

A LIVING SACRIFICE

(LANCE LAMBERT)

Galatians 6:14—But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Romans 12:1-8—I beseech you, therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritually intelligent worship and service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Colossians 1:12-15—Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Just a further word of prayer:

Beloved Lord, You are present amongst us. We are gathering to You, and we want, Lord, just to recognize that without You we can do nothing of eternal worth. You have provided us with an anointing, and we dare not ignore it. Lord, by faith, we stand into that anointing grace and power for the speaking of Your word, for the translating of Your word, and for the hearing of Your word. Touch our hearts, Lord. Challenge us, Lord. Don't let us escape from this matter. Corner us by Your Holy Spirit and follow us until You get us. Hear us, Lord, and we shall be careful to give You all the thanksgiving of our hearts. We ask this in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

The theme of these days has been: “The Way to the Eternal Purpose of God—the Cross.” My responsibility has been the Cross and the World and we have covered certain facts, certain truths. We’ve talked about the world. John, the apostle, said, “Love not the world neither the things that are within it.” And I have sought to explain that there are two different Greek words, translated in English, by the same word, *world*. One is *cosmos*, the whole universe and everything that is within it—all the beauty that is in it and all the inhabitants. That is one word. The other word is *eon*. It speaks of an age, the course and duration of time. Both these words, on the whole, have an unfavorable meaning in the word of God. We have spoken about this world that God created, of which He said, “It is good.” But with the fall of Satan and a third of the angels, followed by the fall of man, something entered into this world that was never there before—the poison of the snake. It has infected the whole of this world and the ages of time. For this reason, Satan is called the prince of this world. And in the temptation of the Messiah, when Satan came to Him and said, “Bow down to me and worship me and I will give you *all* the nations and their glory,” Jesus never said to Him, “You lie.” All He said was “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.”

John, the Apostle, puts it very simply in 1 John 5:19. “We,” we believers, “know that we are of God and the whole world,” *cosmos*, “lies in the evil one.” This is the same word we have in Galatians 6:14: “Far be it from me to glory, save in our Lord Jesus the Messiah, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.”

Next we asked the question: “What is worldliness?” Many people think worldliness is things you dress in, things you look at, things you do, but worldliness in its heart is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vain glory of life, physical life. We could speak endlessly about the world. It extends over everything from commerce, to money, to property, to pride, to jealousy, to ambition; it goes on and on and on.

There is no answer at all to worldliness except the cross. It is God’s one and only way of dealing with it. It is through Christ crucified that worldliness is dealt with. How can Christ live in you and you be worldly? How can Christ crucified dwell in the believer and that believer be in love with this world? John puts it so simply. “He that loveth the world the love of the Father is not in him.” That means all our talk about loving the Lord is a sham. James even more severely says, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility to God? He that would be a friend of the world is an enemy of God.” This is very black and white. There is no mixture, no in between.

The Roman letter is the greatest exposition of the gospel in the sixty-six books of the Bible. As the apostle Paul begins to sum up everything in chapter 12, he says, “I beseech you therefore brethren...” in light of all these eleven chapters. “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice.” That is the cross. That is the cross in action. That is the practical outcome of being crucified with Christ—a living sacrifice. He could have said, “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you study the gospel.” This could have been a very academic exercise. He could have said, “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you be devoted in your service.” Instead, he said, “I beseech you, therefore brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice.” I beseech you, therefore brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a burnt offering—not just consecrated, but to go up in smoke. Burnt! A burnt offering! Nothing else is acceptable to God.

Do you want to be set apart? Do you want to be holy? You must be a living sacrifice. Do you want to be well pleasing to God, acceptable to God? You must be a living sacrifice. There is no alternative. This is the interim goal of the gospel. The ultimate goal of the gospel is the bride. But if you have been saved, if you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, if you have been justified in the sight of God through the finished work of the Messiah, then you must present your bodies a living sacrifice. There is no other way.

Sometimes, we hear it said in Christian circles that we should consecrate our talents, that we should dedicate our natural gifts. “Have you a gift of the gab? (That is an Irish saying.) Dedicate it to the Lord and you will be a preacher. Have you got the gift for music? Dedicate it to the Lord and you will be a worship leader. Have you got the gift of organizing? Consecrate it to the Lord and He will use it to develop order out of the mess in the church.” But what the Lord demands is a living sacrifice. That means your body, your personality, your talents, your gifts, your energy, your whole being, everything you are is to be a living sacrifice.

