

The Cost Of Sacrifice

The idea of sacrificing implies doing something that costs you and causes you to suffer loss of some sort. Yet, there are certainly many opportunities for people to practice a religion that costs them little or nothing in this world today. The reality of what God desires, requires, and deserves is a service to Him that can be described as a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1-2). Therefore, you must carefully reflect on your service to God and consider whether it can better be described as a living sacrifice or a sacrifice that costs nothing (or very little).

1) Araunah’s offer vs. David’s response.

After King David sinned in 2 Samuel 24 (v. 10, also 2 Chronicles 21), God gave David the pick of three consequences (vv. 11-13). His choice was to experience the plague, which resulted in 70,000 people dying (vv. 14-16). When God relented in this destruction, the angel of the Lord was at the threshing floor of a Jebusite man named Araunah (v. 16; Ornan, 1 Chronicles 21:15). As David saw all the destruction, he told God that He was the one responsible and asked for God’s hand to be against him and his father’s family (v. 17). Then, David was instructed to set up an altar on Araunah’s threshing floor (v. 18). As Araunah was threshing wheat with his four sons, they saw the angel and hid (1 Chronicles 21:20). Then, David came to him and requested to buy the threshing floor for the purpose of building an altar to the Lord to stop the plague (vv. 19-21). However, Araunah offered for David to just have it – along with everything that would be needed for the sacrifice (vv. 22-23). Yet, David refused not to offer a sacrifice that cost him nothing (v. 24; 1 Chronicles 21:25). As David offered this sacrifice (refusing to offer a costless sacrifice), God was pleased and the plague stopped (v. 25; 1 Chronicles 21:26).

2) The Israelites’ sacrifices vs. God’s law.

As Malachi prophesied in the time after the exiles

returned from Babylon, a problem had developed regarding the nature of the sacrifices being offered to God (Malachi 1). They were offering sacrifices that equated with dishonoring God that not even their governor would accept (v. 6-8). Note that God had given specific instructions concerning the nature of the animals that were to be used in sacrifice (Leviticus 22:18-25; Deuteronomy 15:21). Particularly, it seems to have been the priests’ responsibility to judge the acceptability of the sacrifices (i.e. Leviticus 27:11-12, 14). The expectation, though, that God would show any favor to such people who offered these despicable “sacrifices” was a ridiculous notion (v. 9). So, God would rather the temple doors to have been shut than for such useless sacrifices to be offered (v. 10). For, rather than God’s name being glorified by the presentation of pure offerings, they were profaning the name of God (vv. 11-14)! Clearly, God would rather such people who went through empty and meaningless motions of “sacrificing” to just call it quits rather than defaming His name by making a mockery of Him!

3) The rich people vs. the poor widow.

In Mark 12 (also Luke 21), Jesus observed some who were putting their contributions into the temple treasury (v. 41). This treasury was supposedly located in the court of women (where women were allowed to enter, not for women only). In this place, there were said to have been thirteen trumpet-shaped collection bins established for various purposes. It has also been suggested that the box and the trumpet shape were designed to amplify the sound of the coins deposited. In this setting, Jesus watched as the crowds deposited their offerings, including many rich people who put in large sums (v. 41). Then, Jesus observed a poor widow who came and dropped in two mites (coins of exceptionally small value, v. 42). Interestingly, Jesus called His disciples and taught them a valuable lesson about sacrifice and giving (vv. 43-44). Jesus

concluded that this poor widow gave a greater sacrifice than all the rich people who put large sums into the treasury – as a sacrifice that cost her deeply! In contrast, He demonstrated that the rich people (though giving larger sums) simply gave out of their surplus. The implication is that their offerings did not cost them or impact their lives in a deep and meaningful way, while the widow's did!

4) Your life vs. a living sacrifice? You need to carefully evaluate your own life and service to God. Searching the Scriptures clearly reveals the fact that acceptable sacrifices cost those who make them (i.e. Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19, 23-26, 32-40; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5). While every circumstance is different, we should not think that God only expects some people to sacrifice, while others can have a religion of convenience! Rather, God calls us all to make a living sacrifice to Him (Romans 12:1-2; Luke 9:23-26)! So, carefully consider how much you sacrifice to God concerning your time, your comfort, your energy, your relationships, your possessions, your money, and all that makes up your life and service to God. Does God see you as one who is only offering that which costs you nothing/little? As offering your leftovers? As giving out of your surplus only? Or, does He see that your discipleship truly costs you something?

The entire concept of sacrifice involves cost. After all, it is a *sacrifice* you are making! As you reflect on your service to God, you should see a life of sacrifice. While God does not require you to be destitute and never enjoy any element of your life and the blessings He gives you, He does expect you to make a living sacrifice to that is holy and pleasing to Him. Therefore, you must carefully evaluate yourself to consider how God will view your life of service to Him when it comes to the Judgment Day (Matthew 25:14-30; Philippians 2:12-13)!

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What are some key lessons learned from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correction: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this teaching to be trained in righteousness and equipped for every good work?