

God's Grand Plan for His People (Part 3)

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Date: 30 January 2011

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[0:00] Take your Bibles. I hope that you're brought with you from home.

And open them to 1 Peter chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2 and follow along in your copy of God's Word as I read verses 4 through 10.

One more time, then we'll move on from here. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious.

You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is also contained in the Scripture. That is, this truth is contained in the Scripture.

Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious.

[1:15] And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame. Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious. But to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble being disobedient to the Word, to which they also were appointed.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, who once were not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

All right, so there it is again. We've been spending, well, this is the third Sunday. And the last one, by the way, on this portion of Scripture coming to us from Peter, chapter 1, verse 2.

And so here we are again, and so here's another opportunity for me to just put all this once again in a nutshell. God's grand plan for His people is that He's building a temple for His presence, for His glory.

[2:44] God's grand plan for His glory.

God's grand plan for His glory.

That's what you're saying. The point of action. This is the point of action. For example, an athlete who's training for the 100-yard dash, for example.

And he eats right and watches his weight. He sleeps right so that he's healthy. He exercises right.

He trains right using all of the latest technologies for running, training runners.

And he learns all the latest techniques. He knows how his feet should be placed on the track before him. How his legs should move.

[4:21] And how his body should be positioned. And how he moves his arms and holds his hands. And what position they ought to be in. All the way up to the way he holds his head. And he learns to breathe right.

He's preparing for the 100-yard dash. And he dresses right from head to toe. I mean, you know, the hair's got to be right. Can't be just waving and flopping around.

And, you know, he wears the outfit that is designed to slice right through the wind with the least of resistance. And all the way down to the feet.

You know, just the right kind of shoes and the right kind of cleats. And all of that has to be just right. And yet, all of that is meaningless if he fails to show up at the starting line when the starting gun is fired.

Why? Because the race is where the rubber meets the road. That's the idea behind the expression. Not just the rubber of the soles of his shoes.

[5:18] Though that's the idea. But the idea being the point of action. Now, I give you that little bit of an illustration. So that you understand that that's where we are here in 1 Peter chapter 2.

In this text. In verses 4 through 10. Because verses 4 through 10. And as we have seen. These passages describe in very lofty terms.

Just who we really are in Christ. And that's praiseworthy. And who are we? Well, let me remind you again. We are his spiritual temple built on Christ. The chief cornerstone.

We are his holy priesthood. Chosen royal. Holy. Set apart to serve him. And to do what? To offer up acceptable sacrifices to the Lord.

Now then. The acceptable sacrifices are or is where the rubber meets the road here.

[6:15] In this text. That's what it all comes down to, dear people. That's what all this leads us to. Acceptable sacrifices.

Isn't that what Peter said here in verse 5? Would you look at that again? Just to make sure we see it being built up. A holy priesthood.

That's what he's doing. To do what? To offer. In order that we could offer. Here's his aim.

Here's his goal. In order that we might offer. And the word offer. Or really we could translate it. To put on the altar. To put on the altar what? Spiritual sacrifices.

Acceptable to him. That's the duty of a priest. That's what it all comes down to. That's what God requires. Of his priests.

[7:10] Serving in his temple. That's what God wants. You see. Listen. No Levitical priest. That is those who were of the tribe of Levi. Who were appointed. That task to offer the sacrifice.

No Levitical priest. And also no Aaronic high priest. That is. The high priest who came out of Aaron. None of these guys were allowed. To just simply occupy the temple.

As their place of residence. It wasn't enough to do that. They weren't there just to occupy the temple. Which apparently is what. By the way. A lot of the Lord's priests today.

Are doing in the church. Occupying the premises. Until Jesus comes. Sadly. There's more to it. See. As priests of the Lord.

Let's understand this. Once again. About God's priesthood. As priests unto the Lord. Which is what we are. If you name the name of Christ. Priests of the Lord.

[8:05] As priests. We have both. A glorious privilege. But we also have. A serious. Responsibility.

Now the glorious privilege. Is simply this. We have been granted access. To the very throne of God. Now that's a glorious privilege. But.

The serious responsibility is. That when we get there. We're to offer acceptable sacrifices. I don't mean when we get there. Somewhere out in the future. I mean we go there.

Throughout the day. Every day. We come before his throne. And when we come before his throne. We're to offer him. Acceptable sacrifices. You see. That's the serious responsibility.

