

Obedience is better than Sacrifice

I was thinking this week about what to preach on. I tossed around that I might do a great sermon on gossip. Then I thought no we need a good sermon on a culture of honor and not running each other down behind our backs... Then I was thinking well maybe what I should speak about was appreciation of each other. Then I was thinking about a rip-roaring sermon on not making assumptions. Perhaps I could preach on the Golden rule or maybe placing yourself in another's shoes. I was kind of thinking about all the things that are happening around in the Kootenay area and what the Lord would want to say about it... To be honest, I was allowing experiences over the last while, to impact my heart. I felt no release from the Lord on what to speak on this week.

Here is what I did... I went into my bedroom and closed the door. I got on my knees and said: "God, there is so much happening right now in this area. I really don't know what direction to go this Sunday. In my heart God I don't feel that you want me to preach in reaction to anything that is happening around me. Lord, I really would like your help... What do you want me to say to your people?"

Not even a half a second passed and I heard in my head, just like God was standing in the room next to me a single sentence. I heard it and, I said "God Really?" then I did something stupid... I asked God: "Are you sure?" Whoa dumb question...

Here's a tip... If God says something to you, he is sure.

Bet you're all just dying to find out what God said, aren't you?
- tune in next week for the next exciting episode of God Speaks...

Just kidding!

God said to me: "***obedience is better than sacrifice***" but he showed me pictures in my head that took it in a direction that I want to share with you this morning.

Turn with me to 1 Samuel 15:10-23 CEV

The LORD told Samuel, "Saul has stopped obeying me, and I'm sorry that I made him king." Samuel was angry, and he cried out in prayer to the LORD all night. Early the next morning he went to talk with Saul. Someone told him, "Saul went to Carmel, where he had a monument built so everyone would remember his victory. Then he left for Gilgal." Samuel finally caught up with Saul, and Saul told him, "I hope the LORD will bless you! I have done what the LORD told me." "Then why," Samuel asked, "do I hear sheep and cattle?" "The army took them from the Amalekites," Saul explained. "They kept the best sheep and cattle, so they could sacrifice them to the LORD your God. But we destroyed everything else." "Stop!" Samuel said. "Let me tell you what the LORD told me last night." "All right," Saul answered. Samuel continued, "You may not think you're very important, but the LORD chose you to be king, and you are in charge

of the tribes of Israel. When the LORD sent you on this mission, he told you to wipe out those worthless Amalekites. Why didn't you listen to the LORD? Why did you keep the animals and make him angry?" "But I did listen to the LORD!" Saul answered. "He sent me on a mission, and I went. I captured King Agag and destroyed his nation. All the animals were going to be destroyed anyway. That's why the army brought the best sheep and cattle to Gilgal as sacrifices to the LORD your God." "Tell me," Samuel said. "Does the LORD really want sacrifices and offerings? No! He doesn't want your sacrifices. He wants you to obey him. Rebelling against God or disobeying him because you are proud is just as bad as worshiping idols or asking them for advice. You refused to do what God told you, so God has decided that you can't be king.

Lets look at verse 22 & 23 in the NKJV

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

Note: Harkening in the biblical context is to: Actively listen and obey...

Point #1) God would rather have obedience to his will that any sacrifices a person makes as a substitution for doing what he has asked.

Point #2) The Fat of Rams in this context signifies that which is spiritual. The spiritual church if you will. To listen and obey (Harken) is better that acting spiritually.

That a **ram** signifies that which is spiritual, or what is the same as those who are spiritual. This is plain as well in the book of **Daniel**; where a ram was seen by him standing before the river, that had two horns; then a male goat from the goats, smote him, broke his horns, and trampled him down (*Daniel* 8:3, 4); In this context the **ram** is representative of the spiritual church, and the male goat which represents those who are in faith separated from charity, or in truth separate from good, who by successive steps uplift themselves against good, and at length against the Lord-which is also described. In **Samuel**:--

Samuel said to Saul, Hath Jehovah as great pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in hearkening to the voice of Jehovah? Behold to hearken is better than sacrifice, and to obey than the fat of rams (*1 Sam.* 15:22);

In this case obedience is treated, so is truth, which is in its way spiritual; and these words were said to the king, by the one who is truth (paraphrased from (www.biblemeanings.info))

Point #3) Rebellion is as witchcraft.

Two things have been evident in the church since its inception...

- The desire to control
- The desire to dominate

These two factors together are the base form of what we term witchcraft.

Witchcraft is essentially nothing more than trying to exert illegitimate control over another person's will. It is a work of the flesh.

King Saul did not want to obey God, instead of following instructions he spared the king and many of the best rams. You see regardless of the king's noble reason for sparing the rams, he disobeyed God. He took the control to himself and placed the plan under his strategy, not God's. Saul even made excuses that he did do what God asked. Because he did not do it God's way and disobeyed part of the instruction he sinned. Remember our working definition of sin for the past few sermons. Sin is not being in the will of God.

Rebellion is seen when a person rejects the authority of God or the legitimate authorities established by him. There is:

- The Authority of God himself
- The Authority of the Word of God
- The Authority of Apostles, Pastors, Evangelists, Prophets and teachers
- The Authority of Parents

All of these authorities have been defined and established by God. Because they are from God they should be obeyed to the full. Providing that these authorities are in obedience with God's Word.

