

Welcome to the seventh-day Sabbath, brethren.

Well, we've actually changed locations from the place where we lived before, so you might hear different noises. In the past you might have heard a train, a rubbish truck, could have heard some birds. You might have heard different noises in the background. Well, we've actually changed locations and I'm not going to guarantee that there's not going to be noises in the background, because now we actually have a lot of magpies around in the area. We also have a bus that actually goes past now and again, or some log trucks. Because the area we live in used to be mainly dairy, well, in one of those dairy areas, because of the economy, etc, sold off their land to plantations and they're growing Blue Gum trees and Pine Trees. So there's a massive logging area where we now live and there's often trucks that go past. Now, in times past the train was quite close. Well, the train is about a km or so away, it may or may not go through. So I hope that the noises that you hear in the background, that they won't be too distracting. There is a plantation mill not far from us and now and again it starts up and can be quite loud, although I don't think it'll be picked up in the sermon.

The title of today's sermon is *Spiritual Sacrifices*.

God established the physical sacrifices of the Old Testament for a purpose. Now, they were for a physical purpose, but the more important part was the spiritual purpose, which is for us. Because the spiritual purpose, they could not understand, they could not "see." But we can see that those physical sacrifices pointed to something that was going to be spiritual. Now, the title of the sermon being *Spiritual Sacrifices* points to what we have to do. We have to sacrifice something. We have to sacrifice ourselves, and that is spiritual. Someone physical can't actually do it - not to the intent that God has set out in His word.

By going back and looking at some of these sacrifices, the physical sacrifices, we can come to understand and see the spiritual aspect of them. There are some spiritual principles or parts that God has allowed in the Old Testament that He revealed, which was spiritual in nature but to mankind they were seen as just physical things. But they weren't.

We're going to start by looking at Psalm 51:1. We're going to read all of Psalm 51 because it actually points to much about the physical sacrifices and the importance of them, but the greater part, which was the spiritual component. So while you're turning to Psalm 51, if we look at it from a carnal aspect of what it was like to have to give up tithes and offerings or to sacrifice to give offerings, well, this was not easy. Because the natural carnal mind is selfish by nature, it's disposition, and therefore, when God instructed the natural mind to do something - like not to give a sacrifice that was blemished - well, it was very difficult for a natural mind. Because if you looked at things, and

let's just say you had twenty sheep and you had twenty lambs, for example, and you knew you had to give a tithe, 10% (and many of those things were given or they were redeemed), well, what was the thinking? Well, naturally you would look at those sheep and go, "Hmmm. They're all looking well. But that one there looks a bit sick, and maybe I'll give that one." Because that would be the natural tendency. Well, we can do the same thing spiritually today because we can switch back and look at things in the wrong light. We're using our natural carnal mind to look at things and there's a great danger in that. Where God requires us to give now spiritual sacrifices, they have to be motivated by God's holy spirit. They can't be motivated by selfishness. We're going to look at this from that very point of view.

Psalm 51:1—Have mercy upon me, O God (O Eternal), According to Your loving kindness. Well, this vastness of God's love, we can't even comprehend it. God's love and God's mercy, to even to begin to understand it is an incredible thing because God's love and God's mercy is about how He sacrifices. For example, God's love is sacrificing love. God gives up something for us, and yet we don't always give back in return, which we should, but we don't. Because we are natural, we are carnal. Well, God having mercy on us, very beginning of that mercy was we have physical life. Incredible thing to come to understand, to come to see that physical life itself is a great mercy of God. Because if we did not exist, if we don't exist we cannot enter Elohim - not possible. Because mankind has to exist first to be able to have that opportunity to enter Elohim. If we don't have life we do not have that potential. So the great mercy that God has given us in the very beginning was that we have physical life, we have the spirit in man in us, we have consciousness. Incredible thing this is! What mercy God has shown! Because God's plan, of course, is for all mankind, not just for us.

"According to Your loving kindness." Well, God is merciful. And the other aspect of mercy is we were called - how merciful is that? - out of all mankind, or awakened. For example, that's what I feel. I feel incredibly blessed of God's great mercy that He gave me the eyes to see spiritually. It's just an incredible thing. It gives me goose bumps when I go back over that because it brings back so many memories about God's mercy to Chris and myself, and we think, "Why us? Out of all the thousands of people that have been in God's Church through the eras, and now at this particular time, why us? Out of all of Laodicea, why us?" Well, the mind just boggles. And it does give us goose bumps. Just think, God in His mercy and His loving kindness has awakened us for a purpose. And we continue on in that purpose, which is to overcome ourselves, to serve the best we can in the ways that God points us to serve. And if things change, things change, because we understand that it is according to God's loving kindness that He has given us spirit life, the fact that we have God's holy spirit living and dwelling in us.

Well, the other aspect of mercy, which is to do with forgiveness. How great is God that He is willing to forgive *if* we are willing to repent! And it is according to His loving kindness. He loves us so much. He wants to give us His love. He wants us to have His thinking. Well, how merciful is God that He has given us that opportunity now?

According to the multitude (vastness) of Your tender mercies. How magnificent is God that He will do this for us when we're not worthy. Now, we were created a particular way, natural carnal mind. And God, in time, would work with a select group, 144,000 and others that are going to live into the Millennium for a purpose. And that same purpose applies to everyone that has existed, the opportunity and the potential to enter God's Family, to live forever, to have this mind of mercy, to have this mind of love, to have this sacrificing love. That's what we'll end up with.

Well, our life now is about learning to come to understand, come to see the meaning of sacrificing love, because sacrificing love is a spiritual sacrifice. To love somebody else requires God's holy spirit. It's spiritual in nature. And spiritual sacrifices is about taking this natural carnal mind and sacrificing it.

Now, when we sacrifice something, go back into the Old Testament and we look at what sacrificing was and what sacrificing is then, we understand now that that's been done away with the death of Jesus Christ, because he sacrificed and got rid of all the physical sacrifices. But then a change to something else - to these spiritual sacrifices. So what does it really mean? It means about having this natural carnal mind and when God's spirit interacts with our spirit and we see something we have to make a choice. We have to choose to sacrifice ourselves to the benefit of others. We have to choose to sacrifice something. We have to give it up.

So when we look in the Old Testament, it was the same thing. They have to give something up. They have to go against what the natural mind really wanted to do. Because the natural mind doesn't want to give 10%. It doesn't want to save another 10%. And it certainly doesn't want to do a third tithe and give another 10%. It doesn't want to do that! "What do you mean I've got to sacrifice another 10% every third year for the purpose of giving to others?!" Well, we understand under that under this current system of mankind that the government has taken that responsibility of supplying support for others - called government benefits. But in the future we will have this opportunity to then again to sacrifice. Because tithing is sacrificing. It's obedience. Well, obedience is sacrificing because we've got to deny our selfishness, what we really want to do ourselves, how we feel about something. We've got to change our thinking and we have to learn to sacrifice. Well, they are all spiritual in nature.

Now, we can look at this another way, which is we can sacrifice something. For example, obedience to God through tithing is a sacrifice. It's a spiritual sacrifice. We do it for a particular reason, which is we love God and we want to obey God. Well, it does require a sacrifice. But in that, if we give a 1st tithe to the Church with a wrong intent or a wrong motive - in other words there's an aspect of bitterness in it - it's a *worthless* sacrifice and it's not a spiritual sacrifice, it's a physical one. We do it physically because, well, we have to, otherwise we're disobeying God and the consequences of disobeying God is we won't be in fellowship. That's the aspect of what we need to look at. Why are we doing what we're doing and are our spiritual sacrifices, what we do in the way of denying ourselves for the benefit of others and loving others, to benefit others (in other words, give up

something that we really want for the benefit of others). If there's an aspect of begrudging or bitterness or jealousy or envy involved in that sacrifice it's a worthless sacrifice.