We have as high priest. As priests. As his priesthood. Now. My point is. That's where Peter's leading. Here. He's been moving us.

[9:04] To this very important truth. One that we had better not miss. I mean while we're basking in the. The idea of being. His temple. The temple of his presence.

And for his glory. While we're basking in the very notion. Very thought. That he would actually. Set us aside. Choose us. And ordain us. To be his holy priest.

And that giving us. Access to him. While we're basking in that. Glorious truth. We need to understand. That it carries with it. Responsibility. He expects something from us.

That's where. Peter's moving us. And he's been doing that. Because. The offering of. Sacrifices. Or acceptable sacrifices. Is what God desires. From every one of us.

That is his goal. In all of this. This being his grand plan. For us. That's his goal. Alright. So. Just logically speaking. If God's goal.

[10:03] God's aim is that his people. Offer up continually. Acceptable sacrifices. To him. If that's his goal. That's his aim. Then. Well.

What are these sacrifices? Don't you think we might need to know that? What are these? Acceptable sacrifice.

Acceptable sacrifice. And that's what we're going to be learning this morning. But before we get to that. We really need to make sure that we understand something else first.

This is very important. We need to understand. What makes. The sacrifice acceptable.

That's pretty important. And Peter tells us. He tells us in. Three words. And two of the words. Form the name. The name of our Lord.

[11:04] He says there in verse five. To offer up spiritual sacrifices. Acceptable to God. And do you see the last three words? What are they?

Through. Or by. Some of you might have that in your translation. Through. Jesus Christ. Now that's important.

That we get that. First. Before we. Venture out into discovering. What these spiritual sacrifices are. First thing we need to understand. Is what makes them acceptable. And they're acceptable through Jesus. Now what does that mean? Well. I'll tell you what it does not mean.

First. And this. Is good news. It does not mean. That. Your spiritual sacrifices. Your sacrifices. Must be perfect.

[12:03] Before God. Will accept them. Aren't you glad to know that? Because none of us are perfect. And not. Not anything we do for the Lord.

Is perfect. Not in this life. Not in this dispensation. So. Understand that. It does not mean. That all of our spiritual sacrifices.

All of our sacrifices. Must be perfect. Before God will accept them. Also. It does not mean. That our sacrifices. Must be at least. Better than the average. God does not grade on the curve.

Aren't you glad? Thirdly. It does not mean. That your sacrifice. Must meet the standards. Prescribed by a pastor.

Or a church. Or a denomination. Unless of course. The prescriptions. Of what is acceptable to God. Come directly from scripture. And they're not man made. A man contrived.

[13:02] We're not trying to live up. We're not trying to live up to the expectations of a pastor. You're going to fail. We don't live up to the expectations of a church.

Or a denomination. Or Christianity as a whole. It also. It also. By the way. Does not mean. That your sacrifices. Must.

Have the notice. Have the notice. Of God's people. And the praises. Of God's people. To prove. The acceptability.

Their acceptability to God. Do you understand what I'm saying? That our sacrifices. We offer up to the Lord. That somehow. God's people. Must also take notice of them. And so.

We must bounce that off of them. And so. If they're praiseworthy. From God's people. Or those around us. Then they must be acceptable to God. Now the fact is. That quite often proves.

[13:57] Their inacceptability. To God. So what then? What qualifies. Your sacrifices.

As acceptable to God? Well I'll give you four things. Real quick. Then we'll get on to the sacrifices. Because that's really the important point here. Well. How could we say.

This part's not important. But let me give you four things. In order for. Your sacrifices. To be acceptable to God. Number one.

You must be enlivened. By the life of Christ. That is. You must be born again. Do you remember what he said here. In verse four.

Here's the idea. Here in verse four. He says. Coming. Coming to him. Who? Well Jesus. But he identifies him as the living stone. Does he?

[14:51] Coming to the living stone. Rejected the deed of men. But chosen by God and precious. You also as living stones. Plural. The whole idea behind this.

Is that you have come to Christ. That you have been born again. That you are now living stones. Because of the living stone.

You see. Everything depends. Upon you coming to Christ. First. Or there is no way you can offer. An acceptable sacrifice.

To God. You must come to Christ first. In repentance. And in faith. And be born again. He. You see. Christ.

Is the one who gives. Us life. And with that life. Gives us access. To God. And so. There is no getting. To God. In the first place. With any sacrifice.

