

Series: Questions

Title: For What Purpose Do You Sacrifice?

Text: Isaiah 1: 10-18

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When a sinner engages in religious exercises without faith in Christ it is idolatry to God. Our subject is “For What Purpose Do You Sacrifice?” That is a variation of the next question God asks a sinner in our questions series in verse 11.

Isaiah 1: 10: Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 11: To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12: When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13: Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14: Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. 15: And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Our text begins with Isaiah saying, “*Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law [word] of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.*”

This is the word of the LORD. He address “*the rulers*”—the religious and civil leaders. And he addresses “*the people.*” He calls them all Sodom and Gomorrah. Those were the cities full of the evil God hates—sodomy/homosexuality. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in judgment with fire from heaven. Is the LORD speaking to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah? No. He is speaking to the children of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Is 1: 1) So were the children of Judah guilty of homosexuality like Sodom and Gomorrah? It was worse than that! So was it base immorality? Oh no.

A VERY RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

Notice the children of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were a very religious people. They made a “*multitude of sacrifices*” unto God, offering exactly what God told them to offer. They did this in God’s house; God said they “*tread my courts.*” They observed “*new moons and Sabbaths.*” They “*called assemblies.*” And they had the “*solemn meeting.*” They observed “*appointed feasts.*” They were continually spreading forth their hands, and making “*many prayers.*”

Those sacrifices and those sabbath days were commanded by God. That was God’s ordained means of worship for that day. When they heard Isaiah declare God’s question, “*When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*” they would have answered, “You required it God.” But did God require what they were doing?

Notice, God hated what the children of Judah and Jerusalem were doing. God said “*I am full of the burnt offerings and I delight not in the blood of bullocks...Bring no more vain oblations*” In the Targum these were translated “*sacrifices of robbery.*” God said, “*Incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*”

In Isaiah 66, God tells us even more about how God regarded their offerings.

Isaiah 66: 3: He that killeth an ox *is as if* he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, *as if he offered* swine's blood [God forbid a pig's blood be offered]; he that burneth incense, *as if* he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. 4: I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not.

They offered exactly what God commanded. But while God accepted some, God rejected most. Why? God did not look on the outward form but God looked on their hearts and God knew what their purpose was. God knew the motive of their heart. And God hated it. God knew they were not doing what God required. Therefore, concerning all their sacrifices and observances, God hated it.

Like as those sacrifices and observances of days was God's means of public worship in their day, God has ordained means of worship today. We make a public confession of faith in Christ in believer's baptism. Then we become a member of a local church. Continually, we attend the preaching of the gospel. We observe the Lord's Table. Sacrificially, God commands us to support the ministry, needy brethren, and missionaries with our money and time. We continue in prayer and good works.

Imagine, if I stood up, as Isaiah did, and said, God says, "*I am full of your profession and your baptism. I delight not in your church membership. Your continual attendance under the gospel is an abomination unto me. Your observance of the Lord's Table, I cannot, away with it, my soul hateth. Your support of the ministry, needy brethren and missionaries is a vain sacrifice of robbery to me. God says when you spread forth your hands to make many prayers I will not hear you, I will hide my eyes from you, you are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear you and your practices.*"

Brethren, if you and I are doing what the children of Judah were doing then that is exactly what God says. What made God say those things to the children of Judah? What makes God say those things to a person in our day?

THE FIRST QUESTION

Isaiah 1: 11: To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD

The word "*purpose*" tells us this has to do with their heart's motive for offering their sacrifices and observing the sabbath days and new moons.

In Isaiah's day, their purpose was to try to make satisfaction to God for their sins and earn God's favor by their act of sacrificing and observing days. Today, multitudes have the same purpose. They join a church, are baptized, attend church services, and do all manner of religious activity with the motive of making satisfaction to God for their sins and earning God's favor by their religious acts.

A friend told me he was looking for a church. I asked why. He said, "It's time I made up for the first half of my life not going to church." You would be surprised how many are performing outward religious acts trying to make up with God.

Brethren, as God said in Isaiah 66, if we engage in God's ordained means of public worship with the purpose of attempting to make satisfaction to God for our sins "*it is as if we slew a man; it is as if we blessed an idol. It is sinful man choosing his own ways and his soul delighting in his abominations.*" Religious acts without

Christ is damning! A mere outward form of religion which is not produced by Christ motivating us in heart is vain and damning!

The offense before God in Isaiah's day, is the same today, they did not believe on God's Son. Sinners then and now are saved only through faith in Christ.

John 14: 6: Jesus saith to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

1 John 5: 10: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Acts 4: 12: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

So why did God command they bring those sacrifices? It all typified Christ. When they came to the high priest and he burnt the offering with the sweet-smelling fat, true believers beheld the coming Christ who "*loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*" (Eph 5: 2)

When the high priest burned incense the true believer watched the smoke ascend up and with the eye of faith beheld Christ, in Spirit, making "*intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" (Rom 8: 26)

When the true believer rested from all physical labor on the sabbath days, through faith he beheld Christ our Sabbath sit down at God's right hand when the work of redemption was accomplished and he knew his true, spiritual Sabbath-rest was Christ, "*For he that is entered into [Christ our] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*" (Heb 4: 10)

At the appointed feast called Passover, as the true believer ate the lamb, he beheld Christ our Passover, the Firstborn Son of God, who died in place of his people. And as the head of the house applied the blood to the door post of the house he was reminded of how his Everlasting Father—Christ the Head of the house—applied his blood to the door of his heart. So the true believer rejoiced that when God sees Christ's blood he passes over us without pouring out judgment because "*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*" (1 Cor 5: 7)

In our day, in God's means of worship, the true believer beholds Christ the same as believers of old. In believers baptism when we behold a brother go under water and arise again the believer beholds Christ in whom our old body of sin was crucified and buried and in whom we arose again to newness of life.

