SACRIFICE versus Obedience

Dag Heward-Mills

Sacrifice Versus Obedience

by Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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Chapter 1 -Sacrifice Is the Central Theme of the Bible

Sacrifice means giving up something. It is a central theme of the Bible. Many of us first heard of the word *sacrifice* from the Bible. We read about Abraham's sacrifice, Isaac's sacrifice and Jacob's sacrifice.

Throughout the Old Testament, we see the Israelites making sacrifices to God continually. You could not think of a prophet of God in the Bible without thinking about sacrifices. You could not think of Elijah, without thinking of his experience with the four hundred prophets of Baal.

However, today, sacrifice is one of the most hushed topics. Today, the theme of our preaching is prosperity, miracles and blessings. The church has totally abandoned the original message of sacrifice. The church has become a phantom of the original church, fearful and powerless. Other religions constantly demonstrate to us the essence and practice of sacrifice.

The message of sacrifice is very relevant for all of us today. The teaching of sacrifice must return to the church otherwise we will continue to be a phantom of the real church!

Chapter 2 - The Missing Ingredient

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat FALL into the ground and DIE, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much FRUIT.

John 12:23-24

Sacrifice is the missing ingredient in the church. This master key will take the average ministry from barrenness to fruitfulness. Sacrifice is the key

that will transform a reverend minister from an official with a title, to a truly fruitful minister. It will make a church grow from a single church to a group of churches.

It will make a pastor move into real ministry. Jesus compares this to a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying.

The readiness to die is a missing ingredient in many good churches. Many ministries will remain small until we have people who are ready to sacrifice, because there comes a time when what is needed is sacrifice.

Failure to sacrifice always results in barrenness. A lot of churches have reached the borderline. Many ministries can do more but they do not. It is because they do not want to sacrifice.

Many people know what I know. They do not lack information or knowledge. If you have read my books, you must have some knowledge. However, knowledge is not enough! You will not have the fruits I have even if you have the knowledge that I have. This is because for you to have what I have, you must pay the price for it. There is a price for everyone to pay. The price of glory is the same for everyone!

Chapter 3 - The Need to Die

And Jesus answered them, saying, the hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat FALL into the ground and DIE, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much FRUIT.

John 12:23-24

The Scripture says that, “unless a corn of wheat disappears into the ground and dies, it will be alone!” The corn of wheat symbolizes the minister. To be alone means to be fruitless. It means to be without members or followers. This dying process that sacrifice brings will eventually bring out much fruit.

Jesus would not have borne the fruit He bore if He had not died on the cross. He would have been alone in Heaven with His Father. He could not have saved us if He had not died and gone to Hell. To win followers for Himself and His Father, He had to fall into the ground and die.

The corn of wheat has to fall into the ground and die. When the seed falls into the ground, it disintegrates and decomposes. It actually goes through

this process before it comes out as fruit. Fruits can only come about after the seed disappears and dies. This is what we call dying. The need to "die" is the most important truth to grasp. There are many sincere leaders who know many things. They have heard much and think they are high up in God. Knowledge unfortunately breeds pride.

…**we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.**

1 Corinthians 8:1

The Kingdom is more than a school of history and doctrines. It is more than acquiring numerous certificates of Bible knowledge. Knowledge without this process of dying will yield nothing. Have you noticed that some of the most learned and scholarly Bible expositors are very ineffective at real ministry? In fact, sometimes the more scholarly they become, the more faithless and godless they are.

A single corn will become a big tree with many fruits only if it falls into the ground and dies!

Chapter 4 - The Secondary School of Ministry

Dear pastor, it is time to send your men out. It is time to release those who have been trained into the fields of ministry. The Lord has constantly led me to send my best people out. One day, a senior pastor who had several junior pastors under him asked me, "How can I improve the quality of my pastors?" I said, "Send them to the 'secondary school' of ministry."

