



Living Sacrifice





“As I read the books of Helen Roseveare, these powerful words come to my mind – REALITY, VISION, INTEGRITY, COURAGE, ACTION and FORGIVENESS. They are all words that we need to hold centrally in our lives too. Perhaps you don’t read many books but I would urge you to read this one - and then to share what you’ve learned with others. They are a huge challenge to the indifference and lukewarm-ness of our day. It is necessary for the church to have IMPACT for the good of this world. Helen shows what kind of impact you too can have.”

George Verwer





Living Sacrifice

*Willing to be whittled
as an arrow*

Helen Roseveare



CHRISTIAN
FOCUS





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Foreword to the American Edition

I WAS ASKED to write a book for students on the subject of “Sacrifice.” As I prayed and studied around this topic, I became increasingly aware that the word *sacrifice* could only truly be employed in direct reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered “death upon the cross for our redemption: who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world” (*Anglican Book of Common Prayer*). We, God’s children by adoption, have the privilege to respond, in overwhelming gratitude and love, by rendering to Him “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” (1 Pet. 2:5). We are exhorted to present ourselves to Him as *living sacrifices* (see Rom. 12:1), renouncing all other claims, that we may love Him utterly with all we have and are, not only in spirit, but also in the emotional, volitional, intellectual, material and physical aspects of our beings. My heart’s hunger is to respond thus to an ever greater degree: and together with my readers, to press on toward maturity in being made conformable to our Master.





Foreword and Dedication to the British Edition

I WAS CONVERTED through the work of the Cambridge Women's Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CWICCU, branch of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship [IVF] as it was then, UCCF of today) in 1945, and taught by them the habit of daily Bible study.

I learned the joy of Christian service with the Bromley Class of the Girl Crusader's Union (GCU), teaching a Saturday and Sunday girls' Bible class from 1946 to 1950: I have been an associate member of the Union ever since.

I have served as a medical missionary with the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) in Congo/Zaire from 1953 to 1973 and on their home staff since then, enjoying the privileges of deep fellowship in the family.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the older members of these three organizations for all they have taught me (however inadequately I have learned the lessons) of a life of sacrifice in Christ's service.

My desire in writing this small book is to pass on these lessons to others "who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt. 5:6) not as though I had already attained it, but that together we may press on toward maturity in being made conformable to our Master.







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HIS RIGHT TO DEMAND

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom. 12:1)

IT WAS COLD as we trudged from the bus stop to the church, the lightly falling snow muffling our footfalls and adding to our sense of loneliness. In the large, empty church, the flickering candlelight hardly penetrated the darkness of that early December morning, as I knelt, a shivering seven-year-old, beside the quiet figure of my mother. She had come to thank God for the birth of another little sister into our family. I did not fully understand why we were there, and yet in a strange way, I knew it was right.

The verger turned the lights on, and I closed my eyes to shut out the hard glare, and to retreat into the mystery of darkness.

The minister was praying. I glanced up at Mother: her face looked lovely and her eyes shone. I tried to listen, to understand, but I was shivering and felt afraid. Mother put an arm round me and drew me closer to herself, and suddenly I knew that she needed me, and I loved her. I followed her finger in the prayer book, and we





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were praying together. The rector's voice was hushed and barely audible as he prepared for the communion service. For perhaps the first time, my restless spirit was stilled momentarily by a sense of the presence of God.

"We are not worthy –" reached through to my understanding, and made me feel guilty. I shrank yet closer to Mother. "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of Thy tender mercy didst give Thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption: who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and –"

Mother had forgotten her seven-year-old, her heart and mind drawing strength and comfort from the well-known prayer. She ceased to point... and no longer listening, I reread that beautiful phrase that seemed underlined by her stationary finger.

She moved away from me, up to the communion rail.

"The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving."

"*Christ died for thee.*" For a brief second, in that solemn moment of awed silence, I heard the Spirit say those words to me, in my heart.

The moment passed, Scarf wound tightly round my neck, beret and knitted mitts pulled on against the damp winter chill, I followed Mother out of the quiet church, and we made our way home.

"Mummy, what is an oblation?"





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Perhaps she was startled out of her own line of thought, taken by surprise, or perhaps she just did not know. Maybe the question jarred against the stirrings of faith, making her question that which she wanted to accept. I do not remember what she answered, except that it seemed short and curt. For some reason, deep inside of me, I felt hurt, so I did not ask again, yet I needed to know the answer.

