

Prove Me Now Seek Me First

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Prove Me Now

Seek Me First

On the final evening of His life and just before He became the sum of all offering, Jesus Christ told His disciples that He earnestly desired to eat the Passover with them. Luke 22:15. In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul explained that we participate in Christ's offering when we eat and drink the bread and wine in our communion service. Paul said, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [or participation] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [or participation] of the body of Christ?' 1 Cor 10:16.

Our participation in Christ's offering is not substantial just because we attend church, although Paul certainly directed us to gather together to exhort one another. Heb 12:25. He said the cross of Calvary allowed us to appear before God and to go boldly to the throne of grace where we are able to find mercy and help in time of need. Heb 4:16. Paul also said that we have an altar which was not available to the priests of the Old Testament. He stated that 'we have an altar from which those who serve the Tabernacle have no right to eat'. Heb 13:10. We can




assume that this altar exists to receive our offering before we proceed to the throne of grace.

The gospel of Christ is about fellowship and participation, rather than just a judicial exchange. The Lord is not obliged to look after us and do whatever we want, just because we become Christians. You and I have no particular rights before God but we do have the righteousness that He attributes to us when we seek first His kingdom and put Him first in our lives. In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul encouraged them to give the Lord 'first place in everything'. Col 1:15. However, it is interesting to note that the word 'place' is not found in the original script where it simply says to 'make Him first'. This reference to 'first' pertains of course, to His position or status as the firstborn Son or firstfruits which were very relevant in the Hebrew context. Col 1:15, 18. James 1:18. And in the New Testament, we are told that all believers belong to the church of the firstborn. Heb 12:23.

Our offering is the means by which the kingdom of God grows, but it is also the evidence of our reliance on Him. When we offer ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice, it will include our time, money and resources. In this way, we make Him first because we are not serving our own needs or agendas before we serve Him. Nevertheless, our

provision is ensured because all our needs are answered in offering. We find that we do not need to engage in spiritual warfare by rebuking the devil or demons who might otherwise devour our supply. In the Gospel of Luke, we read that everything that is 'first' is holy to the Lord and belongs to Him, so we can assume that we are protected when we become part of the 'first'. Luke 2:23.

When we give Him first place or make Him 'first', it goes without saying that we should also seek Him first in our time of need. There is an interesting account in the second book of Chronicles about Asa, the king of Judah. When he was under threat from the king of Israel, Asa turned to a pagan king for help instead of calling on the name of the Lord. We read that Hanani, the prophet came to King Asa and reprimanded him saying, 'Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand'. 2 Chron 16:7. Obviously, the prophet was making reference to a future event and he was saying in effect, 'You have not relied on the Lord'. Prophets spoke constantly to kings, priests and all the fathers of Israel, admonishing them to put the Lord first; not just in their heart but in all their practices, behaviour and life. Because prophets compel us to do something that is fundamentally contrary to the 'good'




management of life, they are constantly being beaten up, slandered and slain.

Hanani came to King Asa and reminded him that the Lord had already wrought an amazing victory on his behalf against a previous foe in the face of immeasurable odds. But the prophet explained that because the king had turned to an enemy for help and was now in his debt, Asa would never be able to overthrow the king of Aram. Hanani said, 'Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand.' 2 Chron 16:7-8. But in the middle of his reprimand, Hanani injected a surprising and very encouraging statement regarding the miracle that God is willing to perform for His people. He declared, 'For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth, that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His'.

Hanani continued to address the king saying, 'You have acted foolishly in this. From now on, you will surely have wars'. 2 Chron 16:9. We read that Asa became so angry with the prophet that he put him in prison and

oppressed the people. Despite the troubled times that the king endured, it would appear that he still did not learn his lesson because we go on to read that ‘in the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians. So Asa slept with his fathers having died in the forty-first year of his reign.’ 2 Chron 16:12. We read that his son, Jehosaphat, became king in his place. King Asa lost his life and his throne because he refused to prove God. Although, Asa had proven God once in the battle with the Ethiopians, he refused to prove Him a second time.

In the book of Hosea, we find another interesting account. It concerns Joseph’s son, Ephraim, who represents the ten northern tribes of the divided nation of Israel. We read ‘Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgement, because he was determined to follow man’s command.’ Hosea 5: 11. If you are over eighteen years of age and live in an adult world, you will know that nobody gives you a command. The police don’t give commands when you drive down the street, although they will certainly give you a penalty if you violate the law. We can do what we like when we like, which is the benefit of living in a free democracy.




