

A FIRESIDE CHAT SERMON: CAREERS AS LIVING SACRIFICES

GOOD Morning OIC and Welcome to Father's House,

Note: If you know anyone in America they will become another hour closer to you here as Daylight Savings Time begins tonight.

This morning I am looking again at to the Book of Romans to focus on a Christian's service for Jesus. However, I want to include some ideas for the sincere Believer in Jesus who is not **Called to full time Ministry**. I am calling this a **"Fireside Chat Sermon"** as I include my life experiences and those of some of my mentors. My mentors were often in person and also in books. I also will exegete or bring out meanings in some Bible verses. I will use some men as examples both of dedicated Missionary Servants and a famous Christian Businessman.

LIVING SACRIFICES – NOT AN OPTION FOR A CHRISTIAN

I closed my last message with: **"Today's Message has tied or connected together the truths from the Bible of God's Unconditional Love unto Salvation, called Justification; with God's Conditional Love as *Living Sacrifices* and *Loving God's Children*, part of our Sanctification. Dear Christians remember that the Christian life is not difficult. It is *Impossible*. That is why God gave us His Spirit to cause it to happen. Yet, a personal relationship with God through Jesus makes it clear that we are also not "robots." God created Mankind for a love relationship with Him. Only Christians can love God back as free agents. What a joy we will have after we enter Heaven and have received crowns of Glory and then to toss these at Jesus' feet! With God nothing is Impossible!"**

GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE UNTO SALVATION

In my Romans 12 Message in April 2024 I said: **JUSTIFICATION is the declaration by God that we are no longer guilty but we are made righteous on the basis of Jesus' death on The Cross to buy OUR eternal forgiveness. OUR JUSTIFICATION is according to God's Plan: Before Time Began - In Time - After Time is No More, as revealed in the Bible. The Book of Romans also declares that God, the Sovereign King of the Universe, has placed salvation of all men in the Word and also in the hands of His Chosen, the Church.....And, today, we will see more details of how Paul describes that Christians who are Justified by Faith and who follow Jesus will be lead to Dedicated Service as *Living Sacrifices*, that is as Sanctified Believers.**

Therefore God's continuing love is now shown in the Believer's life by His leading them. As the Psalmist said in (Psalm 23.3) *He restores my soul; He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.* God is patient and kind to all His Children; but, Jesus' demand for following Him is still true. In (**Matthew 16.24**) it reads: *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take **up his cross**, and follow Me.* As we follow Jesus, we are sanctified, that is set apart and made new in His image unto His Glory and good works. In (**Romans 12.1**) it says, *I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies **as a living sacrifice**, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your **reasonable service** of worship.* God is asking us to present ourselves to Him as sacrifices. When we are truly in awe or reverential fear of our God, and the Sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, we feel honored that God would call us to follow in Jesus' sacrificial footsteps. Jesus is the One who sacrificed His Life on the Cross for us. God's plan is to make all Christians more like Jesus as they follow Jesus to Heaven, our **final** Sanctification.

In conclusion to the above, to follow Jesus at all, a Christians obeys His Lord Jesus by picking up his personal cross assigned to him by God. Along with that requirement to follow Jesus, a Christian's reasonable or logical service is to also offer his whole life to Jesus' service as a *Living Sacrifice*. Christians who obey Jesus out of love will find out as they mature that it is in a sincere obedience to this the Living Waters and Joy will increase. It is easy to see why Christians might assume that only full-time Ministry could make this possible; but, that is not the truth. So today I want to try, with God's help, to answer what many Christians are troubled by: "Am I called to be a living Sacrifice as a Full-time Minister, and, If not, how can I be a *Living Sacrifice* for Jesus?"

LIVING SACIFICES AND MISSIONS

My experiences are with my personal Saviour Jesus as my Commander-In-Chief. I will not claim that I have always been a totally obedient soldier under His Command. But, by God's Grace, it has been by the Word and the Spirit that Jesus brought me to Japan as currently a Pastor-teacher-missionary. My experiences may help someone else to meditate on God's will for their life, however I will also share some famous men who shaped my life for and in Christ.