Now, this principle applied to Israel when it was required to give physical sacrifices because it tested their attitudes. Now, they did not have God's spirit to understand the spiritual component, but they still had to work through their minds about why they were doing what they were doing and was it for obedience or "Well, I'm going to give the worst of the lambs because I can get away with it." All of those things, they were tested. Well, we're going to be tested the same. We are going to be tested the same, only it's going to be on a spiritual level.

Continuing on in **Psalm 51:1—According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgression.** Which is about us repenting and God forgiving sin, because of His great mercy. He is willing to blot out our transgressions, willing to get rid of them totally. Now, repentance is a form of sacrificing as well. Scripture doesn't go into it as well - it talks about the sacrifice of thanksgiving and other things, but when you think about it when we repent we're putting to death something, which is sacrificing. We're putting to death our selfishness because we regret the selfishness, we regret the thought, the word or the action, and we think, "Oh, that was just stupid! That was wrong. I've done it again! I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't have done that." Well, we can go to God and He will forgive us our sin. He will blot out our transgressions based on our sincerity and based on our repentance.

Just like sacrificing animals - that you can go to God and not be sincere. They could go to God and give an offering but not be sincere, doing it with a bad will, ill will. You know, "Boy, I hate giving this but I'm going to do it or I'm going to get put out of the camp!" Same thing. We can go to God and not be truly repentant. We can say the words but we may not be truly repentant.

Verse 2—Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me, which is to forgive me, **from my sin.** Based on our desire for forgiveness. We should desire to be forgiven. Well, we have to have the same desire towards others. Because we can only be forgiven as we forgive others. So we can go to God and we can ask God to forgive us our sin. We've done it again, we've said this, we've thought that, or whatever it is based on pride we've done it, yet we hold this grudge or we hold this envy or this jealousy toward somebody else? Well, God makes it very clear that we will not be forgiven our sin before Him - in other words, the flow of God's holy spirit will remain cut off from us - because we are not willing to forgive somebody else. Somebody else can do something and it may affect us and we feel maybe even offended by it (which we shouldn't take offence), but maybe we do, maybe we just can't let it go, or maybe the envy or the jealousy or whatever it may be we have toward somebody else, we just simply don't like the person. Whatever that may be in our thinking, well, if we hold that and we go to God for something else in our life and say, "God, forgive me, and in Your great mercy, etcetera..." and yet we hold on to that thinking and we're not willing to change our thinking towards that person and actually pray about them so that they are benefitted by God, that God will intervene into their life and bless them, we won't be forgiven. Unless we've got the right

attitude about others, unless we love others we can't expect God to forgive us, because we're not getting rid of our sin.

Verse 3—For I acknowledge my transgressions. So there is an acceptance of the responsibility for our sins, because we are personally responsible for our sins. Nobody can make us sin. Nobody can make us sin; we choose to sin. **And my sin is ever before me.** So we can see ourselves. So part of this whole process about spiritual sacrificing is the ability to see ourselves, the ability to "see" that it does take God's holy spirit to reveal ourselves to ourselves, then for us to actually offer something spiritually it requires us to "see" what we're really like. We must see our nature, that everything within our nature - and I underline the word there, everything in our nature is selfishly motivated. No matter what it is there is always something there. Now, we don't always see that. God reveals things progressively to us, that we begin to see ourselves, that we're not worthy of anything, and that we, by ourselves are just purely selfish. Everything we do is selfish. God reveals ourselves to ourselves and then we start to acknowledge these sins because we accept personal responsibility for the sin. We begin to see ourselves. Well, as we see ourselves we see that we do not sacrifice as God requires. It's not about physical things, it's about spiritual things. We do not give up enough of ourselves.

Now, one of the scriptures that comes out, which I've always found very challenging, personally, is the one that says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." "Do good to those who spitefully use you." Now, "to do good." This is about a process of thinking. It's about the way we think. To love somebody else is a change of thinking because our nature is we love ourselves. Now God requires us to give up ourselves, to *sacrifice our selfishness* and love others - which is to have a right desire towards them. Because the reality is we cannot have a sacrificing love unless we've got a right desire for others and towards others. We desire the best for others. That's our base principle. That's what we desire. We desire everybody in the Body of Christ to overcome sin and to enter Elohim. We hold nothing! We don't have any jealousy or envy, or any spite, or any revenge. We hold nothing against anybody else. That's our starting point. Now, when we have that as a starting point we then have the capacity, powered by God's holy spirit, to sacrifice for others. Because if we don't desire the best for others why would we ever sacrifice for them? Well, we don't desire the best for them, so why would we sacrifice? Well, we're not going to. Our starting point, based on God's holy spirit, is that we must have the right foundation. The right foundation is we must have God's holy spirit, *then* we have to choose to desire the best for everybody else - the *best* for everyone else whether they're in the body or out of the body. That's our foundation. That's our starting point.

Now, with that in place we then can now choose to sacrifice for others because we love them, we want the best for them. Whatever that best is, that's what we want. We want them to progress. So when somebody else is honored with an ordination, for example, which means they've got a greater responsibility before God (and it's hard work), well, we should rejoice at that. And if somebody is removed for the purpose of they've fulfilled a role or the lesson has been learnt that they have to learn, well, we still rejoice that God is working in their life, because all are on the same path, which

is the path of salvation, the hope that lies within us. That's what we all hope for. So our foundation is based on we desire the best for others - everybody - in and out of the Body. Now, based on that, we can actually move forward.

Continuing on in **verse 4—Against You, You only** (Yahweh Elohim), **have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight.** Now, God knows everything and God is aware of everything, so there is no such thing as "hidden sin." There's hidden sin in us because we deceive ourselves because of our stupidity and our thinking, to think that we can sin and nobody knows about it. Well, that may be true, there could be sin in our life that nobody human knows about it. But God knows about it because there is *nothing* hidden from God - not one thought, not one word, not one action. God know everything. And God will give us time to work through the sins that He shows us and reveals to us by the power of His spirit. We hear the sermon and we may be pricked in the conscience and think, "Oh, that's me! That's me! I've let down 'here'," or, "I've done 'this,'" or "I've done 'that.'" Well, God gives us an opportunity to repent and He promises to forgive us if we forgive others. And we realize that we've only sinned against God. "Against You, and You only have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight." Because God sees everything.

That You may be found just when You speak, talking about Yahweh Elohim, **and blameless when You judge,** which is justify. So when God decides to do something, it's not an unjust thing, it's justified. It's a justified action because God is blameless. God is blameless. Because everything God does is done in sacrificing love. So what is coming on this earth is done out of love. God has sacrificed from the very beginning. God sacrificed peace. God sacrificed peace so that He could have a family that would live in peace.

So we started with peace and we're going to end up with peace. What a marvelous plan that God has. And it's an incredible thing if we only "see" it. And this whole process that we are in is moving from physical sacrifices, which God established for a purpose, to end up having spiritual sacrifices, which is why the Body of Christ exists. We exist to sacrifice self. We exist for the purpose of spiritual sacrifices.

Continuing on in **verse 5—Behold, I brought you forth in iniquity, and into sin my mother conceived me,** which is to give birth. So he's been given life, which is a great and wonderful blessing. Just our physical life is a blessing because it opens up the potential for true spirit life. **Behold, You,** talking about Yahweh Elohim, **desire truth in the inward parts.** Now, this is an incredible statement. This is what God desires. It's not about physical sacrifices. It's not about all the physical things. God desires truth, which is the way we live towards others in the *inward* parts, which is in our thinking. We have been given life for the purpose of life, spirit life. And God desires that we live the truth and we live it towards others.