I told him, "Most of the pastors under your care are still in the 'primary school' of ministry and they have been there for many years. Instead of releasing them into the next stage of ministry, you have kept them with you and that has destroyed them spiritually."

I explained, "Instead of these ones becoming pastors of hundreds of people, some of them have become guitarists, singers and ushers in your church. They never moved on in ministry."

I continued talking with this pastor, "It is very difficult to send away people you are used to. It is difficult to send away people you love. You even risk destroying your relationship with them as they may develop a spirit of rejection." I explained again, "There are many of my pastors who are very

honoured and happy to be overseeing thousands of people today. But when I sent them away from me to begin these churches, they were often sad and felt rejected. I had to counsel and affirm my love towards them many times."

I continued encouraging my friend to send out his best people. I explained further, "Unless they go through the experience of the dying seed, they will never really bear fruit. They will prance around you and busy themselves with many activities in church, but actually, bear no fruit." There are different processes that you need to go through to make it in ministry. This verse refers to them as falling, dying, and bringing forth much fruit.

...Except a corn of wheat FALL into the ground and DIE, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much FRUIT.

John 12:24

Chapter 5 - The Falling Process

Falling into the ground, speaks of a period in a man of God's life when he is unknown and hidden from the view of the general public. It also speaks of a period of rejection, negative response, refusal, denial and denunciation in his life. A real minister of God will go through this experience many times.

Do not worry; isolation, rejection and separation are part of real ministry. Concerning **John the Baptist**, the Bible declares that he was *hidden* in the wilderness until the time of his *showing* unto Israel. Every pastor must realize that God has a time in his life when he must be hidden.

Do not be in a hurry to be exposed. Premature exposure leads to destruction.

Jesus Christ was hidden for thirty years before He was exposed to public ministry. His appearance in the ministry surprised those who did not know that a seed had been in the ground for thirty years.

Moses experienced this falling into the ground. He was utterly rejected by his brethren when he first tried to minister to them. He ended up in the wilderness for forty years. After years of rejection and isolation, he was ready to minister.

Joseph had this same experience of falling into the ground. His visions

and dreams were utterly rejected. Then he himself was utterly rejected and dispensed with. He found himself working as a slave and then as a prisoner in Egypt. After several years of *separation* from his brethren he was finally ready for a great ministry.

These are just a few examples of this pattern of falling into the ground. I tell you, no true minister is truly accepted until he has been rejected.

I Have Been There

I have had this experience of falling into the ground myself. When I started out in ministry I was utterly and totally rejected by the ministers of my day. One minister that I had a good relationship with, refused to minister to our group anymore. When I asked why, he said, “I don’t sow amongst thorns anymore.”

He and other pastors claimed that I was not called by God and had no business starting a church. They felt I was a medical student who should concentrate on his schooling. They told my assistant not to associate with me because it was dangerous to stay with someone who was not called by God.

I told another minister with whom I had a good relationship, that I had started a church. I received an instant rebuke and was questioned as to which Bible School I had attended. I was discouraged as I went away with my tail between my legs. To emphasize the rejection, this pastor decided to hold a campaign right where our church was meeting. He held a big programme and showed a very powerful video of his national and international programmes. It was one of the best presentations of that ministry I had ever seen. Our church looked like a group of lame ducks and dwarfs after this presentation.

A powerful invitation was then made to me to join this great ministry.

After they had left, I asked myself, “Who would want to be with us when there are such powerful and established ministries in the city?” After that programme, we felt demoralized and discouraged. It was obvious that we were a group of struggling students attempting to do ministry.

I also remember an incident when I met one of these great pastors of an established church. It was at a wedding being held on the university campus.

I went up to him to say hello and he said, “Oh, hello Dag.”

Then he paused, looked at me and said,

“*Pastor!*”

As I stood before him, I felt in my heart that he was mockingly referring to me as a pastor.

I almost asked him, “Sir why are you mocking me?” “Why do you call me ‘pastor’ when you don’t believe that I am a pastor?”