SPIRITUALLY INTELLIGENT WORSHIP

It is interesting to note this little word: “which is your spiritually intelligent worship and service.” Some translations say “your rational or reasonable service,” but that does not convey the real spiritual meaning. Sometimes, worship has very much emotion in it. That is not wrong. It is strange if you were to worship the Lord like a machine. Of course there is emotion. Rightly, there

should be emotion. And of course, there is emotion in service. Often, we give ourselves to the Lord in a moment of real emotion. In a meeting like this, we are stirred not only in our spirit, but in our emotion and in our will. What then does this extraordinary phrase mean?

“I beseech you, therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritually intelligent worship and service.” It is not just your reason, not just emotion. This is spiritual intelligence. Let me put it another way. It means that in a cold-blooded and deliberate way, you have decided to present your body a living sacrifice. *That* is real worship; not the emotion of a moment or something reasoned out in a moment. It is a deliberate, determined act of worship, your spiritually intelligent worship and service.

There is no alternative to being a living sacrifice, and Satan knows it. He knows it so well that he will fight to keep any believer from being a living sacrifice. He will entice you, he will seduce you, he will get you into bondage, like a spider’s web. He will weave it all around you until you cannot move. It is like an octopus with eight arms; once you have gotten rid of one, you still have the other seven. This is Satan’s strategy. He knows that when believers become a living sacrifice, nothing is impossible. They will go on to prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. If you are not a living sacrifice, you will never know that. He knows that the mold of this world, the straitjacket of this world, the fashion of this world, will never be broken apart from being a living sacrifice. You can study the Bible, you can sing the hymns, you can attend the meetings, but that straitjacket of the world, the world’s mold you are in, is still there. It is a mindset.

THE FASHION OF THE WORLD

“And be not fashioned [molded] according to this age, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” When your mind is renewed, you are transformed, you are out of the bondage, the octopus is dead, the web has gone. You are ready to fly into the heavens. It is a living sacrifice. Only when you become a living sacrifice is the mindset of this age and of this world broken. Then you can be free to have the mind of Christ. Then you can become a bondsman. Then you can humble yourself, so that He can exalt you. It all goes back to being a living sacrifice.

What is the curse of the church? It is the fashion of this world and the mindset of this world. We make the church just like any other human organization. It has its membership role; it has its members; it has its election procedures; it has its organization, just like any other human club, and it destroys the church. In that early church, before the Holy Spirit came, there were one hundred and twenty units of a congregation. After the Holy Spirit came, there were one hundred and twenty members of the body of Christ. They were joined to their Head at the right hand of God, and when He was manifested by the Holy Spirit, the whole Jewish world was turned upside down. And in the end, the Greek and the Roman world were turned upside down and inside out. It did not have the organization that we have today, but the simple union with the Head by the Spirit of God meant that it was invincible. Such is the wonder of being a living sacrifice.

The world’s mold is broken and the world’s mindset is broken to be transformed. If only every member of the body of Christ was being transformed! Can you imagine the effect upon the world? But it is not only proving what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, being a living sacrifice leads to an expression of the one body in Christ. Notice that it is not one body *of* Christ; it is one body *in* Christ, and individually, members one of another. When we are not a living sacrifice, we may have the Bible in our heads, we may have a lot of zeal, we may have a lot of other things, but we always remain individuals, preserving our individual entity.

How well I remember when I first saw what the church is, that it is Christ, and it blew my mind away. That moment I ceased to be a Baptist and became a member of the body of Christ. In that moment, every child of God belonged to me and I belonged to them. But when I went back into the

church I was in, I suddenly realized that I was like a fish out of water; we were all individuals. No one seemed to feel that they belonged to you. People I had known for years, I did not know anything about them. The body of Christ is an amazing thing. You cannot set it up; it has to be born of God. And you have to have a nucleus of believers who are all living sacrifices. When you have that nucleus, the church begins to be expressed. It is not just a doctrine in our head; that is deadness and it leads to pride: “We are the church; you are not. We understand these things, you do not. We are superior, you are inferior. We are elite, you are common.” But when you are a living sacrifice, you will serve every child of God in this universe. You will not be a partaker of their sins, but you will love them and serve them, because inwardly, you belong to them and they belong to you. And you cannot overcome this.