Now, living the truth means we're going to have to sacrifice. Let's take the Sabbath, for example - what is Sabbath keeping? Well, Sabbath keeping is obedience to God. It requires God's holy spirit for the reason we do it, which is our motive and intent, because we want to rest spiritually on the

Sabbath day, which is we want to hear from God. I was asked a question, which I think is a good question, that I was asked some time back, and it was in regards to what did I mean about physical rest, which is understandable, we stop work, we don't earn an income, we stop physically and we don't do our desires that we want to do, which is mow the lawn and all the other things. We stop. We stop physically and we rest physically. But spiritually resting on the Sabbath, what does that really mean? Well, what I was referring to and implying is that there is a spiritual rest on the Sabbath. Now, we know there is a spiritual rest to come, which is when we enter Elohim. That's the rest the Bible talks about. But the spiritual rest that I was referring to is that we have to stop with our thinking and we have to now listen to what God has got to say. Well, that's resting spiritually because we rest, we shut off our mind to physical carnal things and selfishness and we take on the truth in the inward parts. We take on God's spirit in our minds and God's spirit will work with our spirit so that we have this potential to be a begotten son of God, to be a son of God in the end. It's amazing what God has planned for us.

So here David is saying that he was conceived, but what God really desired was truth, which is the way we live towards others, the way we live towards God and the way we live towards others in the inward part, which is in our thinking, which is all to do with these spiritual sacrifices that we must do.

And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. What is "wisdom"? Wisdom is God, God's thinking, the way God is, the Word of God, the intent of God. It's all wisdom. It's based on God's holy spirit. To have true wisdom requires God's holy spirit. Now, if we have God's holy spirit and we implement what God places into our life and we live it - truth in the inward parts - we will love one another, we will learn to love one another and we'll learn to sacrifice our selfishness to benefit others. Now, as we sacrifice to benefit others we're demonstrating we're living love. Because God is love and God sacrifices, He gives up for us. And He loves us so much - He has all these tender mercies, His kindness towards us - that He's willing to forgive us! What an incredible thing that God does for us.

Verse 7—Purge me with hyssop, and cleanse me; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness. Well, when do we hear joy and gladness? Well, when we're listening to sermons we hear joy, because it is a joy to hear God reveal to us His plan of salvation through the Holy Days. And when we see ourselves it should be a joy. Repentance is a joy. Now, most people wouldn't say that's true, you admitting your wrong is a joy. Well, it is before God because it's a great joy before God when anybody who has been called into this gift of repentance and receive God's holy spirit, when they "see" that they are wrong, when they "see" sin in themselves, what a great joy it is to God to see a begotten son admit that they are selfish and they are wrong and they don't want to be this way anymore. How joyful God must be when that happens! What an incredible thing. And He wants to give, He wants to sacrifice for us. He wants to give us mercy. He wants to give us forgiveness. He wants to give us His spirit. He wants us to give us His Family. He wants to give us everything that He has created. He has created all of this to give to us. We don't understand all the

aspects of that, but God is a God of giving. He wants to give all that. The joy He must experience when He sees us repent.

Now, as David is reading this, "Make me to hear joy." When we hear about God's plan we should rejoice. It's a joyful thing to "see" Passover, to understand Passover, to understand the Days of Unleavened Bread and the spiritual component of that. What a great joy to see self, to "see" God's plan in our life. Now, we each individually should be able to see God's plan in our life. God's sacrificing love towards us, we should see all this in our life. "and with gladness," we accept it. Brethren, we don't hold sin against others. God will forgive us as we forgive others. So no matter what somebody does, other than the unpardonable sin (which we're not going to go into today), God will forgive, unless they have set their mind against God.

Continuing on in **verse 8—That the bones which You have broken may rejoice.** Which is we, brethren, have to see spiritually. It's not a physical thing, it's a spiritual thing. We have to "see"⁹ what we are going to become, because it's about God's plan of salvation. Verse 8 says, "Make me to hear joy," which is all about God's plan for us, "and gladness." How exciting is all this? "That the bones which You have broken may rejoice." Because we're going to have to be broken. The spirit that we have, this pride filled selfish spirit has to be broken! Has to be broken! It's the only way to enter Elohim. We have to overcome our selfishness. We have to learn to sacrifice our desires for the benefit of others.

Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Verse 10—Create in me a clean heart, O God. Now, this is an incredible scripture, because only God can do this. We can't do it of and by ourselves. It's absolutely impossible. We can't see ourselves without God's holy spirit. Well, David in this Psalm is saying, "Create," which means there's something in us but now it has to be a new creation; "Create in me a clean heart," which is a new attitude about things. It's about sacrificing love. So create in me this desire to serve others. Create in me this desire to give up of myself, to sacrifice my selfishness. Put that in me. Because God has to give it to us. Then we have to make the choice. "Create in me a new heart," this brand new attitude, this new way of thinking, this right attitude. "Transform my mind, O Eternal, O God," help me with this, **and renew**, which is repair, **a steadfast spirit within me**, which is this right attitude, this new mind. Make it new, which is to renew, which is to make it brand new. "Put your spirit in me. Help me. Cleanse me. Forgive me. And help me to continue to fight. Continue to help me to love, to love others, to desire the best for others and be willing to put to death," which is to sacrifice, "my own selfish desires." Now, there's many of them and God reveals them to us progressively. Because if we saw ourselves as we really are from day one, most of us would just give up. It's just all too hard. But God is merciful, God is gentle, God is kind, and God is patient, and therefore, God reveals to us progressively things and God does create in us a new way of thinking, a new mind, a clean heart. "And renew," or repair, "a steadfast spirit within me." Make it new. Well, that's what we're about, brethren.

Why are we in the Body of Christ, the Church of God? Well, there is other reasons and service and other things, but the main focus is about this conquering, this creating a new man, conquering selfishness, sacrificing love, sacrificing our selfishness.

Verse 11—Do not cast me away from Your presence. "Don't cut off your flow of your holy spirit. Do not let sin dwell with me. Reveal to me the sin that I have and grant me the gift of repentance, and do not cut me off from the flow of Your spirit." So, "Do not cast me away," which would be a terrible thing to happen, to be cast away from God, be cut off from God's holy spirit so that we can't see spiritually, so that we can't sacrifice to the benefit of others. We just become more and more selfish?! What a horrid thing. "Do not cast me away from Your presence," God's presence, **and do not take Your holy spirit from me.**

Now, this scripture has always meant something to me particularly. It's a fearful thing. It's a fearful thing to lose God's holy spirit. My mind sometimes just can't go there, that how desperate and how bad that was. Yet that has actually happened to me personally, and it's happened to everybody that was awakened. We all went to sleep. Laodicea - we all went to sleep. And God did take His holy spirit from me. Frustrating part is that I didn't know it! I didn't know it! And only God could give back the flow of His holy spirit. Only God could grant me the gift of repentance, give me the eyes to see. My mind was blinded. I couldn't see. I just couldn't "see." I thought I could, but I couldn't. And then to come to realize that I had been asleep and that I was spiritually *dead* - because God had taken His holy spirit from me - that even though I thought I was sacrificing they were physical things. They were done out of selfishness, out of pride and many other motivations that a person has. But they're all driven by pride. Well, that was me. And then to be awakened and to "see" one's self again and to "see" the truth... to see the truth. Because God desires truth in the inward parts. God gave truth to the Church, now He expects His people to live it, to implement it.

Well, we've been given the truth about understanding love and understanding what a spiritual sacrifice really is. Well, we can only do that if we have these right desires in the beginning. Because if our foundation is faulty, if we don't have, you know, the best for others in mind and we have envy and spite and jealousy, well, it's not going to work. God's love is not going to be there because we're cut off from the flow of God's holy spirit and God will take His spirit away from us if we continue down that path.

So we need to throw ourselves at the mercy of God and ask God to give us the capacity to "see" ourselves and to see our selfishness and to motivate us to desire the best for others.

