Offering Spiritual Sacrifices

Objective: To teach the nature of spiritual worship.

Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-10

Memory: 1 Peter 2:5, “...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

Introduction:
1. The passage just read makes the point that Christians are priests. All of us. Do you feel like it? Do you know what you are supposed to be doing in this God-ordained role? What is your obligation and responsibility? The function of priests is to offer worship to God and to lead others in worship to God.
2. Since God is spirit, and we form a spiritual house, our role (yours and mine) is to worship and lead others to worship in a spiritual way by offering spiritual sacrifices.

We need to know how to offer spiritual sacrifices. (HOW?)

A "sacrifice" is essentially an "offering". It is supposed to take some effort or cost you something and, hence, to be an reflection of your devotion to God. Let's look at some of what God is wanting from us that constitutes “spiritual” sacrifice.

Let’s start with praise. Scripture clearly designates as appropriate and pleasing offering to God, a

I. Sacrifice of Praise.

A. God is worthy of our praise.
1. Everything you have comes from God. The water you drink, air you breathe, things you see.
2. All of your loved ones. All of your prosperity. Any security you may have.
3. All your talents, skills and abilities. Every good gift comes from God. To Him be praise!

B. Such praise can be expressed verbally.
1. Hebrews 13:15-16, “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.” (We can come to God with this re; Jesus.)
2. What is all the singing about? Are your lips confessing His name? Are you offering Him praise?
3. Praise can come in prayer. Do you take time to praise God in prayer? Do you do so with your mind and with your spirit? Maybe 30 seconds a day as a duty fulfilled isn’t really “sacrifice.”
4. Is it thoughtless rote, like telling your spouse, "I love you", out of ritual, or do you really mean it? Your spouse knows the difference, and God does too. Even our songs of praise should come from the heart to be pleasing offerings.
5. Praise can come in our conversation. How do you talk during the day? Is there complaining, grumbling questioning? Do you avoid the topic of religion and God, or does your heartfelt praise of God come naturally from your lips so folks will know your love and devotion to Him?

C. Such praise can be expressed through our deeds.
1. Same passage continued; Hebrews 13:16, “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”
2. Praise is offered to God through a lifestyle of doing good.
   a. These are things we must think about. Things that might not happen if we don’t do them intentionally. Things that it is possible to “forget”.
   b. Things we ought to remind each other of and prompt each other to do. (Hebrews 10:24, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”)
   c. Things like visiting the nursing homes? Finding ways to encourage the faith of those who are weak? Contacting folks we haven’t seen in a while. Helping the elderly with home repairs?
3. Praise offered to God through a lifestyle of sharing with others.
   a. Boxes to help the poor. Rides to folks needing groceries.
   b. Sharing of spiritual blessings and physical blessings.
4. How better to praise God than to share the blessings we appreciate so much.

For any spiritual sacrifice to be pleasing, it must not be a thoughtless ritual. To be pleasing, it must be

II. A Sacrifice Motivated From The Heart.

A. God wants your heart!
1. Matthew 15:7-9. “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain....’”
   a. He wants you to WANT to do the things you do religiously. To be moved to do “good things” because your heart prompts you to.
   b. Love, prompted by heartfelt appreciation should be the basis of real sacrifices. You WANT to do good things for those you really appreciate and love.
   c. God wants you to know and love Him.
2. Mark 12:33. “To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”
   a. Love for God expressed in standing for the things He stands for. Imitating His very nature.
   b. Love for God expressed in caring for what He cares for; the poor, underprivileged, helpless. Those in genuine need. To show compassion on the lost.
3. Hebrews 12:28. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,”
   a. Heartfelt love and appreciation are the motives for worship, not only attending and participating in formal, collective worship on Sunday mornings, but for a total life of worship.
   b. Duty alone can be cold and rigid. Fear of punishment likewise. But to know Him is to love Him.
4. 1 John 4:18. “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”
4. God doesn't want or need cold rituals or dutiful presentations.
   a. Psalm 50:9-15. “I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? 14 Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”
   b. A prayer of thanks before meals. A prayer of thanks upon safe arrival. A gift of contribution in thanks for a prosperous week. Efforts to pass the blessings on to others.
   c. God doesn’t want offerings or service made grudgingly or under compulsion. God wants offerings that come from a right heart. Because people WANT to give them.
   d. Psalm 51:16-17. “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” A heart that humbles itself. Recognizes its sin and disobedience and error, and resolves to do everything in a way that pleases God.

