

## THE REWARDS OF SACRIFICE

**"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." – Rom. 12:1.**

NOWHERE IN THE SCRIPTURES are we commanded by the Lord to sacrifice our earthly rights and privileges. The Divine commands end at the line of justice. In other words, justice and righteousness are one and the same thing. Sacrifice, self-denial, taking up the cross to follow Jesus, are all propositions away beyond the Divine Law. The Law Covenant proffered a perpetuation of human life to all who would fulfil its requirements. None of the Jews, with whom that Covenant was made, were able to fulfil those requirements, except the One who came from above and for whom was provided a perfect human body, which enabled Him to keep the requirements of the Law Covenant, entitling Him, therefore, to everlasting earthly life.

The New Law Covenant, under the antitypical Mediator, will offer the same reward of everlasting human perfection to all who will fulfil its requirements. Its superiority over the first Law Covenant will consist in its having a better Mediator, capable of helping mankind fully out of condemnation, death and weakness and authorized so to do because of the merit of His "better sacrifices." [R4835 : page 181]

But while Jesus, born under the Law, was obligated to the conditions of that Covenant and fulfilled them and through them had a right to everlasting earthly life, He did more. He sacrificed that earthly life – laid it down – permitted sinful men to take it from Him without resistance, although He had the power to call for legions of angels for protection. This was His sacrifice. He did not sacrifice sinful weaknesses, for He had none. He sacrificed perfect life and all His legal rights and privileges. His reward for so doing was exaltation from the human nature to the divine nature – far above that of angels,

principalities and powers. (Eph. 1:21.) Thus exalted He has the human rights (which He never forfeited) to give Adam and his race – their ransom-price. These He will give to them in the end of this Age, applying them to the sealing of the New Law Covenant, under which Israel and all mankind may be restored to all that was lost through the first man's disobedience. Meantime, the glorified Redeemer uses that sacrificial merit (which He intends to give eventually to the world) to cover (imputatively) the blemishes of those of the household of faith who may hear the Divine call (and accept the same) to follow in the footsteps of Jesus – to sacrifice and suffer with Him in the flesh, that they may be glorified and reign with Him on the spirit plane beyond the veil.

### **SIN-OFFERING SACRIFICES ACCEPTABLE DURING THE GOSPEL AGE ONLY**

Throughout this Gospel Age the Law Covenant has continued upon the Jews only, the remainder of the world being without any Covenant with God and waiting for the "times of restitution" under the New Law Covenant of the future. (Acts 3:19-21; Jer. 31:31-34.) It is during this time (the Gospel Age) that God draws and calls a certain loyal class and gives them an opportunity of sharing with their Redeemer in sacrificial death. The faithful will be counted His members or His Bride or joint-heirs in His Kingdom of glory and honor and immortality. All men, in proportion as they know the Divine will (what is just, from the Divine standpoint), are correspondingly in duty bound to fulfil that righteous requirement or Law of God to the extent of ability. But **[R4836 : page 181]** those desirous of following in the footsteps of Jesus are shown what they can do more than justice; but they are not commanded to do more. All sacrificing is a privilege, not a duty, not a command. In harmony with this, St. Paul writes, not commandingly, but entreatingly, "I beseech you, brethren,...present your bodies living sacrifices." He did not command this. To have made it a command would at once prevent the opportunity of sacrifice. What

we sacrifice is something that is not commanded. Whatever is commanded of God is obligation and not sacrifice.

The Ancient Worthies presented their bodies, laid down their lives, renouncing earthly rights, but they did not sacrifice. Why? Because it is one thing to kill and another to have the slain creature accepted of God as a sacrifice. God did not call for human sacrifices prior to Jesus' sacrifice of Himself. God was unwilling to accept imperfect, blemished creatures at His altar. They might lay down their lives, but He would not count them sacrifices. Jesus was accepted as a sacrifice because He was perfect and His followers, since Pentecost, have been acceptable as sacrifices, because they are perfect – made so by the Redeemer's imputation to them of a sufficiency of His merit to compensate their blemishes.