Verse 12—Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, because this is an incredible thing. This "joy of salvation" which is about God's plan for mankind, God's plan for each and every one of us. "Restore to me the joy"; there's a great joy in this when we understand that God is working with mankind and at some point He will begin to call and He will begin to awaken. This is an incredible joy. Well, we have this joy now. Well, it can be restored in us now if we begin to draw closer to God and if we begin to desire the best for others, to sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others - not only in the Body, but

outside of the Body as well, to give up our selfishness for all people, for all mankind. **And uphold me with Your generous spirit.**

Verse 13—Then I will teach transgressors. Now, how do we teach transgressors? Well, it's not about going out on the street corner and yelling out, "Repent!" It's about the way we live. It's by our example. So when I, "will teach transgressors Your ways," we will live the truth. What an incredible thing that we have to do. Brethren, we are called to live the truth. So it's nice knowing all these things and 57 Truths and many other truths that really exist, and from the book we know all these things, you read these things and they're exciting to us and they're wonderful things, but none of it means *anything* unless we live it and that we have that right example to others. So what is the way that we "will teach transgressors Your ways?" Well, it's about spiritual sacrifices. It's about being thankful. It's about rejoicing before God. It's about repentance. It's about living the truth. It's the way we live. It's the way we treat others. So we can have all this about, yes, we've got all these truths, and yes, God has called us and God's awakened us and all that. That's all exciting. (People don't understand it.) But as people are being called and awakened to what we have been given by God, what is the key to all of it? It's not the knowledge. It's not just the knowledge! Knowledge is important. The key to it is God's holy spirit and living the truth, living love, living sacrificing love to others. *That's* the key! That's what makes us different. We have God's holy spirit, we are sacrificing our selfishness. That's what makes us different.

Now, if we don't sacrifice ourselves, if we don't have these spiritual sacrifices, what are we? We're people with knowledge. We're just people with knowledge. Well, what's the good of all that in the end? It's worthless, brethren! Because in the end knowledge of and by itself is just knowledge. We know nothing compared to God, nothing. We know a little bit. We only see dimly, really, compared to the glory of God and the magnificence of God. He's existed for all eternity. So we teach others as they come into the Body of Christ, not by blabbing out everything, we teach others by living sacrificing love. By these spiritual sacrifices, that's how we teach others *God's* ways. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, God's ways, not our ways, because our ways are selfish by nature. We teach God's ways which is sacrificing love by the way we live it. By living sacrificing love, that's how we teach others. **...and sinners shall be converted to You,** to God, to the truth. They will see our example that we are willing to suffer for righteousness sake, that we're willing to sacrifice our desires to benefit others. We are there to help others, and when they're called we will teach them by our example.

Verse 14—Deliver me from sin, or "from blood guiltiness," which is murder and no love, which is a lack of love. **Deliver me from blood guiltiness,** (blood, sin), **O God, the God of my salvation,** because God is the one who is saving. God saves. No one else can save. There is no other being that can save us. God does through Jesus Christ, through the truth that He gives through the power of His holy spirit. **And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness,** God's way. We can sing, we can rejoice at God, what God has given to us about our calling and many other things.

Verse 15—O Eternal, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. And we do that by? Coming before God and living the truth, sacrificing ourselves for the benefit of others. That's how we show forth love to our neighbor, our love to God.

For You do not desire sacrifice, which is physical rituals or physical killing of lambs and goats and bulls. God doesn't actually desire that, **or else I would give it.** So David is saying, "God, You don't really desire to see these animals be sacrificed." Because they were there for a purpose to show something spiritual in the future. "Or else (he) would do it." He would go and do it. **You do not delight in burnt offerings.** Which is part of this whole process of giving tithes or offerings or sacrificing something.

The sacrifice of God are a broken spirit. So what does God desire from us? God desires that we are repentant. That's where the joy is for God. God has created us for a purpose. He reveals ourselves to ourselves and God's desire for us is that we repent. We have this broken spirit, we get rid of our pride, we humble before God because we see ourselves, what we really are.

What are we, brethren? Do we see what we really are? The times that I've seen it more deeply, because these things do go at different levels. I've found in my life, anyway, that there's different levels of where you see pride in yourself and then you see aspects of humility and the times that you are probably more repentant than other times or you're more stubborn about repenting than other times. And all these things, they do fluctuate and we're not always constant in these things.

"The sacrifices of God," Yahweh Elohim, "are a broken spirit." That's what God wants to do. He wants us to be repentant, because we have to sacrifice ourselves to be repentant, which is this broken spirit. We "see" ourselves. We really "see." Do we really see that selfishness, what we're really like? Do we *really* see it? Because when we do, well, it's a shocking thing to see when you dwell on it and you really get into it. It's not depressing, but it's just a reality check that you realize that without God and that without God's holy spirit we have absolutely nothing!

So it doesn't matter what job we're in, or what title we may have, or what physical wealth we may have and how many children or grandchildren - all of that - it means *nothing* unless we are repentant, we have this broken spirit. "The sacrifices of the Eternal," Yahweh Elohim, God, the Great Eternal Creator, "are a broken spirit." That's what God desires of us. **A broken and contrite heart.** It's somebody that sees their selfishness. "A broken," we have to see it, now we have to say, "I do not want this. I do not want this. I want to have the love of God. I want to be able to deny my selfishness to benefit others." It's a broken spirit and a contrite heart. It's humble. It understands what it's really like. It's willing to yield and submit to God. That's the spirit we have. We're willing to do whatever it takes to yield to God even though it hurts. Because yielding to God in this natural selfishness that we have, it actually hurts. Denying self hurts!

Well, sacrifices weren't easy in the Old Testament where they had to sit there and choose the animal, because oh, this is tough stuff to have to make this decision. Yielding to God is not meant to be easy.

There's a sacrifice. Sabbath keeping is a classic example of this yielding to God. So we have to yield and submit to God, which is the proof of a broken and contrite spirit - God first no matter what. That's the attitude we have. And the "no matter what" can be anything. But if we've got this right attitude before God, God is first, well, this is what God is pleased with. It's a broken spirit. It's a repentant person, someone willing to yield to Him, to put Him first no matter what. If we have to live on the street, so be it. If that's what's required, that's what we'll do. If we have to give up all of our physical possessions, if we have to give up all of our family, we will obey God, we will have a contrite heart, a humble heart, and we will always yield to God.

Well, this is what God rejoices in. This is the joy of God, because He sees our heart, He sees our intent, He sees our motives, why we do it. God sees that we're fighting against our selfishness. God sees our spiritual sacrifices. **These, O Eternal, You will not despise.** No, God rejoices in these things.

Verse 18—Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; which is talking about the Church, because this is where God's Family comes from. God's Family comes from the Body of Christ, the Church of God. It comes from His called-out ones. That's where it's going to come from in the future and in times past. Since 31 A.D. God has always been working through Jesus Christ (the Head of the Church) and God has been doing good by placing His spirit and truth into the minds of His people, His called-out ones. **Build the walls of Jerusalem,** which is the spiritual family of God.

Verse 19—Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, which is about repenting and fighting self. God in us living love to the benefit of everybody are these sacrifices of righteousness. Now, righteousness can only exist if God's spirit's involved, because only God is righteous. No one is righteous of and by themselves. Only God and Jesus Christ. Therefore, to have a sacrifice of righteousness it requires God's spirit living and dwelling in us. Then, by that power, we can actually deny ourselves and we can put God first no matter what and then we can have the best desires and live love to our neighbor, to the rest of mankind. So without God's holy spirit none of what we've just covered is actually possible. **...with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then they shall offer bulls on Your altars,** which is about this sacrificing for others. It's not physical. It's not about physical offerings. It's about spiritual offerings. It's about offerings and sacrifices before God, having a right attitude.

