

THE BURNT OFFERING AND A VITAL LESSON FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE TODAY

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The law of burnt offering given to God's people in the Old Testament has a vital lesson for the Christian life today. A lesson that many professed Christians ignore today, which they will find out to their cost when Jesus returns and says to them ... *"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:23). So what was the law of burnt offering? Well, the burnt offering had its origin, not at Sinai, but right after sin entered. We can see from Genesis and before the exodus that God's people offered burnt offering to the Lord.

Genesis 8:20 ...'And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.'

Exodus 10:25 ...'And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God.'

Now in Exodus 29:36-42 and Leviticus 16, we see that the sin offering was to be made first and then the burnt offering was to be made after the sin offering and that the burnt offering was to be a **voluntary** offering.' Leviticus 4 lays out the law of the sin offering, confirming that an individual sinner (vs.27-35) was to bring a kid or a lamb and slay the animal themselves. The sinner, by confessing their sins over the animal before slaying it, in type, transferred their sins to the animal. Then the life of the animal was taken instead of the sinner. This clearly pointed to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, offering His life for our sins and taking our sins upon Himself.

So why also a burnt offering? Think about it. If the sin offering pointed to Christ bearing our sins and dying in our place, what need was there for another offering, if it provided no other lesson than Christ taking our sins and dying in our place? Well, the fact is, the burnt offering did provide another important lesson apart from the offering of Christ Himself. Leviticus 1:3 tells us that the sinner was to offer the burnt offering *"of his own voluntary will."* Leviticus 1:8-9 tells us that the burnt offering was to be a **whole** offering. The entire sacrifice was laid upon the altar and burned. So what do you think God was teaching His people through this?

That we are to **voluntarily**, not begrudgingly, especially in response to the sacrifice made for our sins, entirely consecrate our lives to the service of God.

The burnt offering symbolized **OUR PART** of consecrating our **WHOLE** lives upon the altar of sacrifice, surrendering ourselves fully to God and His ways.

Yes, it is **only** through the merits of Jesus Christ that we can offer a complete sacrifice that will be acceptable to God. But if done by faith in Christ, that whole sacrifice and consecration of our life will be "*a sweet savour unto the Lord*" (Lev.1:9). The apostle Paul urged the fulfilling of this in the following words:

Romans 12:1 ...'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'

That is exactly the burnt offering lesson. Giving ourselves as a living sacrifice upon the altar of service to God. And Jesus Himself confirmed it also when He said ... "*whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it*" (Matthew 16:25). To gain eternal life we are to lose our lives here. In other words, we are to die to self, sacrificing the sinful flesh and its desires and offer up our lives willingly to God in loving service to Him.

The fire used to consume the burnt offering was fire kindled by Jehovah Himself (Leviticus 9:24). It was holy fire that was to be kept burning and not allowed to go out (Leviticus 6:12) and it is only through that divine fire (love) which God kindles in our hearts that we can offer such a sacrifice in our lives today. But just as the priests had to keep that fire burning and not let it go out, we too are to keep that fire which God ignites in our hearts burning, through Bible study, prayer, devotion, worship, serving others. And even though it is a 'voluntary' offering, it is a sacrifice that **must** be offered unto the Lord, willingly and lovingly. Just look at all the New Testament Bible verses confirming this:

Mark 12:30 ...'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.'

Matthew 16:24 ...'Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'

Galatians 2:20 ...'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.'

Galatians 5:24 ...'And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.'

Colossians 3:5 ...'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.'

Acts 20:35 ...'I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.'

*Galatians 5:13 ...'For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but **by love serve one another.**'*

*1 Peter 4:8 ...'And above all things have **fervent charity** among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.'*

*Matthew 23:11 ...'The greatest among you shall be your **servant.**'*

Do you see? We are not **only** to ask God for forgiveness of our sins through faith in the atonement of the Lamb of God (sin offering). We are also to willingly offer our lives upon the altar of 'burnt offering,' mortifying the deeds of the flesh, living a new life of self denial and service to God, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The burnt offering was not an offering of PART of the animal, it was a WHOLE offering. In the same way, God will not accept a part offering of our lives to Him. It must be a COMPLETE offering, surrendering all sin, all worldliness, in love and devotion to our heavenly Father - our flesh 'consumed,' as was the burnt offering, giving ourselves in service in God's vineyard, in the service of the poor and needy, sharing the love and truth and character of God to the world around us. This is "*a sweet savour unto the Lord.*"

2 Samuel 24:24 ...'neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing.'

But woe unto him who brings "*strange, profane fire*" of worldly ambition, wealth, popularity, position or any selfish desire to this altar, for he will surely corrupt the sacrifice and be destroyed by the Lord, just as Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10)