NATURAL GIFTS

“Having gifts differing” (Romans 12:6). There are natural gifts. A person may have the gift of the gab; they preach and you are bored stiff. They have the natural talent, but nothing touches your spirit. Here is a person who can play; you hear their playing and you think, “Good,” or “not so good,” but you are left with them. Another person plays and it is a ministry of Christ. What is the difference? Why can one person speak and it is a ministry of Christ, and another person speaks and it is just words? Sometimes they are brilliant words but only words. One person sings and it is a good voice; another person sings and you are in the presence of the Lord. One person organizes and they organize the Holy Spirit out of the church. It has happened again and again in the history of the church. Another person organizes and it is the Lord. What is the key? The key is to be a living sacrifice. Then it is not self-expression, self-aggrandizement, self-fulfillment; it is a ministry of Christ.

I think it is amazing that the apostle Paul concludes with this. Of course he is like so many of us writers and preachers; he goes on for another four chapters. But here was the beginning of the conclusion: “I beseech you, therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your spiritually intelligent worship and service.” Present your bodies. Have you ever presented your body? Are you ready to be a living sacrifice?

THE FACT AND CHALLENGE OF THE CROSS

The other matter that is much on my heart is the fact of the cross and the challenge. Let me go back again to Galatians 6:14: “Far be it from me to glory, save in the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, through whom the world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” It is an historic fact. When Christ was crucified, I was crucified; you were crucified whether you knew it or not. Secondly, our old man is crucified; “the man of old” is a good way to put it, isn’t it? The man of old is crucified; it is an historic fact. The world is crucified with Christ. That is why there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. That is why there will be a universe out of which the whole poison of the snake has been drawn. There will be no more curse, no more dying, no more mourning, no more death—all passed away. It is a fact, and we cannot deal with worldliness in our being in any other way.

Do not be Entangled Again

What is the challenge of this to us? First of all, Colossians 1:13: “Who delivered us out of the power or domain of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His Son.” Here is the first challenge. Do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Do not let Satan seduce you. It may seem so good to begin with, so innocuous, but you will come into a terrible bondage. It can be in

business, in your work life and professional life, in your family, in your individual life, in church life. It can be as those who are serving the Lord, which should be all of us. Do not be entangled again.

God delivered you and delivered me out of the authority of darkness at tremendous cost. Satan and his hosts had authority over you and over me. We were blind, helpless, and bound. Then, through the finished work of the Lord Jesus, when He was made my sin and your sin, when He bore the punishment of our sin in His own body, when it pleased the Lord to crush Him, you were miraculously delivered out of the authority of darkness. You could not do it. No church could do it. No religious organization could do it. Only God could do it. But it is more than that.

He not only delivered you, freed you, broke the fetters, and delivered you from the authority of darkness, but He transferred you into the kingdom of His dear Son. Here is the first challenge. Are you bound? Are you playing with darkness? Are you compromising with this world, whether in business, in the making of money, in your family, in your relationships, in your self as a person, in the church, in the service of God? You cannot play with darkness and have it not enter you. You cannot play with fire and not be burnt. You cannot ride on the tiger and not be eaten. You have been made free by Christ; do not be entangled again in a yoke of bondage. Why is it a yoke of bondage? Because when the yoke is on, you can steer the animal.

Submit to His Lordship

Here is the second challenge. If you have been transferred into the kingdom of God's Beloved Son, you have a King; you have a Lord. The challenge is this: submit to His Lordship. Luke 6:46 says, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Good question. "Why do you call me Lord, and you do not do what I say?" I will tell you why; you are not a living sacrifice. You cannot get out of that mold; it is still there.

Many, many times I have used the words of the mother of Jesus to those who have just come to the Lord, words she spoke at the wedding in Cana. She said to the servants, "Whatsoever He says, do it." This is the simple key to the Christian life. This is the simple key to following the Lord. "Whatsoever He says, do it." If He says to you, "Give up this friendship;" give it up. The Lord may give it back to you at some point, but if He says it, do it. If there is some worldliness and He says, "Give it up," give it up."