What we choose to do, we have to do by a free will choice. We have to choose freely to offer up self. So no matter what we think we have we give spiritual offerings when we choose to deny ourselves and put ourselves out for the benefit of others.

Not getting as far as what I had thought in my notes, but never mind, we'll continue on.

Proverbs 21:2—Every way, now, that is *every way*, not just a few, **Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,** because of our selfishness and because of our pride, **but the Eternal weighs the heart,** the inner intent, the inner man. So this really boils down to the whole purpose of why we exist.

Because every way that we have within ourselves, we understand we're just right in our own eyes. Now, if we were wrong, we'd change. But we all think we're right. So no matter what happens in life we just think we're right and we won't change it because we're right. Well, "Every way," of the natural carnal mind, "is right in its own eyes." It just thinks it's right. It's self-righteous. It's self-right - self-righteousness. "But the Eternal," Yahweh Elohim, "weighs the intent," the heart of man, the inner man, the motive. That's what God is looking at.

Verse 3— To do righteousness, which is powered by God's holy spirit, which is about obedience, and **justice**, about being fair in the sense of sacrificing for the benefit of others, **is more acceptable to the Eternal than sacrifice**. So the animal sacrifices don't mean anything. It's about this living righteousness, which is this obedience to God, and justice, which is the way we treat others, is more acceptable. That's what God wants from us, from the called-out ones, from His own Body, the Body of Christ, the Church of God. Anybody that has God's holy spirit, what does God want from us? Well, He wants us to practice righteousness, which is this obedience to the truth, the obedience to God, what God says in His word and how we're taught Sabbath by Sabbath from sermons, what we're given. God expects us to implement it into our life. "...and justice." Well, what's justice? Well, justice is the way we treat others. It's about the way we think about others first and foremost, because if we have the right foundation in our thinking, of what the capacity of every human is - What's the capacity of every human? - to be in Elohim. To be a begotten son of God and then to be in Elohim. That's their potential. So how we treat others is important. That's what God's looking at. How do we think about others. Do we despise? Are we envious? Are we jealous? Are we hateful towards others? Well, how does the love of God dwell in a person if that's the case? Well, the answer is God's spirit doesn't dwell in the person, the love of God doesn't dwell in that person.

Well, God looks at us to make sure that we are just before others in the way we treat them. Because we have the right foundation, the way we think about others, we desire the *best* for every single human that has existed and does exist. That's what we want. That's our foundation. Then we live this way of love towards them. We're willing to give up anything of our own selfish desires to benefit them. Now, there's balance in that, in the sense that we need to make sure that it is the best thing for them. Now, that is what is acceptable before God than any animal sacrifices and all the blood that is shed and all the different animals that are killed. None of that is of any value. It's the heart; it's the mind that God is looking at.

I want to just backtrack quickly and just to explain this about what is best for others, because we can have the right foundation for others, we desire the best for them, *but* there can be things that people would see, the natural carnal mind that would see, that they would say is the best thing for them, but we would say it's not. I'll give you an example in that, where for example somebody on the street that may be begging. Somebody sitting on the street there begging, people can walk past and say, "Well, you desire the best for them, why don't you give them some money." Well, I desire the best thing for them; is not to give them money so that they'll go and buy drugs. So we have to show balance in it.

I remember being in a particular location once where there was a person sitting down and he was begging and he had a sign up. Because most people have signs up that say, "Help me with my child," or "my dog," or "I'm unemployed," or whatever, you know, "I need food," and all these different things. This person had a sign that said along the lines of, not exactly, had along the lines, "I'm an alcoholic and I need a drink!" So he was at least being upfront, and I'm sure he got as much money as anybody else did because his honesty, probably people felt more sorry for him. "He's an alcoholic; give him a drink." Well, we don't support the alcoholic by enabling him to get a drink, so we will pass. Where another person would, "Boy, that's hard-hearted. That's not sacrificing for him." No, there's balance in these things and we have to use wisdom about what we do. Because even within a family it can be, people will say, "Well, why don't you give extra money to 'this,' because of 'this' situation." It's not necessarily the right thing to just go out and hand money out to a person, because they're not going to learn a lesson. They maybe have done the same thing four or five times and you're just enabling the situation.

So we desire the best thing for them but we have to look at the best thing for them from a spiritual aspect, not a physical one. We have to make a definition between what is the best thing *for* a person. Now, the best thing for a person at the moment is that they humble themselves, and if they're not going to humble themselves that they suffer so that they come to repentance. That is the best thing for them. Now, we will sacrifice to help them. So how would we do that? Well, for example, we can support the work that God is doing, because He's going to humble mankind for the purpose of bringing them to repentance so that they can have the opportunity to live into the Millennium, so that they can have the opportunity we have to come to see the truth, to understand that truth, and then they can learn to live love. They can learn to sacrifice. They can learn to offer spiritual sacrifices. That is the best thing for them. Feeding them and helping and all that, well, there's times to do all that and there's times not to. It's about looking at the situation and making a judgment call based on righteousness. Because we have to look at what is the best thing for them spiritually, not what is the best thing for them physically at every time.

Now, there is a time to help people on a physical level and it may be the best thing for them at that time. When there's other times when it may be not the best thing to help them in a particular way because they're just abusing that situation. So it just depends. We have to make those judgments. And those judgments are not always easy. And in the end we have to learn that no matter what, well, we are willing to sacrifice ourselves. We are willing to do that, and that's what we want to do. And we know that by sacrificing our selfishness, by putting it to death (which is what sacrifices are), that God is well pleased with that. Now, we can do that every single day. We can offer spiritual sacrifices every single day. The choice is actually ours.

Proverbs 21:23, just dropping down to verse 23. We'll cover a couple Proverbs here in the light of sacrificing, which is denying our selfishness, getting some control over our selfishness. **Verse 23—Whoever guards his mouth**, which is words, **and tongue keeps his life from troubles** (from anguish). "He who guards his mouth." This is a level of sacrificing, being aware that our words can

hurt others. Now, there's a time to sacrifice our opinion, to sacrifice our view for the benefit of others. In other words, it's not going to do them any harm. We don't want to hurt them or do them any harm. So we need to guard our words, and more importantly, the intent behind the word, the intent or the motive *behind* what we're saying. Now, at different times things are said in jest and there's a bit of fun in it for the purpose of encouraging or building a relationship. But there's another time when we have to be very careful about what we say, the use of our tongue, and the use of our words, because it's not sacrificing to the benefit of someone else. It's hurting them. It's harming them. Even though it could be true there's a time not to say something. So we need to guard our words, our intent and motive - guard our thinking. We then "keep our life from anguish." There's not going to be the problems because we've sacrificed something, we've sacrificed a view or an opinion. By not willing to hurt another person we've sacrificed not saying anything, not saying anything at all.

A proud and haughty man— "Scoffer" is his name; He acts with arrogant pride. So why's he doing this? A proud person does not sacrifice anything - absolutely nothing. "A proud or haughty person," is not sacrificing self, it's full on selfishness! "Scoffer is his name." He acts with arrogant pride. Because prides driving everything there is not one aspect of sacrificing, there is not one aspect of spiritual sacrificing, there's not one aspect of love in this person's life. We've been called out of this, not to be a scoffer, not to be proud, not to be arrogant. We've been called to sacrifice ourselves. Where this person has given up absolutely nothing.

