

HEARTBREAKING

By Michelle Richardson

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 51:16-17

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Hosea 6:6

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

OBSERVATION

David has just committed adultery and murder. In the 51st chapter of Psalm, David is pleading for mercy from God. David fully acknowledges his sin and recognizes that his sin is against God alone. Despite his heinous actions, David is still named “a man after God’s own heart.” The law would have required for David to give a sacrifice to cover his sin. But David understands that a mere sacrifice is not what God desires. He acknowledges that “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

God does delight in sacrifice, but only when rightly given (v. 19). God desires first and foremost for us to have sorrow for our sin and a heart that is humble and receptive to His Word. A broken heart that is acceptable to God can come only through faith in Christ, for without faith in Christ, there is no true repentance. Sacrifices that are merely given outwardly, with no genuine repentance, bring God no pleasure. God wants us to know Him personally and intimately, not just factual knowledge of Him, but to know His voice so clearly that we recognize when He is speaking to us and asking for our obedience.

God reminds Israel and Judah of this in the book of Hosea as well. They have forsaken God by forgetting their covenant with Him and worshipping other idols. They still brought their sin-offerings to the priests regularly, thinking this would cover their multitude of sins, knowing full well they would continue in those same sins the next day. Imagine an adulterous spouse who consistently brings home expensive gifts to make up for what has been done yet persists in his/her unfaithfulness. The Israelites’ sacrifices and burnt offerings were worthless to God without the accompaniment of genuine repentance.

Jonathan Edwards states beautifully: “All gracious affections (feelings, emotions) that are a sweet (aroma) to Christ...are brokenhearted affections. A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is a humble brokenhearted love. The desires of the saints, however earnest,

are humble desires: their hope is a humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable, and full of glory, is a humble brokenhearted joy..." (Edwards, *Religious Affections*)

When we spend intentional, personal time with God, we understand His consistent and persistent love for us, the lengths He went through to save us from our sin, and the patience He displays as we struggle with our sin. From that relationship, we will then have a desire to emulate His love through a consistent, humble pursuit of knowing our Creator. That is, first and foremost, what God desires from us, and out of that love and devotion, with a broken spirit and humble heart, God is then pleased with our sacrifice to Him.

OBEDIENCE

God cares more about the heart of our sacrifice for Him than the mere act of sacrifice. God's people brought burnt offerings as an obligatory act rather than with true remorse for their sin, and David knew an empty sacrifice given to cover his sin would not have pleased God. Are there areas in your life in which you've created a merit-based system out of obligation, or to earn favor with God?

This week, ask yourself these questions:

- Am I serving out of legalism, thinking that's what is required of me to enter into the kingdom of heaven?
- Do I sacrifice because I believe that it will bring myself or my family more blessings?
- Am I serving to gain prestige/to make a name for myself?
- Do I prioritize things I can do for God over spending time with Him in His Word/prayer?
- Do I have consistent, persistent sin in my life for which I have not repented?
- Do I sacrifice my time/money/energy/resources out of a joyful heart, or out of an exhausted, begrudging heart?

Take a few moments to listen to the song "Nothing Else" by Cody Carnes and commit to make intentional daily time to just sit in His presence. Read the entire passage of Psalm 51 and reflect on God's grace.

PRAYER

Father, I praise You for Your steadfast love, Your patience, and Your never-ending faithfulness. Reveal Yourself to me in new ways as I intentionally seek time in Your Word. I pray that my sacrifice and service will be accompanied by a broken and contrite heart. As David prayed in Psalm 51, have mercy on me according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. Amen.