

Sacrifice and Worship

By Waldo Malan



Jesus clearly says that the Father is seeking worshippers (John 4:23). This says to me that in order to be a worshipper one has to be worshipping, and because God Most High is doing the seeking, He is going to be looking for something very specific. Jesus further underlines this by saying that the worship associated with the Father-worshipper needs to be in spirit and in truth. So many times our human nature deceives us into thinking that what the Father is really looking for are workers and doers of things. Put in another way, our human nature, especially the sinful nature subject to the law, has a constant need to make sacrifices. While the Jews in the Old Testament sacrificed animals we tend to sacrifice works in our contemporary contexts. By “works” I mean anything that we can find to do that we regard as being good and ultimately pleasing to the Father. Understand that I am not saying that doing things are bad, or that pleasing the Father by our works are wrong or displeasing to Him! No, but what I am trying to get across is that when we present the Father only with works and no worship then we cannot possibly please Him. This means that whatever we do needs to be done from a position of worship: doing because we worship and not worshipping because we are doing.

The expression “walk your talk” is so relevant in our worship of God with regard to offering sacrifices vs. offering relationship. The Father is seeking a relationship with all people when most of us tend to want to offer a sacrifice. The basic problem with a sacrifice is that it is a momentary thing with tremendous power, both for the one to whom the sacrifice is made as well as the one making the

sacrifice. This problem manifests in the fact that the act of sacrifice appeases our consciences and allows us to live life after the event pretty much in the same manner as we did before. Sacrificing has the ability to allow us to shift the responsibility of careless living onto an object (either an animal or some type of action). When I say “careless living” I am speaking directly about a life without a relationship with the One whom we are sacrificing for. This transference of responsibility will lead us into a legal way of thinking and living, and also deceive us into thinking that God requires our relationship with Him to be based on a set of rules. By this I am not implying that the things we do are necessarily bad, because much of what we do will be considered good works, moral works and works that benefit our communities!

I see a sacrificial attitude manifest itself so clearly in the Church today. A sacrificial attitude make people believe that going to church on a Sunday for an hour or two and then ignoring God for the rest of the week is acceptable. This attitude allows people to believe that an active prayer life can be sacrificed because they are too busy doing the “right things” required for their individual ministries. It is an attitude that will make people bitter against God because they seem to be doing all the work while others are seemingly lazing around doing nothing – a classical Martha-Mary scenario (Luke 10:38-42). A sacrificial attitude will lead to a spiritual burnout rather sooner than later and suffer the kingdom of God by the loss of a precious soul.

This line of thinking made me conclude that if the Father is seeking worshippers and not workers, I probably need to get a refresher course on worship. Having said all I have about working and sacrificing, I also realise that to worship will require some type of action (or work) on my part, meaning that it is not the work in itself that is wrong, but it is the way in which the work is done that matters to God. This way of thinking is supported by Scripture, because the Father is the One Who is searching the hearts of men and is not led astray by our appearances. The conclusion is a simple one: our works simply happen because we are worshipping, not that our worship is simply happening because we are working! So by the grace of God the pressure of having to perform in our worship (a totally human way of reasoning) is removed completely from us and placed with the Holy Spirit. After all, our worship has to be in spirit and in truth, not in human endeavours and accomplishments! The Father is seeking specific people: worshippers. Specific worshippers will have specific worship – a worship that is exposed through the pages of God’s Word time and again. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read the following Scriptures, and ask Him to lead you into a deeper understanding of your personal relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ, so that you can be free in your worship without having to be weighed down by rules, regulations and burdens placed there by yourself, others and tradition. Allow the Holy Spirit to take you into new realms of worship where the Father can find you at the end of His search, worshipping Him with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.