I do not know how those words never came out of my mouth. Dear friend, I tell you, that the only thing I felt at that time in my ministry was rejection and intimidation.

I went through a period of utter rejection and I continued the ministry work in virtual separation from most of the ministers I had known.

God then taught me to minister through lay people. You see, most of the ministries at that time were based on full-time workers.

Do not be worried when you are not accepted or wanted. Do not be upset when no one invites you. Your day of “showing forth” will come!

Today, I am accepted and even respected by some of these great pastors who initially despised me. Perhaps they have no choice but to accept me. After all, I am here even if they do not want me.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts TILL THE DAY OF HIS SHEWING UNTO ISRAEL.

Luke 1:80

Chapter 6 - The Dying Process

When the seed falls to the ground, it disintegrates and decomposes. It utterly changes in its character and appearance. By the time God is finished with you, your appearance will be different! Your character will be utterly transformed!

Allow the dying process to continue. Except the seed dies, it abides alone. The dying process involves a lot of factors.

You must develop some qualities in your life. If these qualities are not allowed to develop, your ministry will not develop.

Two Essential Qualities to Develop

The development of a personal relationship with God

During this period of alienation created by the falling process, many important spiritual traits will be birthed in the man of God.

A personal relationship with God is one of the most important things that you will learn when people reject you. Every true minister derives his strength from the Lord directly.

You see, Jesus said that many will come in that day and say, “I cast out demons in your name and I did great works in your name.” But the Lord will say, “I never knew you.” This goes to show that every minister must be very particular about his relationship with the Lord.

Rejection stops the horizontal (human) relationships and leaves you to develop the vertical (God) relationship.

The development of humility

The rejection by man is intended to make you develop humility. It is the highest mantle a minister can wear. The more humble a minister is, the higher his standing before the Lord! One of the common deceptions in the church is that the larger your church, the higher your standing before the Lord is. That is not the case;

Jesus made it clear that the greatest pastor will be the most humble and childlike amongst us.

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:3

John the Baptist’s humility was evident. He made it clear that he was not worthy to unlace the shoes of Jesus. He deferred to the Lord and stated that Jesus must increase and he decrease. How many pastors today want others to increase while they decrease?

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:30

The humility of Jesus was unmistakable. He humbled Himself and became obedient even to death on the cross. Moses lost all confidence in himself. The Bible calls him the meekest man on earth. Would you not be

meek after forty years in the wilderness as one of the most wanted men in Egypt? When you read about the call of Moses, you see how Moses had zero confidence in himself. He was a great person but his opinion of himself was genuinely very low. Notice Moses' own assessment of himself: 1

The Eleven Complaints of Moses

1. "And Moses said unto God, ***Who am I...?***" (Exodus 3:11).

2. "And Moses said unto God …***What shall I say unto them?***" (Exodus 3:13).

3. "And Moses answered…***they will not believe me...***" (Exodus 4:1).

4. "And Moses said…***I am not eloquent…I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue***" (Exodus 4:10).

5. "And he said, ***O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send***" (Exodus 4:13).

6. "And Moses…said, Lord ***Why is it that thou hast sent me?***" (Exodus 5:22).

7. "And Moses spake…***the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me...***" (Exodus 6:12).

8. "And Moses said…***I am of uncircumcised lips...***" (Exodus 6:30).

9. "And Moses cried unto the LORD…***they be almost ready to stone me***" (Exodus 17:4).

10. "And Moses said unto the LORD, ***Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant...?***" (Numbers 11:11).

11. "And Moses said, ***The people...are six hundred thousand footmen...***" (Numbers 11:21).[1]

Joseph, after being a prisoner for some years, did not think of vengeance when he saw his brothers. He could see through it all, that God had meant it for good.

Joseph had become so mature in the things of God that he felt his brothers had done nothing wrong. In fact he felt his brothers had been used by God.

