



WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE WE HERE FOR? PART TWO

The Role of Spiritual Sacrifices in the Life of the Believer-Priest

By David Schnittger

We began a study last month on the subject of “purpose.” “What in the world am I here for?” “What is my purpose in life?” We began to look at the application of 1 Peter 2:15 in this regard. Believers are pictured in this verse as a holy priesthood, whose purpose is to offer up spiritual sacrifices to the Lord. “Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” The Bible mentions at least four such sacrifices which we, as believer-priests, are expected to make. We looked at two of these in the August “Beacon” article: The sacrifice of LIFE and the sacrifice of LIPS. This article deals with the final two sacrifices.



THE SACRIFICE OF LABOR

In Hebrews 13:16 we learn of the third sacrifice which we are to make as believers. We read there, “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Notice that “doing good” is a spiritual sacrifice in the life of the believer-priest. I have chosen to call this the sacrifice of labor. This includes ALL of our labors in this life.

I would like to point out a few things in regard to labor which is pleasing in God’s sight. First, what should be our *attitude* toward our labors? In Colossians 3:23 we read, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” The attitude we should have in our labors should be, “as to the Lord.” We are sometimes guilty of thinking in terms of the sacred and secular, as if there were a dichotomy in our lives and activities. The Bible does not recognize any such compartmentalizing of our lives. We read in I Corinthians 10:31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do

all to the glory of God.” Eating and drinking are two of the most mundane acts of life, but yet even these things can be done to the glory of God.

Let me quote from A.W. Tozer’s book, *The Pursuit of God*, as he expands on the problem so many of us have concerning the proper attitude toward our labors in life: “One of the greatest hindrances to internal peace which the Christian encounters is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas, the sacred and the secular. As these areas are conceived to exist apart from each other and to be morally and spiritually incompatible, and as we are compelled by the necessities of living to be always crossing back and forth from the one to the other, our inner lives tend to break up so that we lived a divided instead of a unified life.”

Dr. Tozer offers some valuable advice as to how to combat this false division in our thinking when he writes, “We can meet this successfully only by the exercise of an aggressive faith. We must offer all our acts to God and believe that He accepts them. Then hold firmly to that position and keep insisting that every act of every hour of the day and night be included in the transaction. Keep reminding God in our times of private prayer that that we mean every act for His glory; then supplement those times by a thousand thought prayers as we go about the job of living. Let us practice the fine art of making every work a priestly ministrations. Let us believe that God is in all our simple deeds and learn to find Him there.”

A wise man once said, “The whole of life without any exception may be an act of worship if man makes it so.” How can man make it so? Simply by performing every duty of life “as unto the Lord.”

We find this truth perfectly demonstrated in the earthly life of Christ. He was every bit a man with all the implications that involved. The first thirty years of his life were spent in the common processes of growing up and learning a trade. There was nothing particularly “religious” about many of the activities which were, of necessity, part of the life of Jesus. But yet he could honestly claim, as he did in John 8:29, “. . . for I do always those things that please him.”



There was no division between the sacred and the secular in the life of Jesus. Everything He did was sacred, performed in perfect obedience to His Father. His presence in human flesh sweeps away forever the false notion that there is something about the human body that is innately offensive to God.

Now that is not meant to imply that every act of life is equally important. I would certainly agree that it is more important to win a soul to Christ than to plant a garden, and we should give these more important works a bigger priority in life, but even the seemingly mundane labors which we feel led to do should be done with the same wholeheartedness and care that we would show toward so-called “religious” labors.

The next thing I would like to point out about this sacrifice of labor is that there is to be a *consistency* about it. We read in Titus 2:7, “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works . . .” Just as the gigantic looms in our modern textile factories turn out seemingly unending rolls of material with a consistent pattern woven into them, so our lives are to have this same unchanging consistency or pattern of good works. The Bible tells us that we have been saved for good works. In Ephesians 2:10 we read, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

It is tremendous to realize that God has ordained beforehand the good works which we are to accomplish in life. As obedient children of God we should seek to discern those good works which God desires us to pursue, and then we should pursue them wholeheartedly, to the best of our ability.

We find a wonderful Scripture concerning God’s promise to guide us in Proverbs 3:6: “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” This word “direct” means “to cut” or “make straight.” Then, as He leads us in our appointed works, we are to give them the very best of our efforts.

A grand old hymn by S.C. Kirk called, “Our Best,” expresses this idea so well: “Hear ye the Master’s call, ‘Give Me thy best!’ For, be it great or small, that is His test. Do then the best you can, Not for reward, Not for the praise of man, but for the Lord. Every work for Jesus will be blest, But He asks from everyone his best. Our talents may be few, these may be small, But unto Him is due our best, our all.”