[15:49] Apart from Christ. And that really is what. As a whole. What Peter is talking about. When he says.

Through. The Lord Jesus. Through his sacrifice. Through. What he has done for you. Through his blood. Through Christ. As you have put your faith in him.

And have been born again. And you now have. Not only access to God. But you also have. Acceptability. That is everything you offer to him. Is acceptable to him. And so you must be enlivened.

By the life of Christ. Secondly. For your sacrifice. To be acceptable to God. You must be empowered. By the spirit of Christ. You must be empowered.

By the spirit of Christ. That is. All sacrifices. Offered. In the flesh. Are unacceptable. To God.

[16:47] In fact. I would even say. Are an abomination to him. Because they are not acceptable to him. I am talking about. All things you might do.

For the Lord. That you do. In your flesh. In your own power. Without. Without prayer. Without. The motivation. To bring glory to God. That you have done for self.

Or done for others. Anything that you do. In the flesh. Any offering you. Lift up to him. That is done for self. And self glory. Without reliance.

Complete reliance. Upon God. In your life. He will not accept it. That is a big one. By the way. And that is one area. That we battle.

And struggle with. Every moment. Of our lives. so in order for our sacrifices to be acceptable to him you must be enlivened by the life of Christ you must be empowered by the spirit of Christ and third you must be informed by the word of Christ because God's word is the qualifier for it all there are no sacrifices acceptable to him if they do not line up with God's word it's God's word that informs us and we're going to get to that when we look at these sacrifices what these sacrifices are we're not going to get them by rationality or logic or putting together some things that we think might be acceptable to him we're going to get them straight from God's word it's God's word that informs us in our worship of him and what God wants from us and what is acceptable to him it makes sense doesn't it so you must be informed by the word of God and then one more for your sacrifices to be acceptable to God you must be inspired by the glory of Christ inspired by the glory of Christ that is you do it for his glory only those things that bring glory to Jesus are acceptable to him because he's worthy of all glory and he will not share it with us he just will not it all belongs to him and so our sacrifices are for his glory and we're inspired to offer them up to him to involve ourselves to be engaged in this holy the duties of the holy priesthood not for our own glory and to build ourselves up and not even to build our church up but to bring him glory because he will not share it with you or me or with anyone acceptable sacrifices are those that honor the Lord and bring glory to his name because they are consistent with who he is they are consistent with his word and his will and his plan for his kingdom and they all must fit in with that to bring him glory alright let's get to it that is where the rubber meets the road what are these acceptable sacrifices well

[20:14] Peter doesn't tell us he implies one of them and we'll get to that a little bit later but Peter does not tell us what these sacrifices are that is in the sense of listing them for us one, two, three that's what we want at least that's the way my mind thinks I say you know Lord just list them here for me but instead Peter makes us search the scriptures for them now why did he do that because they are contained in scripture other places these spiritual sacrifices now remember we want to keep with the metaphor we keep with the imagery here and the imagery takes us back to the Old Testament takes us back to the Old Testament priesthood who's serving in the temple and offering the sacrifices that is placing on the altar the sacrifice let's keep with that image and so if we keep with that image and search the New Testament for specific sacrifices that are communicated to us in the Bible using this imagery of the priesthood then we're going to understand what these acceptable sacrifices are and there are seven of them by the way at least

I don't I couldn't find any more seven of them so here they are acceptable sacrifices are and by the way many of these most of these are very familiar to us they're not going to be any surprises here this morning and we're going to be blessed and challenged I doubt any of these are going to surprise you except maybe one of them and I'll get to that later but here's the first one prayers conveyed through Christ that's number one not number one in importance but I'm just number one as I'm listing them here prayers these are except this is an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord our prayers conveyed through Christ now we're going to have to go as I said other places in the Bible to find these and the one this one is found in Revelation chapter 8 and verse 3

I invite you to turn in your Bibles to it Revelation chapter 8 verse 3 again we're identifying these using the imagery that Peter's provided for us not just Peter but other places in scripture the imagery of the priest offering on the altar sacrifices Revelation 8 verse 3 then another angel having a golden censer came and stood at the altar he was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne and the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the angel's hand that's interesting isn't it it's part of the seventh seal book of Revelation but I want us to focus on this altar mentioned

here in the Old Testament tabernacle and later on in the temple when the temple was built there were prescribed by God there were two altars one of them was the brazen altar called the brazen altar it was outside the temple it was the brazen altar where the coals of fire would be that the priests would use for other things but also it was at the brazen altar where the priests would sacrifice or to serve up and burn up the sacrifice for the sins of the people that's the brazen altar that's not the altar mentioned here in Revelation 8 the second altar is the altar of incense and if you know anything about the temple and its construction and the arrangement of articles of furniture and so forth then you might remember that inside the temple you had the

