

A Table Of Many Sacrifices

Word studies are interesting; one can learn a lot from studying words. Most of us believe that we know the meaning of most words but have you ever tried to understand some of the terminology in a legal contract? Have you ever sat in a witness chair and been questioned by an attorney? It doesn't take long until you find yourself entangled in questions and words that one would think would be simple to understand only to find out that the words and the questions are filled with trap doors. There were times when Jesus found Himself confronted by such lawyers; but, He was able to see through and beyond the traps and never failed to turn the tables on His adversaries.

One cannot do a good word study without reading a dictionary. Bible students use lexicons that are books that define Greek words that have been translated into the English language that most of us read in our Bibles. Contrary to popular opinion, neither of these books is nearly as dry or boring as one may have been led to believe. For example, consider the word "sacrifice."

The dictionary says it can be either a noun or a verb. When it is used as a noun, it refers to whatever "thing" is sacrificed. In the Bible it usually refers to an animal. When it is used as a verb, it refers to whatever is involved in making the sacrifice. As this word pertains to the sacrifice made by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the word also refers to His suffering the loss of something, to His giving up something. If one were to answer the

question, "What was it that He lost or gave up?" the answer that would most commonly be given, I suppose, is "His life." He suffered the loss of His life; He gave up His life. That answer would not be wrong but it would not exhaust describing all that He lost in His sacrifice.

Our Lord referred to the loss of His life when he spoke to His Apostles on the night of His betrayal. Referring to the "bread," He said, *"This is my body which is given for you."*¹ Then, referring to the "cup," He said, *"This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you."*² Apostle Paul recounted these words in *1 Corinthians 11:23*. He said that he had *"received of the Lord that which also [he, Paul] delivered unto [them, the Corinthian church]"* and proceeded to rehearse the events of the night that Jesus ate the Passover meal with His Apostles before His betrayal. Then recalling the words of Jesus, Paul concluded in *verse 26*, *"For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come."*

God forbid that anyone ever dare to try to eliminate or minimize the sacrifice of Jesus' life for our sins by ignoring His death for us. But was His death on the cross all that was involved in Jesus' sacrifice for us? Was it only at the cross that He made a sacrifice? I think not.

¹ *Luke 22:19*

² *Luke 22:20*

Paul's commendation of *"the churches of Macedonia"* for their generous giving in the midst of *"their deep poverty"* led him to remind the Macedonians of the generous giving of the One Who is the Lord of this Table. He said in *II Corinthians 8:9*, *"For ye know 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."* No, we must never, ever observe this sacred supper without thinking of the sacrificial crucifixion of our Lord on our behalf, but do we ever consider the sacrifices He made before He ever reached the cross? Remember, the act of sacrifice implies the suffering of the loss of something, the giving up of something. We know that He lost His life but have you ever stopped to think of what He lost before He was ever nailed to the tree?

Before He ever felt the lash of the whip on His back, before He ever felt the thrust of the nails into His hands and feet, before He ever felt the sharp piercing of a thorn into His scalp, before the spear penetrated His flesh, He had already sacrificed more than you or I will in a hundred or a thousand lifetimes. He sacrificed His glorious presence in heaven. He sacrificed His exalted position with His Heavenly Father. He sacrificed the praise of myriads of angels. He gave up all of this, and how much more we cannot fathom, to come to His own earthly created things only to be rejected by His own people, those He created and had come to save from sin, death and hell.

Before He ever exited the womb of Mary, there was no room for Him not only in the inn; there was no room for Him in the hearts of His own people.

There is little room for Him in this present world. The foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests but He, the Son of man, had no where to lay his head.³

He was God in the flesh *"full of grace and truth."* He was all those *"I am's"* in the book of *John*. He was *"Christ, the Son of the living God."*⁴ But to those among whom He walked, He was Beelzebub. His ministry was criticized; His miracles were criticized; His person was criticized; His compassion for and His acts of mercy and kindness toward the lost, the outcasts, the poor, the sick, and the maimed was criticized; His speech was criticized; He was mocked, ridiculed, and humiliated. Every facet of His being and life was criticized. Even toward the end of His life *"all [His] disciples forsook Him, and fled."*⁵ One even betrayed Him.

And yet, He has left us His Table and has invited us to join Him in His Kingdom to remember His death and the sacrifices that led to His death. I tell you without any equivocation, only a loving, gracious, merciful God would do this.

After Jesus dialogued with the rich young ruler in *Matthew 19* and after He said *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,"* Peter said to our Lord, *"Behold, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?"*⁶ What an outlandish statement and self-centered question! "You and your buddies have *"left all,"* Peter? Really?

³ *Matthew 8:20*

⁴ *Matthew 16:16*

⁵ *Matthew 26:56*

⁶ *verse 27*

What an audacious statement to make to God incarnate Who forsook all things that are infinitely of more value than you could ever imagine!" *"...what shall we have?!"*

But beloved, how many of us think we have forsaken much to be a Christian? When compared to Christ we must hang our head in shame knowing how little we have forsaken or sacrificed on His behalf and for His cause. Most of us have never had to sacrifice a meal, a bed, or a shirt, let alone our own blood. There are some who have. We read about them in the holy Book. But, we haven't joined their ranks. And, those who have, id not do it for an entire world of lost sinners.

By His marvelous grace we are privileged to live in overwhelming luxury having far more than most people in the rest of the world would ever hope to have if they lived a dozen lifetimes. But as much as we thank God for our meals and our beds and our shirts, it is at this Table that we must thank Him for our salvation, for the forgiveness of our sins, and for the hope and promise of everlasting life.

"...what shall we have therefore?" We have already received the greatest gift we could ever receive through the One and only sacrifice of the One and only Savior of the world. May God cause the knowledge of this force us to our knees in repentance and thanksgiving as we eat and drink this sacred Supper purchased by our Savior's lifetime of sacrifices on our behalf.

PRAYER

Our God and Father, we come to you in the name of Your only begotten Son Who sacrificed Himself throughout His life in every way imaginable that we might have the forgiveness of our sins and eternal fellowship with You. Lord, we are ashamed and we are humbled when we consider the fact that Jesus sacrificed everything that was His in the heavenly, eternal abode to come to this earth to save people like us. Help us Father to repent of our sins - sins of selfishness - and to worship and adore Him as we eat this loaf and drink this cup in remembrance of Him. Amen.

