sacrifices established 1,000 plus years before the priests were identified is the same way that my sacrificing progresses. I am sacrificing almost like the ear of corn that begins to grow out of a certain level of maturity that the stalk accomplishes. It has not been indicated yet. You know the fruit of planting is a blade. You sow a kernel of corn in the ground and you don't get an ear of corn. You get a blade. That is the fruit of sowing; it's a blade. The fruit of a blade being nurtured is a stalk. We still have not gotten to the corn yet. The fruit of a stalk is an ear. The fruit of an ear is a full-fruited ear. If we get involved in the process of offering or sowing ourselves to God, presenting ourselves to Him, there is something that begins to develop out of that that was not necessarily part of what we saw up until that point. It is just the genetic development of what was always

there and it is starting to show up now. It is not the first thing that we see as evidence, but if we *do not weary in well doing* and we continue to offer, then the multiplication factor that God pours into offering begins to bring a harvest. That harvest starts to look like not just an offering, but it starts to look like a priest. Who would have think it? Our way, the natural way is to pursue priesthood in order to offer. God is saying, “No, this is not the way.” The very desire to become something is contrary to what the responsibility of becoming it would do. The priest is not ordained for himself. The priest under the law lived by their service, so the priests in the outer court that killed the beasts ate of the altar. It’s a principle of God: *Do not muzzle the ox that treads the corn. Those that serve in the temple partake of the benefit of serving in the temple.* They did not have dirt; they could not sow; they could not raise their own food. They were compensated from the proceeds of the offerings so that they had a way of living. You know how selfish that can become if the reason I am doing this is because my family wants to eat. It still has a very selfish characteristic.

There is only one portion of the priesthood under the law that had a characteristic of Christ and it was very indistinctly represented. That was one man out of the whole tribe and he was called the high priest. Everybody else, if they did not show up and offer the sacrifice, they did not have anything to take home to cook that night. It was true for him on 364 days of the year, but on one day of the year, he had to put his life at risk to fulfill his calling. So there is just a scent or a savor of what a true priest is about there. 364 days he lived by his calling but there was one day he had to put it at risk to fulfill his calling. He was the only one. Hebrews 9 says *The Holy Spirit thus signifying. The Holy Spirit bearing testimony through this, that one man, one day a year entered and not without blood* was a testimony to something else. It was not going to be by a law; it was going to be by an oath. If I respond to a law, I have to rally my abilities. I have to marshal my reserves; I have to bring what innovativeness or creativity I can to the table in order to get done what I have to do. If I respond to an oath with what little strength I have, I have to humble myself. The link to the oath is covered in Hebrews 4, and it says *We have to cease from our works.* What little strength we have, instead of trying to put it on the table and make it work, we have to set it aside.

If you have a little strength after having none, it can be the glory of your life. When we begin to move a little bit in the Spirit of God, we begin to offer. The life

that is Christ begins to be provisioned through the interface of the Spirit of God and us. As that growth comes, there is a better understanding. Jesus said two things. He said one at twelve and he said another one at about thirty-one. Neither one was an expression of unrighteousness but they show a progression of righteousness. The first one was *Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* It was certainly a righteous statement, but at thirty-one it was a far greater expression of righteousness when he said *I only do*. The tonal difference as well as a doctrinal difference is almost immeasurable. He accepted the harness in Nazareth. Nazareth was the collecting place of the off-scouring of Israel. *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* That was their city motto. They did not have a very good Madison Avenue representative there. They did not know how to package or brand things properly. He grew up and certainly he had compassion on a whole village and healed them later in his ministry. Can you see his heart as he presented himself to his Father at 18 or 22, saying *God, have mercy upon them? Can we do something about this situation?* He could not have just waited until he was 30 to be touched by compassion. In the midst of that compassion that moved him to heal a whole village, there was a harness that he was willing to accept because he wanted to live by the Father and not out of his own perspective on things. In my life I found that I must offer myself to God. That is the whole point of my little strength.

This is the story of Samson; that he had strength. It was considered great strength by comparison to no strength in the rest of Israel. They seemed to be sitting on their hands. Until he laid that strength down, he lost it to evaluate it properly. The last verses that detail the life of Samson to us in Judges say *And Samson humbled himself*. He bowed himself with all his strength. He used the little strength he had to humble him and present himself to God. The next phrase is the reason he is in Hebrews 11. It said more was accomplished in his death than in his life. That was Christ. That was him stepping out of Adam into Christ to humble himself with the anointing. This is what our calling is. We need to get so good at sacrifice that God begins to bring forth a priesthood that's based not on a commandment but on the oath that He is allowed to fulfill in us because we present ourselves to Him.

