

## Wasted Sacrifices

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A lady in one of my early pastorates was in deep grief as her son told her with cold resolve that he was leaving home to move in with his male lover. As I stood talking with her moments after, she was pouring blackberries into a bushel basket. Her hands were bleeding because of the briars around the blackberry bushes where she had been picking. She said, "Pastor, I have two other jobs trying to keep that boy in college and clothes on his back. I've been sending him everything I make from this blackberry patch." Then with a look of deep hurt as she looked at her bleeding hands said, "I guess all of this was for nothing."

As I drove away I thought of the time I saw a young woman present a sweater she had knitted to her boyfriend. He threw it at her feet saying, "I told you, I don't want that." She had labored almost two years to complete that gift of love so the tears that followed were like a cascading river of unimaginable grief. The labor of love cast aside.

I'm sure feelings of hurt, pity, or even anger welled up inside of you as you listened to these stories, but could it be that we as Christians, we who find our spiritual roots with Abraham, Jeremiah, Daniel, Paul, Peter, John the Baptist are contributors to a greater calloused insensitivity than the stories we just heard.

Could it be that those before us see our anemic faith and faltering testimony and they recount their deprivation and persecution and say softly to themselves "was it all for naught, was our sacrifice wasted?"

In the book of Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verse 40 there is a message Southern Baptists need to hear more than any other. Listen to the verse, "God having provided some better

thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Listen again to that haunting phrase "they without us should not be made perfect."

The writer has just chronicled their life of sacrifice – some were tortured, others were stoned, sawn in half, run through with the sword, scourged, and imprisoned. Without us their bloody sacrifice is incomplete, the author affirms.

Somehow the faith of Abraham is connected to a faithless young seminarian that will not go to the Northwest because the retirement package is too small.

Somehow the courage of Daniel is connected to the effeminate pastor of the First Baptist Church who agrees to leave out the name of Jesus in his prayer at the Rotary Club because it might offend someone.

Somehow the example of Joseph is incomplete; this wise man who ran from the clutches of a solicitous woman when connected to celebrity preachers who can't keep their clothes on.

Why then the boldness of Amos? Why the tears of Jeremiah? Why the tenacity of Nehemiah? Why the prophetic voice of John the Baptist? Why the uncompromising preaching of Peter at Pentecost? Why the martyrdom of Steven? Why the death of Bill Wallace and John and Betty Stam? I say, "Why?"

If all of this sacrifice is followed by generations of laymen who cannot walk away from their cocktail parties, teenagers who attend church and Christ-profaning movies the same week, women who call themselves Christian who for undetected sexual dirtiness kill their babies, and spineless clergymen who would rather be politically correct than a voice crying in the wilderness, churches who honor the rich and carnal and ignore the spiritual and poor I say why, why is it nothing more than wasted sacrifices. How can we avoid invalidating the heroes of the faith? Tragic thought of tragic thoughts, our pitiful,

cowardly, self-serving brand of Christianity can invalidate the heroes of faith. How can we assure their sacrifices will not be wasted?

May I suggest 4 ways:

Their sacrifice will not be wasted if:

I. WE PREACH THE MESSAGE THEY PREACHED

A. They preached that this was God's universe "In the beginning God" was their unfaltering message.

They agreed with Job: "He hangeth the earth on nothing." "The pillars of heaven tremble and are astopished at his reproof." "He divided the sea with His power."

Let me tell you something about the greatness of our God. If you would travel straight up at the speed of light, 186,000 per second, in 2 seconds you would pass the moon, in 8 minutes you would pass the sun, in 5 hours you would come to the edge of our solar system, in 4 years you would come to our nearest star, Alpha Centorie. Traveling the speed of light at 186,000 per second, in 100,000 years you would leave our galaxy, the Milky Way. If you traveled to the galaxy nearest to ours, the Great Nebulai, you would travel 1,500,000 years to get there.

We now have electronic telescopes that can see 4.5 billions light years into space, yet Isaiah 40:12 says our God holds all of that in the palm of His hand. And they knew that a God that big did not need the primordial slime of Darwinianism or amoebic transmutation to make a man.