I remember a sister who came one day to the morning meeting. This dear girl, who was a waitress and could only come in the morning, had no Christian background whatsoever. As she watched the bread being broken and the cup being poured at the Lord's Table, she saw the Lord. The person doing it disappeared, and she saw the Lord. She was saved. She hardly knew what salvation was, but she got saved. She came to see me, and I said to her, "The key to your Christian life is whatsoever the Lord says, do it. Do you have any problem with that?"

"No, no, no. I will do it." Then she turned to go out from the study and suddenly she turned around and said, "There is one thing; I am not taking this lipstick off."

And I said, "Who spoke about lipstick? Was there anything in the Lord's Table about lipstick?"

"No, no, no," she said, "no one said anything. But I noticed that all those sisters did not have any powder or rouge on their face, and no lipstick on their lips. I do not want to be a dying swan. I am very pale. I have blonde hair and pale skin."

"Look," I said, "why are you caught on this matter? Nobody has talked about it. Nobody told you that you must take it all off. You are saved. You are a child of God. You can have it." I could see she did not believe me, so I said, "Listen; you make a promise to me. You promise that you will never take off your make up unless the Lord speaks to you."

"Alright," she said. "that is a deal." And out she went.

For about six to nine months she wore the make up. Then one day, I noticed there was no make up. So I went straight over and said, “What about the deal we made?”

“What do you mean?” she said.

I said, “We made a deal about make up. You promised you would never take it off unless the Lord spoke to you. Are you trying to be one with all the others?”

“No,” she said, “the Lord spoke to me.”

Then, I said, “You have done the right thing.”

So it is with sports or with a thousand and one other things. If the Lord speaks to you, obey Him. “Trust and obey for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” I can tell you that sometimes the Lord gives you back things. He takes them away, and He gives them back.

When I was a little boy of three or four years of age, I loved scissors. My desire in life was to get hold of a pair of scissors. My mother thought I would be a tailor because so many Jews are tailors. I loved shears, big scissors, all of them, and my mother spent a lot of time running around saying, “Give me those scissors.” And I would say, “Never!” I hugged them to myself, and in the end, mother had to pull them away from me. Then I would have a tantrum, and I thought to myself, my mother is a witch. She takes away the things I like. I understand now that I have grown up why she had to take those scissors away. They would have damaged me. When the Lord tells you to give something up, it is because He loves you, not because He wants to give you a bad time. He says, “Give that to me. You do not realize it will damage you.” But some things He will give back. Here is the challenge: Obey the King. You have been transferred into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son; obey Him.

A Steward—Not an Owner

Here is the third thing: Learn that you are a steward, not an owner. That means you are not your own; you are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.

First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.”

First Peter 4:10: “According as each man hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Acts 4:32: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”

When you are a living sacrifice, you are no longer an owner; you are a steward. There is a vast difference between an owner and a steward. When you are an owner, you are the authority. When you are a steward, you are under authority. You should be the steward of everything you own, not the owner of it. When you are not a living sacrifice, this kind of talk is very hard to hear. “You mean my home? I should share it?” Yes, at times. “You mean my car? I should share it? Oh no, not here in America.” I notice everywhere cars with one person in them. You even have HOV lanes for the cars with two or more people, and there are not so many in these lanes, I notice. I thank God for those HOV lanes because I am always in a car with two or three others. Everything you own is not what you own, not when you belong to the Lord. You are a steward of it and you will have to give an account of your stewardship.

I came to the Lord through an extraordinary man. His name was C. T. Studd, an amazing missionary. He went with the Cambridge Seven to China first, and when he went to have his medical, the doctor said, “You cannot go; you are a museum of diseases.” But C.T. Studd said,

“Someone with greater authority than you, Doctor, has told me to go, and I am going with a museum of diseases.”

C. T. Studd was a famous cricketer, one of the really great cricketers of history. When he came to the Lord, he had a fortune. Today, it would be millions and millions of dollars. In one week, he gave it all away, every penny of it. He had to trust for his fare to China. Why did he give it away? Because the Lord told him to, and out of that obedience, thousands upon thousands throughout the world have come to know the Lord Jesus, and I am one of them. C.T. Studd was a strange old man, full of weaknesses and faults, but he was for me the illustration of a thorn bush with the fire of God in it. In him, you met the Lord. In him, you heard the Lord. Why did the Lord tell him to give up all his fortune? Could he not have used it? But in the wisdom of God, the Lord knew that if he held onto his fortune, it would have destroyed him. He could never have been what God wanted him to be if he held onto that fortune.

