

# SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

## EXODUS 30:11-38

- A. Welcome everyone! Glad to be together again this morning. Hope everyone's Labor Day weekend is going well!
- B. Today we will be finishing up God's instructions for where and how to worship Him as His unique and called out people. From here on out, any regulations that we encounter will be a recapitulation of what has already gone before us. As we have been studying, each piece of the tabernacle, each piece of furniture and clothing, all had very specific meaning and purpose behind it. None of it was accidental, and it is extremely important that we remember that God is a God of order, which is why He gave such specific instructions for all of these things.
  - 1. Rituals and Prayer: God's presence in their prayers and actions
  - 2. Kingdom of Priests: God's presence in their ministries
  - 3. Paradise Restored: God's presence in their worship and among the people
  - 4. **God's presence transforms us from the inside out! Spiritual transformation occurs in the activity of God's Spirit growing us from one degree of glory to another.**
  - 5. Read, declare, thank, pray

### II. Growing in Trust: transformed faith

- A. God begins this section by describing this strange and fascinating thing called the census tax. So what is this and how does this differ from the free contribution that Moses calls for to provide the materials for the tabernacle?
  - 1. *Story about how I first paid taxes when I was 16 years old...how glad I felt that I was participating in the life of our nation. It made me feel, in some small but significant way, that I was actually a part of this country and not just taking from it...*
  - 2. The census tax was a very small amount of money (it would only amount to less than \$100 per person) that everyone 20yr+ were to give to the tabernacle, held by the priests, for the ministry of the priesthood. There was another reason, which is for each person to personally participate in the atonement that God already provided and to avoid the punishment of God against sin.
  - 3. This tax was different from the contribution because this was called a "tax", which is an obligatory thing, rather than the free exercise of gratitude.
  - 4. So what was the purpose for a census and the accompanying tax?
    - a) Census post-Exodus in order to help bring some order and stability now that the nation has spent some time traveling together. A census brings greater clarity as to the constitution of the nation, and this would be helpful for those who would be tasked with leading and shepherding the nation.
    - b) The tax is a means by which the priesthood would be set up for having adequate resources to minister their offices effectively.
- B. However, ultimately the census and accompanying tax was meant to be a way to help the Israelites grow in their trust of the LORD. The individual would pay the tax as a way to participate in the provided atonement as well as it being a declaration of their trust in the LORD to provide for all their needs.
  - 1. **God's Salvation:** going from faith in our merit or good works to faith in the finished work of Christ
    - a) The census tax showed the equality of all, men/women, young/old, rich/poor before God in terms of their need for His atonement. No one was exempt for the need for God's atonement, nor was anyone uniquely situated to have a special access to God due to their riches or influence. No one was above or below the need due to sin.
  - 2. **God's Provision:** growing from an anxiety of providing for ourselves to trusting God's perfect provision in all things for us

- a) The tax also was meant to be a way for the individual to express to God that they trust God in His provision for them. It is extremely important to remember that God is purposefully requiring a monetary tax because money has a unique connection to our hearts. For someone to bring their money to God a release it to Him is a unique expression of trust and gratitude.
- C. This tax gives us some important lessons for us today as well!
  - 1. Just as Israel was instructed in the common equality of their sinfulness, we too must be reminded that we are all equally in need of God's atonement. There is no one who is able to purchase their soul from God, and no one is outside of God's reach or offer of atonement. The important thing that we must lean into is whether or not we are participating in this atonement personally. You can understand this tax as our faith. Even a small amount of faith gains us the atonement God offers. Even Small Faith is sufficient for salvation, because faith is the hand which grasps onto the way of God's salvation, to Christ Himself. Faith is not a merit that earn us salvation, but the hand which grasps the salvation already purchased for us by Christ. God's spirit transforms our faith so that we no longer look to our goodness or moral excellence, but we look to Christ is all of these things for us.
    - a) Our associations or birth, our accomplishments or riches, our social status or religious background can gain us salvation or favor with God. But rather, as we see with the tax, these things, when separated from Christ, actually put us under the terror of God's judgment against us for our sin. The wrath of God hangs over each one of us, but when we turn to the Lord Christ and use the hand of faith to grasp onto the atoning sacrifice we are saved and welcomed into God's family.

### III. Growing in Holiness: transformed obedience

- A. The Bronze Lavar was given to remind the people that they were to continually be washed and made clean before the LORD. It was put between the altar of burnt offering and the Tent of meeting. The priests would be required to wash their hands and feet before even ministering at the tabernacle, as well as being used to wash some of the sacrifices which required it. The implication was an emphasis on the importance of the holiness to which they are called. It was a physical expression of the call to holy obedience that was theirs as a response to the redemption and atonement God provided. Throughout the Scriptures the image of washing has been interpreted in understanding our salvation via our justification and our sanctification...

