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Go and make disciples!

E-votional 86

Burnt Offerings (Hezekiah Solution Part 9)

2 Chronicles 29:7 (ESV)

or offered burnt offerings in the Holy Place to the God of Israel.

I would like to start right into this one with the definition of burnt offering. In Hebrew and according to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance it is defined as follows, "*ascent, go up to.*" Another way of describing this definition would be to say, "*that which goes up.*" At any rate, the simple way of understanding this is that the smoke goes up, or ascends to God. This sacrifice was known to be a voluntary one whereas the sin and guilt offering was mandatory or rather required of the people (Leviticus 1-7). With this in mind, there were other voluntary sacrifices as well. Among these, were also the burnt offering, the peace offerings, and the grain offerings. These were voluntary and the sin and guilt offerings were required. The sin and guilt offerings were sacrifices offered because people had sinned much like the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was offered once and for all for our sins. The grain offering (Leviticus 2:1-16;6:14-23) speaks of bringing the firstfruits of the harvest of the land or livestock unto God. In short, it was the tithe to the Lord. And the peace offerings were a type of thank-offering to the Lord (Leviticus 3:1-17;7:11-21).

Now as a disclaimer here, I would like to add that this is in no way an exhaustive break down of the Levitical law on all of the sacrifices. I am just pointing out minor differences between them to highlight the burnt offering in contrast with the others for the sake of this teaching.

The burnt sacrifice was to be burned entirely and there are many reasons why in the Bible people would offer them. At the very heart of this book and the message thereof, I would like to highlight something that King David said about it in Psalm 51:14-17 (ESV),

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will

declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

I would like to make a quick comparison of this with true humility. In God's economy and Kingdom, it is the humble who receive grace and the proud who receive opposition from God. In short, God exalts the humble and makes low the proud or arrogant. Something interesting in all of this is the idea of the burnt offering as meaning that which goes up. The only way to God's grace and exaltation is through humility. So we go up when we go down in humility.

The interesting thing about this Psalm is that David wrote it right after his sinful actions with Bathsheba. Take a look at 2 Samuel 11 for a detailed look at his actions. David as King of Israel sees a woman and lusts for her. It is here that David conspires to lay with this woman who is the wife of another man. Once David lay with this woman she finds herself pregnant. And so David now conspires to get her husband to lay with her to try to play it off on him. This plan did not work so David sent this man out to battle on the front lines to make sure that he would perish and not come back. At this point, David takes this woman to be his wife. The cry of David's sin surely made it to the ears of His God. So the story goes, David sins big time and God in his mercy sends Nathan the Prophet to tell David a story with a message about a little ewe lamb (2 Samuel 12:1-12). Through this story, David is rebuked for his sin and arrogance in a very bold way. Now, David had some tremendous consequences for this that were not removed from his life. David experienced a lot of trouble rise from his own family and he even lost the son whom Bathsheba was going to bear to him for this grave sin. (2 Samuel 12:13-23). Nevertheless, he still sees this sin as only before God and therefore repents.

2 Samuel 12:13a (ESV),

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD.

Psalm 51:3-4 (ESV),

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

It is clear by reading Psalm 51 that after this very bold rebuke from the Lord's Messenger, Nathan the Prophet, that David knew that it was really God who he sinned against. And to think that after all of this David somehow still holds the testimony of a man after God's own heart who will do all his will.

Acts 13:22 (ESV),

And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'

I believe firmly that this may just have been because David knew how to repent. To clarify this more thoroughly, really read through Psalm 51 and meditate on it. How many people do you know that after a huge bout of disobedience towards God repent and pray in this manner?

I ask this question because it is evident through David's words that he was not so much interested in trying to get out of the consequences that his sins caused him. Rather, he was grieved over his sin because it had simply hurt and grieved God Himself. For this point, look again to Psalm 51:4a (ESV),

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight

O Lord, that we would truly get a revelation from this that we too may see the gravity of our sin and how it affects you!

David took ownership of his sin once he knew God saw it and classified it. What I mean is that sometimes as Christians and servants of the Lord we can get carried away into things that bear no profit in our walks and in some cases may even be sin in our lives. The question is, are we humble when God speaks into our lives by His Spirit individually or through others? Or, do we as many others harden our hearts to God's reproof?

What does this have to do with burnt offerings you ask?

The true heart of the worshipper that offered a burnt offering to the Lord in the Old Testament was not supposed to do so just merely from tradition but from brokenness over their sin and desire for a change or transformation as we see in Davids Psalm 51:16-17 (ESV),

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

It is then clear that God desires a broken and contrite spirit in place of sacrifices and burnt offerings. One might just conclude something that the Apostle Paul said in Romans 12:1 (ESV),

I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies

as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

I had mentioned earlier, 'The burnt sacrifice was to be burned entirely and there are many reasons why in the Bible people would offer them.' I bring this back up because in light of this living sacrifice we are called to present before God, we must understand that we are to do so without reservation. Simply stated, we as disciples of Jesus Christ are to die to self by placing our bodies on the altar as a living sacrifice. This would mean that we are no longer living for ourselves and our desires but for Him who died for us (2 Corinthians 5:15).