I knew another person, a titled lady. She was twenty years of age when she married. She had a title from her own father, and she married a military man who also had a title. Three years after they were married, he died in the Spanish flu epidemic. (It is what everybody today is afraid of with bird flu. It is the same type of thing.) There she was, a child of God, without her husband who was only a few years older than her, with an enormous fortune. And she said to me, “I nearly went out of my mind, and in the end, I shut myself away. I was going to give that whole fortune away.” But the problem was she did not know which organization or mission to give it to. Suddenly, the Lord said to her, “What are you doing?”

“I want to know, Lord, who You want me to give this money to.”

And the Lord said, “Who told you that you had to give up that fortune?”

But she said, “Lord, I thought that is what it meant.”

And the Lord said to her, “You are not the owner of that fortune; you are the steward. You will do what I say with it.” The amazing thing about that dear Lady Ogle was that she, through prayer, found a brilliant man to supervise that fortune, and over the years, she quadrupled, quintupled that fortune and gave away millions. Literally. It is very interesting to me—two very different cases: one had to give everything away; the other had to use it, but still a steward. The British and Foreign Bible Society was more or less kept alive by Lady Ogle’s giving, and so was the Scripture Gift Mission, these great missions to do with the word of God. Are you an owner of what you possess or are you a steward?

Priorities

Then there is yet another challenge: get your priorities right. Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” What are all these things? They are clothing, food, and a thousand and one other things. These are the things He says in the previous verse that the Gentiles bother about all the time. I will put it this way: these are the things that the world bothers about and thinks about. What shall we eat? How shall we eat? What shall we be dressed with? How shall we dress? The Lord said, “Get your priorities right. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and I will take care of all the other things.”

I have never found the Lord to be mean. I have never found Him to be stingy in all my life. The Lord is so generous; He loves to give once you have your priorities right. But when your priorities are wrong, you will find everything very difficult. Get your priorities right.

Here is the second shortest verse in the Bible: “Remember Lot’s wife.” It comes in an amazing chapter about the second coming of the Lord Jesus. And in the midst of this chapter, suddenly like a bullet comes this verse: “Remember Lot’s wife.” Why remember Lot’s wife? She was turned into a pillar of salt. What has that got to do with the coming of the Lord? She never got her priorities right.

She had a wonderful home in the midst of an unbelievably evil community. She and her husband were famous for their hospitality. Somewhere along the line, the Holy Spirit must have wrestled with Lot's wife to get her priorities clear. But somehow or other she did not rise to it. When the judgment of God fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah, the angels had to carry her out, and then on the way up she kept looking back, and she was turned into a pillar of salt. The church is filled with such pillars of salt, people who have never gotten their priorities clear. They are looking back, looking for the things of the past. Then you become a monument, a gravestone: here lies the body of Lance Lambert, born so and so, died so and so. There are many of Lot's wives in the church. Here is the challenge: Get your priorities right.

Understand the Will of the Lord

Here is a fifth challenge. Understand the will of the Lord. Ephesians 5:15-17 says, "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

The days are evil, increasingly evil, and they will become more and more evil until the anti-Christ appears. Therefore we should not walk unwisely, but wisely, redeeming the time, buying up the opportunity. We should not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is—a living sacrifice that ye may prove what is the good, acceptable, well-pleasing and perfect will of God. When you are not a living sacrifice, you are always fearful of the will of God. When you are not under the Lordship of Jesus, when you are an owner and not a steward, when your priorities are wrong, you are always fearful of the will of God. It is as if the Lord is going to damage you; He is going to rob you of joy and life and peace, as though if you do the will of the Lord, you have to be miserable. It is so stupid. Do you know your heavenly Father is a father? He does not want to put you into situations that make you miserable, simply for the sake of misery. He loves you, and when He reveals His will, you will always discover in the end, it is good, acceptable, and perfect.

I am old now and waiting for a new body. But I know many very unhappy Christians and they are without exception believers who do their own will. And I know many Christians filled with joy, filled with life, and even filled with laughter, and they are all believers who have done the will of God.