It Worked Out for My Good

After going through all that I have been through, I have come to love and appreciate the people who once rejected me. I feel that God used them to train me in the ministry. I bear none of them a grudge and I value their ministries greatly. Even the bitterest of experiences have worked out for my good.

Chapter 7 - Bearing Much Fruit

Bearing fruit is a very spiritual thing. Most men of God think that if you have a large church, it means that you have borne much fruit and so you are pleasing to the Lord.

However, you will notice that Jesus was pleasing to His father even before He preached His first sermon.

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 3:17

You do not have to have a church for the heavenly Father to say, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” You do not even have to be a pastor. You do not have to write a book, you do not have to preach a sermon to hear the words, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.”

You do not need to be famous to hear the words, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus was not famous when this happened. It shows us that pleasing God is not based on our work per se. In fact, our fruits are actually gifts that are given by the Lord.

Have you ever wondered at the immense fruit that Christ Jesus bore? Have you ever wondered how thousands of churches have been started as a result of His three years of ministry? Two thousand years have gone by and He has more fruit than He ever had.

What did He do that brought about so much fruit?

He did six things: just three years of preaching, teaching, healing; his humility, obedience and sacrifice on the cross. The most significant of these things is His sacrifice on the cross as this opened the door for our salvation.

Your obedience and sacrifice to the Lord will make you great in the

ministry!

Spend and Be Spent

If you are a senior pastor, do not be afraid to send out the best that you have. God gave His Son and today He has millions of sons. If God has called you into the ministry, do not be afraid to die. Unless you die, you will never bear much fruit.

It is time to spend and be spent for the Lord. Spend your best leaders and workers on the harvest fields of the world. Allow yourself to be spent for Jesus.

Chapter 8 - The David Livingstone Example

It is time to spend and be spent for the Lord. This was David Livingstone's philosophy. He allowed himself to be spent so that unsaved tribes and peoples could be discovered and evangelized. I quote from an interview that he had before he died.

David Livingstone: Spend and Be Spent!

[2]*At twelve years of age, he showed an anxiety about his spiritual welfare. At twenty he was converted. It was a natural stepping-stone from the Christian home to membership in the church. His folks were worshippers at the Hamilton Church. Two of the elders instructed him in the doctrines. For five months he walked regularly from his home in Blantyre to his little church in Hamilton to be taught by and be prayed with by one of the elders. After this he was duly allowed to become a communicant member. It was then he made the decision to consecrate himself to the service of Christ in some form of missionary effort.*

After graduation in medicine and theology, he applied to the London Missionary Society. Could he come down for an interview? He had no money for his fare. Two friends helped him. The necessary probation period in the London school over, he was ready for his life's task. China was his choice, but the Opium War had closed the door; his heart was turned to Africa, and to that continent he sailed, and landed at Cape Town in 1849.

What did he look like as he set sail? Moderately tall, slim in build; a wiry, closely knit frame suggesting great powers of bodily endurance.

He gave as his reason: "when first I felt the expansive benevolence of the

gospel in my heart, it became an interesting question to me; how can I spend the remainder of my days in bringing my fellowmen to the enjoyment of the same happiness and peace?"

How can I spend my years? ..."spend and be spent" the missionary ideal was constant in all his years.

Preaching and teaching, Livingstone was also a physician to the sick. He had a genius for friendship with these Africans. "Love begets love"was his motto. His hands were never idle; bricklayer, carpenter, stones man and general director of the social economy of his settlements, he passed his days in intense action.

The sacrifice of great men like David Livingstone, brought about a great expansion of the church in Africa. Truly, there is no other way than the sacrificial way laid down by Christ Jesus.

The true church is perpetuated by sacrifice!

Chapter 9 - Obedience and the Ministry

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

1 Samuel 15:22

The word *sacrifice* brings to us terrifying images of suffering and loss. Obedience seems to be a much milder and less demanding option. We often think that the person who sacrifices is greater than the one who obeys. In fact, our human analysis would rate sacrifice above obedience any day.

