

1 Peter 2:4-10 Part C

1Pe 2:4 (NKJV) Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Peter says that what we actually offer to God are “**spiritual sacrifices**”. A “**sacrifice**” is something that always has a cost involved with it. In the Old Testament, every sacrifice made at the temple lost its life. It died. It went to the altar alive, it left the altar dead. Every sacrifice made at the temple died on the altar. The actual Greek word for “**sacrifice**” is “*thysia*” and it denotes two separate things - either the act of offering, or that which is actually offered.¹ Obviously, it can include both at the same time. So, with a sacrifice, we give up something, it costs us something. Generally, the greater the sacrifice, the greater the cost to the one making the sacrifice. The fundamental and core issue with making a sacrifice is that it always entails some kind of personal cost. What we all generally want is to make what is often referred to as a “painless sacrifice”. I.e., it costs us something, but nothing that really bites into what we have or do. It is painless, easy, uncomplicated, and without any kind of major personal costs involved. In [Mark 12:41-44](#) we have the story of the widow who gave her two mites.

Mk 12:41 (NKJV) Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much. ⁴² Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. ⁴³ So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

Obviously, this is not really a story about money, but a story about sacrifice. While everyone else was giving out of “**their abundance**”, it was far from something sacrificial. Two mites is nothing. It would be like us giving someone two pennies. There is nothing that you can do with two pennies. So, the point of the story in [Mark 12](#) is not the amount that was given, but the simple fact that the widow literally “**out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood**”. The sacrifice everyone else was making was not a sacrifice because it was painless to them. They were rich and had more than they could ever use. Listen very carefully. The cross was not painless, and by the same token, when Christ calls on us as genuine believers to lose our life for His sake, it will not be painless. There is no way to get around this – none, zero. So, if what we give to God does not cost us anything, then for all practical purposes it cannot be considered a “**spiritual sacrifice**”. It must be understood that we cannot live the Christian life without having at times to make sacrifices that are “**acceptable to God**”. In my mind, if someone can live out their Christian life and it never require them to make certain sacrifices, then in reality they probably do not understand what it even means to be a Christian.

I think it would be helpful to understand just a little about the sacrificial system of the Old Testament simply because it should have a kind of bearing on our understanding of the word “**sacrifice**”. Under what is called the “Old Covenant”, the priests made two distinct kinds of sacrifices, or what is often called “**offerings**”. There were three major “**atonement sacrifices**” and there were two major “**non-atonement sacrifices**”. When we speak of the atonement, it represents what Jesus Christ did to earn our salvation, and because of His atoning work, we can now have both a relationship with and fellowship with God.

Because of His atoning work, we can be saved, forgiven, and we will spend eternity with God and Christ. The first three atoning sacrifices were the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering. The burnt offering was to cleanse the individual from sin. The sin offering was to symbolically pay the penalty for sin against God, however, repentance was a prerequisite for the sin offering. The guilt offering was to restore the individual to a right standing with God. The two non-atoning sacrifices were the grain offering and the peace offering. The grain offering was to honor God with a worshipful gift and through actual worship, and the peace offering was to be shared with family and friends.² It is often called the “fellowship offering”, a “thank offering”, or a “freewill offering”. In these two non-atoning offerings was the idea of loving God and loving your neighbor. Obviously, there were other types of offerings – drink, memorial, wave.

One very important passage occurs in [Isaiah 53:10-11](#) which says,

Isa 53:10 (NKJV) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. ¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

In other words, Christ became the sacrifice that was laid on the altar. He became the guilt offering by offering His very life. So, in the New Covenant age in which we live, there are no atoning sacrifices simply because Jesus Christ offered Himself as a living sacrifice for our sins. No further offering is needed for salvation. For instance, [Hebrews 7:26-27](#) says,

Heb 7:26 (NKJV) For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

[Hebrews 9:12](#) says,

Heb 9:12 (NKJV) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

The problem that we constantly face is that the culture in which we live is always driving us in the direction of not being sacrificial, of not having to give up anything, but rather to acquire and enjoy as much as we can as often as we can. What many people seem to be looking for is heaven on earth - something that simply does not exist. Then to make matters worse, many Christians simply do not seem to like the idea of making sacrifices that infringe on their life in some way. However, every part of a genuine believer's life - our jobs, our activities, our recreation, our attitudes, our giving, our outlook, and our goals - should be seen as an opportunity to make spiritual sacrifices to God.³

At its deepest level, a sacrifice that any of us ever have to make, or need to make, simply represents an awareness of the incredible need that everyone has to be reconciled to God and to commit ourselves without reservation to God who has provided us with reconciliation, forgiveness, and eternal life. God is worthy of a total commitment on our part to Him and to all that living for Him embraces. What mere religion does is embrace the ritual of religion. Every Sunday there are probably millions of people in churches that simply would prefer not to be there, to be at home, to be doing something else. Whatever

is done for God must be done with the right heart attitude. Listen to what God had to say about religious ritual in [Isaiah 1:13-15](#),

Isa 1:13 (NKJV) **Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies - I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.**
¹⁴ Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.