#### 1. Sanctification vs. justification

- a) One of the prevailing theological issues that the Church has wrestled with over the centuries is the difference between justification and sanctification. Both of these words are Biblical words and are important for us to understand the ministry of God in our lives.
  - (1) Justification is the one time declaration of God that that person is now made right with Him. This is only possible through the perfect atoning sacrifice that the Father offers in the Son, and it is only declared over the person when they exercise their faith in the work of the Son. This would be symbolized at the altar of the burnt offering at the tabernacle.
    - (a) *"He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" - Titus 3:5*
    - (b) This washing by the Spirit of God in His children's hearts to regenerate them is a one time event, we aren't regenerated over and over again....This is the event which precipitates exercising our faith in Christ and so be declared justified...
  - (2) Sanctification is the ongoing work of the Spirit in the person's life to live out the new reality of their new identity as a true child of God. This ministry looks like the Spirit identifying sin in a person's life, bringing conviction about the sin, and drawing the person back to Christ who forgives and cleanses from all unrighteousness
    - (a) *"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he*

comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” - John 16:7-8

- (b) “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” - 1 John 1:9
- (c) So sanctification is a growing transformation of loving obedience to God, a turning away and hatred of sin.
- (d) Historically conviction and repentance has been understood to have two parts: contrition and faith
  - i) “We say that contrition is the true terror of conscience, which feels that God is angry with sin and grieves that it has sinned. This contrition takes place when sins are condemned by God’s Word. The sum of preaching of the Gospel is this: to convict of sin; to offer for Christ’s sake the forgiveness of sins and righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life; and that as reborn people we should do good works...in these terrors, conscience feels God’s wrath against sin...the conscience sees the corruption of sin and seriously grieves that it has sinned.”
  - ii) “As the second part of repentance we add faith in Christ. The Gospel, in which the forgiveness of sins is freely promised concerning Christ, should be presented to consciences in these terrors. They should believe that, for Christ’s sake, their sins are freely forgiven. This faith cheers, sustains, and enlivens the contrite.” —Apology to the Augsburg Confession
  - iii) This is a long-winded way of summarizing Jesus’ concise declaration of His ministry in our consciences when John records
    - (1) “Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.” - John 13:8-11
    - (2) Jesus here clearly makes the distinction of justification and sanctification using the analogy of this ritual washing. Even the imagery He uses refers back to the ritual washings of the tabernacle priesthood...
- b) We have a need for daily being washed in the new mercies that Christ offers in His sacrifice for us. Just as the priest would wash daily, so too we need to wash daily and have our consciences be cleaned of our sin. This does not mean that we need to be saved over and over again, for that has already been taken care of with our justification, but we need the washing of the Spirit in our souls to be transformed into greater holiness so that the world might know and worship the holiness of Christ Himself.
- c) This is why communion with Christ is so important for our ongoing relationship with God, so that we might participate in the sanctification that He is working out in our lives day by day...

#### **IV. Growing in Generosity: transformed love**

- A. The description of the oil and incense will ultimately be used to help us understand another aspect of our lives which are transformed through the gospel: our love. We are people who interact with ourselves and the world primarily as lovers, not necessarily as thinkers (as opposed to what the last several hundred years of Western anthropology has insisted)
  - 1. “The ‘desiring’ model of the human person begins from our nature as intentional beings who first and foremost (and ultimately) intend the world in the mode of love. We are primordially and essentially agents of love, which takes the structure of desire or longing. We are essentially and ultimately desiring animals, which is simply to say that we are essentially and ultimately lovers. To be

*human is to love, and it is what we love that defines who we are. Our (ultimate) love is constitutive of our identity” - James K.A. Smith*

- B. The last thing that God instructs His people in is how to prepare the anointing oil and incense for the tabernacle and priests. This is an extremely important thing, because we have here the warning against preparing or using them in an unworthy manner. All aspects of worshiping God are important, even the smallest part of this whole deal was important to God and to understanding His work in the world.
- C. The oil and incense were extravagant in their aroma and usage. God is worthy of our extravagant displays of thanksgiving to Him!

