

# (Radical Jesus) 25 Radical Sacrifice

by Glenn Meldrum

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*The radical nature of sacrifice is living a life of continual sacrifice, where we die to our affections and lusts, and live a life of loving devotion to Jesus.*

**Duration:** 27:58

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:24, Mark 14:9, Luke 7:36, Luke 16:13, John 1:6, Acts 2:42

**Topics:** "Sacrifice"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of sacrificing our time, talent, and treasures for Jesus in order to build His kingdom. He highlights the low spiritual condition of many churchgoers in America and the lack of devotion and commitment to Jesus. The early church in Acts chapter 2 serves as an example of wholehearted devotion, as they were devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. The sermon also mentions the story of Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, who demonstrated her devotion to Jesus by anointing His feet with expensive perfume.

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## Transcript

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For the last two weeks, we have been studying the radical nature of sacrifice. We began by examining our Lord's radical sacrifice and then moved on to look at how sacrifice is an integral part of the biblical faith. Jesus is the perfect example of what the Christian life looks like.

So by examining the various dimensions of Christ's life and sacrificial death, we are presented with the true nature of the sacrifice we are commanded to live out. It is not just that Jesus is our example, but we are obligated to act like adoring children that strive to be like their loving Savior. We are also commanded to live as completely devoted disciples that are striving with all that is within them to be like Jesus, and this includes sacrifice and suffering.

We also examine the fact that everything a true believer does through faithful service to Jesus is only the basics of what is required of him. This is what God expects of us, what is demanded of us. So when genuine followers of Jesus have spent themselves for the glory of God in the pursuit of personal holiness,

they have really only done what was expected of them.

Even when people have paid the ultimate price to be true to their loving Savior by dying for him, they have really only done what was expected of them. When we sacrifice ourselves for the well-being of others or to do the work of the kingdom, we are prone to think that we deserve a reward for it, that we should get our hundredfold return. We can easily fall into a mercenary mentality where we are for hire and so feel that God owes us for our labors.

Or we can succumb to a welfare mentality where we think that God is obligated to bless us and to make us happy. Such thinking in all of its various forms could not be further from the truth. Paul stated that such ideas come out of the carnal nature, and Jude declared that they are the product of mere mortal instincts.

We owe Jesus a debt that we cannot pay, and if we labored nonstop for the rest of our lives for the Lord, we would still be infinitely indebted to him. Jesus sacrificed everything for us, and he deserves the reward of his suffering, which means that we should sacrifice everything for him. This is Christianity 101, the very basics of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

To give Jesus anything less is to insult the one that purchased us with his own blood and to trample underfoot his atoning sacrifice. Today we are going to look at the sacrifice we are to live out on a daily basis and the great sacrifice that come into our lives at various times. Everyone that has become a true born-again Christian will walk with Jesus in holy intimate fellowship.

According to John's first epistle, those that practice sin are not true Christians. And I will add to that that prayerless people cannot be true Christians. From the moment people become bona fide followers of Jesus, they are called to live an uncompromising life of loving devotion to him.

A life of loving devotion to Jesus will always be one of constant service to God, which equates to a life of continual sacrifice. There is no place in the true faith for those that will not be fully devoted to Christ. No place for lazy Christians.

No place for apathetic believers. Wholehearted devotion is what is expected of everyone that would become a true follower of Christ. Jesus himself said, no servant can serve two masters.

Either he will hate the one or love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. In Acts chapter 2 we find Luke giving the reason why the early church exploded. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Their wholehearted devotion was revealed in their actions, not mere words. Theirs was a devotion that was lived out on a constant basis, which was proof of the sacrifice they lived out of love for Christ. Their devotion was proved through four things, and the first was that they were devoted to the apostles' teaching.

The apostles' teaching consisted of Christ's teaching that we find in the Gospels. They did far more than just believe that what Jesus said was true. They lived it out with zeal, no matter the cost.

By obeying Christ's teaching, they lived on a constant basis the sacrifice that is necessary to walk with a holy God and to build his kingdom. Somehow in America we have come to believe that a self-indulgent life is acceptable to God, but it is not. If we believe what Jesus taught and we are willing to put it into practice, then it will involve continual sacrifice.