I was Born-Again in what became to be called the *Jesus Movement* in America in the 1970's, a special time of many being born-again. It soon became a Missions Movement, as God is not afraid to be very logical. He was saving more Believers which led to more missionaries. But, the *Jesus Movement* also awakened the existing Evangelical Churches to their neglect of Missions. I heard one of my Missions Teachers in a Christian College say, "**That during the early 20th Century the Great Commission, Missions to the whole world ordered by Jesus in Matthew 28.19, became the Great Omission,!**" Many missionaries, including those who became famous

in the History of Christians Missions, were called in the 19th Century. These sailed into dangerous and mighty oceans upon ships which were so fragile. Great danger over the oceans of the world to then find hostile peoples to love and teach the Gospel of Jesus. Some perished by disease before even reaching their mission field. Some were martyred by those they came to love. The Missions teachers that I had, such as Ralph Winters, and Donald McGavern, and J. Christy Wilson, and others, told us: **“Try to be a Full Time Missionary until God tells you NO!”** I did...well “Here I am!” But, many in the 1970's did hear God's loving NO!

PASTOR BRUCE'S MENTORS IN FULL TIME MINISTRY

These are men whose lives were stellar examples of offering themselves as *Living Sacrifices*. They were called by God to be *Loving God back in full-time Ministry*. I have chosen three such Men of God, called great for they grasped “How Great God Is somewhat better than most of us:” Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Adoniram Judson (also, Adoniram Judson Gordon) and Eric Liddell.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

For this Message I have verified some facts on GOOGLE. But much is from my memory as I have read, and wrote a seminary paper on his most influential book to being *Living Sacrifices*. This book is titled *The Cost of Discipleship*. As the title implies one of his famous quotes: ***“Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner.”*** I have confirmed by my reading and watching movies about Bonhoeffer the following excerpts from the Amazon sales page:

“One of the most important theologians of the twentieth century illuminates the relationship between ourselves and the teachings of Jesus. *The Cost of Discipleship* is a compelling statement of the demands of sacrifice and ethical consistency from a man whose life and thought were exemplary articulations of a new type of leadership inspired by the Gospel, and imbued with the spirit of Christian humanism and a creative sense of civic duty.”

Pastor Bruce takes note to Amazon's *Christian humanism and a creative sense of civic duty. This is why:*

Rev. Bonhoeffer, a pastor-teacher in Germany, was so grieved by the annihilation of the Jews that he joined a conspiracy of German Generals to assassinate Adolph Hitler. Jesus, I am sure, could have been tempted to use Almighty Power in mercy. But he said in **(Matthew 26.52)** *Then said Jesus unto him, “Put up again thy sword into his place, for all **they** that take **the sword** shall perish with **the sword**.”* We all fall well short of our Lord in many ways. Bonhoeffer's plot might be called a mistake, rather than a sin. In my seminary paper I praised Bonhoeffer for his life as an example

to pay the cost of discipleship taught by Jesus. But, I also commented on his lack of faith in the sovereignty of God over good and evil in this world. The plot to kill Hitler failed. This “cost Dietrich his life by hanging.” About a month later the Allied Army of Americans and British invaded Germany, setting the imprisoned Jews free. This would have been Bonhoeffer's answer to pray to relieve his burden! Please note that my 37 years of Ministry and Missions since seminary do not change my correct theology; but, I more deeply understand his human failure due to compassion.

Bonhoeffer also considered non-ministers in *Cost of Discipleship*. As the Amazon summary mentions:

What can the call to discipleship, the adherence to the word of Jesus, mean today to the businessman, the soldier, the laborer, or the aristocrat? What did Jesus mean to say to us? What is his will for us today? Drawing on the Sermon on the Mount, Dietrich Bonhoeffer answers these timeless questions by providing a seminal reading of the dichotomy between "cheap grace" and "costly grace." "Cheap grace," Bonhoeffer wrote, "is the grace we bestow on ourselves...grace without discipleship....Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock....It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life."

