

### **Our glory and our ‘sacrifices’**

The theme of my exhortation is: «**Our glory and our ‘sacrifices’**». As a rule, our knowledge, our diplomas, our capacities, our gifts, our work and our goods usually make the object of our glory; our successes constitute the basis of our internal satisfaction and our glorification vis-à-vis others. But is it for Christians spiritually permissible and profitable to behave in such a way? Let’s take a look at what the Bible tells us: “**For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.**” (2Co 1:12 NKJV). Then, **our glory** depends on our “**simplicity and godly sincerity**” before God.

This verse constitutes **the basic principle** concerning our attitude towards God and before men. There is another very relevant verse in Psalms that says: “**My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a perfect way, He shall serve me.**” (Ps.101:6). This verse means that **only** the servant’s ministry that works in an honest or perfect manner is **acceptable** by Christ and that **he can stay by Him!** This verse doesn’t speak of «*sinless perfection*». It simply means the sincerity and the purity of our motivation and especially our love for the truth and for the Lord Jesus. What a privilege to have a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (Heb.10:22)! Source of all blessing! We can easily, therefore, draw the conclusion that **God’s work is in reality done by God’s men who are faithful to God and who act according to God!** No one can be considered as **true** God’s servant if he is not a true child of God, who does not lead a holy life and if he is not guided by the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:14). Otherwise, his ministry is of the flesh and of carnal wisdom. ***Therefore, the first requisite is a good conscience both for a spiritual life and a prosperous ministry*** (2Co.1:12; 1Ti.1:19).

The good conscience is not only our most important duty (1Tim.1:5), but it is in addition **the only one, the unique personal reason for us to boast**. We cannot boast about **tomorrow**, because we don’t know what a day may bring forth (Pr.27:1 and Jas.4:13-14). We cannot brag about our **salvation** because it is God’s gift: we are saved by His grace. The fact that we can boast in the **cross** of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to us, and we to the world.” (Ga.6:14) and the fact that we understand and know Him, that He is the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth (Jer.9:23-24), all that doesn’t constitute a personal glory. We boast merely in the Lord (1Co.1:31). Then, **the only personal glory is a good conscience that always makes good moral choices!** God who calls us to have such a testimony knows that it is feasible! He has already given us the necessary spiritual means to accomplish His will. The one that calls us to have such a testimony **it is He that will accomplish it**. Our greatest joy in front of His throne will be the consciousness that we lived our lives in «**holiness and purity**» for our Savior.

Therefore, “... **the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,**” (1Ti.1:5). Yes, such a faith and such a good conscience that some have lost, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have **suffered shipwreck** (1Ti.1:19). When the conscience of someone is corrupted, then his faith, his life of prayer, his fellowship with God and his fellowmen, as well as all his life are

seriously damaged (Tit.1:15-16). How it is sad to see Christians that – with an ashamed lightness – **neither respect neither their written promises nor their oral ones.** And how much more when they commit themselves before the Lord Jesus Christ for divine purposes and **neglect them!** Can I say that I have a good conscience when **I know how to do good, and I don't do it?** Is this not for me **a known sin?** (Jas.4:17). Can I boast that I have a good conscience while when I present my tithes and offering at the altar, for example, and there I remember that my brother has something against me (Mt.5:23) and don't I try to make **a sincere reconciliation?** How can I say that I have a good conscience while, when reproved because of my sin or my bad conduct, instead of admitting humbly my sin or bad behaviour, I avoid systematically to contact or even greet the person that has reproved me? If I believe that I am unjustly treated why do I not try to defend myself by explaining or by protesting against the supposedly unjust accusation? How can I say that my conscience doesn't condemn me **when I don't put in practice what I preach or teach?** (Mt.5.19). How can I say that I have a good conscience while **I don't take my cross and do not faithfully follow Jesus?** Can I be His **disciple?** The Lord orders those who want to walk in integrity to **tell the truth in their heart with sincerity and humility.**