I found her prayer book later that day, and the marker was in the communion service. Slowly, laboriously, I found my way through to that particular prayer, and read and re-read the first paragraph. I learned it by heart. For months, I used to recite it to myself in bed at night before falling asleep. The words had a beauty, a fascination that reached down toward an inner need: yet so much was incomprehensible. What was redemption? What was an oblation? I looked the words up in a dictionary, but the flat explanations spoiled the mystery of the incomprehensible.

It was many years later before I gave in to the promptings of the Spirit, to realize that God had so loved *me* that He had given His only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death on the cross for *my* redemption – to save me from my sins, to take upon Himself my punishment and all that I deserved.

“A full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world” was made by Christ at Calvary, because He loved us.

The mystery of that great sacrifice still stirs my soul to its depths. That the Son of God could so love me that He would give Himself for me, still stirs a sense of awed wonder.





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There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.

CECIL F. ALEXANDER

The well-known words of childhood hymns became more precious, more meaningful, as one sought to enter into an understanding of the Mystery.

If He so loved me that He was willing to die for me, whatever could I do for Him even to begin to show my heart's longing to thank Him? "A full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice" – sufficient, sufficient for the sin of the whole world. So no more could be offered. The only possible acceptable sacrifice was complete. Christ had sacrificed Himself, once for all – once for all time, once for all people, once for all sin. No further sacrifice was needed or possible. God had shown Himself satisfied by that perfect offering when He brought back the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, raising Him to life again that first Easter morning. I could add nothing to the efficacy of His sacrifice: I could do nothing to save myself from the penalty of my sins. He had done it all.

Yet there was a striving in my inner being to do something to express my heart's response to His great love for me. His Spirit in me stirred that unrest, planting in my heart the desire to respond to an insistent demand made upon me by that "one oblation of Himself once offered."

Paul, a nine-year-old African schoolboy, grabbed by a rebel soldier and struck across the face, flung onto the ground, brutally kicked and beaten with the butt end of a gun, refused to give in to intimidation.

This incident occurred during the civil uprising in the Congo in 1964. Paul had to make a choice. He could





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have escaped, but that might have led to the capture of others. Young as he was, he had had to think out, quickly and decisively, a course of action, knowing that the alternative to escape put him in a position of considerable personal danger. He may not have known just how great that danger was, but he was no fool, and he knew it would include physical pain. He had already seen others beaten, threatened...

He could still hear the piteous screams of that woman and her teenage daughter that the rebels had captured in the maternity compound of the hospital. He had been in school that morning when a truckload of armed gangsters had driven into the village. A wild, dark-eyed youth with a blank face of sullen hatred, armed with a spear, had rushed into the school compound and ordered them all to stand. Another was doing the same in the church, next door to Paul's classroom. Six or more others had charged over to the maternity compound, through the child-welfare clinic, through the wards, out to the special-care unit, across to the orphanage home. Noise, shouts, anger. Then they had returned with these two women as captives, the sixteen-year-old girl, with swollen, puffy eyes from sleepless nights of fear, and her mother, seven months with child, even then in pain. The two women had been unceremoniously thrown up into the truck: then the girl beaten and bullied and taken down, forced into the cab to direct her captors to the place where her father was in hiding. He was apparently a paid secretary of the national government, the "last regime," and was therefore to be shot by the present rebel regime. As the truck had lurched off, the mother had fallen; and Paul





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had heard her piteous screams as the soldiers jeeringly kicked her.

His mind raced back to that other occasion, the week before. So much had happened since, it seemed years away. He had been asleep between his two brothers, when he was woken by a gunshot somewhere outside in the dark. He sat bolt upright and saw the front door crash open, and Susan, one of the senior nurses, rush through the house naked, slamming the door behind her. He had raced after her, wildly terrified, no idea what was happening. She had flung herself over the fence behind the home, and he had not been able to follow her. He had crouched back in the vegetable plot, whimpering and scared, as soldiers had searched round his home, shouting and angry. He had not understood. He just knew that it was all evil and unreasonable, and that no one was safe from their wickedness.

During the first eight weeks of the rebellion, the guerrilla soldiers had forced the national army back over nearly four-fifths of the country. All rebel troops were subjected to initiation rites by the witch doctors, and thereby considered “protected” against the bullets of the government forces, which would “turn to water” as the rebels surged forward in the name of their martyred hero, Patrice Lumumba.

Then came the day when the president of the republic accepted the help of Colonel Mike Hoare and white mercenary soldiers. The tide turned. Discipline in the national army improved, morale rose and the rebels were forced to begin their long retreat. Battle after battle raged, and hundreds of rebel soldiers were killed.