Verse 25—The desire of the slothful kills him, because of his selfishness, for his hands refuse to labor. He's refusing to overcome. So we can look at this on a physical level and saying, "Well, a slothful person, he desires all these things, but he's lazy. He's not going to go out and work for it. He wishes he could win lottery." That's a classic example. "The desire for a lazy person kills himself." His selfishness is just going inward, inward, inward, "for his hands he refuses to labor." He refuses to do anything spiritually. We have been called to labor, to overcome selves. We've been called not to be slothful, because if we are spiritually lazy (we're slothful), we are killing ourselves *spiritually*. So if we're not putting in the effort through our prayer, through our study, keeping the Sabbath and obeying God and sacrificing our selfishness we are being lazy, we are killing ourselves on a spiritual level. "For his hands refuse to labor." We refuse to sacrifice ourselves. We refuse to overcome our selfishness. We just let it go and what happens? Well, we just become more and more selfish, only we don't "see" it.

Verse 26—He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare. The greedy person, the selfish person, he desires things, but he's not going to have it because he's not working for it. "But the righteous," someone with God's holy spirit (because we're only righteous if we have God's spirit), "gives," gives of himself, sacrifices himself "and does not spare." We don't hold back. We sacrifice totally.

Jesus Christ was a perfect example. Jesus Christ lived in a world that hated him. There's a few that followed. The majority, the Roman Empire, and the high priest and all those, they hated him. They despised him. They didn't like him at all because of what he was saying. It cut to the quick. It cut to

their thinking, their carnal mind. They hated it. Jesus Christ gave - he gave of himself - a total sacrifice and he didn't spare. He didn't hold anything back. He gave up everything of himself to the degree he gave up his life for mankind so that we didn't have to do animal sacrifices anymore.

Often I've thought about this possibility if we lived back in those times, how difficult it would be. It might all sound easy and we read over a lot of these things about the animal sacrifices and the free will offerings and the burnt offerings and that and it all sounds reasonably simple, but we don't get into it, the thinking process of what it was like. Because it was very difficult for many because they had choices to make. Now, some would have made right choices and some would have made wrong choices. And it was all about this physical obedience to God. How much more important it is for us that we give up of ourselves. "But the righteous gives," he gives up himself - about everything. We just lay it there and we give up our physical desires. We give up our desires for the benefit of others because we see another person within the Body (and out of the Body) as they truly are, potential sons of God. That's how we see them, therefore, we're willing to lay down our life as Jesus Christ did.

Now, Jesus Christ layed down his life out of love. He demonstrated his love by laying down his life. We have to demonstrate our love by laying down our life through these sacrifices, these spiritual sacrifices that we must do. "And does not spare." We don't stop. We don't give up half-way through. No, we just keep going and keep going. And, yes, it hurts. It's designed to hurt. Putting down the self hurts. It's going to hurt. It's going to be painful. But the end of it is joy, great joy for God. And if we have spiritual eyes to see, great joy for us, even though we don't get anything in return.

Verse 26—He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination. Now, there were wicked who gave sacrifices. They gave something but it was with the wrong intent, the wrong motive. Well, before God it is an abomination. It's disgusting. It's shocking. **How much more when he brings it with a wicked intent!** So there's an evil intent. For example, somebody can give something to get something. He is manipulating the person saying, "Yeah, I'll give you this money, and interest rate is 45%." Well, it all looks good giving the money, but how much more evil is this sacrifice, this person giving the money. It's an abomination before God because this person's intent is he wants 45% interest! And there's people that take it because they're desperate. Now, that is an abomination before God. He's giving and nothing about sparing. He's trying to get it all back.

God desires that we give and do not spare. If we're going to give something we don't expect anything in return. We're sacrificing the self. We want nothing back in return for it. Whereas, an abominable act of sacrificing before God is when we give to get back. That is a disgusting and shocking act. It's with wicked intent, evil intent - giving to get praises of men, giving to get back to self. Well, before God that is actually an abomination because our motive and intent is not motivated by God's holy spirit. We've got the wrong motive and intent.

Romans 12:1-2—I beseech you, therefore, brethren, "I urge you, brethren," by the mercies of God. Now, we've seen the mercies of God because God in His mercy has called us - that is a greatness - or

awakened us. How merciful is God in just His plan of salvation. How merciful is all that? We don't deserve anything. God owes us nothing, and yet God's great mercy, He's lived it, He's demonstrated it through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And look at all the things He's given us. He's called us, placed us in the Body of Christ. How merciful is God! **...that you present (you yield) your bodies a living sacrifice.** So this is our purpose in life.

The reason we have been called is to yield to God, to have a giving attitude, and to deny our selfishness - a living sacrifice. We have to live it. So we're alive, but we are to sacrifice ourselves every single day. Because we're alive we're a living sacrifice, because we're denying ourselves every single day for the benefit of others and we expect nothing in return.

...holy, which is "separate," **acceptable to God**, we're accepted by God because we are a living sacrifice, we're continually repenting, we continually get rid of self, **which is your reasonable (logical) service.** This is the purpose of life. This scripture covers the purpose of life. Called to be a living sacrifice, separated, holy, accepted by God or acceptable to God because of what we're doing, giving these living sacrifices, therefore, that's what God wants of us. That's our logical and reasonable service.

Verse 2—Do not be conformed, or do not blend into, **this world**, because it's not sacrificing, it's not giving up self. It's back on that Proverb we read about, the wicked. Yes, it sacrifices, but its motive and intent is evil! Anybody in the world that's giving - it's hard to sometimes hear these things - but a mother's love, as Mr. Armstrong said and Ron's been in lately, a mother's love is a selfish love. It's difficult for a lot of people to come to understand that. But it is, because why? Because it's sacrificing - yes, a mother will die for its child, and yes, a father will give up much for a family or a mother or a daughter or son, whatever - but it's done out of something. It's *my* mother. It's *my* father. It's *my* child. It's *my* wife. It's *my* daughter. There's an aspect of selfishness in it, which it can't see. But it won't lay down its life for the person up the road who's not necessarily doing the right thing. No, because our nature is selfish. So we're not to be conformed to *that* type of sacrificing love, because that type of sacrificing love is still selfish. It's expecting something in return. And generally it's praises of men. It's one of the big things that comes back, and it's the praise of somebody, "Wow, isn't that person being a good father!" "Wow, isn't that person being a good mother!" etcetera... Many other things involved in that selfishness.

So we're not to blend into or to look at the human component of sacrificing, **but be transformed**, which is this conversion, this changing that must take place, this renovating or this renewing that must take place. **...but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, the way we think. We've got to move from selfish sacrificing to spiritual sacrificing where there is nothing coming back to us. There is from God, but not from other humans. God always gives. God gives the flow of His holy spirit to us. Well, that is Him giving to us. Well, how we use it, how we allow God to work in us is often to do with our choice. God desires the best for us. God desires that we do give up of ourselves and we have this transformation of the mind that takes place, "by the renewing," by the refreshing, by the renovating, through the truth, through sermons, through the power of God's holy spirit, **that you may**

prove, so we're going to have to do this, we've got to test it out, we're going to have to do it by the way we live, **what is that good**, because God's way is good, **and acceptable**, which is something to do with the way that a thing is. It's acceptable before God, **and perfect**, because God's way is perfect, **will of God**. So we have to practice this way of life. It's about our intent. We have to learn to think like God. We have to renew our thinking. We're not to conform to the world's way of selfishness by giving to get. We have to give and expect nothing in return, just like Jesus Christ did, just like God the Father did.

God the Father has given us a sacrifice through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gave up his life for us. And it's now up to us whether or not we want to accept that sacrifice that God and Jesus Christ have made. It's our choice. We don't have to accept it - and there's many that don't, and many that won't. But we're in a position now to choose, to be transformed now by this renewing of the way we think, by learning to live love to those in the Body and those outside the Body, by the renewing of our mind, the way we think. And the foundation is that we put God first no matter what. First foundation of all things. We can't love unless we put God first no matter what, whatever that "what" is. And the second component is we must desire the best for others whether they're in the Body or out of the Body, the best spiritually for them. We desire the best thing for them. What's the best thing for them? Well, it's spiritual in composition and we desire that they enter Elohim. That's the best thing that could happen to any human. That's the best thing that can happen to us.