Holy of Holies alright that's where the Ark of the Covenant would be no one was allowed in there but the high priest remember and then only one time a year and there was a thick veil there that the priest would enter through the high priest would enter through into the Holy of Holies now he would enter into the Holy of Holies from another room so to speak which was called the Holy Place and in the Holy Place there were a number of articles of furniture significant prophetic we're not going to get into that part of it but you had the golden lamp stand you had the altar of showbread and then right at the veil positioned right there right at the opening into the Holy of Holies you had the altar of incense the altar of incense and that's the altar mentioned here in Revelation 8 now the altar of incense was of course an altar where the priest would burn incense

I guess you guessed that but it was there at the altar of incense where the incense would be burned and the smoke would rise up into the very nostrils of God so to speak symbolic symbolic of what the prayers of God's people and while the people are praying on the outside the priest symbolically is offering up those prayers it's a sacrifice the incense is being sacrificed but it's the prayers symbolically that are being offered up as a sacrifice to the Lord and it's a beautiful picture now here in Revelation 8 we have an angel performing that task the task of the priest and it was not the high priest who did this it was the priests and they would do that on a rotating basis and you might remember that Zacharias the father of John the Baptist was performing this very very act as a priest when the angel Gabriel visited him and told him about his son

[27 : 17] John who would be born but here in Revelation we have an angel doing it and he is standing there if you can just kind of try to picture it he is standing there at that altar and he has in his hand a golden censer coals from the brazen altar would be put in the golden censer and the incense would be he would have the incense that it's implied that God gave him to burn and the Bible says that he puts this incense this golden censer he puts it down on the golden altar of incense and he mingles it with the prayers of the saints that are already there that's the picture because the altar is already burning he's not burning the incense it's already burning that is and it signifies our prayers prayers of the saints in immediate sense it signifies the prayers of the martyred saints in the tribulation but it also and that's what's being mingled with the prayers of the saints it's already burning it's burning now by the way symbolic of our prayers being offered up and the smoke the incense the sweet smelling fragrance of our prayers coming up into the very nostrils of God as he breathes breathes those prayers into his nostrils acceptable sacrifices to him beautiful beautiful pictures it's the altar of incense it's the prayers of the saints that's our acceptable sacrifice and what are those prayers what do those prayers consist of well a lot of things but I think you ought to consider this and if we tie this in with Revelation chapter 6 and we're not going to go there but then I think we understand that the primary prayer or prayers that are offered continually as a sacrifice to the Lord might be threefold that the Savior would come is that part of your prayer life

I tell you that's an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord that the Savior would come and that he would be exalted if you go back to Revelation chapter 6 that's what the saints those who were slain that were martyred that's what their prayers consisted of oh how long Lord they're saying come they want the Lord to be exalted that's how we ought to be praying and we have a lot of other things that we pray for and pray about and all those are certainly bonafide prayers and sacrifices unto the Lord acceptable to him they're prescribed by scripture but think about this prayer this as an offering as a sacrifice unto the Lord Lord come Lord Jesus come and be exalted and praying also that Satan would be defeated have you prayed that prayer I got to thinking about this and then applying that to my own prayer life you know I just don't pray this way that's how we ought to pray that Jesus would come and be exalted and that Satan would be defeated and that sin would be once and for all forever destroyed what an acceptable sacrifice unto the Lord along with all the other things that God leads us to pray according to his will let me give you a second sacrifice acceptable to the Lord this one also is a

