

Week 9

February 26 - March 4

Leviticus 27; Numbers 1-18

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"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind He will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is."

May you, as you read this week, ponder the ways in which your life can be a living and holy sacrifice.

February 26th

Leviticus 27; Numbers 1. "The High Cost of Sacrifice"

The last chapter of Leviticus is concerned with redeeming that which was dedicated to the Lord. The act of redemption was a major part of life for the Israelites. For the 21st century Christian it is not something we often think about. When is the last time you heard someone talk about redeeming? If anything, we use the word to speak of getting even which is not the biblical meaning.

Redemption is an important concept for us though, because if you are in Christ then you have been redeemed (Titus 2:13-14). You may have noticed the cost involved with redeeming in this chapter. If someone or something is going to be redeemed there is always a cost.

So, if we are redeemed and if there is always a cost associated with redemption, then how are we to pay the cost? Fortunately, for you and me, Jesus paid the cost for our redemption (1 Peter 1:18-19). It is a cost far beyond what we could afford.

February 27th

Numbers 2-3. "Sacrificing Our Freedom"

As I reflect on the responsibilities given to the Levites, I am rather overwhelmed. Could you imagine being responsible for taking care of the one place where the true God could be worshipped? Wow! Then I think about the fact that they didn't aspire to this, but that the Lord chose them and they were born into it. Their whole purpose in life was the proper care and operation of the tabernacle.

Now, this is not all that different than it is for us today. Like the Levites, we have been chosen by God and then given a purpose in life. We do not inherit this based on our genealogy, but we are born into it, for every believer is born of the Spirit (John 3:5). The Levites were instructed as to what their purpose was – they didn't get to choose. In the same way, God directs and gives each believer significance and purpose. This is what I mean by sacrificing our freedom. As chosen people, we are not free to declare the purpose for our life. Our purpose, one that will bring real meaning and significance, comes from above.

February 28th Day 59

Numbers 4-5. "Sacrifice of Fellowship"

In the instructions that the Lord gave to Israel through Moses, purity was greatly emphasized. There were a number of reasons for this, and the one given in this passage is because the Lord dwelled in their camp.

Praise God that we live under a covenant of grace and not one of law as the Israelites did. And yet, even though we are called to grace, we cannot ignore the need for purity. God demanded purity because He dwelt among Israel. God now, through His Spirit, dwells in the life of every believer and in the community of believers as a collective whole. His expectation is still purity in the lives of believers and in the community of believers. As a new creation, we are made pure by the blood of Christ, and we maintain purity by confessing our sins (1 John 1:9). Unfortunately, some within the community of faith stop practicing personal confession and knowingly and willingly engage in sin, thus defiling the church. As with Israel, the church must take action to remove those who defile the community (1 Cor. 5:5). However, we must not forget that once purity is restored, through forgiveness and grace, fellowship is also to be restored.

March 1st Day 60

Numbers 6:1-27; 10:1-36. "Dedicated to Sacrifice"

The Nazirite vow was a special way for an Israelite to dedicate one's self to the Lord, and he knew that it came with certain restrictions. We even see this practiced by the Apostle Paul who shaved his head because of a vow (Acts 18:18).

Not every Israelite would make a Nazirite vow, but every believer who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit is already dedicated to the Lord. We do not operate with a list of restrictions like one who has taken a Nazirite vow. In fact, we operate with a higher standard. Romans 12:1 says that we are to be a living and holy sacrifice. We show our dedication by not copying the ways of the world. We are then to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This is different than being the same person with some additional rules. It is a change of the entire person. When we come to faith in Jesus it is more than a ticket to Heaven. It is dedicating our whole life to the Lord. Have you truly dedicated your whole life to the Lord?

March 2nd

Numbers 11-13. "Whining and Complaining"

I have overseen a few short-term mission trips with teenagers, and it has been my experience that the most important rule for keeping the group together and focused is that there is no complaining. Anytime you choose to follow the Lord's leading there will be some form of sacrifice associated with it. Whining or complaining communicates an unwillingness to make that sacrifice.

It is obvious here that many of the Israelites and the foreigners who were with them had reached their limit of personal sacrifice and had begun to complain. They were prepared to return to slavery in Egypt because the sacrifice was too great.

Returning to slavery may sound silly to us. Personal freedom is worth the sacrifice, isn't it? While this may be true, how often are we tempted to return to being slaves to sin because the sacrifice of following Christ is too great? As you follow Christ, remember his sacrifice, and what he gave up to secure your salvation. – David Curtis

March 3rd

Numbers 14-15. "Missed Blessings"

The report from the spies truly tested if Israel trusted God for their protection. Already struggling with the level of sacrifice expected of them, they decided the prospect of engaging the inhabitants of the Promised Land wasn't worth it. The people ignored the fact that the Lord was with them (Num. 14:9).

You might find it easy to criticize their lack of faith as I often have. The harsh reality is that we sometimes do the very same thing. We size up a situation and decide the cost is too great, and instead of trusting in the Lord's protection and provision, we make a fear-based decision and miss out on God's blessings.

Why are we prone to fear? The Apostle John tells us that perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). As broken yet redeemed people our love for God is being perfected. As this process continues fear is diminished and love will increase. As God's faithful love continues to work in our lives, our love for Him grows, and our willingness to sacrifice and follow Him grows as well.

March 4th

Numbers 16-18. "Rebellion of Korah"

God's justice is not often talked about in our churches. We would much rather talk about His love and mercy and grace. The story of Korah, Dathan and Abiram is a vivid reminder that our God is a just God who cannot let sin go unpunished. These men were challenging the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and worse, they were in rebellion to the Lord.

For me, the difficult part of this passage is that the families were punished as well. This is an illustration of God's very own description of himself in Exodus 34:7, "I will show unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations."

As unfair as it may seem, we see the impact parental sin has on children lived out every day. Some will walk away from the Lord because of the sins of their parents. To those who are living with the impact of a parent's sin, know that there is grace available in Jesus to break that bondage of sin.

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

Read 1 Peter 1:18-19. When you think about the price that Jesus had to pay for your redemption, how do you feel?

How do you respond to God's gracious act of redemption?

The devotional for Feb 27th speaks of giving up our freedom for God's purpose in our life. Does this excite you or does it intimidate you?

What is it about following God's will and not your own that you find easy? What about it do you find difficult?

In what ways have you recently sacrificed your own desires in order to follow God's direction?

In the devotional about sacrificing fellowship we talked about the need for purity in the church. How has the process of confession and seeking forgiveness been a blessing in your life?

What makes confession difficult for you?

Personal application: You may not have taken a Nazirite vow, but in what ways have you dedicated your life to the Lord?