The second aspect of their devotion was revealed in that they were constantly in fellowship with each other. Because they were devoted to God, they were devoted to each other. It is impossible to be devoted to God and not be devoted to the body of which Christ is the head.

This dimension of the New Testament faith is almost entirely absent from the present-day church. The average commitment of American Christians to a local body of believers consists of one or two hours a week on a Sunday morning and not necessarily every Sunday of the month. Church folk are not devoted to each other.

Many times they do not really like each other. People think that being at church more than once a week is too much. Why? Because they are not really devoted to God or to each other.

A case in point can be seen in the decline of the Sunday night worship service. Hardly any churches have evening services anymore because they cannot get people to come. A slow-motion spiritual suicide is taking place as the church continues to forsake Christ in greater ways.

The midweek service is also dying because fewer and fewer people are willing to attend. They would rather have their children at soccer games or football games than to be learning about Jesus. It is said how people will sacrifice their time for sports, TV, recreation, and so on, but will not sacrifice themselves to worship God and to learn His Word.

The church has fallen so far yet is blind to this fact. So we now have million-dollar churches that are used only once a week for an hour or two in the morning because people are not devoted to God or to each other. The third expression of the early church's devotion was seen in the breaking of bread.

This is not referring to fellowship meals, as some claim, because that was part of their devotion to fellowship. And the breaking of bread has far more meaning to it than just partaking of communion, even though that was part of their fellowship and worship. I think the idea has to do with how they kept the cross ever before their minds and in the midst of their preaching, teaching, ministry, and fellowship.

They kept before their hearts and mind the atoning sacrifice Jesus paid for their salvation so they would not grow weary of sacrificing themselves for Him. The preaching of the cross and partaking of communion should be reality checks for us if they are being done correctly. The cross keeps us mindful of our fallen condition and desperate need of a Savior.

Without the preaching of the cross, we will stray from the faith and not be devoted to Christ. The final expression of the early church's devotion was that they were devoted to prayer. It was who they were, not just something they did.

The context in which this is spoken tells us that these were prayer meetings, but that does not diminish the necessity of the private prayer life. Jesus taught them the necessity of prayer and modeled it before the disciples. Yet most churches today do not have prayer meetings because people are not willing to sacrifice their time.

Of those that do have prayer meetings, their attendance is very sparse. Prayerless churches are backslidden churches, just like prayerless Christians are either backslidden Christians or self-professing Christians that have never really known Christ. When people are not deeply devoted to God, they will not be devoted to prayer, whether corporate or private.

To be devoted to Jesus requires sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is why there are so few people in our churches that are truly devoted to Jesus. It is important to understand that the only sacrifices that are acceptable to God come out of lives that are accepted by God. There are many Bible verses that clearly teach that mankind is a fallen, sinful race, that we are not predominantly good, but inherently evil.

We are sinners by nature and by choice. Of course, Jesus is the only one excluded from this statement because he was without sin. God is holy, and he will only fellowship with holy people, and there is nothing that we can do to alter this fact.

This means that anyone that is not living a holy life is not in fellowship with God. To not be in active fellowship with God means that they are outside of salvation, that they are lost and destined for hell if they do not change their spiritual condition. God does not accept people that continue in the practice of sin, which tells us that there is nothing they can do that is acceptable to God until they come to repentance.

No amount of sacrifice or good deeds can cancel the debt of sin or cleanse the guilty soul. People must be first accepted by God before any of their works will be accepted by him as worship and devotion. Imagine that a man kills a person that you dearly love and then tries to make an amends by saying he will mow your lawn and wash your car for the rest of your life.

Would you be appeased by such an offering? Would the man's good deeds pay off the debt of murder? If that would not appease you, what if he offered you \$25 million? Would the money fill the hole in your heart for the loss of your loved one? If it did, then you are no different than a prostitute that sells her body for \$100 or \$1,000 or \$10,000. The only difference is the price at which we sell our souls. Good deeds can never pay for the crimes we have done.

Salvation must come through the cleansing blood of Christ, and when the person is accepted by God, then the acts will be accepted as well. To sacrifice ourselves without being in right fellowship with God may be a temporary help to people in this life, but they do nothing for the next. Sacrifice must be a part of our daily life as followers of Jesus.