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In desperation, the guerrilla army began drafting sixteen-year-old schoolboys into their depleted ranks, giving them a few days' drilling, initiation rites and armbands. We saw trucks drive through our village, laden with singing youths, "off to the war." Hardly any came back. We heard terrible rumours of the massacre at the front, the war cry of the young zealots "Mayi-mayi-Lumumba!" mingling with the agonized screams of their dying companions, mowed down by a superior force of arms.

On October 23, the guerrillas rounded up three hundred fourteen-year-olds from the local Roman Catholic school. It would be our turn next. How could we protect our teenagers? We could not send them home, as more than half of them were our own orphanage children. This *was* their home.

A contingency plan was drawn up to safeguard as many as possible in the event of a direct attack on the school. Each morning, two village workmen were nominated as scouts. They went to the north and south ends of the village and hid in the undergrowth at the roadside. Should they hear in the distance the sound of an approaching vehicle, they were to whistle a sharp alarm signal. (By then, all vehicles in the area were in the hands of the rebel forces.) The first in the village to hear the whistled warning was to beat a quick message on the talking drum, and all knew what to do next. Action had to be immediate. There would be barely four minutes from the sound of the whistle to the arrival of the soldiers.

In the school, each of the five teachers was to lead his class of twenty to thirty children down into the relative





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safety of the forest behind the village. They could go on any pretext they liked, such as a botany or nature-study walk, for a game or gymnastic period, but they were to keep the youngsters happy and quiet, as far from the village as possible, till we signalled them to return.

A monitor was to be appointed weekly in each class, whose job was to gather up all school material, books and pencils, blackboard chalk and eraser, into a provided basket; and to push the desks and benches haphazardly into disarray, as though the building had not been used since the previous school year, four months ago. Hurrying over to my house with their laden baskets, the monitors were to put their baskets inside a big cupboard, open and ready, the last one closing the door, and to run after their classmates, down to the forest – all within the four-minute warning period.

One day, suddenly, the whistles blew; the drum beat out its staccato warning; the teachers set off for the forest with their young charges; the monitors hurriedly cleared the school. Nine-year-old Paul was fourth-grade monitor that week. Small for his age, the son of leprosy parents, he had difficulty in reaching up to unpin charts attached to the blackboard frame. He dragged a bench up from the classroom, but still could not reach high enough. He rushed for a second bench, and precariously tried to balance it on the first. Scrambling up without upsetting them, he felt tears of frustration prick his eyes. Then, nervously struggling with the stubborn drawing pins, he saw the other monitors crossing the courtyard with their filled baskets.

At last, Paul was ready. As he was leaving the school, lugging the ungainly basket, the other four monitors were





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disappearing into the forest. He could hear the approaching truck. It shifted gears to take the sharp corner as it passed through the village, still out of sight, over the brow of the hill. Then Paul heard the rev-up as the truck swung round to come up into the village courtyard. He was caught!

Every instinct told him to drop the basket and run.

Yet in the same instant, another thought flashed into his mind. The basket would be right in the pathway of the truck, and it contained exercise books with today's date! The soldiers were bound to see them, and then they would know that there really was a school, despite every effort to disguise the fact. All would have been in vain. Worse than in vain, in fact. They would search till they found the pupils ... and young Paul was astute enough to know that the punishment meted out for hiding would be added to the originally planned wickedness, had they been found in the classrooms.

Heart pounding with fear, Paul struggled for a second in indecision.

What was that story he had heard recently in Sunday school, of a twelve-year-old girl in Communist China? She had been caught by the Red Guards as she came out of a house where they suspected an underground church. Held for three days for interrogation, she was brought out before a people's court eventually. Challenged directly by the guards, she knew it was a question of life or death.

"Do you love Jesus?"

Poised to say "No," caught in a vice of fear, she saw a girl of her own age down in the crowd silently make the sign of the cross.

Drawing herself erect, she proudly answered: "Yes, I love Jesus."





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And they shot her.

“If she could, I can,” said Paul to himself, through gritted teeth.

He struggled across the courtyard and over the veranda; then he pushed the basket into the front room. There was no time to spare: the truck was already in the drive. Paul pulled the double doors shut, and leaning against them, he turned to face the soldiers.

The guerrillas piled out of the truck, cruel and determined. They spread out in every direction, searching for what and whom they wanted. Two came to my home and shouted roughly at Paul.

“Wanafunzi ni wapi?” (Where are your classmates?) Almost paralysed with fear, Paul could not answer. He bit his lip to control the rising panic. In his heart, he prayed to God for courage to go through with it, and that he might know what to do or say. Only nine years old – could God help him? He had only come to know the Lord Jesus as his Saviour a few months previously. Certainly there was no one else who could help him now. The fingers of his right hand, frantically twisting in his clenched left fist behind his back, pressed the deaf-and-dumb signal “P-M:P-M,” as his lips soundlessly formed the precious formula “piem” over and over again – the secret code of Paul’s youth group, P-M, stood for Pasipo Mupaka, part of the motto Kwa Yeye pasipo mupaka, “For Him (Jesus Christ) with no limits.”

