

Bound to the Altar

Sermon #0721

Study given by W. D. Frazee—January 1, 1957

"God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar"
Psalm 118:27.

What is sacrifice? Somebody says self.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"
Romans 12:1.

For four thousand years there were altars in this world. Every one of those altars from Adam on down pointed forward to the cross. Finally the One that all those sacrifices typified came, and He was sacrificed on the cross. The cross is the Christian altar.

"I am crucified with Christ" Galatians 2:20.

The cross is not only where He died for me, the cross is where I die with Him. The cross is where He gave everything for me, and the cross is where I give everything for Him.

That was represented in those altars. The altars of stone the patriarchs built, and the brazen altar that was in the court of the sanctuary represented the cross, and thus they speak to us. The altar is the place of sacrifice, and the sacrifice is you and me.

Our text says to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar. How many horns were there on the altar? Four. So the figure is that here is a sacrifice, and it is to be tied to the horns of the altar.

I have been trying to visualize that. I was not there, and I do not know whether they actually did any binding of sacrifices to those horns or not. I question it. A dead slain bullock would not need to be tied, would it? No. But was there ever a binding of a sacrifice? Yes. It was Isaac.

"At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man,

exhausted with the struggle of those three terrible days, could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience" *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 152.

One of the biggest problems we have is that hardly anyone has learned that lesson. Some of the struggles you dear young people are having in your teens and twenties, and some of the struggles we who are older are having, is that we never learned before we were three this simple but wonderful lesson of ready, trusting obedience. When the great test comes and we are asked, like Isaac, to go onto the altar, it is hard to go and it is hard to stay.

"But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission. He was a sharer in Abraham's faith, and he felt he was honored to be called to give his life as an offering to God. He tenderly seeks to lighten his father's grief, and encourages his nerveless hands to bind the cords that confine him to the altar" *Ibid*.

What a picture. I look at it and say, Why was he bound? Lest in the hour of sacrifice his reflexes should get the better of him and he should jump away from the discission his voluntary choice had already made. And to everyone of us God sends the suggestion, bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? You can never find rest or be perfectly blessed until all on the altar is laid. We sing about it. We read about it. But the great struggle of life is to experience it. Perhaps I ought to say that the settling of this question is what cuts short the struggle.

"The surrender of all our powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life. It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart"
Messages to Young People, page 30.

Dear one, if you and I can settle this question, there are a thousand problems that are already solved. There are a thousand struggles that are already cut short.

Some of you know that troubles are getting more intense half way around the world, and every few days the president tells the country that things are going to get worse before they get better. He is increasing the draft and increasing the number of men he is sending over there.

Suppose one of those soldiers says, They are probably going to call my name to go. It probably wouldn't be good for my health over there in those jungles. I wonder if I couldn't get out of the army, or at least be given a clerical job in Washington D. C., or one of these army bases here in America. My health is the most important thing, and it might be very dangerous for me over there.

Is there anything wrong with what I said? No. There is nothing wrong with any of it, but it will never win a war. And there are a lot of things that people are saying that there is nothing wrong with at all, but it will never get this work finished. It will never bring the coming of Jesus. It will never bring success to the work He gave us to do.

I would like to have us think about it. Where are you? Are you on the altar, or are you running around free? I know it is terrible to be physically tied down to an altar. Therein lies the danger. We cannot look at others and see if they are on the altar or not. Some people obviously aren't. They don't pretend to be. And nobody but God and your heart knows if you are tied to that altar.

What looks like the most dangerous place in the world to be is the safest place, and what looks like the hardest place in all the world is the happiest place. We are told that some people take such good care of themselves that the Lord does not do much for them. They are always watching to see that they are looked after. If we will go to the altar with Jesus, we will be crucified with Him. We will give up our way and our plans to Him.

As we take on God's problems, He takes on our problems. I know this is so. There is no question in my mind about it, and I wish everyone could get the joy I know.

Let's see what the cords are:

"We must bind ourselves upon the altar with the strong cords of faith and love" *Counsels on Health*, page 381.

The cords are faith and love. We are to bind ourselves upon the altar with them. Can you get the picture? Here is someone who gets up on the altar, but they are not bound there. They are not tied, and the knife begins to cut. What is the danger? That they will jump off. And they are rather wary about getting back on again.

Some people, bless their dear hearts, do not know any better than to tell them, Well, brother, sister, get back on and maybe nobody will cut you this time. Maybe you will not get hurt this time. Get back on and we will try to see that nothing happens.

What is an altar for? Sacrifice. Jesus says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." What a strange thing it would be if, as one of Jesus' assistants would whisper into the ear of the man next to me, Don't be afraid. Go ahead and take the cross and nothing will happen to you.

That is a good way to get people to take the cross, isn't it? But when they get to calvary and finds it means business, then what?