I John 2:15: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

What a wonderful promise! He that does the will of God abides, remains forever. What the Lord does in him is eternal. What the Lord does through him is eternal. Why? He does the will of God. It is as simple as that.

God's Co-workers

That leads me to yet another challenge: the contribution you and I make to the people of God. What do I mean? Look at I Corinthians 3:9, 11-15: "For we are God's fellow workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building... For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble, each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire."

We are God's co-workers. You can either be a co-worker of God or a worker for God. There are two kinds of work—work *for* the Lord and the work *of* the Lord. When you are not a living sacrifice, it is work for the Lord. We are a worker for God. You know the kind of thing: "I have a ministry, I have a work; this is my service, get behind me, Lord. Stand behind me, support me, provide for me, bless me. It is my work and I want You to use it." That is probably putting it a little harshly. When you are a co-worker with God, it is the Lord who calls the shots. You are under government; you do not do what He does not command. It is His work and therefore He provides. When God calls, He always provides in every way. He will provide money on the most mundane level. He will provide anointing on the highest level. When God is the worker, when it is His work, when you are a co-worker together with God, under His command, and it is His work, anything can happen.

There are two kinds of material: gold, silver, precious stones, and wood, hay, stubble. Everything is tried by fire. What is going to come through? Not wood, hay and stubble. I remember a number of times going to Imelda Marcos' Coconut Palace in Manila. It was the government's special visitor's guesthouse. I was amazed by it. Everything in it was made out of coconut palm—the wood on the floors, the wood of the banisters, the carpets, the curtains, the lamps, not only the actual lamp, but the lampshade. I could never believe that you could use coconut for so many things. It amazed me. I walked around in a daze the first time; I could not believe it. I kept on saying, "This cannot be coconut." But it was coconut—very beautiful, but very flammable.

Many a worker in God's work is building a beautiful building that is flammable. It is ingenious art, brilliant craftsmanship, but wood, hay, and stubble. If what is in you is wood, hay, and stubble, what else can you minister? To use gold, silver, and precious stones in the building, it has to be in you. Wood, hay, and stubble is worldly. Gold, silver, and precious stone is heavenly; that is, as far as heaven is concerned.

These are the challenges. Only a worker who is a living sacrifice can build on the foundation of the Lord Jesus with gold, silver, and precious stone, that which is eternal, that which in the end will be found. The gold and the precious stone will be in the bride and the silver is the means of coming there. What a challenge! What a challenge! We have so little time left to us.

When I was young, which is quite a few years ago, my birthdays seemed to me to be a millennium from each other. I used to bother my mother again and again, "When is my next birthday?"

"You have just had one."

"Well, I cannot wait for it." I could not believe that whoever was up there could make it so long until the next birthday. Now my birthdays just fly by. I cannot keep abreast of them. I have to ask the boys, "What age am I now?" It goes so fast. I sometimes wonder if the world is getting faster or is it just me. But the nearer we get to the coming of the Lord, the faster everything will go. You have very little time. Do not listen to the powers of darkness when they whisper to you, "You are young; enjoy yourself. Enjoy the world; it is there for you. It will not do you any harm; you are young. When you are a little older, you can become more separate from the world."

Then you get married and have children, and the enemy comes, "Don't settle these things. You are too busy with your family. You have got too much to do. Bother with your relationships, your family life."

When you get to middle age, you begin to spread out, and the enemy comes and says, "Take it easy. You are middle-aged. That is for young people, all that fire and fervor. It is the young people's job and business. You are middle-aged; take a little rest. Don't be so one hundred percent. It is not necessary. You are middle-aged. Wait until you retire, then you will have time. Then, you can sit down. Then, you can sort things out."

Then you get old and you lose your hair, your teeth, and your eyes. And the enemy comes and says, “Don’t think the Lord wants you; you are ready to totter into the grave. You cannot do anything. You have left it too long. You should have settled it when you were young.” How clever is the power of darkness. If, today, you hear the Lord’s voice, do not harden your heart. This world will destroy you. May God challenge us.

Shall we pray:

Beloved Lord, we ask You, do not let us escape. We prayed this at the beginning. Do not let us escape. Corner us, Lord. Have mercy upon us. Save us from the lies of Satan, from his seductive power. Lord, help us to deliberately, coldly, in one sense, present our bodies a living sacrifice. And Lord, we know You will do the rest. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.