

## The Altar is Ready, But Where's the Sacrifice?

We are now in the twenty-first century. Christ has already come into the earth realm in the flesh, died for our sins, rose again on the third day, and He now sits at the right hand of God. So, it goes without saying that Christ was the last blood sacrifice that had to be offered for our sins. Nowadays, we (believers) reside under the grace of God, even though we can't dabble between sinful living and righteousness; we have to choose who we will serve. If we double-dutch between doctrines (truth and lies), we run the risk of becoming declared lukewarm by the Lord, and as such, He said that He would spit us out of His mouth. What does it mean for Christ to spit us out of His mouth? We go before God in prayer, and we make our requests known to Him. He said that if we have faith the size of a mustard seed. To get this answer, we must go back to the scriptures.

Matthew 10:33 reads, "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Now, when we hear the word "deny" most of us define that word to mean to vocally or verbally denounce, and while that is true, there is more depth to that definition. Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online defines "deny" as:

- : to say that something is not true
- : to refuse to accept or admit (something)
- : to refuse to give (something) to someone : to prevent someone from having or receiving (something)

Here, we come to understand that to deny something means to say (verbally) that something is not true. It also means to refuse to accept or admit something. Now, we don't have to use our voices to refuse to accept or admit that something is true. We can shake our heads, walk away, demean whomever is bringing the message to us or harden our hearts to the truth. Additionally, to "deny" means to refuse to give something to someone. So, what Christ meant was that we could deny Him by:

- Verbally denouncing Him.
- Refusing to accept or admit our faith in Him.
- Refusing to give our hearts to Him.

One way that we refuse to accept or admit something is by continuing in the sin that we know is wrong because we refuse to accept that it's wrong. In other words, we become double-minded and unstable; therefore, we begin to sample both doctrines in hopes of creating our own versions of the truth.

Nevertheless, if you're reading this article, it's likely because you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and regardless of where you are in your faith-walk, more than likely, you're seeking to get closer to God. But there's something that keeps so many believers from living the lives that Christ has afforded for them through His shed blood, and that something is: Many people create altars in their hearts, but they aren't sacrificing to the Lord on those altars. Instead, they are offering sacrifices to their own lusts, all the while, chanting the Lord's Name in vain. How so? Anytime we ask God for

something, God answers us with a seed. He gives us a seed, and what He expects of us is that we go out and multiply that seed. By doing so, we are declared righteous and faithful servants, and it is then and only then that we get to enter the peace of the Lord. But there's a problem: Most believers cover themselves in their seeds. Instead of taking what God has given them and offering it as a sacrifice in their hearts, they bury their seeds in their bellies. For example, I've come across a lot of believers who will proudly boast that God has given them a business to start or a book to write, but anytime I ask the aspiring sower why he or she has not obeyed, and their response is almost always I'm waiting to get the funds for start-up.

One day, the Lord said to me that they weren't waiting for the funds; He'd already answered them through a seed, but they'd taken that seed and consumed it. How so? Oftentimes, when we ask God for something, we receive surprise checks in the mail or sudden promotions on our jobs, and while this can be exciting, two voices begin to play in our hearts. One voice says that we can take that money and finally start those businesses or write those books, but as exciting as it sounded when we were broke, it suddenly sounds intimidating when we have the funds to do it. That's because of the second voice that we hear. That voice comes from the enemy, and his goal is to uproot the seed. What does he say to the believer? He reminds them of everything they've been wanting to do and everywhere they've been wanting to go, and this is truly exciting. The enemy says You only live once. Go out and enjoy yourself, and most people hearken to his voice instead of the voice of the Lord. So, the believer takes the money and looks for any and every way to spend it. The way poverty work is: A person in poverty is accustomed to earning and living with a certain amount of money, and they've gotten comfortable in their lifestyles. But when extra funds come in, the poverty-stalked believer loses his or her peace, and they won't rest until they spend the money back down to what they're accustomed to having. Of course, after spending most of their seed, most believers say they wished they'd written those books or started those businesses that God has given them. The altar was ready, but the sacrifice was nowhere to be found.

The same goes in our relationships. Oftentimes, married couples pray and ask God to restore their marriages and their love and respect for one another, but they refuse to make the necessary sacrifices. These sacrifices often include renouncing old mindsets, forgiving one another, listening to the spouses, and consulting with God whenever opposition arises. Instead, they consult their flesh and speak of what they feel instead of what God says. The key to ending strife in marriage is in Ephesians 5:33: *Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

Husbands refuse to love their wives as they love themselves; therefore, they put their own desires, lusts and needs before their wives' requests. Wives refuse to reverence their husbands because the world has taught them that by doing so, they are weak women who will soon come to regret their decisions to honor their husbands.

The altar is there, but the sacrifice isn't.

Singles ask God to send their spouses to them, but they refuse to put away their old mindsets as it relates to the opposite sex, so most believers continue to date the way the world does. After fornicating, they apologize to God, but they do not repent because they aren't truly sorry nor are they willing to turn away from their sins. Their apologies are nothing more than tools they attempt to use to pacify the Most High God, but of course, this does not work because God looks at the heart of man to see which way it's turned. In short, most believing singles refuse to give up their sinful ways, and to add insult to their immoral ways, they began to use their beliefs as bait to draw in the men and women they believe are better suited for themselves. They become religious speakers of the truth, but their lives reflect what's really in their hearts. They draw near God with their mouths, but their hearts are far from Him. In other words, the altar is prepared, but the sacrifice isn't ready. What sacrifice should a single and waiting Christian give? Romans 12:1-2 answers this question for us: *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. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

The sacrifice that God requires is that we present our bodies in holiness to Him, sacrificing the lustful desires of the flesh, and our oftentimes almost insatiable desire to get married in a hurry. Additionally, we are not to be conformed to this world; meaning, we are to put away worldly practices such as casual dating, kissing and fornicating. We are royalty, and as royalty, there is nothing casual about us. Again, the altar is erected, but the sacrifice is nowhere to be found.