ADONIRAM JUDSON

I first learned of Adoniram Judson in the book titled *The Splendor of Glory*. My pastor in Springfield, Missouri, USA loaned this for Dorothy and I to read as we expressed our heart for Missions. Judson's fame likely assures that all future biographies and books are quite accurate. I will start with the Amazon summary from the book written in 1987 titled *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* :

On February 12, 1812, Ann and Adoniram Judson sailed from Salem {Massachusetts, USA} aboard the brig Caravan as two of the first missionaries to go out from North America. Watching the shoreline disappear from view, they could not have foreseen the impact of their journey on the future of the Christian world mission or on the thousands of men and women who would follow in their footsteps. After a short stay in India, they carried the Good News of Jesus Christ to the golden shore of Burma. Drawing on letters and church records, Courtney Anderson paints a poignant portrait of Judson's early life in dealing with the conflict between his desire for material success and the inner call to serve God. For Adoniram Judson "the golden shore" brought bitter hardships, imprisonment, and family tragedy. Yet, he never wavered in his commitment to win people to faith in Christ and to translate the Bible into the Burmese language. This special edition of *To the Golden Shore* recognized the 175th anniversary of the Judson's sailing on their historic voyage and celebrates the early years of Baptist mission overseas. Photographs and reproductions of Burmese woodcuts are used in telling Judson's story.” {end Amazon}

Please note how the Burmese woodcuts show how the people of Burma, now Myanmar, revered this man who truly gave his life to be a *Living Sacrifice to The Splendor of Glory*.

I was so blessed to meet here at OIC a Christian woman who attends when her job permits. She is from Myanmar and confirmed that the church he planted continues despite civil war and Muslim pressures. She also said the people still hold Rev. Judson in high esteem. Of course, some of my American homeland connection was not lost upon reading *The Splendor of Glory*. Adoniram and Ann Judson were the first foreign missionaries from North America. They sailed from, Salem, Massachusetts, my home state. Judson had hoped to work with his “hero,” the British missionary William Carey. He was already famous among missionaries. Conflicts with Judson's sending denomination led a disappointed Judson with his wife Ann to be redirected from India to Burma.

Bitter hardships, imprisonment, and family tragedy- The Judson's had the normal frustration with this new language, and hardships in a country less blessed than 19th Century Massachusetts.

Adoniram began translating the Bible as he progressed. The resistance from the King of Burma was also increasing. In order to gain an audience to explain his religious, and not political goals, he had to do the cultural norm, that is, bribe the guards of the palace. This bought some time; but, the King was paranoid about the nearby British Armies in India. He arrested Judson and placed him under the palace floor in the sewage and filth for over a year. Some letters got out and back from Ann. She was pregnant. The British Army finally arrived as other missionaries from England were in Burma. After Judson's release he returned to his home to find that Ann and the baby both had died during childbirth!

Judson showed his humanness as he went to a cabin in the woods. He dug a grave and all day leaned over it **begging God to kill him**. After many months of his daily routine, missionary friends came to his rescue. He outlived two more wives and finished both planting the Burmese Church and translating the Bible into Burmese.

Then in 1893, as a famous Missionary, he wrote six lectures titled *The Holy Spirit in Missions*. He opened these with: “I am just recovering from **The Fever**, and able to record my gratitude to God for His sparing mercy, and to the Bernettes...and Dr. Richardson.another span is added to my **FORFEITED LIFE**. **If so poor a worm as I may to Thy great glory live”**

Please note that as he called himself a worm it is as in (Isaiah 41.14)

*Do not fear, you worm Jacob,
and you men of Israel.*

*I will help you, says the LORD
and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

Charles H. Spurgeon writing in England at that time and likely read by Judson, had exegeted this verse: He compared the small worm to another small creature, an ant coming to a farmer's granary for food. God's love for Israel was His Almighty ability to provide well beyond any need they had. This is a promised blessing. Judson was expressing his smallness before his Lord and Savior Jesus!