I guess we would say a no brainer it's what we've been singing about it's been the kind of the focus of our the portion of our worship where we've been singing together and it is this praises centered on Christ because those are the only praises by the way that that are acceptable praises centered on Christ let's look at Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 15 Hebrews 13 and verse 15 we quoted this we read this together earlier in our service as a part of our worship the Bible says therefore by him him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise there it is in fact you have the whole thing here don't you offer that's a word that describes the duty of a priest and offer what sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name that's a tremendous passage that's just think about each word here we don't want to miss the importance of this passage therefore he said which by the way is not in the original text in fact most other translations don't even have therefore there so skip that therefore by him now don't pass over that word by it could be translated through him and knowing that him is Christ then Paul here in Hebrews saying the same thing that Peter said did through Christ therefore through or by him how is that important the emphasis there is we're doing this through him through Jesus not as opposed through the bodies of animals and the blood of animals and he's already mentioned that up there in verse 11 do you see that for the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary he's saying that we offer this sacrifice of praise through him not through animals aren't you glad you didn't have to bring you know some kind of animal to for me to take and slit its throat I don't really want to do that you know and shed its blood aren't you glad you don't have to continually offer up animal sacrifices and the blood of goats and other animals aren't you glad we don't have to do that in order to approach the Lord it's through him through Christ let us now look closely don't miss any of the words here though your words may be a little different in your translation let us do what continually or constantly offer or you could translate put on the altar that's what a priest does to put on the altar what the sacrifice of praise to God now what is this sacrifice of praise that's what we need to understand well he tells us doesn't that is the fruit of our lips what is the fruit of our lips words I bet you knew that that's the fruit of our lips words words spoken but I think also words sung hopefully as you have entered into our worship this morning as

Jonathan was leading us and and we've got the words up here but hopefully they were coming from your heart and these as we sung them and then also as we read the scripture these are the fruit they represent the fruit of our lips our words spoken sung and what about these words words according to the New King James version giving thanks to his name giving thanks to his name giving thanks is one word in the Greek translation Greek Bible it is the word *homologeo* two words put together *homo* I'm sorry but that means same okay same and *lago* we've heard the word *lago* *lago* word or speaking and you put that together it's the same words same words same speaking that's why other translations render it acknowledge like the ESV says acknowledge his name [36 : 48] NIV uses the word confess and I think that's pretty good confess it's all all consistent with the idea of words the fruit of our lips and what are we doing with those words we are acknowledging something we are confessing something with our lips whether verbally as in spoken words or in singing we are confessing specifically certain things and so what's the idea here is is this the sacrifice of praise is to acknowledge verbally the Lord's greatness who he is his attributes his character his nature who he is but also to with with our lips to acknowledge verbally the Lord's goodness what he has done this is this praise this the sacrifice of praise or to put it another way to acknowledge verbally the Lord's glorious worth by the way that is the root understanding root meaning of the word worship worth ship the root of it is that in our worship what are we doing we are praising his worth his worth his glorious worth but not only that but his gracious works we we need to learn that about worship and that is the sacrifice of praise and then

I might add and the reason why the New King James translators rendered it thanking or giving thanks is that really our praise this sacrifice of praise that acknowledges his goodness acknowledges his greatness is melded together in our thankfulness we're thankful for both things his greatness and his goodness who he is and what he has done that's the sacrifice of praise alright so we're talking about acceptable sacrifices prayers conveyed through Christ praise is centered on Christ and third provisions contributed in Christ that is in the name of Christ our provisions possessions maybe we could use the word possessions that starts with the letter P that works for me just came to me aren't you glad our possessions or our provisions contributed in the name of Christ now we're already there in

Hebrews chapter 15 let's stay there and look at verse or 13 rather and let's stay there and look at verse 16 are we together here I'm not hold on just a minute Hebrews 13 verse 16 we quoted this portion of the text earlier as well but do not forget now it's all attached to this idea of offering up a sacrifice do not forget to do good and to share for with such sacrifices God is well pleased now this is talking about our possessions if you have a King James version you might have noticed that it reads but to do good and to communicate forget not what what in the world how do we go from communicate in the

King James to share in nearly every other translation of the Bible well the word is koinonia that famous word for fellowship so the word is fellowship but when it follows this idea of doing good and that word means acts of kindness or beneficence and you put all that together and the idea is very clear the idea is to give your resources to give of your resources sacrificially in order to meet the needs of someone else that's a spiritual sacrifice it is isn't it that's that that specifically is in the imagery of the priest coming in and offering on the altar sacrifices unto the Lord in that imagery we as priests priests unto the Lord we're to offer up sacrifices that is our possessions given contributed in the name of

