

Sacrifice Without Righteousness

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

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Proverbs 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Micah 6:6-8 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

- I. Man is very inclined to justify himself through religion and good deeds.
 - A. It is a thing that is in all of us to some degree.
 - 1. To think that peace with God and others is based on some kind of a merit system.
 - B. Almost everyone thinks that good behavior buys the right to indulge in a little bad behavior.
 - C. A person will most often justify his bad behavior by some good he claims to have done.
 - D. Even in small children we see this notion of buying liberties with good behavior.
 - E. Many parents reinforce this terrible tendency by training their children to think this way – bribing them to do good in order to be allowed to indulge their desires.
 - F. Many people who think themselves Christians imagine their loved ones and others in heaven because of the good they have done, in spite of the fact that they rejected Christ and lived after their own selfish lusts.
 - G. It is a universal error that leads many souls to hell and it is certainly not the way God keeps accounts.

Ezekiel 3:20 Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

- II. This is the reason behind the fact that so many people keep practicing religion while living in sin.
 - A. This is what a hypocrite is – it is someone who relies on their religious deeds to cover for their transgressions against God and others.
 - B. The churches have always made it far too easy for hypocrites to hide in their midst.
 - C. If they will simply attend the services they can be a member and identify with the church in the community.
 - D. If they will give money and help in other ways they have earned a place in the church and the right to be known in the community as “one of us.”
 - E. This is the only real reason that many people give to churches but seldom, if ever, come to the services, or involve themselves with the people there.
 - 1. They are making a sacrifice to ease their conscience and improve their reputation.

2. They feel better about themselves and worry a little less about God's judgement, because "...surely He will remember the good that I have done." And, "I could have took that money and bought something for myself, you know."
- F. I am sure that I have known many people who attend church regularly for no other reason than to maintain their reputation in the community and to calm their conscience for the way they live outside the church walls.
 1. Likewise, I am sure I have seen many come to the altar in tears and make vows and promises for the same reason.
- G. There are many examples in the Bible of people doing exactly what we are talking about here.
 1. Saul, when he returned from slaughtering the Amalekites, insisted that he had been obedient to God and rested his argument in the sacrifice he had brought.

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

2. The strange woman of Proverbs 7 used her religious acts as part of her flattery in seducing the young man to fornication.

Proverbs 7:14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows.

- a) In her mind she actually justified what she was doing with the fact that she had been to church and had done some good for others (peace offering).

Proverbs 7:27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

3. This is exactly why there can be people in churches who do some of the most wicked things.
4. When the people of a church value the religious offerings and good works of someone more than their obedience to the truth they are adding leaven, and a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Luke 12:1 ...Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

5. Jezebel used hypocrisy and religion to kill Naboth and take his vineyard.

1 Kings 21:9-10 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

6. Caiaphas the high priest while he was doing his best to get Jesus put to death was so careful about his religion that he would not go into the judgement hall with Him.

John 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

- III. We should all examine ourselves closely and be honest with ourselves about our motives for what we do, or do not do.

Isaiah 1:11-20 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath

required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Mark 12:32-34 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, **Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.** And no man after that durst ask him any question.

- A. God wants our heart and He wants our good works to glorify Him.
- B. This requires that our works be accompanied by true holiness and righteousness in our dealings with others and in our conduct in the sight of others.
- C. If our heart is not right and we are living in continual, habitual sin, it is a great detriment to the cause of Christ if we continue to try to convince everyone we are right with God by our religious performances.
- D. Sacrifice and offering, vows and promises, are only acceptable when our heart and life are yielded to God and our will is in his hands in all things.
- E. Performing religious acts or making a show of religion while living in continual sin is evidence of an unconverted and wicked heart.
- F. Just because someone is religious does not mean they are a child of God.
 - 1. The wicked almost always practice some kind of religion.

Proverbs 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Proverbs 17:1 Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.

Proverbs 21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

1 Chronicles 16:29 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

- G. Do not neglect to do what God has commanded us to do just because a some people do it in hypocrisy.
- H. Those who worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness are not thought of as hypocrites by those who really know them.
- I. Just make sure that you are not trying to justify yourself with some kind of sacrifice when you know your heart and your life is not right with God.