Thus this Gospel Age is called the "acceptable day (or time) of the Lord," because, during this Gospel Age God is willing to accept a predestinated number as joint-sacrificers with Jesus. But as soon as that predestinated number shall have been completed the acceptable time will immediately end. No more presentations will be accepted as sacrifices – the antitypical Day of Atonement will have ended.

But suppose that some should present themselves after the close of the acceptable time; what would be their status and God's dealing with them?

Since God is unchangeable, we must assume that He would always be pleased to have His creatures devote their lives wholly and unreservedly to the doing of His will, as He was pleased with the faithfulness of the Ancient Worthies to lay down their lives before a Covenant of sacrifice was in force. We may reason that as God has promised human perfection to those Ancient Worthies who laid down their lives, He would be willing similarly to reward any who might follow the same course after the completion of the Church – after the ending of the acceptable time of sacrifice.

Quite likely, therefore, there will be some in the end of this Age who, although faithful unto death, will not have been begotten of the Holy Spirit and not attain the spirit plane of being in the resurrection, but who will come forth members of the same class as the Ancient Worthies, who were developed before this Age began.

### **THE PRESENTATION OF ONESELF ALWAYS A REASONABLE SERVICE**

In view of these facts our advice to all who love the Lord and who desire to be in complete fellowship with Him is the same message that has gone forth throughout this Age – "We beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies living sacrifices." We cannot now assure them that, after presenting themselves as sacrifices, God will accept them as such and grant them spirit-begetting to a new nature; but we can assure them that it will be their reasonable service and that God always gives large rewards to those who manifest their faith and loyalty towards Him and His cause. We can tell them, too, that, to our understanding, the Scriptures teach that the Ancient Worthy class (of which they may be a part if they fail to be accepted to the new nature) will be highly honored of God, perfect on the human plane and made "princes in all the earth." We can assure them that, to our understanding, these princes will have a glorious precedence over the remainder of mankind as the special representatives of the invisible Messiah class for a thousand years. We can assure them that, to our understanding, after participating in that glorious work, these princes will be uplifted at the close of the Millennium to the spirit plane of being – as part of the antitypical Levites.

Since none can know when the elect number will be fully completed all should be alike anxious to lay down their lives in the service of God and of His Truth. To say that we would refuse to serve because any uncertainty would prevail in our minds respecting the character of our reward would be to show our unworthiness of any favor of God, for, to be acceptable to Him, our service must not be

rendered to obtain the reward, but to serve righteousness and to please God! "I delight to do Thy will, O God" – everything written in the Book. Hence at Memorial season all of the consecrated should manifest their love, loyalty, obedience, faithfulness, by symbolizing the Redeemer's death and symbolizing also their own desire to share in the sufferings of Christ as parts of the "broken loaf" and as participators in the cup of His suffering.

As to how much we should expect for our children is [R4836 : page 182] another matter. It is not for us to say at how early an age the children might demonstrate loyalty to God and to the Truth in a manner pleasing and acceptable to God. Those who are parents should, in all reasonable ways, by example and precept, illustrate and exemplify their appreciation of the privilege of the Lord's service – even unto death. Furthermore, their children should be instructed weekly and, if possible, *daily*, in respect to the different features of the Truth, that they may receive as much as possible. God knows whether a child of even tender years and short mental and heart development might not present himself in an acceptable manner. Parents, therefore, should do their best by their children and leave the results with the Lord, with full satisfaction with whatever may be His wise, just and loving decision for them, either on the earthly or on the heavenly plane. We are to remember, however, that none can enter either of these planes of instantaneous perfection in the resurrection unless his trial be finished successfully in the present life and by passing into death. The remainder of mankind, however, as already shown, will then have glorious opportunities and possibilities before them.

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