Christ to those who have need and that's what we do and by the way tack on to that what Paul said here with such sacrifice now don't forget this with such sacrifices God is well pleased not just pleased but well pleased in fact Paul said a similar thing in Philippians chapter 4 verse 18 and it's a bit of a personal testimony for him he's writing to the Philippians and he says indeed I have all and abound I am full having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you so the Philippians had sent some money probably to Paul and Paul says I have all I need and I abound and I'm full and I've received your gift to me but then he goes on to say a sweet smelling aroma an acceptable sacrifice well pleasing to God that's great isn't it so our possessions contributed in the name of [42:56] Christ are a spiritual sacrifice that is well pleasing to God acceptable to him number four acceptable sacrifices are practices conducted conducted for Christ that is the things we do the things we do with our life I want you to look at Romans chapter 6 and verse 13 in fact I'm going to begin with verse 12 Romans 6 and verse 12 therefore Paul writes he says therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts and in verse 13 we get into this imagery of the priestly offering and do not present present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin but rather what present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead and your members that is your hands your feet speaking of the things you do even your mind things you think so you're presenting yourselves to God as being alive from the dead and your members as what instruments of righteousness to God present place on the altar not works of unrighteousness which are attached to who you once were but righteousness righteousness to God for sin he says shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace dear people as

God's people who are being built up into a temple for his glory who are his holy priesthood priests offering up acceptable sacrifices one of those is constantly continually involving ourselves in works of righteousness everything we place our mind on what we use our eyes for our ears for our hands for our feet for as we walk through this life all of those things should be directed toward works and acts of righteousness unto the Lord that's an acceptable sacrifice to him we could spend a lot of time on that let's move to number five number five an acceptable sacrifice our acceptable sacrifices are proclamations communicated because of Christ proclamations what we proclaim we communicate because of

Christ our acceptable sacrifice sacrifice is the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ and here's where we get back to first Peter chapter two and in the imagery the context of the holy priesthood Peter says in verse nine but you are a chosen generation a royal priesthood a holy nation his own special people that and notice that word that that for what purpose that you may proclaim the praises of him who applied the gospel to your life I'm paraphrasing you're proclaiming the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light who once were not a people but now are a people of God who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy the whole idea there is that what you have received from him that is contained in the good news of Jesus

Christ that's what we're to proclaim the gospel the good news it's an acceptable sacrifice unto the Lord so prayers conveyed through Christ just make sure you're getting all these praises centered on Christ possessions contributed in the name of Christ our practices the practice of life conducted for Christ proclamations what we proclaim communicated because of Christ and number six people

converted to Christ now this is interesting Romans 15 and verse 16 Romans 15 verse 16 Paul says something very interesting here he says that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ do you see that here verse 16 Romans 15 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles we know that Paul was set apart for that very task and now notice what he says next ministering the gospel of God and we'll come back to that in a minute when we read on that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable sanctified by the Holy Spirit therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God now what's this about when

[49 : 38] Paul used the word ministering it is a word that really refers to the ministry of a priest in fact some of your translations may bring that out he's ministering in the priest of service that's what he's saying he said I am ministering as a priest the gospel that's what I'm doing for what end so that I just like a priest can offer up the Gentiles to the Lord that is those that are saved I offer them up offer them up to the Lord these Gentiles that I've been called to minister the gospel to I as a minister ministering as a priest I offer those that are saved up to the Lord this this is an acceptable sacrifice he's saying

I offer I offer as a sacrifice an acceptable sacrifice to you oh Lord these Gentile converts to Christ offer them up to you as a sacrifice to you now what what's he saying he's saying I'm a priest and I'm offering the souls of those that I have been privileged to lead to Christ have you ever thought of that as an acceptable sacrifice to God that is that our acceptable sacrifice are those that believe as a direct result of our witness I dare say it's from the silence in the room that you've never thought of that let me show you something out of the Old Testament book of Psalms Psalm 126 verse 5 those who sow in tears shall reap in joy he who continually goes forth weeping bearing seed seed is the word of

God the gospel shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his his sheaves with him now think about bringing them where to the Lord of the harvest because it's his harvest I want you to listen to something Charles Haddon Spurgeon said about that text and listen very carefully rather lengthy quote but it helps us understand he said while the converts that are brought to Christ are all the Lord's own we would agree with that yet they belong also to those who brought them in so God puts it bringing his sheaves with him and

Spurgeon said I like to think of that I like to think of that if God shall privilege me to bring souls to him I shall count them all and say here I am and children which you have given me oh it is blessed to give all the glory to Christ it is the great honor to give all the honor to him but you must have the glory first or you cannot give it to him the glory of leading someone to Christ you can't give it to him until you have that the sheaves must be yours or evidently you cannot carry them honestly and offer them to him thus does God put high honor upon Christian workers who by making the souls as it were completely theirs the sheaves their sheaves they threw themselves into the work they made the work their very life they wept they cried and pleaded as they sowed that's a tremendous understanding of that passage

