

26. Prayer and Sacrifice

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr
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And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God....And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. -- Colossians 1:10; 4:3,4

After Jesus Christ met Paul on the road to Damascus and led him to salvation, he was overjoyed. He knew he was not worthy to be saved, because he had persecuted Christians; therefore, he never ceased praising God for His grace. And Jesus Christ made such a difference in his life that he began telling others that Jesus could do the same for them. As the years passed, he was overwhelmed more and more each time he thought about all that Jesus Christ had sacrificed so he and others might be saved from sin and hell. And just like his Savior, he joyfully began sacrificing all the comforts of this world to preach the gospel--even being flogged and imprisoned if necessary. He seldom thought of what he was sacrificing for others, because he kept his focus on all that God had sacrificed for him through His Son.

Saving faith supernaturally leads us to a willingness to sacrifice for others, as God and others have sacrificed for us. Those who went to L'Abri saw daily how much the Schaeffers and all the Helpers and Workers sacrificed so they could learn the truth and be given good reasons to accept Jesus as the Messiah. And when they came to faith, the Holy Spirit filled them with such joy in believing that they naturally wanted others to know that same joy through Christ. They knew the peace and joy of living in God's Kingdom now by experience, and wanted others to know the same things: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men" (Romans 14:17,18). Once they entered into a supernatural way of living, they began to act on the basis of the character of Jesus Christ, which He was forming within them. Sacrifice became a natural thing, rather than a burden to bear with resentment.

L'Abri has helped thousands of people become Christians, because many of those who were saved at L'Abri went out and led others to saving faith with the same spirit of sacrifice they saw at L'Abri. They did not go out with a legalistic resolution, saying something like, "They sacrificed for me, now I have to sacrifice too." No. The Spirit of Jesus Christ filled them with His love and joy, so the love of Jesus spurred them into action--to do all they could to lead others to the Savior no matter what the cost. They acted on the basis of what they saw modeled around them, and saw how reasonable and right it was to sacrifice to promote the well-being and eternal happiness of others. God led them to the place of looking for ways to bless others, and the cost in time, energy, or material things became secondary to serving God and others--meeting real needs. They did not sacrifice "to be saved," or "to earn points with God," or "to obligate God when they prayed." They sacrificed because the Holy Spirit supernaturally leads those who are saved to make sacrifices out of a heart full of love for God and others. And after we have sacrificed and done all we can for God, our spirit still says in our hearts: "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty" (Luke 17:10).

The Schaeffers never asked anyone to sacrifice for the work of L'Abri, but the Lord sometimes led those who were saved through L'Abri to sacrifice that the gospel might be spread. After Jane Stuart Smith gave her life to the Lord, she also gave God her exquisite and expensive opera costumes. And when people began to pray for money to build a chapel at L'Abri, Jane began to pray that the Lord would send an opera singer her size, who also sang her various parts in opera, who could buy her costumes so she could give to the chapel fund. It seemed an impossible situation, but the Lord honored her desire to sacrifice for His glory and promote the salvation and happiness of others by sending her a woman from Yugoslavia who could wear all of her clothes, who sang all of her parts, and who rejoiced at finding such beautiful costumes that she could afford to buy.

When the bee keeper, who lived near Chalet les Mèlèzes and who had become a Christian under the Schaeffers' ministry, learned that L'Abri could not afford to build a chapel, he volunteered to dig the foundation. And his leadership influenced others in L'Abri to volunteer their labor to build the chapel themselves. As he led in prayer for God's protection of the workers each day and for good weather to get the roof finished on time, his prayerful sacrifice was noted by some of those living in the village, and they reported that they had never seen such a mild December and January while workers were on the roof.

Some young people have prayed for and sacrificially given their savings to send a friend, a brother, or sister to L'Abri, because "they so need to hear these truths too." Others have postponed trips or used a part of their salaries to send money to buy more property "for more room," or to buy more food, or beds, or tape recorders for students, or to support a student friend at L'Abri. No one at L'Abri asked anyone to make these sacrifices. Each person has sacrificed because God has moved them in answer to their prayers or the prayers of others. No one pressures anyone to give to L'Abri. The L'Abri Family Letters report some of the needs and have requested prayers, but there has never been enough space in the letters to tell about all the needs. And God has met every need, those spoken and unspoken, by His grace through prayer to build up people's faith and meet real needs.

Jesus loved and sacrificed for His enemies. We need to ask God to give us the same love for the worldly-minded that Jesus Christ has. Only if we have the mind of Christ will we be willing to sacrifice for them and supernaturally be able to show them the love Jesus Christ has for them. One great difficulty for Christians is spending enough time in prayer to develop the love of Jesus for those who are His enemies and ours. How much are we willing to sacrifice that Jesus Christ may be honored and His enemies come to saving faith--not to mention our loved ones and friends? Wouldn't we be more effective in prayer, if we prayed for Christ's sacrificial spirit to rule in our lives throughout the day? Edith Schaeffer wrote to the L'Abri Family: "Oh, what a work there could be in homes scattered through the world, if the Holy Spirit would be given His place in the lives of Christians unhindered by the terrible demands self makes when 'self' takes first place in hearts!" To pray effectively, we must have a spirit of sacrifice. And much true prayer will lead us to sacrifice. Our prayers for unbelievers, confused believers, and others need to flow supernaturally from hearts remade in the image of Jesus Christ, who died that we might live. Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, give me the sacrificial love of your Son for others. He died that rebels in your Kingdom might be saved. Give me the love of Jesus: not to meet any selfish desire to feel good, but to motivate and empower me to seek and save the lost as effectively as He did. Help me to be more willing to make any necessary sacrifices to promote your cause upon this earth that you might receive the honor you deserve. Amen.

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