Well, that's what we desire for others. And we're willing to put down these selfish desires now to benefit them now. And we know that God will do it in us if we're willing to yield to it.

Ephesians 5:1—Therefore, be followers of God as dear children, which is to be imitators of God, which is, what has God done? Well, God has lived love to us. He sacrificed for us. He's given up peace for us. So we know, brethren, to be followers we have to imitate God, which means we're going to take on God's thinking, "as dear children." **And walk in love**. God loved us. Well, we have to walk in love. We have to have this sacrificing love for the benefit of others. **...walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us**. So we have to give of ourselves for the benefit of others, which is this sacrificing love, which is this spiritual sacrificing. **...an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma**. So that's what we are required to do, which is to give of ourselves, which is to love *everybody*. Not just those in the Body, but those out of the Body. And it's a spiritual component; it's not a physical love, which is just an emotion. This is about denying self. This is about spiritual sacrifices.

Now, there is another spiritual sacrifice that I want to look at briefly. I haven't gotten into any of the scriptures really that I had planned, but we'll go with the flow and we'll look at this component because it's a really key component to our life. And that's about the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Psalm 107:19. It's talking about Israel here and God's great works. **Then they (Israel) cried out to the Eternal in their trouble, and He (Yahweh Elohim) saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh, that men would give**

thanks to the Eternal for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Because God has done this to mankind. God has saved mankind many of times. Working with Israel and He's intervened into their life many a time. Now, it says here, "Oh, that men would give thanks," now this is the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Because to be thankful is a sacrifice. It's not just a selfishness. Because people are thankful but often it's a thankful for their own selfishness because they got something. This is about a thankfulness to God for who God really is. We're thankful that God has called us. We're thankful that God has awakened us. We're thankful that we're a part of the Body. We're thankful that we live at the end-time. We're thankful that we can be part of a future work that is soon to be upon us. We're thankful for these things.

"Oh, that men would give thanks to the Eternal for His goodness." How great is God, how good is God that He's done all this for us? "And for His wonderful works to the children of men!" Well, they were looking physically. For us it's the work that God has done by calling us. We should be so thankful. We should rejoice at God and His law and His commandments and His Holy Days and His plan of salvation. All of these things we can express the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, which is what we have to do; to be thankful to God for every aspect of what He is doing for us and with us, to be thankful for other members of the Body, to be thankful the fact we have an apostle and two witnesses, to be thankful that we have a Church, to be thankful if we have employment, to be thankful that we can give offering (even if it's 10 cents), to be thankful to be part of a work, to be thankful for the truth. That's a sacrifice! Because what it is: If we're selfish and filled with pride we don't sacrifice, we don't give up anything. We have to sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and that is really about kneeling down before our Creator and sacrificing our time, sacrificing our thinking, our selfishness about taking, taking, taking, and be thankful to God who provided us everything! Anybody that has a job ought to be thankful to God that they've got one. Anybody that has any level of income - if it's a hundred dollars a week, if it's five thousand a week, it makes no difference. We should be thankful to God. It's a sacrifice to kneel down before God and thank God with all great humility, understanding who we really are and that of and by ourselves we have nothing, and without God we wouldn't have anything. We only have access to what we have because God allows it. Well, we should be thankful to God and it should move us to tears at some times for all the things that God has done for us at this time compared to others in the world and what they have at this time. We should be so thankful.

Well, when we do that, brethren, it is a sacrifice to do it. We have to deny our selfishness and all the things we want to do, we're to get down before God, or stand before God, or lay before God, it doesn't matter how we do it, to get before God and thank Him with all sincerity for *every* aspect of our life that we have. If we've been blessed to have a roof over our head. If we've been blessed to have a wife. If we've been blessed to have a child, children. Or if we've been blessed to have grandchildren. If we're blessed to be single. If we're blessed to have income. If we're blessed in any way - to have a meal - we should give thanks to God for His great mercy to us. We deserve nothing.

God owes us nothing. Well, to do this, to actually get down before God and to express our appreciation is a sacrifice. It's a spiritual sacrifice.

Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing. Because we understand God's plan of salvation. How incredible is this? And we should "sing in our hearts," which is this joy that's in our hearts that we understand the plan of God. There's very few on this earth that understand God's plan from Passover to the Last Great Day. How thankful can we be that we understand what's going to happen with those that die, go to sleep for a short period? How thankful can we be that we understand, for example myself, the fact that my mother and father, who knew nothing about God at all, are going to be resurrected for a hundred years to begin to know what I know? What a great blessing that is! And I pray that I'm there to be with them so that I can help them, that they can have the same opportunity. And 57 Truths will be probably be little in comparison to what they're going to be given during that Hundred-years, and the world that God is going to create and the environment and the opportunity for them to one day have eternal life, to be in Elohim. And all the people that I have known in God's Church and all the people that I've known in the world and had relationships with, that I desire that they too have what we've been given. We've been given so much.

Well, we can express the thanks to God, this sacrifice of thanksgiving to God at any time. It's our choice. We don't have to. If we don't there's a problem in our life and it's very clear from scripture what that problem is. Pride. Pride. Pride. Pride. We're not willing to sacrifice our selfishness. If we're willing to sacrifice our selfishness we will be thankful. Now, a thankful person is a humble person. A thankful person is a humble person, because we "see" that everything comes from God. And without God what have we got? We've got nothing! Absolutely nothing! And what's our value without God? Well! What's the good of it all? Nothing. The plan of God is salvation and without God we can't have salvation. So we should be thankful now, the fact that we have this opportunity now. We've started. When we finish, God only knows. But we've started. We have it now. It's in our hands now. How could we neglect so great a calling? Well, many do... many do. Why? Pride gets in the way and they don't sacrifice themselves. They give up the thankfulness that they should have. They give up the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Because if a person truly is thankful we won't veer off. We'll be thankful for the truth. The fact we see any of these things? Many a time my wife and myself are watching TV and they've got this documentary about some aspect of something they just don't know. And we sit there and think, "God's given that to us!" How merciful is that? How incredible is that? We know the answer. You feel like picking up the phone and ringing and saying, "Listen, it's pretty much straight forward. This is the answer." But, course they don't have the mind. They've not been called to see. We've been called to "see." We can offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving at any time for so much in our life.

Hebrews 13:15. We're just touching base here quickly on this sacrifice of thanksgiving. **Hebrews 13:15—Therefore, by him (Jesus Christ) let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God,** which is about this being thankful to God. So we're to continually do it through Jesus Christ, because

Spiritual Sacrifices

we've been given that authority. ...**the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips**, so it's about expressing it, saying it in prayer. How? This process: ...**giving thanks to His name**. It's about who God is and what God is. God is love. So we are to express to God, this process that we are to go through in our life about giving thanks to God for what He is. We're continually expressing our appreciation to God. The sacrifice of thanksgiving, it's a spiritual sacrifice to God. Now, we've been called to do this. The purpose of our calling is to offer spiritual sacrifices.

1 Peter 2:4, referring to Christ and what Christ did. **1 Peter 2:4—Coming to Him** (Yahweh Elohim), which is God the Father, **Christ a living stone, rejected indeed by men, by the world, but chosen by God *and* precious**. Now, this can refer to Jesus Christ, but we also are a living stone. We're a living being. We're alive for a purpose. So Jesus Christ was rejected by man. He was a living foundation because God was in him. He was rejected by mankind, rejected by the world, but he was chosen by God and precious. **You then, talking about us, as living stones**, so we have this same opportunity to be a living stone, **are being built up a spiritual house**, we're being built up as a family. We're part of the Body of Christ and we are in the Body of Christ for a reason, which is a spiritual House, **a holy priesthood**. So we've been separated by God for holy use and purpose. Why? ...**to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**. Because Jesus Christ made it all possible.