[Hosea 6:6](#) says,

Hos 6:6 (NKJV) **For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.**

In [Malachi 3:13-14](#), God is speaking to the people and says,

Mal 3:13 (NKJV) **"Your words have been harsh against Me," says the LORD, "yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' ¹⁴ You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the LORD of hosts?**

In v14, the way that it might be stated today would be *"What's the use of serving God, of being committed to Christ. I don't see much in it for me."* If I can say it this way, the person who comes to church, but really does not want to be there, it is just a vain offering to God – what He said in [Isaiah 1](#) was a waste of His time. If my heart is not right before God when I go about my spiritual life, none of it really counts for anything. It has no spiritual value.

Every part of a believer's life should be willing to make sacrifices that are pleasing and acceptable to God. The word **"acceptable"** in [1 Peter 2:5](#) is the Greek word *"euprosdektos"* and it means that whenever we genuinely offer a meaningful sacrifice to God that He receives the sacrifice that we offer to Him with personal pleasure.⁴ It is not that He just accepts it, but that He accepts it with great pleasure, with sincere gratitude. When we learn what truly pleases God and then yield our life to what pleases Him and follow His directions and guidance, all that we do delights Him. Peter defines these sacrifices as being **"spiritual"** simply because we can only give ourselves to God with the Holy Spirit's help.⁵ The heart of spiritual sacrifice is when a believer is willing to offer himself or herself to God to live for His glory in accordance with both His Word and His will for their life.

However, just the inclusion of the word **"acceptable"** means that there are certain things that can be offered to God that are unacceptable, even when done sincerely. There are so many bizarre doctrines and behaviors within the confines of Christianity that it is frightening. We have people being slain in the Spirit, falling backwards on the floor like bowling pins, whole congregations laughing uncontrollably, and people squirming, wiggling and thrashing about on the floor like a woman in labor - as if something deeply spiritual is taking place. I seriously doubt that any of that is acceptable to God. I have heard of congregations doing the "Holy Ghost Hokey Pokey". I have no idea what that is, but I would not see it being on God's acceptable list. We have people who are "tokin the Ghost". They are pretending to inhale the Holy Spirit and get high, as if the Holy Spirit were some kind of invisible spiritual marijuana that they are inhaling.⁶ It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand where this kind of nonsense is derived, but we can be sure that it did not come from God. The point is that just

because something is done in the name of Christ or God does not make it acceptable. Listen to some of the verses in the New Testament that speak of the idea of an “**acceptable sacrifice**”. [Romans 12:1](#) says,

Ro 12:1 (NKJV) **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

[Ephesians 5:2](#),

Eph 5:2 (NKJV) **And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.**

[Hebrews 13:15-16](#) says,

Heb 13:15 (NKJV) **Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.**

Peter also says that we are being built up into a “**spiritual house**”. The “**house**” that Peter is addressing is “**spiritual**” which means that it is “*of the Spirit*”. It is a house that is indwelt by and animated by the work and life of the Holy Spirit operating in believers both individually and corporately. The fruit of the Holy Spirit should be visible in us. The work of the Holy Spirit should be visible in us. The giftings and manifestations of the Holy Spirit should be visible in us. The graces of the Holy Spirit should be visible in us. Kindness should be on our lips. Love should be in our heart. Forgiveness should permeate our lives. Grace should characterize our relationship with other people. My wife and I were talking the other day about someone we know and how they desperately needed to allow the grace of God to operate in their life. It just seems that they are always short and impatient with people, and generally somewhat antagonistic towards those individual who are not in agreement with how they think. It really is a very miserable and depressing way to live. We are not to be like that at all. We are a “**spiritual house**” that is being built to be able to offer up and to make spiritual sacrifices that impact people’s lives.

The obvious goal is to make Christ known to others, and the only way that will ever happen is when we as believers corporately allow the Holy Spirit to actually and personally control how we live. We have to see ourselves as part of God’s “**spiritual house**”, as part of something that is much bigger than we are personally. We cannot just go off and live in our own little world with all of our personal idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. We cannot always be found to be complaining and griping and whining and criticizing and grumbling and protesting everything that simply does not suit us personally. That is being terribly self-centered and self-absorbed and living for ourselves and not for Christ. If we have the “**mind of Christ**” (which we do), then it should cause us and motivate us to live for Christ – and not for ourselves. We cannot live in isolation from one another. It is not that we are just available to God for His use, but we must make ourselves available to one another. The Scripture says that we are “**members of one another**”. [Romans 12:5](#) says,

Ro 12:5 (NKJV) **so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.**

It should be more than obvious to each of us that the world is simply filled with people who are lost. John MacArthur says, and I like the way he puts it, that lost people are people who “*have no access to God*”.⁷ I know that nothing depends on me, but sometimes it seems that we may be the only person who is really praying for someone who is lost. How tragic that we may see them every day or talk to them

every day, but never spend one moment praying for them. It takes time to do all of these things and that is why these kinds of activities would be considered as sacrifices for many. When we get up early to pray for someone, or when we forego doing something we wanted to do in order to pray for people, I think that God would see that as an acceptable sacrifice on our part. It may be that we have to help someone and do it without complaining – and that becomes an acceptable sacrifice to God. The list of meaningful sacrificial things that we often are called on to do is endless, but critically important to a meaningful Christian life.

ENDNOTES

¹ Vine, 985.

² Sonnenberg, ep.

³ Barton, 1109.

⁴ Wuest, 53.

⁵ Barton, 1109.

⁶ MacArthur, *Strange Fire*, cover flap.

⁷ MacArthur, 1 Peter, 107.

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