

PRAYER AND THE WILL OF MAN:

Part 5

The Benefit of Sacrifice: Habitation



For several months since April we have been talking about prayer and the will of man. We looked at the theological reasons as to why prayer, praise and worship can all be classified as worship. We saw the connections between worship and sacrifice and what we do for Jesus. Once our understanding of sacrifice was established we looked at the nature of sacrifice and we looked at the embodiment of sacrifice. In this installment we will look at the benefit of sacrifice. So often when we talk about sacrifice there is a negative connotation. I believe this comes from the world. It cannot come from Jesus because His sacrifice gave us life. When we look at what took place for

Him after His sacrifice, we realize that there is life after death. We realize that our own resurrected bodies will be awesome. But before the grave, while we are still living on this earth, there are benefits when we worship or sacrifice as God asks us to. We will only look at two. The main benefit of God-ordained sacrifice is always habitation. Tell me, what makes God so happy that He shows up?

I have often said that sacrifice is the love equation within the heartbeat of God. When God calls David a man after His own heart there is a dual understanding in the Hebrew (1 Samuel 13:14) as well as in the Greek (Acts 13:22). In the Hebrew the word used is lebab. It comes from the root leb. This is a word that means heart, but it means understanding or wisdom and thought, which for those in antiquity was the head. Because of that, the understanding of order is conveyed. For the ancient mindset, the sense of governmental direction is expressed because the seat of understanding and wisdom is in the heart or head, which is what is birthed first; and being birthed first is governmental order. In Acts the word is kardia and it also conveys the same understanding of thoughts and feelings of the heart. It is from this that the understanding of David being a man after God's own heart conveys a dual role. David will fulfill all that is in God's own heart concerning God's people because David will be made king according to the head. Yet at the same time, David will listen to the feeling-heartbeat of God by sacrificing and staying in close relationship to God. By this

David is able to personify the coming Messiah, who is both King and sacrificial great High Priest. For me this is how it would look as a mathematical equation:

FAITH

_____ X OBEDIENCE = LOVE

SACRIFICE

The final fulfillment of this is Jesus' own sacrifice on Calvary. Before this, though the evidence is seen in the Tabernacle of Moses, the Tabernacle of David and the Temple of Solomon. We see the manifestation of God coming down to Moses in the tent of meeting. On the order of the Law and the implementation of sacrifice as God ordained it, God shows up. Later on the Ark of the Covenant stays in a tent that David pitches for it. David reads the Law and he understands that he has not sacrificed or ordered God's house as God requires. After David reads he gets a revelation of the tabernacle in heaven, as Moses did, but from a totally different vantage point. The book of Job is our best understanding for this. In Job 1:6 when satan presents himself before the Lord with the sons of God the understanding in the Hebrew is that the angels present themselves in their stations. This is the same understanding that is employed in Solomon's temple when the singers and musicians are put in their stations. In the same way that David stationed the singers and musicians around the temple during worship and presented offering to the Lord in music and song, the angels present

themselves before the Lord. As Moses patterned the tabernacle on earth after the pattern he saw in heaven (Exodus 25:40), so David patterned his tabernacle similarly only from the aspect of sacrifice in music and song. For David it is the fulfillment of his understanding of the Lord of hosts going out and doing battle. The singers and musicians lead the way. The army is ordered as God says so on earth. As you look up, the angelic host is in its assigned battle stations. On top of this funnel cloud is the Lord Almighty, King, sitting on His throne.

But it is Solomon's temple where it comes together. David was never able to build God such a structure. Here in this temple is an occasion of faith, sacrifice and obedience not seen in the other worship settings. Great sums of money and workers are gathered for this temple. Now, there is enough room to have the musicians and singers stand in their stations. Strict obedience to the law and the prophets is handed down to Solomon. Solomon starts the prayer of dedication in 1 Chronicles 6:1: "Then said Solomon, the Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness. But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for they dwelling forever." Solomon's prayer continues for a whole chapter. When he is done praying the Bible tells us that fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the house. The people see this and bow down and start a sacrifice of thanksgiving: "For the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever." Over the course of

time 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep are offered up. 1 Chronicles 7:6 says this: "And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of music of the Lord, which David the king had made to praise the Lord, because his mercy endures forever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood." After the dedication and the feast was complete, the Lord appears to Solomon by night. God makes this proclamation: "If my people which are called by my name will humble themselves and pray (all symbols of sacrifice) and seek my face (symbolic of faith) and turn from their wicked ways (obedience); then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land (LOVE shows up)." At this point you have habitation and fellowship with God.