B. He wants heartfelt obedience.
1. A heart genuinely offered to God seeks to comply with His wishes. To His commands, instructions, preferences and desires.
2. No one feels loved if you ignore what they say and what they want, then try to make up for it with a financial gift. To ignore God’s “feelings” then try to make up for it by putting an extra $10 in the collection plate is like; if my wife wants me to spend Mother’s Day with her doing special things, sitting and talking about what’s on her mind, intimate conversation – but I don’t really feel like that myself, so I give her a gift certificate to McDonalds and go fishing. (Doesn’t get it done.)
3. God doesn’t want your money or your rituals, He wants your heart! For you to be concerned with Him. 1 Samuel 15:22. “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”
   a. When God says, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, “...”, Do it. Get to church on Sundays, and every other church meeting you can.
   b. When God says, (Col. 3:24) “… rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.”, Do it. Out of a heart sacrificed to Him.
   c. When God says to be baptized, do it! No questions, no hesitation. From a responsive heart!
4. Such a sacrifice of obedience is illustrated by Christ; Hebrews 10:8-9. “First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were
you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” That is a heart that is given to God.

All this life of praise, this matter of your very heart, this diligent obedience, comes down in full intensity on each of us, to essentially offer God our very life. God is looking for

III. Living Sacrifices:

A. What God wants is you.
   1. Not your things. Not $10 in the plate. God doesn’t need your money. What He’s looking for in such material sacrifices is not the material things, but the very heart of the giver!
   2. Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”
   3. In 2 Corinthians 8; the Macedonians are praised for their financial contribution because gave themselves first to the Lord.
   4. This is what Peter was talking about in today’s scripture reading from 1 Peter 2:5, when he called Christians “living stones” being built into a “spiritual house”.
   5. He wants you. Genuinely from the heart! YOU are the temple He wants. Not some dead corpse laid on an altar, but a living, active spiritual sacrifice to bring Him honor and glory and praise.

B. God wants your very life as a pure and holy offering.
   1. Purity is required of anything that is offered to God.
      a. Malachi 1:8, “When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?”
      b. You would not give anyone you love and honor, a gift covered in vomit!
      c. Neither give God a life that is diseased or defiled with sin!
   2. This brings us back to the Scripture reading and memory verse; 1 Peter 2:5, “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
      a. Become clean and holy and “acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”.
      b. Come to Jesus and wash away your sins by being baptized in His name.
      c. Receive the gift of the Holy spirit to convict you of sin, to guide you and strengthen you and make you a child of God.

So What?
The appeal of the message this morning is to genuinely belong to and follow Jesus.
To genuinely worship God with your life, in spirit and in truth, offering yourself as a living sacrifice, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer:
Offering Spiritual Sacrifices
Topical

Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-10
“...y_a_, l_l_s_, a_b_b_i_a_s_h_t_b_a_h_p_, o_s_s_a_t_G_t_J_C_.”

Memory: 1 Peter 2:5

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What God is wanting from us that constitutes “spiritual” sacrifice.

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A. God is worthy of our praise.

B. Such praise can be expressed verbally. Hebrews 13:15

C. Such praise can be expressed through our deeds. Hebrews 13:16

II. A Sacrifice Motivated From The Heart.
A. God wants your heart!

B. He wants heartfelt obedience. 1 Samuel 15:22  Hebrews 10:8-9

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A. What God wants is you. Romans 12:1

B. God wants your very life as a pure and holy offering. Malachi 1:8  1 Peter 2:5

So What?
Worship God with your life, in spirit and in truth, offering yourself as a living sacrifice, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.