Ah, the thieves wrestled with their executioners. But their crosses are not our crosses. Jesus voluntarily laid down His life upon the cross. It is volunteers Jesus is

asking for. There are no draftees in this army. There are no people who are caught and wrestled with and held down.

Mark it, if you ever go to the altar and stay there, it will be because like Isaac you assist the Father in binding yourself to the altar with the cords of faith and love.

It ought to be a convenient thing to help a man to move off an altar by offering something more comfortable. It ought to be a simple thing to find a more comfortable place than a cross. Wouldn't you think so?

Then it is nothing strange if someone comes along and offers you something different, something easier, something more comfortable. But you may well have a doubt whether it is the One who said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.

If we are bound there, we will not be so easily moved by the fear of problems on one side, or the hope of finding something more comfortable and convenient on the other.

How long does the sacrifice stay on the altar? Until it is consumed.

Someone says, But shouldn't we guard our health, and shouldn't we think about our families, and shouldn't we think about a reasonable amount of income? And if a man does not provide for his own house, isn't he worse than an infidel? Doesn't the home come first? Doesn't my health come first?

I want to read you something, or rather I want you to read it. There is a grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff in what I just said. It is all right to get the grain of wheat, but don't get the bushel of chaff along with it. Here is a statement from Jesus. Here is the altar:

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" Matthew 19:29.

To forsake houses is hard. To forsake brethren or sisters is harder. Father or mother is harder yet. Wife or children is still harder. I wonder what Jesus was talking about. Did He mean that? Let's see:

"Christ meant something when He said, 'And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' He intended to impress upon us the fact that we must make eternal things of first importance, and so relate ourselves to the cause and work of God that we shall not be hindered by things of a temporal nature" *Historical Sketches*, page 128.

How did Jesus put it in the Sermon on the Mount? Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. He intended to impress upon us the fact that we must make eternal things of first importance, and so relate ourselves to the cause and work of God that we shall not be hindered by things of a temporal nature. Everything of this character must come in secondary.

"The armor of God once put on is not to be taken off over slight excuses. What we need is untiring energy and perseverance so we will not be broken off from the work by difficulties and home perplexities. If we do allow our interest to be thus separated, the enemy will understand it, and he will make trouble right in our families to draw us away from the work" *Ibid*.

This is pure supposition, but suppose all the soldiers over in Viet Nam were volunteers. Suppose they could leave anytime they wanted. You were the enemy and had the opportunity to get at their families at home. What would you try to do? You would try to make all kinds of situations at home so that the word would reach those soldiers over there that things are such that we just have to have you. We need you. Uncle Sam has a million others he can use, but we have got to have you.

If you were the enemy and could thus get a man out of the army, you would do it. You would do it for George as well as Harry. You would do it for John and James. You would go down the list.

How many devils has the enemy? Several million. Is there one of them that has any other job than to get you out of this army? No, there are two or three who have no other job. That's right. No other job than to get you out of this army. To get you off the altar is their job.

And remember, you are a volunteer. You were when you came in. Every day you are a volunteer. Can you get off the altar? Yes. Any time. It is a wonder Jesus ever gets anyone, isn't it?

Yes, it is a wonder, and wonder is what we need to see in order to be held there. The wonder is His love. It was love that led Him to the cross. And we are told that He even longed for His baptism of blood in order that He might accomplish the redemption of His children.

As He hung there on the cross no one slipped up to Him and said, Jesus, we hear you are just about ready to get down. We will make it a little easier so You will stay. Not one devil said that, and not one angel from heaven said that.

Did things get easier? No. They got harder all the way through. He finally died in agony for you and me. What held Him there? Faith and love.

Those are the cords that will hold us there. What we need is not the spirit to go and lash ourselves or to lie on cold stones. What we need is the Spirit of Jesus;

to go to Him and ask Him to inspire our hearts with what led Him to the cross and held Him there.

If we get that love, all the temptations, allurements, invitations, and suggestions that there is an easier way to do it will not have any effect upon us whatsoever.

Jesus was talking to His disciples and telling them about the cross that He was going to. He had a dear friend who was trying to make it easier for Him. His name was Peter. But who was behind Peter? Satan.

"Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying,
Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee"
Matthew 16:22.

I want to tell you something. Peter was not a heathen, and he was not a hypocrite. Some well-meaning, misguided friend may come to you and say, Surely God does not require you to make such a sacrifice as you are about to make. There is an easier way. There is a way that does not require as many problems for you or your wife or your children. There is a way that will be easier on your health. There is a way that will be easier on your pocketbook. There is a way that will be easier on your reputation.

What should we say? Jesus said to Peter, "Get thee behind Me Satan." Could it be that He would say that to one of His best friends? Yes He did. He said that very thing. And Peter doubtless wondered what in the world was the matter with Jesus that He would say anything like that.

Oh, that God may help us to say it.

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W.D. Frazee Sermons
PO Box 129, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org