Once again, God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. He makes it clear that to obey is better than to sacrifice. The word *better* means "greater, to be preferred, an improved version, superior, enhanced, more acceptable, more favourable, higher quality, augmented and more desirable."

This verse therefore means that it is *greater, to be preferred, superior, more acceptable, more favourable and more desirable*to obey than to sacrifice.

Why is obedience to be preferred to sacrifice? When we sacrifice we often know what we are doing and why we are doing it. We know we are going to suffer and we know the reasons for the sufferings. Why is it more desirable, favourable and more acceptable to God when we obey?

The following reasons will explain why obedience is a greater thing compared to sacrifice.

Chapter 10 - Why Obedience Is Better (Greater) than Sacrifice

1. It is greater to obey without fully understanding, than it is to sacrifice.

The greatest blessings in my life and ministry have come from obeying God rather than from sacrificing to Him. Most of the time, it is not easy to understand the implications of what you are doing.

As I write this book, there are things the Lord has asked me to do that I do not understand.

The reason why we do not understand is because of our level of growth or our stage of maturity in the Lord. I believe that we will never fully understand what God has asked us to do until we begin to do it.

Notice this Scripture. It shows us that it is when you do the will of God that you know His will.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

John 7:17

How could I understand the impact of full- time ministry when I was a lay pastor? Many lay people think they understand what full-time ministry is. But I know that they do not appreciate what it is all about.

Many lay people think they are serving God just as well as anyone else. It is only in obeying God that I found the importance of full-time ministry.

2. It is better to obey a command to do that which you would not naturally do, than it is to sacrifice.

When the Lord directed me into the healing ministry, I did not fully understand the effect that it would have on my ministry. Until then, I had operated mostly as a teacher and preacher.

Naturally speaking, I am a more calculating and logical person. It was not natural for me to move by the Spirit or minister things that are spiritual. It is one of the most difficult things I have ever done and I am ever grateful for the people who helped me to cross that barrier.

Today, I have seen many miracles in the ministry. I can say it is the one thing that has made a great difference to my present ministry.

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

Luke 22:42

It is very unnatural to give yourself to be killed by wicked men. One of the most frightening experiences of mankind is to know that you are going to die. I have had patients who died shortly after being told that they were terminally ill. If you think about it, you would know that it is a terrifying experience.

I remember a lady patient in the hospital where I was working, who had leukaemia. She thought she had some kind of fever that she was being treated for. Even though she had a deadly illness she looked and felt quite well.

One morning, on a ward round, she asked one of my doctor colleagues where she could get her drugs. My colleague pointed across the road and said, “Oh, you can buy these cancer drugs from the Burkitt’s tumor department across the road.”

The lady was silent! She was shocked! Up until this time, she had not been told that she had cancer or any such illness. This lady was so frightened that her condition deteriorated rapidly.

I am sorry to say that within a few hours, she went into coma and died.

The knowledge of approaching death is one of the most terrifying ordeals for any man. Mercifully, God rarely shows us our day of departure.

I always remember the bloodshot eyes of a thirty-year-old man who was dying of chronic renal failure on a medical ward. He knew there was something terribly wrong with him.

One morning as I attended to him, he gripped my hand and said, “Doctor, please help me. I want to go to Germany. I have a brother there who will help me get medical attention.” I was scared because I was only a

medical student, and I did not know what to do.

I looked down and saw his urine bag filled with blood and I knew that only God could save him. I always remember the terror in that man's eyes. I remember the sound of his frightened and pleading voice. "Doctor, please help me."

When I think of my Jesus and how He calmly approached His own gruesome death, I can only marvel. When I think of how He prayed for God to take the cup away, I appreciate His obedience to His father.

Dear friend, it is not natural to walk toward your own death. It is not natural to do things that will hurt and destroy you. To obey is better than to sacrifice!

