

Obedience Vs. Sacrifice

1st Samuel 15:22, 23

Obedience is far better than any sacrifice one could ever make. The Lord says many times that He doesn't want our gifts and sacrifices when we give them out of ritual and hypocrisy. Our Lord God wants us first to love and obey Him with all our heart, mind, soul and body; with all our being. Amen!!! We have to have a proper balance. Sacrifice is very important, but when it comes down to obedience, the Lord would rather us to be obedient than to give the greatest of sacrifices that we could ever make.

Let's break this down. The text 1 Samuel 15:22-23 "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. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" First and foremost let us take a look at the reasons for making the sacrifice rather than the sacrifice itself. Let's think about that for a moment. Take for instance; I hear all the time from those who play the lottery, from those who gamble, but when and if they ever win they will give the Lord 10% to the church. That is their sacrifice. But for the life of me that I can't understand or what I want to ask them when I hear this is that don't you know that God owns everything already? The Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Psalm 50:10 "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." The Word say that all the silver and gold belongs to God. Haggai 2:8 "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." Now I am a college man, I have obtained my degree and I translated the word all into its simplest text and the word all simply means all. So if all of it belongs to God already how are you furthering the Kingdom? How does your 10% of sacrifice from the lottery winnings help God? Think about that church.

What is a sacrifice? I am glad that you asked me. A sacrifice in the Old Testament is a ritual transaction between man and God that physically demonstrated a relationship between them. A true sacrifice requires us to give up something, self sacrifice. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his only soul? Mark 8:36 "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Sacrifice is easy. It is the self sacrifice that requires discipline and true hearted service. How much

sacrifice am I making if I eat 11 times a day and now I only eat 10 times a day? How much sacrifice am I making instead of partying 7 nights a week I now party 6? We can go all day. Self sacrifice is that from your heart, when it is done unto the Lord for His will and glory. If a person heart was not truly repentant or if they didn't truly love God, the sacrifice was a hollow ritual.

Religious ceremonies or rituals are empty unless they are performed with an attitude of love and obedience for our Lord. What is being religious? Let's break this down. Being religious isn't holiness. Did you know that you can smoke a cigarette religiously? Most folks consider being religious by going to church every Sunday, serving on a committee, giving to charity, giving a tithe faithfully, and though these are all well and done, it is not enough if we don't act out of devotion and obedience to God. Being religious is doing things habitually. Basically doing things out of habit is called religious. What is a sacrifice if it doesn't cost you of nothing substantial? That is why it must be inline with Scripture and of self sacrifice. Jesus the Christ is our sacrificial Lamb of God. It cost our Lord Jesus His life for us.

Our Lord accepts far more things than just sacrifice. Proverbs 21:3 "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." First He says that obedience is better than sacrifice, now we read that to do justice is better than sacrifice. A lot of times people may think that a sacrifice and/or offerings can be used as a bribe to make God overlook our character faults. Tell me can you pay your way into heaven? Or could you do enough sacrifices to get your soul out of the depths of hell? No!!!

So then what is obedience? Obedience is to hearken, to listen carefully and do what thus said the Lord to do. Jeremiah 7:23 "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." Jesus said if you love me keep my commandments. John 14:15. What are his commandments? Matthew 22:36-40. "36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Jesus says that if we truly love God like we say we do and also love our neighbor then we will naturally keep his commands. The Lord doesn't say that we are to not ever sin, nor does the Word state that we cannot be forgiven if we miss one or the other. But to obey is better than sacrifice. Ask yourself, is what I am doing out of love for God or love for self? Ask yourself is what I am doing going to bring all the Glory and Honor to God, or praises to me?

Let us take a look at Hosea 6:6 which says "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." You see, there has to be a proper balance. Yes going to church, paying tithes, reading and studying God's Word is awesome. Why? Doing these things helps us to understand God and grow our relationship with the Master. The major difference is that am I doing these things out of ritual, or am I am doing these things to be praised by man, or am I doing this for the love of God and to be obedient. If ones heart is far from God then these things are an empty mockery before God.

The Lord doesn't care so much on the going to church part as He does about your soul, about being Lord and Savior of your life. But not forsaking assembly of yourselves together, this is God's saying, not man's so it is His command. Hebrews 10:25 "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." For some who say well man wrote the Bible take a look at II Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" All the words in the Bible are written and inspired by God Himself. God used man to write it out. God uses us as instruments to do His will. And let us not forget St. John 1:1, 14. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." This alone states that Jesus Christ is the Word of God and the Words that we read are life and spirit. Why do you worship? What is the motive behind your offerings and sacrifices?

One last thing, though not the last thing in regards to obedience vs. sacrifice, but to conclude this lesson, our Lord also states that mercy is better than sacrifice. Matthew 9:13 "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but

sinner to repentance.” Matthew 12:7 “But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.” Let us wrap it up with the conclusion of this lesson. Mark 12:29-33 “29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. 32 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: 33 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.”

To obey is better than any sacrifice you or I could ever make. God’s laws are not burdensome. They can be reduced to two simple principles; love God and others. When you love God completely and care for others as you care for yourself then you have fulfilled the intent of the 10 commandments. Jesus even said that His yoke is easy and His burden light, Matthew 11:28-30. “28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Let the Lord rule over you, your thoughts, decisions, and actions by obeying His commands. When you are uncertain about what to do, ask yourself, which course of action best demonstrates love for God and love for others? To obey is better than sacrifice. Amen!!!

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