The record of our lives as Christians should reveal a pattern, a design of consistency. In our academic lives, in our family lives, in our business lives, in our church lives, there is to be a pattern of good works, of doing our best, under the control of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish the labors that God has marked off for our lives.

The third thing I would like to mention about this sacrifice of labor is that they are to show *practicality*. We read in Titus 3:8, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and PROFITABLE UNTO MEN.” Not only are we to have the right attitude toward our labors, not only is there to be a consistency about our labors, but there is to be a practicality to them as well. Many

people have the mistaken idea that Christianity is not practical; that Christians are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good.

While I am sure that there are many Christians who qualify to receive such accusations, that is not as God intended. Christians should be the most concerned, compassionate and productive people in the world, for Christians have a depth and quality of love which the unsaved world does not possess - the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches that genuine Christianity will always find expression in practical concern for the needs of humanity. In James 1:27 we read, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fathers and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

We see here that outward service and inward sanctification are the balanced elements in the genuine Christian experience. In James 2:15, 16 we read, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit?" The obvious answer is that it profits nothing.

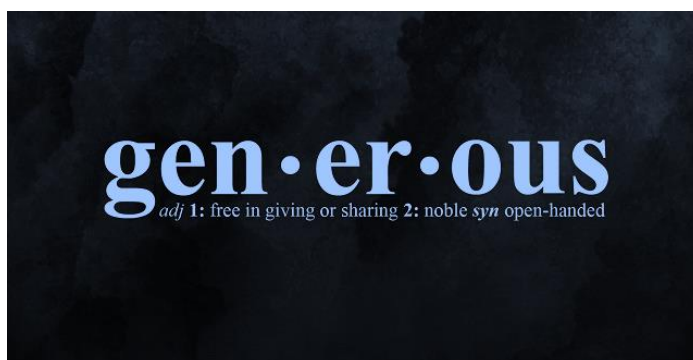
By this I am not trying to imply that social concern and involvement are to take preeminence over evangelistic concern. Our prime concern with regard to the unsaved world is their salvation. Their physical needs are subordinate to this primary need. The scriptural attitude toward evangelism in relation to social concern is this: Evangelism is *commanded* and social action is *commended*.

At times, conservative, Bible-believing Christians have come under fire by the more liberal elements of Christianity for not having an adequate concern for the physical needs of humanity. While this accusation is true to some extent, the fact remains that conservative, fundamental Christians have led the way, historically, in the areas of education, medicine and agriculture in underprivileged nations across the world. Civilization has taken its greatest strides forward under the influence of well-trained and hard-working Christian missionaries who have given their all to express the love of Christ in practical ways to those who need Him so desperately.



Whenever a disaster strikes anywhere in the world, whether it be in Bangladesh, Haiti or Zimbabwe, dozens of Christian relief organizations immediately converge on the area to provide tons of emergency supplies and medical relief. This is the love of Christians in action, moving to meet the crying needs of humanity as they arise. These are good works which are profitable to men.

What have we learned about the sacrifice of labor or good works which we as Christians are to perform? First, all that we do is to be with the attitude of “as unto the Lord.” Second, there is to be a consistency about our labors. All that we do is to be done to the best of our ability, so that a pattern of good works is evident in every area of our lives. Third, there is to be a practicality about our labors. The direction of our labors is to be to the profit of others. Our concern is primarily to be for the salvation of lost souls, for this is mankind’s greatest need, and the best way for us to be of profit to an unsaved person is to tell him of salvation in Christ alone. But our concern also extends to the whole man, which includes his physical, mental, and emotional needs as well.



THE SACRIFICE OF LUCRE

The fourth sacrifice which we as believer-priests are to offer to God is the sacrifice of lucre, or the sacrifice of money. We find this in the same verse that we read previously in reference to the sacrifice of labor. In Hebrews 13:16 we read, “*But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*” The word “communicate” can also be translated “share,” “fellowship,” or “distribute.” It has in view the sharing or distribution of material goods or money. So, this fourth sacrifice mentioned in Scripture for the believer is the sacrifice of money or lucre.

While those who are members of the body of Christ are not required to give a specific percentage of their incomes to the Lord’s work, as under the Mosaic law, there are certain principles set forth in the New Testament which should characterize our giving. Let’s briefly examine these principles.

The first is found in 1 Corinthians 16:2, “*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*” This verse sets forth the principle that we should give *systematically*. It is indeed strange that many Christians are regular and systematic about their business and domestic affairs but are sporadic and irregular when it comes to giving to the Lord’s work. This ought not to be, when you consider the importance of the work. Our giving is to be systematic.