Again, anytime we ask God for something, He hands us a seed, but it is what we do with that seed that determines what grows up for us. If we ask God for a better marriage, our seed is to become better people, sacrificing the very ways that threatened our marriages anyway. If we ask God to send our spouses to us, our seed is that we start acting, behaving and thinking as spouses today. We do this by remaining faithful to the "one" person God will send, as opposed to dating around and attempting to find our own spouses. If we ask God to give us better jobs, our seed may be financial because we are attempting to reap a financial blessing. One apple seed grows a tree of many apples, just as a financial seed will grow better opportunities and greater wealth. God may tell us to leave the cities or the states we're living in, take what we have and start a life somewhere else. Now, this is intimidating, to say the least, because we are being required to step out on absolute faith and go to a place where we likely don't know anyone and start off their without a job or any prospect for a job. The point is: Anytime we ask God for something, we erect an altar, God hands us a seed, but we can't expect a harvest on a seed that we've consumed.

Think about Cain and Abel. Cain's offering to God was not a sacrifice; meaning, it didn't hurt or bother

him to give it. It wasn't given in love; instead, it was a religious offering, and that's why God had no respect for his offering. Abel offered the fat from some of the firstborn of his flock. Abel likely loved those animals, but his love for God was greater, and he demonstrated this by sacrificing those animals and offering them up to God.

Nowadays, many believers have Cain's heart because they approach God in the very same manner that Cain approached God. That's because whenever most believers hear the story of Cain and Abel, they think that Cain's first sin was to murder his brother, but Cain's first sin was that he approached God in a disrespectful way by offering something other than a sacrifice. A sacrifice is anything that we love and are willing to do without. For example, the Lord may tell us to sacrifice our familiar (family and friends) relationships so that we won't be hindered by familiarity, but instead, we can go out as new creatures and preach the gospel without hindrance. Most people aren't willing to make that sacrifice, and to those people, the Lord says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). Some people may be required to sacrifice life as they know it, giving up jobs, careers and material possessions to go out and preach the gospel. Most people aren't willing to make such a sacrifice, and to those people, the Lord says, "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38). To take up one's cross means to sacrifice one's own desires and the riches of this world to go out and preach the gospel of truth. When the young ruler approached the Lord, Christ extended this same offer to him. He told the young ruler to go away, sell everything he had, to take up his cross and to follow Him. Like most of the world today, the young ruler was not willing to make such a sacrifice.

You get on your knees before the Lord in prayer, and your heart is filled with love for Him, but does your love for Him supersede your love for yourself, the people in your life, your lifestyle or the possession in your life? If not, those things, people and lifestyles possess you, and therefore, they have lorded themselves over you. The evidence of your love for God is reflected in what you are willing to sacrifice for Him. Abraham was ready to sacrifice his own son because his love for God was greater than his love for Isaac, and for this reason, Abraham was blessed to keep his son and God made him a father of many nations. Oftentimes, God will test you just to see who's the god of your life. Is it Him as you claim, or is it money, your girlfriend, your boyfriend, your spouse, your friends, your children, your belly or yourself? Anytime the Lord notices an idol, He will show you that idol by requesting that you sacrifice it for Him. Now, He's not going to ask you to kill someone, but He may ask you to disassociate from that person. If you do what He asks of you, you will have first repented of your idolatrous relationship with that person before walking away, and He will bless you for your sacrifice. If you do not do what He asks of you, you in turn, deny Him before man, and therefore He will deny you before the Father. That's because you gave your heart to that person, and you tried to give what was left of your heart to Him; meaning, you made an idol of that person, but you attempted to pacify the Lord with a portion of your heart. Think of it this way: What if you were married, and your spouse was having an affair? How would you feel? What if your spouse came home at night and offered you

whatever energy he or she had left, because he or she'd spent their willful energy on someone else, but for you, they are simply laying their bodies down to pacify you. In other words, they won't get any pleasure from their coming together with you because they spent themselves with someone else? That's how God feels when we attempt to offer Him a piece of a heart that took pleasure in serving Satan.

Ask God for whatever it is that you want, but look for the seed to manifest in your life, and then, sow that seed. If you want to be married, start being faithful to your spouse now, and more than that, you must be faithful to God first. If you want a financial breakthrough, look for the seed that God will give to you, but do NOT consume it! Instead, take that seed and sow it wherever God tells you to sow it. Think of it this way: If you purchased land for \$25,000 and someone paid you \$40,000 to purchase that land from you, would you take that \$40,000 and live off of it, or would you take it and invest it into some more property so you could get an even greater return? If you're a wise businessman, you'll take that \$40,000 and buy more land. You'd then sell it for a greater profit, and once you got that profit, you'd invest it again and again until you finally started reaping the kind of money that you want to reap. In other words, if a \$500 check comes in the mail, take it and sow it wherever God tells you to sow it. Once you reap the harvest from that seed, go and sow the seeds from that harvest. Do this until you reap whatever it is that you were praying for. Pray, receive the seed and sow it. Don't end up standing in front of an altar, covered in your seed, but without a sacrifice!