There are many commands of God that will go against your natural grain. It is time to obey. There are people who give extra offerings to the Lord because they are living in disobedience. These extra sacrifices are intended to compensate for their lives of disobedience.

Watch carefully every Sunday, and you will see many disobedient Christians paying large amounts of money to the Lord, hoping that these offerings will close the eyes of Jehovah.

Mercy!

3. It is better to obey instructions you do not agree with, than it is to sacrifice.

Disobedience often sets in when you do not agree with the instruction given you. When God instructs us to forgive an obviously rebellious person, we may not readily agree. With time, you discover that forgiveness is greater than revenge.

Whenever you are wronged, there is a very self-righteous feeling that makes you want to correct situations and pay back. It is not easy to ignore this feeling!

Great blessings have come my way as I have forgiven the people that wronged me. It is not always easy to agree with God's style of doing things.

And it came to pass…that God…said…Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah;

and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abrahamrose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Genesis 22:1-3

I am sure that Abraham did not agree with the idea to kill his only son but he did what the Lord had asked him to do.

4. It is greater to obey humbling commands, than it is to sacrifice.

Many of God's commands humble us. In fact you could say that the number one characteristic of God's instructions is that they humble you. They often make you look foolish in the eyes of men or in your own eyes.

When the Lord led me to be a full-time minister, I looked foolish in the eyes of other doctors. When I receive offerings or do fund- raising, I look foolish in my own eyes and in the eyes of many people.

I planned to make great sacrifices to the Lord when He called me to full-time ministry. I told Him, "I will give large amounts of money from the hospital that I would set up." However, the Lord told me that He did not want my sacrifices, but rather, He wanted me to work for Him.

The Compensating Lay Pastor

One day, I called one of my lay pastors and asked him to join me for a ride to Kumasi (a city about 272 kilometres from Accra, the capital city of Ghana).

"Will you come along?" I asked. "It would be a privilege to ride with you," he said. "I will slip away from work and join you." As we drove along, and chatted, I told him something that surprised him.

I said, "You are a very hard-working young man."

I continued, "You are always doing extra things for the Lord."

You see, this young man was an architect, and in spite of his job, he was constantly working in the church.

I told him, "You run around the city doing anything that needs to be done. You are one of the most sacrificial and dedicated pastors I have ever worked with."

He smiled gratefully. I went on to say, “You have done so many architectural jobs for the church and never charged a penny. Whenever there is any extra pastoral work to be done, it is you I call on.”

I explained, “That is why I called you to come along with me on this trip. I knew you would be able to get away from work at short notice.” Then I dropped the bombshell, “But you are in disobedience!”

I persisted, “You are disobeying God.”

His smile began to fade.

I explained further, “The reason why you are so active, so zealous and so sacrificial is because you are trying to compensate for disobeying God. God has called you to serve Him in full-time ministry but you are on the run.”

He was shocked. “I never thought about that,” he said. “It never occurred to me that I was just compensating for my disobedience.”

A few months later, this young man gave up his job and obeyed the call to full-time ministry. May God open our eyes to see if we are disobeying Him and trying to compensate! Oh, how we love to compensate for our disobedience. We do not want to humble ourselves before the Lord.

We do not want to look foolish before anyone.

We want to do our own thing and make a convenient sacrifice to compensate for our disobedience.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:8

5. It is better to obey instructions that do not require your wisdom than it is to sacrifice.

Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

Matthew 10:9-10

How will I live if I do not provide for myself silver and gold? Walking with the Lord requires that you put aside your own reasoning and trust in His wisdom.

To work for God requires faith. When you see the measly offering baskets with jingling coins, going around from pew to pew, you wonder, “Can I survive on these collections? “Is this how God will sustain a full-time pastor?”

Years ago, I visited a church in Europe. The American missionary pastor had a thriving congregation. As I sat in his office, I got to talk about the finances of the ministry. I told him proudly, “I am not the kind of pastor who depends on offerings.”