B. They preached the only God was Jehovah God. They knew Baal, Molech, Mammon were all creations of man's lust. And Paul could say concerning the

strange God's of Greek mythology, "Men of Athens, I perceive that you are too religious as I pass by and find an altar to the unknown God." When Mt. Sinai heard the thunderous "Thou shalt have no other God's before me" the Hebrew literally says, "Thou shalt have no other God's before me, or beside me, or after me."

- C. They also preached this God has only one son and His name is Jesus Christ, I Am, Immanuel, Lord, King of Kings. When I was president of our convention a dear man wrote me and told me the First Baptist Church that he was a member of and his concern. He wrote, "I understand you were in seminary with our pastor. Sir, would you please call him sometime and let him know we would like for him to preach about Jesus sometime."

Preacher, if you can't preach Jesus Christ, only begotten of the Father, only way of salvation, only road to Heaven, then move over for someone who will. 1 John 2:23 "He that denied the son, the same has not the father." You cannot turn your face toward God and your back on Jesus, because they stand as one. For so called religious leaders to meet on theological matters and avoid this truth is ludicrous. Their meetings are nothing more than the empty philosophizing of unregenerate minds, with meaningless conclusions. To leave Jesus out is to leave God out. If we don't preach that, the sacrifices of those that did will be wasted.

- D. They also preached: Judgement sure and certain. At one of the Real Evangelism Conferences sponsored by our ministry Jim Wilson, the son of T.W. Wilson, Billy Graham's closest associate said that when God called him back into Evangelism he resigned FBC of Beaumont, Texas and immediately went to Black Mountain, North Carolina to visit with Billy Graham. He asked with such an obviously successful ministry would he do anything different. He

said, "Yes Jim, I would use the term soul-winning instead of witness and I would preach on Hell more."

I have asked the cooperation of our NAMB to make what God has laid on my heart a reality. Our new church year will begin on Sunday, October 1, 2000. We are calling that day Reality of Hell Sunday and requesting every pastor and every evangelist to preach on the scriptural doctrine of Hell and offer an evangelistic invitation.

We are going to ask every church to report their number of people saved that day. I believe it will surpass the average of 7000 we normally see. It could be our greatest harvest of souls in our history. It is to our shame that it takes seven churches, seven congregations a full week to win one convert.

Let's say together the most memorized verse in the entire Bible. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Because mankind is going to perish without God's love, Jesus came. We must preach it or those before wasted their voices of warning to a hell-bound world. The cross itself was a wasted sacrifice if a church is not primarily involved in evangelism, because the cross says something brutal, something deadly had to happen to keep men out of Hell. The Good News is only good news if it gets there in time.

## II. ALSO, WE MUST HATE THE EVIL THEY HATED

Noah hated the sins of decadence. Moses hated the sin of injustice. Joshua hated the sin of deceit. Habakuk hated the sin of alcohol. John the Baptist hated the sin of adultery. Paul scolded the churches for their immorality, apostasy, and

lethargy. James hated discrimination. Our heritage is one of bold condemnation of evil. If we don't do it, the sacrifice they made to stand strong is wasted.

In a day of anything goes, it is not popular to stand on the wholesome standards of God's Word. With a Southern Baptist President with the morals of an alley cat and a congress with the backbone of Jell-O, we have a difficult but necessary tack before us. Yes, we have a Baptist president – I'm ready for a Christian myself. And the republican spokesman was less than forthright. Why? We later learn he himself is in an ongoing affair. Why did our Congress not stand with conviction: as they should have? What a blight on our American culture that our Congress had no moral backbone during the entire impeachment proceedings.

But note this regarding that body:

29 members of Congress have been accused of spousal abuse,

7 have been arrested for fraud,

19 have been accused of writing bad checks,

117 have bankrupted at least two businesses,

3 have been arrested for assault,

71 have credit reports so bad they can't qualify for a credit card,

14 have been arrested on drug-related charges,

8 have been arrested for shoplifting,

21 are current defendants in lawsuits,

84 were stopped for drunk driving in one recent year.

Of course, remember politics divided is “poly” which means many and “ticks” is a blood-sucking insect.

Dr. Menniger asked, “Whatever happened to sin?” I’ll tell you where it is. It’s buried under the betraying sewage of Judas preachers who kiss Jesus with their two-timing lips while pushing Him into the hands of His enemies.

