

"The Red Heifer  
Pastor Wally Contreras  
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Numbers 19

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At the beginning of the service there was a video about Romans 12:1 ("I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." My body is to be a living sacrifice that is: a) holy; and, b) acceptable to God. I know that being holy means to be set apart for the Lord, but what is required of me in order for my "living sacrifice" to be deemed "acceptable (or pleasing) to God"?)

R.C. Sproul once said: "...and so the way in which in the first instance we function as spiritual priests, dear friends, is by offering the sacrifice of praise to God. That's what worship is. Worship is not entertainment, worship is when the people of God come and as priests lift up their praises, their adoration, their affection to God, just as the priest lifted up the blood offering in the Old Testament, we lift up our reverence and our adoration to God in praise. And we don't come to church and watch the minister do that, we all do that because we are all called as a community of living stones to be involved in this holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. If we just came in here and offered our sacrifices to God on the basis of our own merit, God's response to our sacrifices would be just like it was to Israel when Israel had violated the terms of their covenant, where God said, "I hate your feasts, I despise your solemn assemblies and your sacrifices have been loathsome in my nostrils." And if we today came in here and offered up our spiritual sacrifices to God on our own, they would be just as repugnant to him as those sacrifices were in the Old Testament. But what makes them precious to God and the sweet aroma to him is that our sacrifices are offered through Jesus Christ. Our sacrifice of praise, our spiritual sacrifice is carried to the father through our great high priest who sanctifies our worship. Do you hear what I'm saying? That if it weren't for Christ, our worship would not be acceptable to God at all. It's Christ who makes our worship acceptable and pleasing to God. Review Proverbs 21:3 and Romans 14:13-19. Does this change my answer to the question above? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally spoke of the oft quoted saying "Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." According to The Gospel Coalition's website, "[i]t is always attributed to St. Francis of Assisi—founder of the Franciscan Order—and is intended to say that proclaiming the Gospel by example is more virtuous than actually proclaiming with voice. The closest comes from his Rule of 1221, Chapter XII on how the Franciscans should practice their preaching: "No brother should preach contrary to the form and regulations of the holy Church nor unless he has been permitted by his minister ... All the Friars ... should preach by their deeds." Essentially, make sure your deeds match your words." I will edit this a bit to say this means make sure my deeds

match **His Words** that come out of my mouth. Romans 10:14 challenges me: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (See Romans 10:9 and 13 for something that people need to hear spoken to them.) How often do my actions match His Words and what are some things I need to do to bring my actions more in line with Him?

Numbers 19 deals with the idea of “the clean” becoming “unclean” and what is necessary to be done in order to become “clean” once again. How easy is it for me to confuse physical cleanliness and spiritual cleanness?

But then we come to Numbers 19:13 (ESV) which tells me: “Whoever touches a dead person, the body of anyone who has died, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not thrown on him, he shall be unclean. His uncleanness is still on him.” Again, in Numbers 19:20 (ESV) tells me: “If the man who is unclean does not cleanse himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, since he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. Because the water for impurity has not been thrown on him, he is unclean.” I know that the blood of Jesus covers my sin, but before entering the sanctuary on Sunday mornings to worship Him, do I have any thought or concern at all of being spiritually “unclean” which “defiles the tabernacle of the LORD”, that it “defiles the sanctuary of the LORD”? Should I have any such thoughts? Explain.

Leviticus 10:10 (ESV) teaches me that “[I am] to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean”. According to Benjamin Shaw, a professor of Old Testament at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, FL and a contributor to Legonier.org: “In Mark 7:14-23, Jesus makes clear to His listeners that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him. He is speaking here about the cleanness laws, because defilement was what produced uncleanness in a person. But Jesus says it is not what goes into a man that truly defiles. Instead, what truly defiles a person is what is in his heart—his sinful thoughts, desires, and intentions. By this statement, Jesus is telling the people that those laws of clean and unclean were intended to be a picture that showed them that the totality of their lives was, by nature, unclean. Uncleanness was not sin, but it was a picture of sin. As it was almost impossible to get through a day in ancient Israel without contracting some sort of uncleanness, the Lord by these laws was showing how thoroughly sin had corrupted human life. There was really no escaping it. In reality, their hope was not to avoid uncleanness. Instead, their hope was to be delivered from it. As the author of Hebrews says, the blood of bulls and goats only sanctified for the purification (or cleansing—again, an obvious allusion to the cleanness laws) of the flesh. It is only the blood of

Christ that cleanses our consciences from dead works to the true service of the living God (Heb. 9:13-14).” Jesus said in Luke 11:44 (ESV): “Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.” Likewise, Jesus said in Matthew 23:27 (ESV) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.” How concerned am I (does the thought even enter my mind) of defilement (uncleanness) when it comes to the types and nature of my entertainment or amusement? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally pointed out that repetition in the Bible provides me with the ability to see patterns...the consistency in God’s actions and His nature and character. What patterns have I seen of God’s involvement in my life, if any?

Pastor Wally said in his exhortation that I am “to live each day anticipating Jesus’ return.” Hebrews 13:13 (ESV) tells me: “Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” Regarding the sacrifices to be offered, Spurgeon said: “Apart from Christ there is no acceptable prayer, no pleasing sacrifice of any sort. “[Through him]”— we cannot move a lip acceptably without him who suffered without the gate. The great High Priest of our profession meets us at the sanctuary door, and we place all our sacrifices into his hands, that he may present them for us. You do not wish it to be otherwise, I am quite sure. If you could do anything without him, you would feel afraid to do it. You only feel safe when he is with you, and you are “accepted in the beloved.” Be thankful that at the beginning of your holy service your eyes are turned towards your Lord. You are to offer continual sacrifice, looking unto Jesus. Behold our great Melchizedek meets us! Let us give him tithes of all, and receive his blessing, which will repay us a thousand-fold. Let us never venture upon a sacrifice apart from him, lest it be the sacrifice of Cain, or the sacrifice of fools. He is that altar which sanctifies both gift and giver; by him therefore let our sacrifices both of praise and of almsgiving be presented unto God...The apostle goes on to tell us what the sacrifice is— the sacrifice of praise. Praise, that is, heart-worship, or adoration. Adoration is the grandest form of earthly service. We ascribe unto Jehovah, the one living and true God, all honor and glory. When we see his works, when we hear his Word, when we taste his grace, when we mark his providence, when we think upon his name, our spirit bows in the lowliest reverence before him, and magnifies him as the all-glorious Lord. Let us abide continually in the spirit of adoration, for this is praise in its purest form.” Does this describe my “sacrifice of praise” to God? If so, how so? If not, why not?