One expression of daily sacrifice is living the crucified life whereby we die to our affections and lusts. We looked at this for a little while in last week's lesson. To genuinely love people takes sacrifice, whether it is family, friends, coworkers, or strangers.

Love costs, and if we will not pay the price to love, then we will never know the joy of correctly loving others and being loved by them. Why do marriages break down? Because the husband or wife or both do not want to make the daily love sacrifices that it takes to make a good marriage. What is one reason why there is strife in the church? Because people do not want to sacrifice themselves to keep peace by loving one another.

We must sacrifice to forgive people, to do acts of kindness, to be tender and caring, and to meet the needs of others. Sacrifice is a part of life, and especially for the true follower of Jesus. To build Christ's kingdom, we must sacrifice our time, talent, and treasures for Jesus.

As an evangelist, I have seen this more times than I can count, where someone gets up in the pulpit and begins begging the people to help with a particular ministry need in the church or community. On one occasion, I was preaching on the last Sunday that the pastor would be at his church. He stood in front of the congregation with his arms around a couple of local children and asked if anyone would commit

themselves to picking up these kids on their way to church Sunday morning so that they could attend children's ministry.

Not one person volunteered. Not one. I was appalled, and when I stepped into the pulpit to preach, I seriously confronted that selfish congregation for their outright betrayal of Christ.

None of those selfish, self-absorbed people would commit to pick up those children because they did not want to sacrifice their time or their gas. I believe that the Lord will hold each of those people accountable for their selfish, unchrist-like lives. If any of those children end up in hell because those backslidden church folk were unwilling to sacrifice such a small amount for the souls of those children, then it will even be worse for them at the judgment seat of Christ.

How much ministry is lost because of the selfishness of those who call themselves Christians. How many people must perish because self-professing Christians refuse to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of others. If people are not willing to do the daily sacrifices to love one another, to minister to the lost, to build Christ's church, then they will not be willing to do the great sacrifices that are demanded of us at various times in our lives.

Along with the daily sacrifice that the Christian life entails, there are those moments or seasons of life that necessitate what we might call great sacrifices. They are also a reasonable service. I do not think that people can make a great sacrifice that is acceptable to God until they embrace a life of continual sacrifice.

Many of you have heard the moving story of Jim Elliott and how the Wadoni Indians were brought to Christ. Jim was one of the five pioneer missionaries who lost their lives in 1956, attempting to bring the gospel to a tribe of savage Indians in Ecuador. His widow, Elizabeth Elliott, once related an incident when she was interviewed by a reporter after her husband's death, and I would like to share this with you.

The reporter opened the interview with a statement about Jim Elliott dying in the jungles of Ecuador. Elizabeth interrupted him, saying, My husband did not die in the jungle. The stunned reporter replied, Mrs. Elliott, there is proof that your husband died in Ecuador.

My husband did not die in the jungle, she reaffirmed. At this point, the reporter grew concerned about Mrs. Elliott's state of mind and attempted to gently remind her that the body of her husband had been recovered. Elizabeth then looked directly into the reporter's eyes and stated, Sir, you don't understand.

My husband did not die in the jungle. Jim Elliott died before he ever went to the jungle. He died kneeling at his bedside in college where he offered his life as a sacrifice to the God he loved.

Jim Elliott lived a life of continual sacrifice, so when he was called to be a missionary and then a martyr, he was able to obey the Lord's call. If he had not first lived a life of daily sacrifice, then he would have never risen to the high calling of a greater sacrifice. This phenomenal story continued when some of the wives of the men that were murdered went to try and reach the very people that killed their husbands, and they won them to Christ.

Are you getting the picture here? If we are not willing to live the daily sacrifice that is the basics of the faith, then we will never be able to rise to the need of great sacrifice. If we seek to save our lives in our everyday life, then we will not spend ourselves for anything greater. When we offer our lives to Him on a daily basis, then through His transforming grace, we can make extraordinary sacrifices that the Savior accepts with great pleasure.

First, our lives must be an acceptable offering to God that is a sweet aroma to Him. Great sacrifices begin with the faithful daily sacrifices that define the New Testament faith. Great marriages and families are the result of those daily love sacrifices, which then can grow children up in such a way that they may accomplish for the glory of God more than the parents even did.