They grabbed him, flung him to the concrete floor, beat him and kicked him. Dragging him to his feet, they repeated their question angrily.





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Suddenly Paul knew what he had to do. His mind cleared, his fear dropped away. Jackie, a boy in his class, was a deaf-mute who could only communicate by garbled sounds and gesticulations. Paul pretended to be Jackie, and mouthed an inarticulate answer to the soldiers.

“Don’t dare mock us,” they screamed in unreasoning rage, flinging Paul again roughly to the ground and ruthlessly kicking him in their frustrated fury. “Tell us where they are hiding.”

As they dragged Paul to his feet, the boy, filled with newfound courage, went through the charade a second time. “Under my breath,” he told me later, “I kept repeating ‘P-M, P-M, P-M,’ to remind myself that Jesus loved me so much that He died for me, and so I could go through anything they did to me, for His sake.”

Suddenly one soldier said: “We’re wasting time. This boy must be a deaf-mute. He cannot help us.”

Throwing the lad back against the closed doors, they left the veranda to join their comrades, gathering from various directions. Two came back from the school buildings.

“There’s no school here. The place is in chaos, and obviously hasn’t been used for months.”

Climbing into the truck, they drove off.

Returning from the hospital where I had been on duty, I came into my home through the back door. Entering the sitting room, I was surprised to see the double doors closed. As I pulled them open, Paul fell into the room. The lad had been severely beaten, and was very shaken. I lifted him up and carried him to the settee. Getting us both hot drinks, I asked him what





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had happened. Slowly, sipping his chocolate, he told me. Then looking up, he asked:

“Have the soldiers gone, Doctor?”

“Yes, Paul, they’ve gone.”

“Did they find the other schoolboys?”

“No, Paul, they didn’t.”

“Did I save them, Doctor?”

“Yes, Paul, you did.”

There was a moment’s pause. Glancing up at me, the lad said simply and very sincerely: “No, Doctor, it wasn’t really me, was it? It was the Lord Jesus in me.”

Paul had come to know the Lord Jesus as his friend and Saviour only a short time before. It had been at a youth rally. The visiting evangelist had spoken, in the closing epilogue, of our Lord’s return as King and Judge. He had asked the children if they would be ready to meet and greet the Lord with joy, or if they would try to run away and hide their faces in shame.

“Have you anything in your heart or life of which you would be ashamed, if the Lord Jesus came right now?”

Paul had gone home very quietly, with a miserable feeling inside. Next morning, as his father read the Bible and prayed with the family, before going out to work, Paul had started to cry, and eventually blurted out: “I couldn’t meet Him: I’d be ashamed!”

His father quieted him, and got him to explain his outburst. Then, encouraged by his parents, he had confessed all that was in his young heart to the Lord, and had asked God’s forgiveness, and that Jesus would save him, and come to live in his heart.

Now when this test had come, faced by the cruelty of the rebel soldiers, Paul had hardly hesitated. God’s





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love for him and in him had dictated the action he had taken: and he was glad. He had found a way to express to God his great love for Him. He had not thought it out like that: he did not even reason it out after it was all over. But he had peace and joy in his heart: and he knew more wholly than before how much he did love his Saviour.

Had God the right to demand of Paul that willingness to sacrifice himself to save his schoolfellows? Had He the right to demand such a demonstration of love? Can one question God's rights, or His ultimate purpose and motive? Perhaps God was not demanding a demonstration of love, but rather offering to Paul a privileged opportunity of sharing in His love? God Himself so loved Paul that He had given His only begotten Son to die in his place to redeem him: now they had shared together in a demonstration of that love for others.

Is there always a *cost* involved in responding to that insistent demand in our hearts to express to Him our love? Would I be willing to pay such a cost, perhaps a similar price to Paul's, if asked to do so? Do I believe that as my Saviour He has the right to demand such a response to His love if I would really love Him as He first loved me?

Peter, when the Lord told His disciples that that same night all would desert Him, had boldly declared that he would never do so. He would rather die than desert Him. The test came, and Peter failed miserably, denying the Lord with oaths. Fear had made a coward of him. The *cost* of loving the Lord wholly in that instant had seemed too great to pay.





