

An Offered Life

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving your life as an offering to God, not as an investment, and living in his presence through gratitude and thanksgiving.

Scripture: Genesis 4:3, Psalm 116:12, Malachi 3:1, Luke 15:29, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Sacrificial Giving", "Spiritual Worship"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of giving offerings to God willingly and with a grateful heart, emphasizing that true offerings are not investments seeking a return but rather a sacrificial giving of our lives in thanksgiving for God's goodness. He highlights the difference between offering our lives to God out of gratitude and praise versus as an investment expecting something in return, urging believers to live their lives as offerings to God without holding back. Bieber stresses the significance of presenting ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, as an act of spiritual worship.

Transcript

The reason we never appeal for funds in this flock is not that we consider giving a minor thing. Our Lord made clear that what we do with the unrighteous mammon is proof to the Father of whether or not we're ready to handle the true riches of his kingdom. But whatever portion of our money we're going to give as an offering to God has to be an offering ... not something that was squeezed out of us by the stewardship committee. And where to give that offering is also a matter between the believer and the Lord.

Another reason why we never appeal for funds---we're pretty much in agreement that it would be better to nail the door shut than to appeal for one penny---is because many people who find their way here are still carrying scars from when they were ripped off by some religious money pitch in the past, and are now cynical and suspicious about churches and money...with good reason.

But in our efforts to avoid this area, where from the beginning of the church there has been so much compromise and dishonesty and hypocrisy, we may have neglected to think through together an aspect of the life of faith which is essential: we need to think through what it means to live our lives as an offering to God.

"Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is

like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years."

Malachi 3:1-4

...till they present right offerings to the Lord.

An offering is not just a lamb you bring to be sacrificed, or some wheat from your harvest, or some money you put on the plate...these things are outward signs of the real offering which is your life.

In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Genesis 4:3-7

Why did the Lord have regard for Abel's offering but not Cain's? Because Abel's really was an offering and Cain's was not. God was looking at their hearts and God saw Abel giving himself in his offering, and God saw Cain holding himself back keeping himself for himself.

There are two ways in which we can give ourselves to God.

- We can give ourselves to God as an offering or,
- we can give ourselves to God as an investment.

You give your life as an offering out of thanksgiving and praise to God for who he is.

- He's been so good.
- He's done so much.

So you give yourself to him in gratitude, without strings, without looking for a reward.

You give your life to God as an investment when you calculate that: "If I give myself to God he's going to start doing extra things for me. I'm going to get a return on my investment."

In this case you haven't really given your life and let go of it. You've given your life to God but still holding on to it. Like a money market certificate it's going to draw interest and in the end you'll get your money back too.

I can still remember a friend in high school who complained at the end of his date with a girl he claimed to be in love with,

"After all the money I spent on her and she wouldn't even give me a kiss."

That money he spent on her was not a gift, it was an investment ... a shaky one and he lost.

And so with most of us so much of the time, the life we feel we're spending for God is not the joyful offering up of all that we have and are to him in thanksgiving for his unspeakable goodness ... it's an investment. We're looking for a return. And the proof that it's an investment shows up when the return is slow in coming. We start to feel in our hearts that God has been cheating us.

"Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots; you killed for him the fatted calf!"

Luke 15:29-31

Those many years of service and obedience were not an offering, they were an investment.

An offering is when you give your life ... you just give it, expecting nothing back. You give it in gratitude for God's goodness which is already beyond deserving. An investment is when you give your life, but deep in your heart you expect something in return. And when it doesn't come you throw in the towel and say,

"It doesn't pay to follow Jesus!"

"What's the use of prayer?"

"I'm tired of being good!"

What we're really saying is,

"I'm not getting a decent return on my investment so I'm going to pull out.

"For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord."
Malachi 3:2b-3

What is a right offering? A right offering is a life given back to God in sheer gratitude for his goodness. The one leper out of ten who, when he saw that he was healed, turned back praising God with a loud voice and fell at Jesus' feet giving him thanks, was presenting a right offering. He was saying thank you with his body, soul and spirit ... his future, his everything.

The woman who took the alabaster box of ointment worth a year's wages and lavished it on Jesus before his crucifixion was presenting a right offering...it was no investment. She wasn't looking for anything to come back. She was just so grateful for the new life Jesus had given her!

Or when Saul of Tarsus turned in his tracks after meeting Jesus and spent the rest of his life just pouring himself out ... that was a right offering. Paul was giving himself back to Jesus in thanksgiving and praise every day. He knew he couldn't repay the Lord in a million years for his death on the cross, but it was Paul's joy to offer himself day-after-day.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.

Psalms 116:12-14

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord.

Psalm 116:17-19

An offering begins with the question,

"What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?"

Before we're saved, it's legitimate to ask,

"What shall I do to be saved? What shall I do to stay out of hell or to get out of this hell I'm in and get into the kingdom of God?"

But once the blood of the Lamb has brought peace to our sin sick heart, once the Spirit of the Lord has brought the life of God into our body, soul and spirit, then the only question that makes any sense is,

"What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? What can I do to show him my thanks?"

- I will take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

- I will receive the salvation God has given me and start living in his presence.

How do you live in his presence? by calling on his name, speaking to him, praising him, communing with him.

Very good...you're going to live in the presence of the Lord. You're going to call on his name, walk with him, talk with him.... when?

"I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all his people....

I'm going to do what I said I would do now, right here, in the congregation."

"Lord, thank you for your salvation.

- I receive it.

- I enter into it.

- I call on your name.

- I commit myself to you afresh and my brothers and sisters are my witnesses."

So now I've received the cup of salvation, I've entered into the presence of the Lord.

There's one more thing I'm going to do as an offering to God:

"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call upon the name of the Lord."

What's a sacrifice of thanksgiving?

- A life spent thanking God ... thanking God with a mouth of course, but also thanking God with deeds of mercy.

Deeds of mercy ... when I do something for someone as an offering to God. And the person for whom I did this thing never says thank you ... no problem ... it was an offering not an investment. If that person never does anything in return, praise God! It was an offering not an investment!

What a difference it makes when the things we do for people are done as an offering instead of an investment.

- The prayers we pray.

- The visits we make.

- The letters we write.

- The meals we cook.

- The gifts we give.

- The time we spend listening, serving.

What a joy when we can do these things as an offering to God!

"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call on the name of the Lord."

When?

"I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all his people."

..."I will do what I said I would do now right here in the congregation."

"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Romans 12:1

Spiritual worship ... not a deal, not "I'll give you my life, Lord, if you give me a reserved seat in heaven."

You already have a reserved seat in heaven. You already have the Spirit of heaven upon you at this moment. What investment could ever bring you such a return?

True, Jesus talked to his disciples about spiritual investments when their hearts were still hard and they didn't understand what an offering was.

"Sell what you have and give alms. Provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail. "

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

But once the glory of his cross broke upon their sin-darkened minds ... once the Holy Spirit came as a gift from the Father's throne their whole life became an offering.

May God help us,

- to turn our invested lives into offered lives,

- to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.

Psalm 116:12-14

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord. Psalm 116:17-19

PRAYER

I present my body to you, Lord God, as a living sacrifice. I turn my mind away from the darkness, and open it to your Light. I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/an-offered-life/>

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