I continued, “I work as a doctor and do private business. I don’t need anyone’s money.” He looked at me quizzically and said, “I see the wisdom in what you are doing but God’s wisdom is higher than yours.”

He explained, “God has a plan and a pattern by which He is building His church. Your plan and your idea will never be superior to His plan.” God’s way is simple!

...they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:14

He said to me, “You are depriving your congregation of a blessing which they receive when they bless the man of God.” I self-righteously thought to myself, “I don’t need any of those offerings.”

However, after that conversation I began to consider that I could not be wiser than God. God must know how to build His church better than I do!

Today, I preach the Gospel and I live off the Gospel. I humbly depend on the method of sustenance that God has designed for pastors. I am not better than any of God’s servants. Instead of sacrificing extra time, doing business and other money-making deals, I give myself wholly to the ministry of the Word and prayer.

It is better to obey than to sacrifice.

6.It takes greater faithfulness and diligence to perform duties that do not appear urgent or important.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:19-20

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Most important things are not urgent. They are often unattractive and uninviting. It is difficult to be faithful with what God considers important.

For instance, praying without ceasing is one of the most important things for us to do. However, we lack a sense of urgency when it comes to prayer.

In times of trouble, you often cannot have faith. When you are in trouble you will feel like calling on God, but fear and anxiety will grip your heart. It is almost impossible to pray under such circumstances. That is when you realize how important it was for you to have prayed!

I have been there in the darkness of life when all theories on faith no longer worked. Have you ever wondered why Jesus did not pray when He was arrested? It is because He had finished praying *before* the crisis began.

When Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus, He would not have said a single prayer before raising Him from the dead. He explained that the only reason He was praying was so that those around would know that He had a Father.

To preach the Gospel and to win the lost is a very important instruction. But often there is no sense of urgency to fulfil that command. The fact that you do not feel any pressure does not mean that it is not important. Pressure does not always signify the importance of a command.

It is a great thing to obey the Lord even when we are not under pressure to do so.

7. The consequence of obeying or disobeying one little instruction can be so great that no sacrifice could ever compensate for it.

Look at the mess we are in because Eve disobeyed the Lord.

When the Lord God asked her the question in the Garden of Eden, “What is this that thou has done?” He was asking:

“What are these wars that you have brought into the world?

What are these sicknesses that you have created?

What is this perversion that you have introduced into the world?

What are these cancers and HIV that you have unleashed on mankind?

Who are these “Saddam Hussein”, “Adolph Hitler” and “Joseph Stalin” characters that you have given birth to?

What are all these funerals and deaths that you have released?

What is this fear and self-preservation that is so dominant in the world?

What is this barrenness and pain to women that you have initiated?

What are these hospitals that you have given us a need for?

Who are these handicapped, blind and lame people that you have produced?”

Little did Eve know what she was releasing in that one act of disobedience. She could not well imagine how much hurt and suffering she was bringing into the world.

This is the one thought that keeps me in the ministry. I think about all the people who would perish if I were to disobey God.

Think about Jesus. Think about all the people who were saved through His ministry. By one act of obedience, He has rescued millions from the throes of Hell.

Perhaps, if He had stayed on for eighty years, preaching in every country, He would not have had the fruits He has today. There is nothing like obedience in the eyes of God. To obey is indeed better than to sacrifice. This is the most important truth you must learn about obedience.

Therefore as BY THE OFFENCE OF ONE judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ONE the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Romans 5:18

I remember the story of a lieutenant in the army who had received orders to fire his artillery at a certain target that was some miles away. As they prepared to fire, the radio operator received a message for the lieutenant to hold his fire. He ran to his officer to tell him the new order.

Something had changed: the position that was formally occupied by the enemy had been taken up by their own troops.