So in what circumstances, would we follow man's command? At the crunch points of life, do we seek the Lord first? Of course we do in attitude! We would definitely testify that we are committed to Christ and that He is first in our lives. But in practice, do we offer ourselves continually as the morning and evening sacrifice? In his letter to the Romans, Paul told us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice and in the book of Proverbs we read that those who seek Him early will find Him. Rom 12:1. Prov 8:17. Are we giving the first of our time, income and resources as the representative portion for all that He has abounded to us? In the book of Proverbs, we are commanded to honour the Lord from our wealth and from the first of all our produce so that our 'barns' and 'vats' will overflow. Prov 3:9, 10.

The burnt offering is tied to all offerings because it is continual. Although it was only offered twice a day, it had a continual effect from morning to evening and from evening to dawn. There was always an aroma ascending to the Lord which meant that He was always acknowledging them as they were continually before Him. David said, 'I was continually before Your face'. Paul urged us to present our bodies a living sacrifice so that we might prove the good, the perfect and the acceptable will of God. Rom 12:1, 2. We are to be continually before Him, morning and evening, lifting up

our hands in prayer. Just as the temple, the house of God was a house of offering, so the church is to be a house of offering today. We bring offering so that we obtain an access, an entry, to a throne of grace; to find mercy and help in time of need.

When we continue to study the book of Hosea we read, 'Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like rottenness to the house of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb but he is unable to heal you or cure you of your wound.' Hos 5:13. We then learn that Ephraim was severely disciplined by God because he was determined to follow man's command. It says, 'For I will be like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver. I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.' Hos 5:14, 15.

In chapter 6 of the book of Hosea, we find the people's response to the Lord's rebuke. 'Come, let us return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day




that we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.’ But the Lord replied, ‘What shall I do with you O Ephraim? What shall I do with you O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud and like the dew which goes away early. Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them with the words of My mouth; and the judgements on you are like the light that goes forth.’ Hos 6:1-5. The nation of Israel sought assistance from a pagan king rather than seeking mercy and help from God. They were severely chastised for their disloyalty and disobedience so that in their affliction they might repent and seek Him with sincerity of heart.

In the book of Malachi it says, ‘Prove Me now’. Mal 3:10. It is the only statement that I can find in the Scriptures where God is categorical about the miracle which He will perform. But He makes the miracle dependent on offering. He says, “‘Prove me now. Bring Me My tithes and heave offerings’.” Your translation might just say ‘offering’ but the correct translation is ‘heave offering’. The heave offering was the way God’s people lifted up the burden to participate in the carrying forward of His work. We read, “‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and

test Me now in this”, says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes”, says the Lord of hosts. “All nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land”, says the Lord of hosts.’ Mal 3:10-12.

What do you default to when you come under pressure in life? Do you cast yourself on God and dig into your resources, time and motivation to bring an offering? If you do, God will meet you because He answers offering. That is what the Scripture teaches. We read in the book of Hebrews, that Christ was the one offering for all time. ‘For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.’ Heb 10:14. Paul was not negating the breadth of offering taught in the Scriptures. He was simply saying that there was only one sacrifice of Christ required to activate all those offerings. If you need to control your circumstances, you will never be a person of offering. The crunch will come. Indeed, the pressure will come and your resources will dry up. God is laying out a tapestry under all our lives, so that we can cast ourselves upon Him and prove Him by offering. We read, ‘Ephraim is oppressed and crushed in judgement



because he determined to follow man's command'. Hos 5:11. If we simply follow the advice of a financial advisor in our time of need, we are following man's command and we will never know the miracle that comes through offering.

I completely believe in the proposition of offering. It was the mode of the prophets, Moses and the apostle's Peter and Paul. The Lord told Moses to instruct the people to raise a contribution which actually means 'heave offering'. Ex 25:2-8. They were to bring gold, silver, bronze, gem stones, fine linen and other valuable materials which would be used in the construction of the tabernacle. It is interesting to note what happened after the infilling of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. The first action of the new converts was to sell their properties and lay the proceeds at the apostle's feet. Acts 4:34-35. We cannot find a specific direction from the apostle Peter to the believers but the outcome is evident. This offering initiative produced the seven deacons in Jerusalem and it produced Barnabas who laboured with Paul in Antioch. Their first venture together was to take up an offering for the Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing severe hardship.

The exercise of faith in raising that offering produced prophets and teachers in Antioch. It was here that the

Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Paul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them'. Acts 13:2. From a basis of offering and as a consequence of their missionary endeavours, the whole of the Gentile church was born.