The process is important because God's people must be prepared for habitation. Jesus comes to do just this. He is Immanuel, God with us. God came down in habitation and lived among us for 33 years. I often make this statement: "love is not a feeling; love is a choice." By faith Jesus believed that God would not allow His Holy One to see corruption. (See Psalm 16;10; Acts 2:27) Because Jesus chose the way of love, the obedience of His sacrificial shed blood has purchased our redemption. We can have fellowship with a God so Holy that in the Old Testament if a priest offered the wrong sacrifice or offered it in the wrong condition (Numbers 3:4) he was smitten on the spot by fire which fell from heaven. Thank God that now the indwelling Holy Spirit does a

cleansing work in us on a daily basis so that we don't stray from these precepts. In the New Testament we are exhorted "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God---this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is---his good, pleasing and perfect will." Because of Christ's sacrifice we get a renewed mind---AND we get to know God's perfect will. What an awesome benefit of sacrifice.

There are so many benefits to God-ordained sacrifice. As I reviewed the benefits, I had to single out one that I felt would help us. There is just no way to name them all. We just could not name and expound on all of them. The one I looked at was evidenced in the life of Joseph. So often in life we as humans develop attitudes. Attitudes lead to strongholds. They become our ideas of strength in what we choose to believe. As hard as it is for us to understand this, quite often what we are choosing to believe is not what God knows as truth. We must sacrifice our attitudes to see God's will fulfilled in our lives. This is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The Amplified Bible continues in the next verse

with the understanding in the Greek of what Paul has been talking about: "Being in readiness to punish every disobedience, when your own submission and obedience is fully secured and complete." In other words, when we choose to take down from the lofty place we put our attitudes and ideas in-- those ideas and thoughts that we do not realize we have placed in a higher position than what God knows to be true--and bring those things under submission to the mind or thoughts of Christ, then God will be ready to punish all things (including demonic activity) that has been waging war against us--once we are in submission to Christ.

I felt a good example of this is evidenced in the life of Joseph. Joseph has a resident word from God that his mother, father and siblings would eventually acknowledge him as head of the family. This word is too incredible for them to believe. Even his father had a hard time with it (Genesis 37:10, 11). Joseph is too young to realize that this word will take time to be fulfilled. He is just so happy that God knows his address that he runs around sharing his good fortune with his family. Unfortunately, his brothers consider this anything but good news. Envy, bitterness and murder are in their hearts. Knowing God as I do, I cannot imagine our Lord starting a nation with these characters. God has to teach them something about sacrifice as well as show them what is in their hearts. In order for Joseph's dream to be fulfilled he is 'sacrificed' by them (quite unwillingly). Years later a famine hits the land. We all know the story. Jacob and his eleven sons,

their wives and children will all starve if they do not get some food. They must go to Egypt to buy it. It is there that they encounter the second in command in Egypt--their long lost brother, Joseph. His heart is filled with desiring to be restored to the family, but he remembers the evil in their souls. He must test them to see what is really in their hearts. During the testing phase he overhears their conversations of guilt at having sold him, for now, they say, their sin is finding them out (Genesis 42:21-23). After they pass his tests, he now has to make a decision. For Joseph also has attitudes. Attitudes are part of the human condition. Joseph has to make a decision to sacrifice his attitudes, reach out in faith to God's word from that long ago dream, become obedient to the love command of God, forgive his brethren and restore fellowship and life back to them. This is evidenced by his words in Genesis 45:1-8. In verse 5 he says, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." After Joseph decides to lay aside any bitterness, envy or anger and to assume a life of loving forgiveness, he comes out on the other side of this with the benefit of a clean heart--no anger, no envy and no bitterness. I know many people who would give anything to have such a heart. Trust me, there are benefits to having a clean heart before God. Think about nights filled with peace and restful sleep. Think about knowing that God has your address and knows exactly what you're going through because He lives with you. The benefits also extend to the natural realm.

Joseph was restored back to right relationship with his family. He has received the position of second in command of the mightiest nation of the then known world and God Almighty gives him a double portion for his posterity all throughout the nation of Israel's history.

How about you? Do you know for a surety that God knows your address and will live with you through all your turmoil and pain? Do you live with a peace that truly passes human understanding? When you go through difficulties is there an amazing peace that surrounds you, even though by all earthly standards you should be a wreck? You can have this kind of peace. Jesus will come into your life if you ask Him to. Listen to His words in the Gospel of John: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world gives it, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." . . . "These things I have spoken to you that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." God the Father and God the Son will come and make their habitation with you if you decide to lay down any preconceptions of Jesus, ask Him into your heart to save you and free you from sin. It's that easy. For those of you who already know Jesus and may be going through some tribulation in this world, be of good cheer--another benefit of Christ's sacrifice is that He overcame the world so you can too!

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