In his Six Lectures in 1893, Judson had a real concern that men, not Holy Spirit were administrating Missions.

Judson wrote: “The first word in the history of Missions among the Gentiles is: *As they worshipped the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” from (Acts 13.2).”* Judson continues: **“God sends ambassadors, but He does not call for volunteers in His work. And the Holy Spirit, the present Administrator of the Church, commissions those He sovereignly chooses, instead of recruiting those who may judge themselves fit for His service.”**

Being a humble servant, he commended those who planned and built Christian Schools on Mission fields rather than send out preachers. He acknowledged God's fruit; but, he said “The greatest revivals happen when a preacher is anointed to preach the Gospel to the most destitute of sinners.” He gave several examples of those days. I recall clearly his story of a Missionary approaching the Chief in a very Savage cruel village. Before they could kill him, he preached the Gospel to the Chieftain. That pagan fell on His face before the Lord and became the preacher to lead his whole village to Faith in Jesus.

I love Judson's expression of the difficulty of Missions, especially his to the Burmese. Both Burma and India have a true danger from tigers. Adoniram Judson chose an expression like my *Japan-Mission Impossible*. He said, **“I am pulling the eye tooth from a living tiger!”**

BEING A LIVING SACRIFICES IS IN THE HEART, NOT JUST IN THE CAREER

Many new Christians assume the *Loving God back must mean full-time Ministry*. To prevent that wrong attitude many pastors in the 1970's said: “Not everyone is supposed to be a Full-time Minister!” I do not say this. **Why? Because,** I believe that it does not help a younger Christian much to think along **the negative lines on something that you were not asked by God to do!** My attitude to young Christians is to be so sold-out to Jesus so that you cannot miss what *God prepared beforehand, so that we {YOU} should walk in them* from **(Ephesians 2.10)** *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that*

we should walk in them Believing that God will lean you into a positive thing to do will help to really do that. Faith is often shown in a positive, rather than a negative, attitude.

NOTE: Living Sacrifice or Hypocrite?

By the way, any Christian who acts like he is sold out to Jesus yet refuses Water Baptism is a hypocrite. I consider him **Not a Christian At All!** The Apostle Mark made that clear in **(Mark 16.16)** when he wrote: *He who believes and is baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned.* One might say, it says not believing is the road to condemnation! But, how can a sinner saved by Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross expect to follow Jesus into everlasting life, if this sinner now become a saint, will not follow Jesus in the death to self shown by submitting to Water Baptism? As the Apostle Paul wrote in **(Romans 6.8)** *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.* Once a believer has followed Jesus in that obedience to Water Baptism, God will clearly be faithful to lead him in some works to do, and eventually, make clear what is his **Calling**. Not only as a *Living Sacrifice* day by day, but also, for a purpose driven life!

NON-MINISTERS – LIVING SACRIFICIAL LIVES

One of the first fruits to look for in a Christian not called to the Full-Time Ministry is his willingness to work and his handling of **money!**

Willing to Work - (1 Thessalonians 4.11-12) *11 Learn to be calm, and to conduct your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 so that you may walk honestly toward those who are outsiders and that you may lack nothing.*

And - (2 Thessalonians 3.9-11) *9 We did this, not because we did not have that right, but to make ourselves an example for you to follow. 10 For when we were with you, we commanded you that if any will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some among you who live in idleness, mere busybodies, not working at all.*

Love of Money-

(1 Timothy 6.9-12/PHILLIPS)*9-10 For men who set their hearts on being wealthy expose themselves to temptation. They fall into one of the world's traps, and lay themselves open to all sorts of silly and wicked desires, which are quite capable of utterly ruining and destroying their souls. For loving money leads to all kinds of evil, and some men in the struggle to be rich have lost their faith and caused themselves untold agonies of mind. 11-12 But you, the man of God, keep clear of such things. Set your heart not on riches, but on goodness, Christ-likeness, faith, love, patience and humility. Fight the worthwhile battle of the faith, keep your grip on that life eternal to which you have been called, and to which you boldly professed your loyalty before many witnesses.*

I have known personally some Christian doctors and businessmen who were quite successful financially. But I have chosen a famous Christian businessman who showed his desire to be a *Living Sacrifice* in business: Harland Sanders.