There is a very interesting point. When love is the motive of our daily sacrifice, then sacrifice will cease to be a burden and will then become a joyful privilege. This is divine grace working in the soul of a surrendered saint.

Here is where acts of mercy are joy. Where expressing the love of God to others is a burning desire. Few find this place because they do not want to pay the price.

When people will not sacrifice themselves on a daily basis, then they will think that all sacrifice is a burden unless they obtain some personal benefit out of it, such as praise of man or monetary gain. I want to look at what could be considered a great sacrifice. This true story is recorded in the Gospel of Mark in chapter 14.

Let me read to you the account. While Jesus was in Bethany reclining at the table of the home of a man known as Simon the leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another why this waste of perfume. It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor. And they rebuked her harshly.

Leave her alone, said Jesus. Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want.

But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.

I tell you the truth, wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. We are told that this event took place two days before the Passover and was held at the home of Simon the leper, who must have been once a leper that Jesus had healed. Simon was probably a wealthy man because the people are eating in the Greco-Roman style, which was reclining at tables.

The poor did not recline while eating or sit around tables because they held to the Middle Eastern culture rather than the Western one. The heroine of this story is Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. Some commentators think that Mary could have possibly been the sinner woman of Luke chapter 7. I am among that number.

Other commentators do not think that the sinner woman is Mary. Either way, we cannot prove the case one way or another because we are not given the identity of the sinner woman of Luke 7 or of Mary's life before she became a follower of Jesus. It is circumstantial evidence that makes me lean towards the idea that Mary could have been the sinner woman of Luke 7. There are two primary reasons for this.

First, the event where Mary anoints Jesus is similar in nature to the story of the sinner woman that washes Jesus' feet with tears of repentance, dries His feet with her hair, anoints His feet with perfumed oil, and kisses His feet in adoration. Let me read to you the wonderful touching story. Now one of the Pharisees

invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume. And as she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them.

When the Pharisee who invited Him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is, that she is a sinner. Jesus answered him, Simon, I have something to tell you. Tell me, teacher, he said.

Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him 500 denarii, and the other 50. Neither of them had money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both.

Now which of them will love him more? Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled. You have judged correctly, Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I came into your house and you did not give me any water for my feet.

But she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little. Then Jesus said to her, Your sins are forgiven.

The other guests began to say among themselves, Who is this who even forgives sins? Jesus said to the woman, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. I am only going to make a couple points about this wonderful story.

Jesus gave a parable about two men that owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed ten times as much as the other. The moneylender canceled both debts because neither of the men would be able to pay the debt.

Then Jesus asked the Pharisee a question, Now which of them will love him more? The Pharisee answered, The one that owed more. Jesus then did something remarkable in that culture. He contrasted a man with a woman, and not just any woman, but a sinner woman.

We do not understand in our modern Western culture how extremely humiliating this was. Jesus makes an astounding statement, Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much. This is a very powerful principle.

Jesus making a point that when people understand that they are great sinners and they are forgiven through divine mercy, they are prone to love God very deeply. The sinner woman was forgiven much and was filled with gratitude which was expressed through those acts of devotion that we just read about. The sinner woman was developing a godly character of deep devotion and was willing to sacrifice her pride and wealth as a result.

We can see then that there are similarities of devotion that is expressed by Mary and the sinner woman. The second circumstantial evidence has to do with the character and devotion that Mary had for Jesus.

And it ties into what Jesus told the Pharisee, that those that are forgiven much love much, but those who have been forgiven little, love little.

When we look at the account of Mary in Luke 10, verses 38-42, we see this deep devotion expressed once again. Mary and Martha are sisters and they are having Jesus over for a meal. Martha is preparing a great meal for Jesus while Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet listening to his teaching.

Martha gets angry at Mary for not helping her and asks Jesus to make her help her prepare this great and wonderful meal. We find though that Jesus sides with Mary instead of Martha. "'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.

"Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'" We see here that Mary had deep devotion to Jesus that was first of all expressed in that she loved being with him and hearing his teaching. This was the character of Mary and is seen once again in her anointing of Jesus before his crucifixion. Mary's anointing of Jesus with very expensive perfume speaks of a character of deep devotion that defined her.