Romans 6: 3: Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized [unto] his death? 4: Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Those born again of God unite with the local church because Christ is the Head and his church is his body and by God's grace, "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*" (1 Cor 12: 27)

In our day, we do not offer those sacrifices or observe sabbath days. Today God's means of worship is for believers to hear Christ preached from those types, so that by his Spirit we worship and rejoice that "*ye are complete in him, ...[who blotted] out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; [we rejoice that God says] Let no man therefore judge*

you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow [or type] of things to come; but the body [the fulfillment] is of Christ.” (Col 2: 10, 14-17)

At the Lord’s Table, true believers show forth the Lords’ death till he come remembering Christ’s broken body and shed blood which he gave to make us the righteousness of God in him.

As believers give sacrificially to help one another, and as we promote the gospel that others may hear, we behold “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*” (2 Cor 8: 9)

We do not much notice our own works. But when we behold a fellow believer do a good work “*we thank God who works his will in his people to do that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ our Lord and we give him all the glory.*” (Heb 13: 21)

So today, the same as then, there were means that God ordained. But believers only use the means to worship Christ. We do not worship the means or expect to be saved by the means.

In the tabernacle the floor was made of silver from the redemption money taken up when they redeemed their firstborn. So when the priests were washed it was a picture of Christ washing us in his blood and making us priests unto God. Then when they entered the tabernacle, all their service was performed on that foundation of redemption silver. It pictured believers serving God on the foundation of Christ our Redemption already accomplished. We add nothing to the finished work of Christ!

THE SECOND QUESTION

Isaiah 1: 12: When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

Then and now vainly religious men would answer this question, saying, “God, you required we come to you by this means.” But God is asking “*Who hath required satisfaction be made at your hand in my courts?*” God never said satisfaction could be made by a sinner’s hand offering sacrifices.

Hebrews 10:1: For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect...4: For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The same is true in our day. Satisfaction to God is not made by our will or by our works: not by our decision for Christ, not by being baptize or going to church. Satisfaction to God’s broken law is made one way—by God’s will fulfilled by Christ for those God sanctified in him before the world was made.

Hebrews 10: 5: Wherefore when [Christ] cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6: In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. [no satisfaction] 7: Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God...9...He taketh away the first [covenant of works], that he may establish the second [everlasting covenant of grace.] 10: By the which will, [by God’s will], we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. [satisfaction is by God’s will, fulfilled by Christ’s works, not by our will and our works] 11: And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13: From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

God began in our text by calling the children of Judah Sodom and Gomorrah. That tells us that physical sodomy—homosexuality—is symbolic of sinners attempting to make satisfaction to God themselves by their will and their works. How so? A man and a man cannot produce fruit/children. In verse 10 you have “*the rulers and the people*” (men with men) which could never produce the fruit of satisfaction to God.

It is interesting we come to this passage and God laid this message on my heart the day after Billy Graham died. He was the prominent preacher in the past 100 years preaching that satisfaction is made by the sinner’s will making himself be born again and accepting Jesus as his personal savior.” He also taught that believers are made progressively holier by a co-effort between God and their law-keeping. Such preaching has resulted in a self-righteous nation which God has turned over to physical sodomy in judgment due to preachers preaching salvation by the will and works of sinners. That’s right, the legalization of physical sodomy in our day is God’s judgment. The fault lies squarely on the shoulder of will-works preachers just as it did in our passage.

Everyone receiving this please understand: God never required any sinner to even attempt to make satisfaction for our sins. Christ alone made satisfaction to God and has perfected forever all them that God sanctified in him.

FOR THE WILL-WORKER

Isaiah 1: 16: Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17: Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

If a sinner is trying to save himself by his will and his works what does God command him to do? God says, “*Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil.*”

This is faith in Christ and repentance from the evil of trying to save yourself by your will and your works. Those who are washed in regeneration in the blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit shall obey this command by believing on Christ. By God’s irresistible grace, they will put away the evil of attempting to make satisfaction by their will and their works. And Christ shall wash them white as snow, “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*”

The second thing God commands is love toward brethren and toward all men—“*Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*” Along with faith in Christ, the Spirit of God gives a heart of love in which Christ teaches us to do what is righteous to our brethren and to all men. We love our brethren and our friends, first and foremost, by bringing our friends with us to hear the gospel of Christ. By Christ our “*judgment*” is settled; by Christ sinners are “*relieved from the oppression*” of law and legal preachers; by Christ the helpless sinner like “*the fatherless and widow*” are defended in providence in justice. Also, we love by doing these things toward our brethren and all men.

This is what God requires, this is the heart of true worshippers, to believe on Christ who established the law for his people and to love one another. Both are done as we are constrained or motivated by the love of Christ for us. Both are the gift of God, both are worked in us by the Spirit of Christ and both fulfill the purpose of the believer’s heart. “For what purpose” do we do these things? To give Christ all the glory!

Amen!