The idea then of the burnt offering in the clear and concise spiritual parallel is that as followers of Jesus Christ we should understand that we are to be dead unto ourselves but alive to Christ. So we place our bodies on the altar as a burnt offering. This is such a person that is broken over their sinfulness and in humility draws near to God realizing that they have nothing in themselves to offer but themselves fully and entirely.

This is not a one-time thing that we do, but one that may need to be done daily if necessary as we seek God and His will for our lives. The believer who has not died to self is very simply not alive to God.

On another note, I have seen many Christians today who are almost careless in their walks. In saying this, it seems like they have no remorse over their sinfulness that they continually perpetuate before God. Instead, they say things like, 'I am just a sinner saved by grace' as if that were some consolation of Jesus' death and resurrection. Many today, even half justify their disobedience and say weird things like, 'God knows my heart.' Now, I am not saying that this statement is not true. However, when it is used to justify evil beware. The truth is God does know our heart, which is why He paid so dear a price with the blood of Jesus to make us new and buy us back from the evil one. To this, I believe Paul would say, as he did in Romans 6:2 (ESV),

By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Oh, people say, but sir, it is so hard to not sin. To this, I say, as the Scripture says in Matthew 26:41 (ESV),

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

I had an experience while at a University where I was studying for quite some time where we talked about resisting temptation from sin. I brought this passage of Scripture up in its simplicity and said this is all one must do to resist temptation.

I was told by the professor that while he wished it was this easy there must be more. Why do I share this? I share this because this professor was wrong. The Scripture is never clearer. What more than would I need but the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ who also said, *'with God all things are possible.'* The problem, I believe with this professor and also so many more professing Christians is that they do not understand the power of our Lord when we lay our flesh upon the altar as a burnt offering to the Lord. There is something so beautiful that takes place when we lay ourselves down before the Lord and then through faith in Him alone rise up in newness of life.

There is a beautiful passage of Scripture that illustrates this theme written by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:36 (ESV),

You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

Now, this passage was telling forth the mystery of the resurrection of our bodies but has within it the embodiment of a spiritual principle that is spoken of in other areas. Namely, this principle is that repentance leads to refreshment and death to self leads to life in Christ.

Allow me to explain by sharing James 4:8-10 (ESV),

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Look at the last part of this passage in connection with what was spoken before. To humble oneself is to realize that there may be in fact areas in one's life that are unsavory to God. For this reason, a person humbles themselves in brokenness and contriteness of spirit in hopes that God will heal them of their unsavory character and bring them to newness of life in that area. Thus causing such a one to be a pleasing and savory burnt sacrifice unto the Lord.

Now James is not saying to have a lack of joy in your life by mourning and weeping for nothing. But understand the principle here. Mourning and weeping are what people did in Old Testament times when they, for example, realized that their nation had fallen away from God. In America, there was a time when there was instituted a national day of prayer. This day was a day of mourning before God for the sins of the people and the nation as a whole.

However, this principle was not only applied to a nation or people as a whole but also to individuals who mourned before God or wore sackcloth and threw ashes

on their heads. This was a sign of repentance or mourning over sin for them. Look what David says about this in Psalm 30:11 (ESV),

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness.

Hallelujah! Such a sweet melody in my heart!

Recognize here that the way to this loosing of sackcloth is by first bringing it to God and therefore drawing near to Him. It is a sweet place however when He draws near to us from this. Oh, it is the humble who get exalted, not those who make excuses for their sin. It is reserved for those who in the fear of the Lord bring their brokenness to God knowing His character that He lifts those out of the ash heap. Look further at what Isaiah said in Isaiah 61:2-3 (ESV) about what Jesus would do for us,

to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Furthermore, will the dust be able to give God praise as David said in Psalm 30:9 (ESV),

“What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?”

Will the dust praise You, Lord? Certainly not. Neither will our corrupted flesh made from the dust of the earth bring You proper praise. Therefore, we bring our bodies to You as living sacrifices, dead unto us but alive unto You by Your resurrection power. By this, we are renewed from glory to glory as by Your Spirit. And then we through brokenness and mourning of our hearts brought before You will be raised to newness of life to give You all the glory, praise, and honor by Jesus Christ.

The importance of what I am mentioning here is best understood sometimes with a contrast to compare it against. So the contrast, I will say, is the difference between inner transformation and outward behavior modification. I say this because there are many in the church in this nation today that rely heavily on legalism as well as humanism and so modify behavior to mimic those of Christ-likeness. Legalism and humanism then are being practiced under the guise of true biblical Christianity and also by well-intentioned people.

However, neither of these produce true transformation, for only Jesus has the power to change. And we must bring our need for change to Jesus at the altar. For the sake of this teaching, we get a great illustration of this with the burnt offering which shows true humility and brokenness. So inner transformation is the key and the very heart of biblical Christianity. Very simply put, if Jesus while on earth healed all who came to Him from any sickness or disease, then we should also believe that He can handle our behaviors and character defects due to sin and the sin nature.

So the burnt offering on the altar with our lives is a place of transformation and change brought about by the Holy Spirit when we draw near to God with our sins and burdens and allow Him to draw near to us with His holy fire to bring about a change that only He can do. We must, stay near the altar in prayer until the change we desire is fulfilled.

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In Christ's Love,
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