We spoke of the Jezebel Spirit then we spoke about Controlling people and now we see that disobedience is wrapped up neatly in that package.

Point #4) Stubbornness is as sin and idolatry

Ask yourself this morning... Am I stubborn?

Jeremiah 17:23-24 KJV

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. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the

counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward

Hebrews 3:7-12 NKJV

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: " Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, ' They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways. ' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest. 'Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;"

Deuteronomy 17:12a NKJV

Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or the judge, that man shall die.

You know I am not prideful or controlling when I say this, but each one of us really needs to harken to Godly counsel and leadership. Ever notice how for many in our culture this very concept is grating? We need to examine within ourselves and ask in our hearts why that is...

Psalms 32:8-9 NKJV

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.

I have given these first four points to place obedience in context with what we have recently been discussing around insecurity, control, manipulation, domination etc.

Clearly God wants us to be obedient to his will. If you don't know his will then read, pray and review the sermon "Hear Ye" wherein we discuss the 8 steps to hearing and knowing when God is speaking to you.

Now let's get a little revelatory...

In our modern context sacrifice is often an attempt by many to gain independence from God. Remember when we talked about someone using God to run from him. Sometimes people will get busy doing everything for God that they can... except what he has asked them to do... You see sacrifice, in a very real, very modern sense may be an attempt to encumber God with a debt to us. In our minds, when we sacrifice for God, do we ever have the associated feeling that God owes us something? Do we ever feel that when we sacrifice for God we have God favor chips

in the bank? Do we go to him in prayer asking for a favor, deliverance, protection, or stuff with the expectation that because we have sacrificed for God we have purchased the right to have God do things for us?

How about the mom praying for her unsaved son... "God, please look at all I have done for you! You owe me this, you must heal my son, I have been your servant for all these years!"

How about a circumstance where a wife is praying for the cheating husband and her for her marriage? "God I have faithfully followed you and given to the church, I have volunteered and worked my fingers to the bone in the church for you. You need to stop my husband and make him love me."

"God look at everything I have done for you... You owe me, its only fair." How about what God has done for you through his Son...

Anyway I digress. Look at Saul's attitude, I will do this for God, but I am going to do it my way and I will throw a few extra sacrifices in to grab some extra merit points.

Okay that's the negative view...

Obedience is the positive response of a person who is not bound by religion, but who is in a trust relationship with the almighty God. All meaningful relationships are built on trust. If we really trust God; what are we saying? We are saying that we have faith in God. God tells us that without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6), Obedience is better than sacrifice because we surrender control to God, step into our proper place, surrender our will to his and surrender to the truth of the Goodness of God.

Mark 12:33 CEV tells us:

It is also true that we must love God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and that we must love others as much as we love ourselves. These commandments are more important than all the sacrifices and offerings that we could possibly make.

Are we living in sacrifice mode?

Are we demanding our rights and living the way we want to?

OR

Are we living in Obedience mode?

Are we responding to God in trust? Are we depending on him? Do we have a relationship or only religion?

To be really clear here... in John 14:23-27 CEV

Jesus replied: If anyone loves me, they will obey me. Then my Father will love them, and we will come to them and live in them. But anyone who doesn't love me, won't obey me. What they have heard me say doesn't really come from me, but from the Father who sent me. I have told you these things while I am still with you. But the Holy Spirit will come and help you, because the Father will send the Spirit to take my place. The Spirit will teach you everything and will remind you of what I said while I was with you. I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give. It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid

So... Do you love Jesus?

Will we hold control, will we run from the Lord by hiding in spirituality or will we submit and obey?

Once again I ask... Do you love Jesus?

Now all that said sacrifice with the right heart and motivation is good. If sacrifice is not meant to buy your way into heaven or encumber a debt upon God it can be pleasing to the Lord.

You see there is only one way to be saved, we are not saved by works:

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, " I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Acts 4:12

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Simply put for us to believe that the sacrifice that we make in our lives can compete with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us all is arrogant and deluded. We can be excited, we can be zealous and we can do things to help, this is not my point. My point is that when we do things in our own strength for our own reasons, in our own time, in league with our own programs and objectives he is NOT interested. Jesus paid the full price of sacrifice for us so that what we give to the Lord is not our of obligation but joyfully and cheerfully given. When he looks down at his children and they are following his instructions and obeying his direction, he values it far above sacrifice.

Romans 6:16

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey— whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience leads to righteousness. Sacrifice without obedience is futile and useless. Because obedience requires faith and faith without works is dead.

Intention People... We are not soul-ly judged on our actions but our intentions. Now, God does accept our bodies as living sacrifices to Him. So what sacrifices would God like to see?

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God— this is your spiritual act of worship.

Jesus also wants the "sacrifice" of our praise and works through faith.

Hebrews 13:15-16

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise— the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Confused? Don't be!

Obedience is better than sacrifice. Because the sacrifice of self to obedience is the only sacrifice God is really interested in...

Remember the steps to hear from God?

First we hear the Word

Then we acquire faith

Faith requires action

Action requires commitment and self-sacrifice

Commitment and self-sacrifice require diligence in reading and in prayer

Reading and prayer require meditation, waiting, listening

Meditation, waiting and listening require reverence

Reverence requires that we hear and obey the voice of God.