The next principle is also revealed in this verse. We are to give *proportionally*. “. . . as God hath prospered him . . .” We are to give an increasing amount to the Lord’s work as He blesses and prospers us. If we receive an increase in income, then it is only right that our giving should increase as well. As you prosper, the Lord’s work should prosper in like proportion.

A third principle is that we are to give *generously*. We read in II Corinthians 9:6, “*But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*” There is a fundamental principle of life known as the law of sowing and reaping. This law extends into every area of nature and human life. It is most clearly stated in Galatians 6:7, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*”

For example, this principle applies in the area of health. Proper diet, rest and exercise generally results in a long and healthy life. Neglect of these areas usually causes illness and poor health. In the area of education and scholarship, the same is also true. The path to wisdom and knowledge has always been hard and painstaking and requires much diligence. As an ancient saying goes, “Be eager to acquire knowledge; it does not come to thee by inheritance.” Likewise, in the spiritual realm, we reap what we sow. If we sow generously in the Lord’s work, we will reap generous rewards in the way of joy, spiritual growth, and even financial prosperity, as we shall soon see.

Strange as it may seem, the direction and amount of our giving influences the direction and affection of our hearts. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*” If you want to love the Lord more, then put your treasures in the Lord’s work. I have actually heard of an instance where a non-Christian began contributing to a particular mission organization. Knowing he was not a Christian, some of the staff of the mission questioned whether it was proper to receive money from him. The mission director wisely allowed this man to continue supporting the Lord’s work, knowing that his heart would naturally follow his pocketbook. Before long, the man received Christ as his Savior. The law of sowing and reaping paid off. So, our giving should be generous, for it reaps generous results.



Fourth, we are to give *cheerfully*. In II Corinthians 9:7 we read, *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* We ought not give to the Lord’s work because we feel that we have to, or because we have been pressured into it, but because we want to, because we’re glad to. Let me suggest a couple reasons why we can cheerfully give to the Lord’s work. For one reason, it is a vital and enduring work. The work of evangelism and Bible teaching is the most important work going on in the world today. The ministry of God’s Word brings new life and direction to every individual that responds to it, making a permanent difference for good in our world. I do not know of any better investment than this.

Consider the billions of dollars that we sink into law enforcement programs and prisons in this country, but yet the crime problem is growing by leaps and bounds. Consider the exploding welfare budget, yet the welfare rolls continue to mushroom, as more and more people are turning to government charity for their incomes. Consider the 700 billion-dollar U.S. defense budget, yet there is more political unrest than ever before.

Vast expenditures in these areas aren’t solving the basic problems, for THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM IS THE PROBLEM OF THE HEART. Only the saving and sanctifying Word of God comes to grips with the real problem in the world today, the wicked heart of man. You cannot change society for good until you change the individuals in that society. And only through Christ does one become a “new creature,” transformed by the Holy Spirit Who comes to indwell all who receive Christ as Savior. Because the work of the Gospel is the best investment we could possibly make, we should give cheerfully.

Another reason we should give cheerfully is because of the returns involved. Immediately after the verse we just read about giving cheerfully, we have this promise: *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”* God promises “sufficiency in all things” (including financial) to those who give generously and cheerfully to His work. In fact, the Lord blesses some Christians with abundant wealth, for the purpose of having them give to the Lord’s work. This is called the “gift of giving” in Romans 12:8.

We often quote Philippians 4:19 concerning God’s provision to supply all our needs, while completely ignoring the context in which it is found. This passage, from verses 10-20, is Paul’s expression of thanks for the gifts that the church of Philippi had sent him to aid in his ministry. Verse 18 reads, *“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”* As a result of their giving he continues: *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (4:19). Because they supplied the needs of the Lord’s work, the Lord would therefore supply their needs. This is NOT a blanket promise which extends to the stingy Christian who gives little if anything to the Lord’s work. Such a person will not reap, because he does not sow.



Let me ask you. How does your giving rate according to the principles of New Testament stewardship? Are you regular or sporadic in your giving? Do you give a proportionate amount of your income, or just the left-overs? Do you give cheerfully, or just because you consider it an obligation?

We have seen that there are definite sacrifices which God expects us to make as believers in Christ. First, we must give our LIVES. This is the starting point, and without this initial act, all other service becomes meaningless. Second, we must give our LIPS to praising God continually and verbally. Third, we must give our LABORS as unto the Lord, being careful always to maintain a pattern of good works which are of practical aid to the needs of mankind. And finally, we must give of our LUCRE or money regularly, proportionately, generously, and cheerfully, as part of our total stewardship to God.



What in the world are we here for? *“Ye also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:5).

Editor’s Note: *David Schnittger is the President of Southwest Prophecy Ministries. He has been teaching the Word of God since he was 17 years old. He has been a pastor for over 25 years and has served as an Adjunct Professor at both the college and seminary level.*

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