If the Lord asks us to have a good conscience that is our duty and it is, therefore, possible; we must set all, therefore, in motion to achieve it. If not, if our heart condemns us, we cannot receive from God what we ask Him for (1Jn.3:20-22); this can drive us to a cauterized conscience that becomes hypocrite, silent and insensible with regard to many things (1Ti.4:2). Then, the believer has the tendency to justify his acts as well as his omissions; his will to follow the Lord even in the simplest moral principles is at stake. When a man avoids the instructions of his conscience and resists light, **he is covered with darkness** up to the measure he has silenced his conscience. This is also valid for a church. Its members can then believe that they advance, precisely because they have less and less the feeling of sin: this **illusion** can be fatal! This tendency results, indirectly, in an intense scheduling and in an activism in order to compensate the spirituality that he is lacking. False number! **The good number is the true repentance and the conversion! Repentance must always start with us, official or unofficial workers of God!** Jesus said: «... but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish...» (Lu.13:3, 5).

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But, even though one can boast for the testimony of our conscience, **God is not obliged to us, He doesn't owe us anything!** The good we have done, we had to do it or do it. Is it not so? We are “**useless servants**”. The greatest Christian cannot receive a bigger title of honor than to be called a «**useless servant**». Yes, “**useless servant.**” **Who among us has done everything he was asked to do?** Who? Let him raise his hand! Then, let's stop speaking of **cost** and **price to pay** and especially of «**sacrifices**» for Christ. **If we read the Bible attentively we are going to find out that the only so-called “sacrifices” are “a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart...”** (Ps.51:17); **it is also mercy and God's knowledge** (Hosea 6:6; Mt.9:13). In reality, even with these sacrifices, it is we that «win», it is we that “benefit” from this because we attract in this manner God's approval and blessings of God! Even though we offer to God **a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess His name** (Héb.13:15), as well as **sacrifices of gratitude and justice** (Ps.107:22), these «sacrifices» are required by God.

Besides, if God is He who works in us **to will and to do** (Php.2:13), where are our «sacrifices»? We must merely **give our consent** to what the Lord wants to do in us and through us. It is our duty! In other words, the only one supposedly sacrifice that we can offer

is «obeying the voice of the Lord». To obey is better than sacrifice (1Sam.15:22). Otherwise said: “And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” (Mr.12:33). Then, if God’s Word demands it and the Holy Spirit guides us to do something and we do it, the glory belongs to God who gave us light and the power to do it. **Let us never forget that all the times that we abandon our sins and our «me» and we obey the voice of the Lord Jesus we receive blessings and the Holy Spirit!** (Ac.5:36).

The Bible also tells us: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.” (1Jo.3:16). If we must love our brothers and sisters as ourselves, give our life for them and help them, then where could the word and the notion of “sacrifice” be applied? If each of us, instead of looking out only for his own interests, should also look out for the interests of others (Php.2:4) where is the notion of sacrifice? Here is how the Holy Spirit speaks to us: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Ro.12:1).

How can we speak of sacrifices when we recognize the big debt that we owe to our God and that we will never be able to repay? When we remember the great sacrifice that He consented to give us His Son, and He, Jesus to leave His Father’s throne and come down to give Himself for us? To live for Christ, that’s a privilege. How can we speak of sacrifices when one is conscious that “... our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.” (2Co.4:17) and that someday we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1Jo.3:2). Paul, the apostle said that “... what things were gain to me (*his privileges*), these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ..... who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

The only great and real sacrifice is the one of God the Father who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (Joh.3:16). The only great sacrifice is the one of our Lord Jesus Christ, that in order to abolish the sin by His sacrifice (Heb.9:26) who though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor that we through His poverty might become rich (2Co.8:9); yes, Who gave himself for our sins, He the just for the unjust (1Pie.3:18), that he might deliver us from the present evil age (Ga.1:4), in order to redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for the good works (Tit.2:14). If the Lord Jesus asks us to be a people, zealous people for good works, is the production of good works a sacrifice, a duty or a privilege?

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It is today that it is necessary to act, to pay attention to the voice of our conscience in order to **put our life in order and watch over our words!** It is then that God will make us see His salvation and will make us participants of everything that our salvation contains (Ps.50:23). Let us take courage because, **He who has called us is faithful, and who will do it** (1Th.5:24). Amen.

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