We have to sacrifice our pride and live humility. Humility is yielding to God, sacrificing ourselves for the benefit of others. And we're to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Now, there's many. We've been through just one today, really, and that is the sacrifice of thanksgiving. But we've been through another component which is this continual sacrificing of pride, which is a spiritual sacrifice. It doesn't stop. We're alive; we're a living stone. We have God's holy spirit living and dwelling in us, which makes us alive. Now, our part is to sacrifice what goes on in our thinking. The selfishness, just get rid of it. See, if we just stand back and look at God's plan, that He has made us as humans with a selfish mind for a reason. That reason is to sacrifice it, to choose God, to choose God no matter what and to sacrifice the wrong desires of selfishness that we have, to look after self first.

We have chosen to desire the best for other spiritually. That's what we desire for them. And to do that we realize we, like Jesus Christ who gave up himself for us, we are going to imitate God. We're going to imitate Jesus Christ and follow his footsteps. He sacrificed. He loved by sacrificing. We are going to love, we're going to demonstrate our love for all mankind (and in particular, those in the Body) by sacrificing, by sacrificing for them expecting nothing in return, absolutely nothing.

Sometimes I've often thought about the disciples, when they were with Christ and he goes through the aspect of when you are to forgive. And they say, "How many times do we have to forgive? Seven?" Someone's going to do something to you, you've got to keep forgiving them. And wisdom would mean you just don't turn back up and get hit in the face again. But they say, "How many times do we have to forgive this person?" And Christ turns around and says, "Seven times seventy," 490 times. Well, we have to continually forgive. That's part of our whole process of life. Because if we stop forgiving God

can't forgive us. Because He says, "I'll forgive you as you forgive others." So any grudges we hold, well, we've got a problem.

Well, I look at that as the aspect of sacrificing. So how much do we have to sacrifice? What's enough? How much is enough? How long does it have to go on for? From the moment we're called we have to sacrifice for our whole life everyday for the rest of our life. And it's not seven times seventy. It never stops. It can never stop. We have to continually sacrifice ourselves.

Now, it all sounds daunting when we stand back and look at it and think, "I can't do this! I've got to keep giving up and giving up and giving up myself and denying myself." Well, it's the same with repentance. We've got to keep repenting, keep repenting. Yes, we do. Yes, we do. We've got to stay in the fight. The key to it, let's stay in the fight and we have to continually sacrifice ourselves to the benefit of others for as long as it takes. Because Jesus Christ sacrificed himself totally for us, demonstrated his love. Well, we have to love the brethren fervently, with zeal, with a pure heart, with a thought process that we are willing to give up every single thing for another person. Everything. Everything. We're willing to lay down our life to benefit others. Now, this is a thinking that the natural carnal mind can't grasp, but with God's spirit we realize it's simply just about denying our selfishness, putting ourselves out.

Now, the best way to do this is to start with something really, really small, because it's a process of thinking. I thought I'd share with you just one aspect of my life. Often when temptation comes in, or something is going on in my mind, I've learned that there's one way that I can overcome it rather than let it go on and on and on, is that I simply have trained my mind in some ways, or God's given me the ability to think this way, is that I just simply say, "I choose God." So no matter what goes on in my mind, I just say, "I choose God." I just choose God. That's what I've decided. I've decided that I choose God. No matter what is going on, I choose God. Whatever the temptation may be or what's going on, I choose God. That I've done it, I've chosen God and I'm continuing to choose God. That's my life. I want to choose God. Don't always succeed with those temptations and those tests and trials, but in the end I come back to this principle, "I choose God." That's what I choose. And that has helped me greatly to get through things.

Well, with sacrificing I realize that through the sermons that Ron had given leading up to Passover and through that period that there's an aspect in my life that I needed to change about this sacrificing love. And I realize I have to start small. It's not use trying to jump into the big things. The first thing I had to do was to have a right desire towards everybody, those that love me and those that don't, my enemy. "Do good to those that hate you and despise you." How am I ever going to do that? So once I've got the aspect of who a human is, really, and the way God sees a human (not from our minds, the way God sees a person), that's what I have to start with. Therefore, I desire the best for them spiritually. I desire the best for them physically, if that's what God wants to give them. That's not my call. But I desire the best for them. That's my foundation.

So I have to start to learn to sacrifice small things in my marriage, first of all. That's what I think about. Okay, what is it that I don't like doing or my selfishness gets in the way, and what am I going to do? So there was one particular thing that I thought, well, I'm going to start with that. And I found it a great help, because the first time I started to tackle it, I didn't do that well. Then the next time I thought, no, I can do this. I can actually give this up and I'm going to do it. So I did it. And it wasn't that bad. It hurt a little bit to do it. Then it started the next thing, and then it popped up again, and it became a bit easier. Then after a while it becomes a pattern where there's not a lot of thought that goes into it. You just do it. You just sacrifice. It's just that's who you become. You just sacrifice. It's just the way that you do things.

Well, I realized that if I could start with something small like that and begin to work at the bigger things, we can, if we just get into the habit of choosing God first and "Yes, I'm going to sacrifice. I'm going to sacrifice. I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it!" And set our minds, powered by God's holy spirit (because it's not from self), it's God's going to give us the motivation to do it, that we have to get into the pattern. We have to practice righteousness. We just practice God's thinking. So we can do it, brethren, if we set out and just start small and work through these things. "I'm going to put myself out. I'm going to deny myself." And we do it. And there is a great joy in that sacrificing. There is a joy in sacrificing.

Well, we've been called by God, placed in the Body of Christ, the Church of God for a purpose, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because he made it all possible. So it's our choice whether we want to humble ourselves. It's our choice whether we want to sacrifice ourselves. It's our choice whether we want to offer spiritual sacrifices.

1 Samuel 15:22. This is cutting into the story flow here about Saul and what he had done by not obeying God and not following God's command to destroy everything. And he then turned around and justified himself saying that he'd brought back the king. But he should have utterly destroyed everything. And he turns around and doesn't look at himself or blame himself. His pride gets in the way. And in verse 21 he says, **But the people took the plunder, the sheep and the oxen, best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed. Why? To sacrifice to the Eternal your God (not my God), your God in Gilgal.** So he justified himself and he blamed someone else, which is human nature at work. Justification and excuses and blame someone else and then to turn around, "the reason they did it," gives them the reason, "to sacrifice to the Eternal *your* God in Gilgal."

So verse 22—Then Samuel said, **Has the Eternal *great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Eternal?** So here it is, brethren, the spiritual component that is clearly outlined in the Old Testament, and which is now alive in the New Testament. "Has the Eternal a great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices," physical sacrificing. Does God want that? Or does He want, "as in obeying the voice of the Eternal?" So now it's spiritual. It's about obedience in spirit and truth. **Behold, to obey God... to obey is better than sacrifice.** So all of the sacrificing physically is all meaningless if there's disobedience involved, if there's wrong motives involved.

Well, for us we are far better off to be obeying God, keeping the Sabbath in spirit and truth, than it is to do anything physical. We have to give spiritual sacrifices, the spiritual sacrifice of thanksgiving, denying ourselves.

Behold, to obey God is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. "To heed," is to listen. So it's far better to be listening to what God is saying, to repent, and to take on the mind of God, to listen, to obey. **For rebellion**, this taking to self, going against God's authority, **rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft**, which is this trusting in something else. Because witchcraft is really looking to something else and trusting in something else. **And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.** **Because you have rejected the word of the Eternal, He also has rejected you from being king.**

From this, brethren, we can see that obedience to God, God first no matter what, we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices, denying self, offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for *everything* that He has done for us, starting with the gift of life itself. And we have to get to this point that we don't reject God. Because if we reject God, He will reject us from being in His Kingdom.