However, the lieutenant was so zealous and eager to fight that he did not listen to the radio operator. He was so bent on getting into the battle that he did not listen.

In the story, the radio operator was struck by a bullet as he pleaded with his lieutenant to listen to the new message. He eventually died before he was able to relay the message. The lieutenant finally opened fire and pounded what he thought was the enemy position.

Soon after that, he received word that his own soldiers had suffered many casualties due to the pounding he had given them. He was told that he had killed many of his own. This man was later court-martialled.

From this story we see how important it is to obey rather than to sacrifice. The young lieutenant wanted to fight at all costs. But the

greater thing to do at that point was to hold his fire and not get involved. Could it be that there are times that we are just to hold our fire? God is like the general who sees the whole picture. He knows when to sacrifice and when not to, He knows when to fire and when not to fire. I have learnt that to obey is better than to sacrifice!

God has asked us not to do things that we would have traditionally done. Could it be that there will be times that it is more important not to preach, than it is to preach because that is what God says?

The Apostle Paul said he had been given different commands by the Lord. At times, he had been commanded to be full and at other times, he had been commanded to be hungry. Paul was intent on obeying the Lord. If the instruction were hunger, he was prepared for it; if the instruction were fullness, he would obey!

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Philippians 4:12

Chapter 11 - The Disobedience of Saul

Saul was a classic example of someone who thought he was wiser than God and could compensate for his disobedience. No sacrifice, no matter how big, is acceptable to God if it is done in disobedience. Read the Bible. There are many sacrifices that God is not pleased with. God is not

against sacrifice, but He wants your obedience first.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Isaiah 1:11

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

1 Samuel 15:22

Chapter 12 - The Disobedience of Joshua

Joshua had a clear mandate from the Lord to wipe out all the heathen nations in the Promised Land. It was explained to him that disobeying this command would result in these very nations becoming a snare to the Israelites.

But if YE WILL NOT DRIVE OUT THE INHABITANTS of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be PRICKS in your eyes, and THORNS in your sides, and shall VEX YOU in the land wherein ye dwell.

Numbers 33:55

However, Joshua left the heathen in three key cities. He obeyed God everywhere except in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. Read it for yourself.

Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua

destroyed them utterly with their cities. THERE WAS NONE OF THE ANAKIMS LEFT IN THE LAND OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: ONLY IN GAZA,IN GATH, AND IN ASHDOD, THERE REMAINED.

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

Joshua 11:18-23

It is very interesting to note the three groups of people of the cities that Joshua left alive: Gath, Gaza and Ashdod. Each one of these three groups of people gave birth to a significant enemy of the people of God. The cities became the breeding grounds for future enemies. The city of *Gath* produced Goliath. Delilah, who was a thorn in Samson's flesh was from *Gaza*. The god Dagon, into whose temple the Ark of the Covenant was taken, was in the land of *Ashdod*.

These enemies lived to fight God's people. No one has ever forgotten about these three evil agents.

The Lord foresaw this and that is why He gave that instruction.

Perhaps, by your disobedience, you are giving birth to future enemies of God. A sacrifice will not prevent the emergence of future enemies. Obedience will.

Goliath of Gath

And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named GOLIATH, OF GATH, whose height was six cubits and a span.

1 Samuel 17:4

Delilah of Gaza

Then went SAMSON TO GAZA, and…loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

Judges 16:1,4

Dagon of Ashdod

And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when they of Ashdod

60 arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

1 Samuel 5:1-3

May the Lord save us from our own modern- day cities of Gath, Gaza and Ashdod! I pray for you, that the Lord will open your eyes to see His truth about sacrifice and obedience. May you receive a revelation that will put these virtues in the right perspective in your life.

1 Excerpt in Chapter 6 is taken from *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible,* page 66. Used by permission.

2 Excerpt in Chapter 8 is taken from *Classic Books for Today No. 196, The Hour Series: An hour with David Livingstone* by Walter McCleary. Public domain.

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