### 1. Oil

- a) The oil was made from very expensive and hard to find ingredients. The primary ingredient was myrrh, which should automatically signal a bell in our heads of recognition from another part of the Bible which uses myrrh...
- b) What is this oil to be used for? Initially, dedicating the tabernacle (including all the furniture and utensils) and dedicating the priests. However, over the years it would be expanded to include the anointing of kings, and eventually be incorporated in important person's burial ceremonies...
  - (1) *“And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” - Mark 14:3-9*
  - (2) We are told from the gospel of Luke that the woman was Mary the prostitute who did this. We see this beautiful picture of extravagant love being poured out on Jesus! Because of her gratitude in His love and forgiveness and acceptance, she is not ashamed or regretful to take over a years worth of wages and dump it on His head! As Jesus teaches, “he who has been forgiven much loves much, but He who has been forgiven little loves little”...This is part of how we grow in our own love for Jesus, through the work of the Spirit exposing and convicting us of sin and drawing us to the forgiveness, grace, and acceptance of Christ. As we grow in knowing how much we have been forgiven, we grow in our love for Him.
  - (3) Judas is the one who complained about the waste of the oil because he wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to pilfer from the money box that he was in charge of. Judas had no real love for Jesus, but only saw Him as a way to get rich and earn lots of money. There are still pastors and church leaders like this, who see their ministry as an opportunity for fame and getting rich...they ought to beware lest they fall!

### 2. Incense

- a) The incense, like the oil, was made up of several expensive and hard to find item, the primary one being Frankincense. Again, the little bells in our head should be ringing with familiarity to this particular spice! This incense, of course, was the incense which would be burned at the altar of incense inside the Tent of Meeting day and night.
  - (1) Significance of the main ingredient being Frankincense is that the Israelites had to trade for it from other nations. They could only get the main ingredients for the oil and incense from other nations from the East. Thus, we see God's desire for His people to be engaging with the nations of the World, taking the message of salvation in Yahweh to the nations!
  - (2) He wants His people to not be isolationists, but expansionists, not Zionist but globalists! The true and proper worship of God could only be done when including the nations of the world.

It is even built into the very objects and instruments of worship in the Tabernacle. This is yet another aspect of our love which gets transformed through the gospel, our growing love for the people of the world and of including the nations in the Church!

D. In summary of this point, we see through the oil and the incense God's design is transforming our love so that Jesus is ultimate aim and intention of our loves. God's goal for our transformation is that we would love Christ more, as we more and more receive His love for us, and thus increase and fuels our love for Him. It is like the oil which continually pours down and blesses. The only way we can ever have any love for ourselves is by accepting the love of Christ for us. The only way we can grow in our love for those God has placed around us is through the continual intake of Christ's love for us. The only way we can ever hope to love Christ more is through experiencing His love for us. Thus, the first and primary movement of the Christian life is the ability to receive the love of God in Christ. If we can't, or won't, do that, then we have no hope of ever loving rightly.

E. Some quick lessons to learn from this point

1. We must always remember our anointing by God's Spirit. For those of us who are in Christ, we have been anointed by God in the gift of His Spirit dwelling in us. This anointing reminds us that we are prince and princesses, priests, of our High King Jesus.
2. It is good and right to give the best of ourselves to Christ, just as Mary gave her most precious oil to Christ. May we examine ourselves and see where God might be calling us to give back to Him the best of ourselves!
3. We must learn to engage with the nations of the world and not remain isolated and insular. My goal for us as a church is to have a global impact, not just a local one. This is part of why we partner with members of our church who are either living in other parts of the world ministering there, or travel often to other nations to minister in those countries as well. Some of the countries that we have been actively involved with are: Italy, Nepal, Vietnam, Nigeria.

V. Conclusion

A. Well, what a wonderful way for us to finish up the regulations! We have seen the moral law in the 10 commandments, the civil law (which is really an expansion on the 10 commandments), and now the ceremonial law. Whew! Good job everyone for sticking through that! Hopefully you are encouraged in the LORD and in His work in our lives. He is great and glorious and deserves all the best we have to offer! May we continually grow as His nation of priests, living out the holiness of our Great High Priest, loving our neighbors and one another with His transformative love, and engaging with our culture with the gospel of our salvation so that all might know and trust in our great High King Jesus!

B. Let's pray

VI. Communion

A. At the Lord's Supper we reminded of the blessing of being part of God's eternal kingdom and family. Here we have the tactile ministry of God's anointing in our lives and the spiritual nourishment to continually grow in His grace and love. Here we as priests declare Christ's death until His promised return. Here we invite the nations to come to the table and be seated with the honor and dignity of God's family. Here we offer up the sweet smell of our prayers to the Father who delight in us and in being with us.