

The Spirit of Sacrifice

Introduction

1. An outstanding characteristic in the lives of God's people in every age has been a spirit of sacrifice.
 - a. It is commanded by God. (Romans 12:1)
 - b. It is exemplified by the Macedonians. (2 Corinthians 8:3-5)
2. As Christians, we must cultivate that spirit as did the Christians in the first century.
 - a. We live in an age of convenience where we are willing to do many things if they do not require the sacrifice of our convenience or ease.
 - b. As a people we are abundantly blessed yet we still want to sing "Showers of Blessings."
 - 1) It is sobering to think of the history of God's people in prosperous times because, most of the time, they left God and went off in other directions to ease, idolatry, etc.
 - 2) Usually it was during times of suffering and want when they sought God and His approval.
3. A question we must ask: "What will happen if a time of oppression should come?"
 - a. What would be our spirit? Would we take a stand?
 - b. We will if we develop the spirit of sacrifice that is characteristic of the faithful.

I. Exemplified by God's People in All Ages

- A. Patriarchal Age: Abraham. (Hebrews 11:8-10)
 1. He was called upon to sacrifice Isaac. (Hebrews 11:17-19; Genesis 22:1-3)
 2. His sacrificial spirit enabled God to bless him. (Genesis 22:16-18)
- B. Jewish Age: Moses. (Hebrews 11:23-27)
 1. He lived in the most prosperous nation on the earth as the son of the most prosperous man of that nation.
 2. He sacrificed all that was his in Egypt to serve God.
 3. God blessed him. They sing in heaven of him. (Revelation 15:3)
- C. Gospel Age: The apostle Paul.
 1. When I read of Paul I feel very inferior because I see how much he did as compared to how little I have done.
 2. Paul sacrificed greatly to serve the Lord.
 - a. He had been born in a wealthy country, Cilicia.
 - b. He was a highly educated man having been taught by Gamaliel.

- c. He had the potential of being a great leader, a national hero, and an influential and rich man.
- d. He counted all of the above “rubbish” in order to gain Christ. (Philippians 3:3-9)

II. A Primary Requirement for Followers of Christ

- A. To properly follow Jesus requires sacrifice.
 - 1. Jesus always tried to find out whether or not those who desired to follow Him would be able to “stand the test,” i.e., live sacrificially.
 - 2. Jesus explained that sacrifice was an integral part of following Him. (Matthew 5:10-12; cf. 2 Timothy 3:12)
- B. Luke 9:57-62 illustrates the spirit of sacrifice one must have to follow Christ.
 - 1. You may not have a bed to sleep in. The animals are better off. (vv. 57-58)
 - 2. It is not wrong to pay one’s last respects to a family member but if one had to make a choice, will he love God or man more? (vv. 59-60)
 - 3. Is one who looks back really committed? Really willing to live sacrificially? (vv. 61-62)
 - a. Did Abraham look back when he left his homeland at God’s direction?
 - b. Lot’s wife did look back. (Luke 17:32)
- C. If one is to follow Christ he must deny self. (Matthew 16:24-25)
 - 1. Even family and friends. (Matthew 10:37)
 - 2. One is to seek the kingdom of God first. (Matthew 6:33)

III. Do You Have the Spirit of Sacrifice?

- A. When you refuse to obey the gospel? (Hebrews 12:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
 - 1. One needs to count the cost but he must also look to the rewards.
 - 2. Are you willing to sacrifice for one you love? (John 15:13)
- B. As a Christian?
 - 1. When you miss the services of God’s people for frivolous reasons using some anemic alibi?
 - a. The weather. Too wet, dry, hot, cold.
 - b. Time. “I just don’t have the time.”
 - 1) Everyone has the same 168 hours each week. If you would sacrifice 3.5 hours Sunday morning, 2 hours Sunday evening and 2 hours Wednesday evening, that would only be 4.5% of your total week.

- 2) If you are too busy to do that, you may be too busy to go to heaven because you are neglecting what is important.
 - c. "I just don't feel right."
 - 1) It is funny how aspirin does not work on Sundays.
 - 2) When one family member is sick, all stay home.
 2. When you give "left-overs" to the Lord?
 - a. Old preachers used to say that it was like feeding the dog.
 - b. Not just money but time.
 3. When you refuse to use your talents?
 - a. Many are content to be "bench-warmers" when they have the ability to do far more.
 - b. They usually end up being like spectators at a football game: Always ready to say what should have been done.
 4. When you are deaf to the needs of your brethren?

Conclusion

1. I wish I knew how to instill in the minds of people the spirit of sacrifice demanded by the Lord and exemplified by His people.
2. Are you willing to start a life of sacrifice in which you let no sacrifice be too great, no burden too heavy, no journey too long and no night too dark to keep you from doing the will of God?
3. The rewards of sacrifice are great. (Revelation 2:10)