A little note on the issue of sacrifice. One of the most epic sacrifices I think in all of scripture is Mt. Carmel. The altar was built; the bull was slain and flayed; and

then water was poured on it. A trench was dug around it so that basically it was almost an island in the midst of water. When God showed that He accepted that sacrifice, the whole thing was consumed: the water, the rocks, the wood, obviously, and the bull. I think Elijah's eyebrows got singed. It left a hole in the ground. Our perception when we present ourselves to God is similar to being concerned that we are going to be destroyed but the picture was not destruction. The picture was being consumed. *Our God is a consuming fire.* Consuming to the natural man means that if we consume this altar, this podium by fire, we would have ashes to come in and vacuum up. The consuming of God by the fire of God is not that. It is Him being able to fully partake of us. You know? Have you ever seen a football team go to a buffet? The buffet gets consumed. It is gone. The football team goes out and wins the game. This is the picture of consuming. It is not to destroy us. It is to define us according to a whole different life. When I sow to the Spirit, I have to recognize that my presentation of my offering is going towards something that I cannot define. Certainly I have no control over it and therefore have no predictable end or result from it. Did not Jesus say *If you are not willing to lose your life for My sake and the gospel's.* For his sake. I see a lot of people wanting to do things for Jesus' sake to honor the one who provisioned them. Boy, if that is not there, there is something wrong with you. What about the gospel? What about the going forward of the benefit of what he has done for you? What about the clear testimony of the life that he is seeking to instill in you and me? What about the priesthood? To become a provision.

Certainly when Jesus was in Nazareth, he was not just building end tables. He was becoming harnessed and provisioned through that harnessing to the point where he talked to his disciples and the masses and said *If you are tired, weary, your burden is too great for you, and the goal you have in mind seems to be unattainable, I want to teach you how I am doing this.* I think that is essentially what that means. *Learn of me. I will teach you how I am doing this.* He said *Take my yoke on you.* He did not say be yoked to me. He was not yoked to himself. If he was yoked to himself, if he was doing this because he as Christ was capable of winning the victory separate of any other influence, then he would have said *Be yoked to me;* but he said *Take my yoke on you.* We know that he, *through the eternal Spirit offered himself.* He made himself an offering. Paul reduces his gospel, the depth of it, and he says *I beg you. If I could influence your life for one thing, let it be this. By the mercies of God, you will present yourselves daily as an*

offering to God. We don't need to try to become priests. We need to offer ourselves to God.

The record of Jesus' priesthood in Hebrews 7 doesn't say that He was born a priest. It says that *He was made a priest.* For the most part, the King James translators kept to the intent of the words in the original, but the word that is used there in Greek is more accurately translated as "become." He "became" a high priest is more consistent with the underlying principle of what happened. Jesus grew into the full expression of what he genetically was at birth. He was born a new creation. From his mother's womb, he was a new creation because he did not have a natural father. The Spirit of God was his Father. The testimony to this is that he was born of a virgin. It was not essential to him getting the body but it was a second witness to the fact that his Father was the Spirit of God. He was not born a priest. If he had to be made that and the way he was made that was through offering himself to God through the Spirit, there's the path for us. We are called to walk it. We will never be more provisioned by God than when we are confronted by our inadequacy; and out of that insufficiency, we turn and offer ourselves to Him. God answered Elijah by fire and consumed the sacrifice; but God, when He responds to your offering of him, what He does is He grows that life that is Christ in you up just a little bit more. It has to be a *daily offering.* We have to come to the place where we are so convinced that this is the path that no matter what else we do or don't do in a day, we do not neglect to do that. We offer ourselves to Him.

Finally, an additional confirmation to our need to present ourselves is from Daniel the 11th chapter where it details an interpretation by the angel, saying that *From the moment the daily sacrifice ceases, the abomination that makes desolate is right there in its place; it is just waiting.* The only thing that keeps it at arm's length or at bay or from influencing your life is that you are presenting yourself to God. Righteousness is progressive. You are right today; you still have to get right tomorrow, by sacrifice.

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