Since she was a disciple of Jesus, she regularly attended many of the various meetings where Jesus ministered. Since her presence at this meal was not strange, the people eating around the table did not pay attention to her when she came into the room to anoint Jesus. Mary had been forgiven much, so she loved much.

She brought some very expensive perfume that was fit for a king, and she was giving it to the king of kings as a thank offering. She had come for an audience of one. She was not doing this for the people, but for Jesus.

Its cost was the equivalent to a year's wage for a common worker of the day. The average yearly family income in the U.S. is around \$50,000. Would you give Jesus a year's wage out of disinterested love? She did not give this to Jesus with selfish intent so that she could get her tenfold blessing in return.

She gave it out of loving devotion, no strings attached. Where Mary obtained the money, we are not told. It could possibly have been her marriage dowry, which would imply that she was not only spending such a large amount for the perfume, but that she was giving up her hope of a future marriage as well.

This is a very costly sacrifice, which was an expression of great love for Christ. It did not take long after she broke open the seal of the perfume and began pouring it upon the head of Jesus that the aroma filled the room. Everyone grew silent as the pungent aroma filled their senses.

After seeing what Mary was doing, some of the disciples grew angry at her and attacked her, saying that the cost of such an extravagant perfume should have been used on the poor. At this, Jesus asked them a very serious question, Why are you bothering her? This was an important question, and they should have taken the time to examine themselves with it. Why were they angry with Mary? Because Mary's extravagant love reproved those that did not have that depth of love.

So the easiest thing for them to do was to attack the source of that conviction, which was Mary. That way they would not look so bad. This is all too common.

When someone is trying to fan in the flame a holy fire of God, all the wet blankets in the church want to put out that fire. When the fire of God is burning in the heart of a person, it reproves those that do not have the

fire and do not want it either. If they can somehow make that person look bad, then they have seemingly justified their lukewarm condition.

They were also angry at Jesus for enjoying the pure and holy love that Mary was showing him. So Jesus came to her defense, declaring, She has done a beautiful thing to me. One astounding statement.

This is God incarnate proclaiming that a mere mortal had done a beautiful thing to him, that she brought joy to the heart of God. God can be pleased. Jesus stated that Mary did what she could.

In other words, she gave him the best that she had, but it was still her reasonable service. What Mary did was so powerful an expression of loving devotion that Jesus stated, I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. Mary's legacy was one of loving devotion, of sacrifice that was a joy to offer to the Savior.

Is this not the heart condition that should define every believer? Should not this kind of sacrificial love be the normal Christian experience? Such devotion does not mean that everyone must take a year's wage to spend on Jesus, but we must be absolutely willing to do so. In today's church culture, we think people are doing well if they go to church a couple of times a month, read their Bible occasionally, maybe for five minutes, and then pray a couple of minutes on the way to work. The extremely low spiritual condition of most church people in America has produced books like Your Best Life Now or five-minute devotionals because people refuse to give anything of substance to Jesus.

So much of the American church is in a pitiful condition. Churches are closing Sunday and Wednesday night services because people will not go to church because there's a spiritual disease in the heart of people. Church services are getting shorter and shorter because people do not want to spend time with Jesus, so churches advertise that they have a service one hour or even drive through churches.

Prayer meetings are virtually nonexistent because people are too busy to seek God's face. This modern Laodicean version of Christianity knows nothing of devotion to Jesus like Mary had, yet they think that they are right with God. Mary showed us through her life the meaning of sacrifice and how such loving devotion moves the heart of God.

Anyone that names the name of Christ should be striving to sit at the feet of Jesus like Mary did and to pour the costly perfume of undivided devotion on Jesus' head on a continual basis. Jesus said that Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her. How many professing Christians will not make heaven their home because what they lived out will be taken from them when they are forced to face death? When people live for wealth, comfort, self-indulgence, or for the things of this world, they will all be taken from them because they cannot pass through death's door.

The only things that will pass through into eternity are those things that are done out of loving devotion for Jesus. Everything else will be utterly lost. The sacrifice we make for Christ in this life will pay exponential dividends in heaven throughout eternity.

Just as Christ's sacrifice was the perfect expression of His extravagant love for us, so our lives should overflow with sacrificial expressions of extravagant love to Him. This is New Testament Christianity.

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