I would ask you how long has it been since you offered a soul to the Lord I don't mean just offering up a person in prayer and interceding that God would touch their hearts and save them we need to do that but I'm talking about a soul one when's the last time you offered a soul to the Lord and said I offer to you oh Lord this saved soul as a sacrifice acceptable in your sight but you say that that's God's sovereign work yes it is it is his sovereign work but he will not do it he will not do it apart from your ministry of the gospel you know that and God go out there and just independently and directly save souls he certainly can but God's desire is to work through you to share the gospel and to win souls to

[55 : 43] Christ and it's all his work yes it is but he will not do it apart from you now he's going to get it done with or without you personally but God's going to do it through his people and if you're one of his people then listen the glorious the glorious privilege and opportunity to offer up souls saved unto the Lord now I'm going to say something to you that I think we all need to hear some of God's people some of God's people are so sensitive to the sovereign grace of God and salvation that really we avoid all kinds of intentional evangelism because we don't want to get involved in the sovereign work of God and so we'll just wait until they're ready and wait till they come and wait till they ask the question and wait till they show some kind of emotional response and so we just don't tread on that quote holy ground that's the sovereign work of

God and so we don't engage ourselves in any intentional pleading with people to come to Jesus come to him repent and believe on him and so we avoid all of that how about those children God

has placed in your home are they saved well I hope one day they will be well I hope so too but have you asked them have you have you sat down with them and said this is what God's word says about salvation will you trust Jesus repent and trust him now have you ever asked him that so I'm waiting for the preacher to do that don't wait for me to do that what about those grandchildren are they saved are they have you asked them have you pleaded with them to come to Christ what about the kids and teenagers right here in our own church who are part of the ministries of the church are they saved who are you waiting for that's God's work yeah but it's your work too have you asked them those kids in Awana's in Sunday school your Sunday school class not just kids but even young adults and older adults are they saved who are you waiting to bring the gospel to them who are you waiting for that's that's our business God's called us to that and the glorious thing is and it doesn't take anything away from the majesty and sovereignty of God and salvation that when Christ is so merciful to use our witness to lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ that we can offer them up to the Lord as an acceptable sacrifice that we can bring our sheaves with us to him not for our glory don't misunderstand it's all for his glory one more very quickly persons committed to Christ now this is kind of the catch all and I end with this and we're not going to spend time delving into it it's a familiar passage

Romans chapter 12 and verse 1 I started to begin with this one and I chose to end with it because this one really includes all of it it really is more in keeping with the idea that Peter conveys that we are the sacrifice ourselves every part of it Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable to God which is your reasonable service or your service of worship your spiritual service of worship and do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God this is a tremendous passage and we'll have to wait until

I get there in Romans on Sunday nights to really pick this apart but in essence the idea is that when we as priests approach the altar the altar of sacrifice we don't approach with some slain animal instead we climb up on the altar ourselves and we commit to him soul our souls body every part of our body mind because he mentions the mind here and will it's all right there soul brethren by the mercies of God God has saved you we offer our soul body he says present your bodies a living sacrifice mind be transformed by the renewing of your mind be being constantly transformed by the renewing of your mind and will so that your life every aspect of your life everything you do everything you commit to do every thought every action every plan all of it is consistent with the will of God proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of

[62:07] God soul body mind and will see as priests of the Lord we offer sacrifices and we are that sacrifice everything about us with nothing left out now to finish this off God's grand plan that includes tremendous blessings in this life oh yes but also glorious blessings in the life to come absolutely that grand plan applies only to those who come to the living stone who believe and are not ashamed not put to shame believe in the chief corner stone that's what God's grand plan applies to those many of you maybe most of you maybe all of you

I don't know but those to those who disbelieve disbelieve Jesus to those who have rejected Jesus as their chief cornerstone foundation of their life Jesus has become a stone of stumbling a rock of offense put it this way he said he is the sovereign lord of the universe we either believe him and trust him as the foundation of our lives or we reject him and spend the rest of our lives falling over him there is no other alternative so where are you in that have you come to him believed on him or are you even now disbelieving disobedient to Jesus my invitation to you is to come to him come even now right