

DEVOTION SACRIFICES

II CORINTHIANS 8:5

1st century church members knew that devotion to Christ means sacrifice. The eloquence of the writer of Hebrews is nowhere more evident than in chapter 11. There he says that those who walk by faith do so in lifelong sacrifice.

Hebrews 11:10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. :13-16 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

What drives God's servants to make such sacrifices? Devotion to Christ. And devotion sacrifices!

In 1555, the English bishop¹, Reformer, and martyr Hugh Latimer knew that devotion to Christ means sacrifice. Latimer was sentenced to be burned at the stake for his pro-Reformation positions. Prior to his death his convictions were set forth in an open letter to all genuine believers in Jesus Christ. This in part is what Latimer wrote:

¹ MacArthur, Power of Suffering, p. 99.

"Die once we must; how and where, we know not. Here is not our home; let us therefore accordingly consider things, having always *before* our eyes that heavenly Jerusalem, and the way thereto in persecution" (cited in Harold S. Darby, Hugh Latimer [London: Epworth Press, 19531, 237).

Latimer was executed later in 1535 along with his dear friend and colleague Nicholas Ridley. At that time, as the flames were being lit, an amazingly composed Latimer encouraged his fellow martyr with these words:

"Be of good comfort, master Ridley, and play the *man*. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out" (Darby, 247).

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In the 19th century John Paton² knew that devotion to Christ means sacrifice. He accepted an immense challenge. While he was a student at a Bible college in London, God called him to go to the cannibal-infested New Hebrides islands (which are in the South Pacific). That would be a hard thing for a young Bible college student to say yes to. I probably would have said, "Lord, You've got the wrong guy! Are You sure my gifts are fit for that? And besides, I graduated-I can make it in the ministry. No sense in me being someone's lunch after all the effort I've put in. I know a Bible-college dropout who will never make it in the ministry. Send him there; they'll eat him and who will know? The guy will go down in history as having died a hero."

But John Paton didn't argue with God. The Lord said, "Go," so he and his wife went. A ship left them off and they rowed ashore in small boat to an island inhabited by cannibals whose language they did not speak.

From the moment they set up a little hut on the beach, the Lord miraculously preserved them. Later, when the chief of the tribe in that area was converted to Christ, he asked John who the army was that surrounded his hut every night. God's holy angels had stood on guard.

After a short time, his wife gave birth to a baby and both she and the baby died in childbirth. All alone, he was forced to sleep on the graves to keep the cannibals from digging up the bodies and eating them. In spite of the great challenge, he decided to stay. Why? Listen to his reasoning.

"The adversaries were many, but that's where God wanted me."

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² MacArthur, Dynamic Church, p. 114.

THE SACRIFICE OF DEVOTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Have you ever sat back and pondered how God invites us to serve Him? For a moment look at some lives you already know. There is a common thread in each of their lives. Devotion to God leads to Sacrifices for God!

1. ENOCH had to go against the flow of the culture around him to walk with God (Genesis 5).
2. NOAH had to sacrifice his everyday way of life if he was going to devote himself to God. (Genesis 6-8)
3. ABRAHAM had to give up his culture, his comfort and his control over his life if he was going to become the father of God's chosen people! (Genesis 12:1-8)
4. MOSES had to leave the comforts of Pharaoh's court to stand for God! (Hebrews 11) and later he had to get out of his comfortable obscurity in Midian's backside of the desert to stand for the Lord! (Exodus 3)
5. DAVID couldn't keep the simple life of a shepherd boy and still be God's king for Israel. (I Samuel 16:1-3).
6. ELISHA had to leave his oxen, family business and security to go for God as a prophet. (I Kings 19:16)
7. DANIEL had to leave the crowd, his own peers and even his future job security in order to become God's man for the era in which he lived. (Daniel 1-6)

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THE SACRIFICE OF DEVOTION IN THE GOSPELS

1. THE WISEMEN SACRIFICED TO WORSHIP JESUS : Coming to see Jesus at what cost? They had to travel for what did they do? They came from afar, they fell before Jesus and they offered their treasures to Him. Matthew 2:11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
2. THE 1ST DISCIPLES SACRIFICED TO FOLLOW JESUS : The first followers left behind their security to follow Christ. Matthew 4:22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.
3. THE 1ST SERMON OF JESUS IS ON SACRIFICIAL INVESTING: To invest in heaven treasures on earth are exchanged for ones in heaven. Matthew 6:19-20 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

4. THE END OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY WAS ANNOINTED WITH SACRIFICE: Jesus likes no regret sacrifices for Him. Matthew 26:6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, NKJV
5. JESUS SAID OFFERINGS ARE MEASURED BY THE SACRIFICE INVOLVED: Jesus noticed the total sacrifice the widow had made. Mark 12:43-44 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;44 "for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."NKJV

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THE SACRIFICE OF DEVOTION IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Note the progression:

THEY SACRIFICED THEIR TIME: Acts 1:4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

THEY SACRIFICED THEIR NORMAL CONVERSATIONS (gave mouth to Jesus) Acts 2:7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?

THEY SACRIFICED THEIR POSSESSIONS: Acts 2:45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

THEY GAVE UP THEIR RIGHT OF PERSONAL OWNERSHIP: Acts 4:32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

THEY FIRST GAVE THEMSELVES: 2 Corinthians 8:5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

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Have you done that yet? Have you given yourself to Jesus? If so then any other sacrifice will be small compared to that. "All I am, all I have, all I'll ever be, absolutely, positively, now and forever . . . I give all to Thee!"

One person who said that any meant it was David Livingstone, the pioneering missionary to Africa wrote out a prayer that went like this:

O Lord since Thou hast died, To give Thyself for me,
No sacrifice would seem to great, For me to make for Thee.

I only have one life, and that will soon be past;
I want my life to count for Christ, What's done for Him will last.

I follow Thee my Lord, And glory in Thy Cross;
I gladly leave the world behind, And count all gain as loss.

Lord send me anywhere, Only go with me;
Lay any burden on me, Only sustain me.
Sever any tie, Save the tie that binds me to Thy heart.
Lord Jesus my King, I consecrate my life Lord to Thee!

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HOW DOES THE SACRIFICE OF DEVOTION APPLY TO US HERE AT TULSA BIBLE CHURCH?

I WANT TO SEE GOD PROVIDE EXCEEDINGLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE HIS PEOPLE COULD COMPREHEND. Exodus 36:5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done." The New International Version

I WANT TO GIVE TO JESUS SOMETHING THAT TRULY COSTS ME DEARLY TO LET IT GO. 2 Samuel 24:24 But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. The New International Version

I WANT TO SACRIFICE TODAY IN ORDER TO LAY UP MY TREASURES WHERE THEY NEVER GET RUSTED, ROTTED, RUINED OR STOLEN. Matthew 6:19-20 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. The New International Version

I WANT TO SHOW MY LOVE TO THE LORD JESUS BY INVESTING MY DEAREST TREASURES INTO HIS PRECIOUS CHURCH. Matthew 26:7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. The New International Version

I WANT MY SAVINGS TO LAST FOREVER BECAUSE I INVESTED THEM IN JESUS CHRIST.

Revelation 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. The New International Version