You may know him better as Colonel Sanders the creator of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC)

HARLAND SANDERS

Taking from the summary on the Amazon page for his autobiography with some of the other facts I recall from reading, *Life As I Have Known It Has Been Finger Lickin' Good*:

Colonel Sanders - sixth-grade dropout, farmhand (at age 12), army mule-tender, locomotive fireman, railroad section hand, aspiring lawyer, insurance salesman, ferryboat entrepreneur, Chamber of Commerce secretary, tire salesman, amateur obstetrician, unsuccessful political candidate, gas station operator, motel operator, restaurateur.

His gas station was like a *Lawson's with cars*. He offered food, chicken of course, along with pumping the gasoline. His first wife divorced him for all the hours he spent away from his job in his "Cooking Laboratory."

Then, at the age of 65, a new Interstate highway snatched the traffic away from his corner, and Colonel Sanders was left with nothing but a Social Security check, \$105 per month, and a secret recipe for fried chicken. That's all he needed.

As Harland said, "I made a resolve then that I was going to amount to something if I could. And no hours, nor amount of labor, nor amount of money would deter me from giving the best that there was in me."

Once he was satisfied with his unique recipe, he tried to sell his chicken recipe but restaurant owners slammed the door in his face. Not once. Not twice. Over 1,000 times.

But he kept knocking, a small restaurant in Salt Lake City finally said "yes", and KFC was born. That one "yes" turned into 32,000 restaurants in over 150 countries.

Colonel Sanders, named a colonel by the state governor who liked his chicken, is an awesome inspiring story for *Never Give Up*. Many motivational speakers use his story for their material. But, in his autobiography, he included his accepting Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. A man with much charisma and charm, his eccentricity for the best fried chicken made him world famous. When he accepted Jesus, he went to Israel and was baptized in the Jordan River. That fits the Colonel, I would say.

His priority regarding wealth also was shown in some of his simple Kentucky sayings. He once famously said, "**There's no reason to be the richest man in the cemetery**". And in fact, he gave all his profits, yes all, to charities. He lived comfortably, of course, but what a testimony he gave

to Christian businessmen. He sold his business but traveled the world as an ambassador for KFC. In 1980, at the age of 90, he graduated to Heaven.

ERIC LIDELL

I can not finish this message without mentioning another Missionary Hero of the Faith, Eric Lidell. His life was made famous in the Award winning movie, *Chariots of Fire*. He left the Mission Field for a few years back home in Scotland. He decided to compete in foot races. He had no competition. When his sister, also home for a break from their Mission in China, chastened him for his passion to run, he told her that: “The Lord takes pleasure in me when I run.” He also said: “God made me fast!” His superb gift of running brought him to the 1924 Olympics in [Paris](#). While boarding the boat to France for the Olympics, Liddell learns the 100-meter heats (races) will be on a Sunday. Despite intense pressure from the [Prince of Wales](#) and the [British Olympic Committee](#), he refuses to run the race on the [Lord's Day](#). His teammate switched a spot with Lidell on a week day in the 400 Meter race. Liddell fell and still won by several yards at the finish line. “God made him fast!”

As an amateur runner I myself spent many days in Boston at the local track running 100 yard wind sprints. One day simply minding my own business and running I evidently humbled some college track men. I heard one of them say of this 55 year old man: “Who does he think he is!” I always regretted not yelling back to them: “Someone that God made fast!” I wondered about racing in a seniors race. I was for sure the fastest 55 year old man in Boston. Jesus whispered quietly how he was blessed to see me run, but He had another race for me to run to GLORY!

Eric returned to the Mission in China. Soon, the Japanese invaded and placed him in prison where he died. He finished his race; may we all do so well, to finish ours!

Let Us pray,

REFERENCES

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