Can we be one with God and yet keep our lives unto ourselves, fulfilling our own desires and passions and pleasures? Can we simply offer that "sin offering" of confession, accepting the sacrifice of God's own dear Son for our sin and then just continue to live in sin and for sin, fulfilling our own fleshly desires? God forbid! We are also to **willingly, voluntarily** offer that "burnt offering," that "WHOLE offering" sacrifice to the service of God and His kingdom, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

*1 Peter 2:21-24 ...'For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps**: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.'*

In creation, God through His Son, poured forth His life freely into all that lives. In redemption, God through His Son, poured forth His life freely to save mankind from death, only to be despised, rejected and crucified. All this He did for our joy, which is one with His own joy. Thus can we be one with God and not freely give as He did? Can we know the "*power of Christ's resurrection*" without knowing "*the fellowship of His sufferings*"? All this is symbolized in the burnt offering. A whole offering, freely given in love. This burnt offering wasn't just beaten, bruised and let go. If it was, the offering might say to us, "*I will go with Christ to Gethsemane and Pilate's judgment hall and no further.*" But no, the burnt offering was killed and everything burned upon the altar. Therefore it says, "*I will go with Christ to Calvary!*"

Sadly, the Jews lost the significance of this offering and it simply became an empty ritual. They thought that simply performing the ritual made them holy, all the while their hearts were far from God (Matthew 15:8). Which is why God said the following words:

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?'

1 Samuel 15:22-23 ... '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. 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.'

Now some people misunderstand these verses above. They think, "Oh God doesn't need me to make any sacrifice. I just need to be humble and do good to others." And yet the law of burnt offering DOES teach us that there is a sacrifice to be made. But God was dealing above with the fact that the Jews were making all these countless animal sacrifices and not learning the lessons contained in them. God didn't delight in all those animal sacrifices. They were merely great object lessons to teach God's people the gospel message. God didn't want the people to offer animal sacrifices to simply 'appease' Him, like some false god. He wanted His people to learn to give Him their hearts, **completely**, so that He could fill them with His love and character, so that the character of Satan could be destroyed, and sin could be destroyed. And God can only do this work when we make a complete offering to Him, just like the burnt offering taught us.

So there IS a sacrifice to be made on our part. A sacrifice of self, so that we can be made one with God and the kingdom of God through the merits of Jesus Christ and faith in Him. This is what the burnt offering teaches us. A vital lesson that many professed Christians need to learn today, as many continue to live for self and the world - Satan's kingdom. But the kingdom of God is all about selfless love and service. And this is why the lesson of the burnt offering is so important. Selfishness is the foundation of Satan's kingdom, which will soon be destroyed. But selfless love, sacrifice and obedient service is the foundation of the kingdom of God, which will last forever. And the freewill "burnt offering" that we give, not of animals, but of our very hearts and lives, shows which kingdom we belong to.

Many feel it would be too much to offer such a sacrifice on our part and that life would be an unhappy experience. But what they don't realise is that when we offer our lives in complete devotion to our heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus will fill us with such amazing joy and peace that cannot be rivalled, which is what the peace offering symbolized. Leviticus 3:5 tells us that the peace offering was to be burned upon the burnt offering. So we find peace upon the burnt offering! Thus when we offer our lives upon the altar of sacrifice, willingly and lovingly to Jesus, we do not find worries, stress unfulfillment or unhappiness. No! We find the PEACE and JOY of Jesus Christ, look:

John 15:11 ... 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.'

*John 14:27 ...'Peace I leave with you, **my peace I give unto you**: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'*

*Psalms 16:11 ...'Thou wilt shew me the path of life: **in thy presence is fulness of joy**; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'*

*1 Peter 4:12-14 ...'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: **But rejoice**, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, **ye may be glad also with exceeding joy**. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, **happy are ye**; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.'*

*"Oh! Taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8). And oh! what joy and peace there is to be found in a life completely surrendered to Jesus Christ. Even if need be, our lives are to be as was the life of Jesus, going out in crucifixion and apparent defeat, hated, despised, maligned, and rejected. There we will find an everlasting joy and peace! Praise God! But notice, just as in the Old Testament type, we will **ONLY** find true peace and joy upon the altar of burnt offering. So let us give our lives; and give it freely, making no claim; give it in Christ's name and for his sake. In other words, present it a burnt-offering, to be consumed for a sweet savor unto the Lord; **then, and only then, we will find true peace.***

*Isaiah 26:3-4 ...'Thou wilt keep him in **perfect peace**, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord **JEHOVAH** is everlasting strength.'*