On the matter of sex outside of marriage...it is wrong. Homosexuality is wrong. If you believe it is natural and acceptable for 2 men to marry each other and 2 women to marry each other, you are not a liberal. You are a fruitcake.

What do Southern Baptists think about “choice?” Choose not to be immoral in the first place. Abortion is human sacrifice to the god of sex. Choose life.

America needs a moral bath and only living water will get us clean. We must not only preach the message they preached and hate the evil they hated we must also:

### III. LOVE THE PEOPLE THEY LOVED

The theme of the New Testament seems to be what Paul said to the church at Corinth that not many wise, not many mighty and not many noble are called, so we also need to be reaching for and caring for the poor and unlovely.

T.B. Maston, my ethics professor at Southwestern Seminary would tell us two or three times a week, “When Southern Baptist turn away from common people, God will turn away from us.” Sadly, I see that happening. This last year I preached a crusade in one of the largest churches in America, a non-denominational church. I noticed people who I rarely see in a Southern Baptist church, but used to see a great deal – not just poor, but people with the scars of a hard life etched into their faces, people with leather skin and hurt in their eyes, and people of every race and tribe. You know – sinners.

I stood at the door of an expensive Christian Life Center of one of our noted churches. Young men walked by and slid their card into a slot that freed the turnstile to let them in. The recreational director simultaneously chasing some Latino teenagers away said to me, "Those darn Mexicans are driving me crazy. They thought we built this for them, I guess."

This wasn't a church. It was a country club with a steeple on top.

I see our churches pride for their big Lottie Moon offering, but have not one black member and many, even today have policies against it. Less than 1% of white, active, church members have ever made an evangelistic visit to an African-American household. If you write a big check for foreign missions, but you won't walk into a black family's house and invite them to your church, just keep your money. You are a hypocrite.

There are no black people, white people, brown people, rich people, poor people, bad people, good people...just one kind of people and that is people for whom Jesus shed His blood.

Behind us are murderers who became missionaries, tax collectors, fishermen, and even harlots. Let's not waste their sacrifices of unlimited love for we must love the lost, the least, and the last.

And last of all the sacrifices of those who paved the way for us will not be wasted if:

#### IV. WE SHOW THE COURAGE THEY SHOWED

Wouldn't it be pleasing to Heaven's courageous multitude if they could see us perfecting their stand for right? Joseph looks down with a smile as he sees teenagers fleeing sexual temptation as he did. Able shouting for joy as a preacher preaches on blood. Noah encouraged by those who teach judgement is coming and



Christ is the ark of safety. Steven encouraged to see many of God's servants willing to take the stones of rejection with courage.

I can see the courageous John the Baptist saying, "Yes, my evangelist friend, I could have extended my life had I ignored the sin of Herod, but before my head hit the bottom of that crude basket, I was summoned by Heaven's choir welcoming me with anthems of joy. So preach the Word without apology, for if you don't, my courage will be incomplete."

And there with the glow of glory like radiant beams of light stands the Savior with hoards of people behind him. The crowd begins to chant, "Tell them Jesus. Tell them."

Jesus says, "These behind me were beheaded, those over here were run through by the sword, these were burned at the stake, and these were ravaged by the lions, and there is Dr. Bill Wallace jabbed to death by bamboo sticks. There is John and Betty Stam. Betty was forced to hold the wooden basket that would catch her husband's head severed by a Chinese soldier and, of course, thousands of modern day martyrs.

Jesus stops a moment glancing back to those whose lives are not perfected without us and he says, "Southern Baptist do you really have the heart to waste all of this – and, by the way, as He holds up nail pierced hands, do you have the heart to waste all of this"

Oh, Southern Baptists we have a Gospel to preach not a society to please. We have a Christ to follow not a challenge to avoid. And we have a torch lighted by the fiery testimonies of believers before us, that must never be extinguished by the darkness of our compromise. We have a cross to carry not a poem to recite.

Those before us gave us a foundation of spiritual granite and we must not build on that wood, hay, and stubble and we shall not if we preach what they preached, hate what they hated, love the people they loved, and show the courage they showed.