

Lesson 38
The Sacrifice of Faith
Hebrews 11:24-27

One Sunday morning I said to my congregation,

Has it occurred to you recently that local church needs you? You say, “How does the local church need me? Surely the pastor must mean that the local church needs my money for the new building.” It is true that many local churches need money to build a building, but I am talking about people, not inanimate objects. After all, people matter more than things. The church needs you as a person and as a vital part of this local body of believers. God blesses the local church in so many ways, and God is at work in the church, but with blessing comes problems. John Knox used to say that when God begins to build His Church, the devil always builds a chapel close by. The church cannot go forward without tribulation and testing, but when these testings come we see the cream come to the top and leadership and dedicated people rally to meet the need. God often brings a church to an hour of crisis and we all need one another as never before. We need to be concerned for one another, help one another and communicate with one another. We all must seek to find and use our spiritual gifts and put them to work in the assembly of believers. We must stop looking at men and go to Christ for supernatural help.

The two things any local church needs are sacrifice and a durable faith. It needs a faith in the invisible God, which expects and anticipates Him to do the impossible, and it needs a display of personal sacrifice on the part of the people to accomplish the task that God has set before it. The church can do it; it must do it; it shall do it, and God will receive the glory!

In the life of Moses we see the characteristics of sacrifice and durability. Moses was a remarkable person and one of the greatest men ever to live upon this earth. He was a great man because he had great faith in the invisible God. He made great sacrifices and endured because he understood and practiced the “by faith” way of life.

THE DYNAMIC OF SACRIFICE - Hebrews 11:24-26

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter...” -- Moses, when he was 40 years old, turned away from being royalty in Pharaoh’s court to serve the one, true and living God. Moses could have been one of the leading men of all Egypt and a possible candidate to the throne of Egypt to become a pharaoh. By faith, however, Moses rejected personal prestige, splendor and human glory because he came to understand that the only thing in life worth living for is commitment and service to God.

Moses had to turn from prestige to follow God, and we today must turn from prestige and position to serve Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before

My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33).

Moses also had to turn away from his stepmother, Pharaoh’s daughter, to follow Christ. Surely Moses had great love for his mother by adoption, but he could not serve God without leaving all in Egypt.

“Do not think that I am come to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against His father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:34-37).

Prestige, position and glory may be ours in God’s providence, but these things must not obsess our thinking. Is our love for God greater than our commitment to men? God will not allow anything to be first above Him in a believer’s life. God must and will have first place in every believer’s heart!

“...choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...” -- Moses had to make a deliberate, purposeful choice to follow the one, true and living God. By faith he made a determined act of his will to turn from sin to God. This was not an impetuous decision of a youth but came from an educated and wise man of 40.

Moses, a man of royalty, chose to identify himself with the people of God. The Israelites at this time were poor, enslaved people who were despised by the Egyptians. The Israelites were the scum of the earth in Egypt, but Moses knew that to identify himself with God was to identify himself with the people of God. It took great humility for Moses to cast his lot with this ragged and torn mob of slaves. At great sacrifice to himself, Moses traded prestige, wealth, fame and affluence for the people of God. He was willing to make any and every sacrifice for God’s people because God had put such a great love in his heart for them.

Why did Moses make this sacrifice? Because he believed God’s promise that Israel would be delivered out of Egypt. By faith, he made great sacrifices to lead the people of God because people matter more than things.

Moses turned from wealth to serve God and so must we if we are to be effective for God. ***“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon (riches)”*** (Matt. 6:24). If in God’s providence He gives you wealth, praise God for it and use it for His glory, but God will never allow you to put your wealth above Him. Are you sharing your wealth out of great concern for others?

“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to

share ...” (1 Tim 6:17-18).

Are you willing to identify yourself with the people of God - all the people of God? Are you a very sophisticated Christian who does not want to fellowship with other Christians who are in another social class or of another race? Are you willing to sacrifice for the people of God? Have the love of money and worldly pursuits kept you from being concerned about the needs of God's people? We all must choose between sin and holiness, between the world and Christ and between fellowship with the children of God and friendship with the children of the devil.

“...considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt...” -- The word “Christ” in the Greek is equivalent of “Messiah.” Moses was not only committed to God and God's people but also to the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. When he turned from Egypt (the world), he turned to the Messianic program of the Jews and looked forward to the Messiah who would come. It is more important to suffer for Christ and with His people than to have all the riches of the world! Why?

“...for he was looking to the reward.” -- The fleeting treasures of Egypt could not capture Moses' affections for he looked forward to an eternal inheritance. At the end of his persevering faith was the reward of eternal life, heaven, the New Jerusalem, the City of God.

Only as one uses the power of the world to come can he put down the power of this present world!

THE DURABILITY OF FAITH - Hebrews 11:27

“By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king...” -- This refers to the early stages of the exodus in which Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. This does not refer to the second 40 years of Moses' life where he fled in fear from Pharaoh's face to Midian (Exodus 2:14, 15). Surely this period of Moses' life was bathed in faith, because for 40 years he was on the shelf and being trained in patience to do a great work for God. Sometimes it takes more faith to wait on God than it does to actively serve Him. This refers to the exodus out of Egypt and Moses' fearlessness before Pharaoh. Moses faced Pharaoh many times (ten times to be exact) saying, “Let my people go!” and each time Pharaoh refused. Pharaoh threatened Moses' life but God was with Moses and protected him.

Moses had reason to fear, but a powerful pharaoh, a mighty army and human threats could not shake him. By faith, Moses overcame human fears and God did a mighty work through him.

“...for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.” -- Moses was persistent. He never gave up. Each time Pharaoh refused to let Israel go, Moses sprung back and commanded that God's word be obeyed. Moses did not give up; he persevered; he pushed on. When the going got rough, he pushed on even harder! Why? Because he had faith in the invisible God. The real God, Whom he could not see, was real to him through the avenue of faith. God is real even though we cannot see Him with the naked eye, but by faith God begins to work supernaturally in our experience.

APPLICATION TO CHRISTIANS

Sacrifice. We as Christians must gain a spirit of sacrifice - of self, of time, of money - that the work of Christ might go on. What is the work of Christ? It is people. God is interested in His people and we must all make sacrifices that we may minister to the people of God. Grace Church needs every member to sacrifice for this body of believers that we might see God work a mighty work in our midst. We must work together, pray together, pull together and communicate with one another. How can we do this? By faith! By faith we will sacrifice to see this work go forward for God's glory.

What a joy it was to my heart recently when I was talking with a woman member of Grace Church on the phone. She said, "Dr. Arnold, what can I do for Grace Church? I will do anything that will help our church grow together in love and unity that we may do God's will."

Durability. As we face the problems of a growing church, we must endure, trusting the unseen God to work supernaturally in our midst. We must pray for our leaders and for one another. When problems come or someone in the church disappoints us, we must endure and believe God to do the impossible. We must never give up and we must go forward, knowing that God goes before us.

I thank God for my athletic background for I learned many lessons there that I can apply to my Christian life. To be a good athlete one can never give up and to be a mature Christian one can never quit. Many a coach has told me, "Quitters never win and winners never quit!" We must never quit in our spiritual life or we will never win the spiritual race.

CONCLUSION

For you without Christ, God is a real person. He is the unseen God who can only be known through faith. How can you know Him? God can be known through the person of Jesus Christ, for Christ came to reveal the Heavenly Father to men. Christ promises that all who come to Him, accepting His death for sin and acknowledging Him as Lord, will come to know the invisible God. Only Christ can bring you to an understanding of God, so that God will work for you in supernatural ways.