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Momentarily I had felt the same the night the rebel soldiers first took me captive. Beaten, flung on the ground, kicked – teeth broken, mouth and nose gashed, ribs bruised – driven at gunpoint back to my home, jeered at, insulted, threatened. I knew that if the rebel lieutenant did not pull the trigger of his revolver and end the situation, worse pain and humiliation lay ahead. It was a very dark night. I felt unutterably alone. For a brief moment, I felt God had failed me. He could have stepped in and prevented this rising crescendo of wickedness and cruelty. He could have saved me out of their hands. Why didn't He speak? Why didn't He intervene? And in desperation, I almost cried out against Him: "It is too much to pay!"

Yet His love for me cost Him His life. He gave Himself, in that one all-sufficient atoning sacrifice at Calvary. He so loved that He gave all. His sacrifice was the expression of His great love.

But His sacrifice had achieved something. He had saved lost mankind from their sins. What was I achieving by suffering brutality at the hands of rebel soldiers? If I died (which seemed probable and imminent) no one would even know of the suffering. What was being gained? God, why, why?

In the darkness and loneliness, He met with me. He was right there, a great, wonderful, almighty God. His love enveloped me. Suddenly the "Why?" dropped away from me, and an unbelievable peace flowed in, even in the midst of the wickedness. And He breathed a word into my troubled mind: the word *privilege*.

"These are not your sufferings: they are not beating you. These are My sufferings: all I ask of you is the loan of your body."





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For twenty years, anything I had needed I had asked of God and He had provided. Now, this night, the Almighty had stooped to ask of *me* something that He condescended to appear to need, and He offered me the *privilege* of responding. He wanted my body, in which to live, and through which to love these very rebel soldiers in the height of their wickedness. It was inconceivable, yet true. He offered me the inestimable privilege of sharing with Him in some little measure, at least, in the edge of the fellowship of His sufferings. And it was all privilege.

For that night, cost became swallowed up in privilege.

What is cost, anyway? At best, it is only a relative term; with no absolute value. It can be understood only in reference to the object desired, and its value may change according to circumstances. A sack of rice for about twenty dollars would seem dear in normal conditions, but the cost would be immaterial in conditions of starvation.

Early on in my missionary life in Africa, God taught me a lesson as to the meaning of *cost* in relation to what He wanted to do in my life to make me more like the Lord Jesus Christ. The palm trees in our village of Nebobongo were being stripped of leaves by an invasion of small, brightly coloured weaver birds, and this was affecting the yield of urgently needed oil from the palm nuts, a basic commodity in both our local diet and also the local industrial economy.

I offered the children of the village a penny for every bird shot. (Later, as they became excellent marksmen, and the invasion continued unabated, the





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offer was changed to ten birds for a penny!) From then on, we noticed apparently wanton destruction of the lower boughs of flowering acacia trees, of red-leaved poinsettia shrubs, of blossom-bearing branches of coffee bushes, of fruit-laden branches of orange and grapefruit trees. The latter really stung us into an active search for the culprits.

Not far to find! Everywhere we found children whittling away at branches from any accessible tree or bush, using any available weapon as a knife, to create arrows. Even in the back row of the classroom, during a maths lesson, I heard the inescapable telltale sound of sandpapering, as a banana leaf was rubbed energetically up and down a stripped stem to polish an amazingly straight arrow shaft for the all-important, new, financially fruitful hobby of archery!

We had to weigh up the comparative “costs.” We needed oranges and grapefruit in our diet, so those trees became banned to the amateur archers. We sold coffee beans to augment our hospital funds, so those bushes were forbidden. But we decided the beauty afforded by the bright yellow blossoms and feathery green leaves of the acacia trees was only appreciated by the white foreigners. The branches were not even of value for firewood. The “cost” as measured by the acacia trees was decidedly less than that caused by the loss of the palm leaves through the destruction by the weaver birds. From then on, bright yellow acacia blossoms and feathery green leaves could be found littered all over the paths of the village, the price paid for the construction of arrows to destroy the destructive birds.





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So the Lord spoke directly to me about what He wanted to do in my life. I personally had liked the bright yellow acacia trees. They broke up, for me, the monotony of green that shrouds the great rain forests. But we needed the palm oil. The one was relinquished for the other. The bright flowers and leaves were sacrificed to make the needed arrows. There was nothing wrong with the flowers and leaves. In fact, they were essential for the life and reproduction of the trees. Yet they were not only unnecessary, they were definitely a hindrance for an arrow. The side branches, thorns and knots needed smoothing off. It seemed that each branch became impersonalized, losing its own particular form and beauty, sacrificed for the one aim of producing a straight, well-balanced arrow. Even the bark had to be stripped off, leaving the stem naked, exposed to wind and rain. The branch as such had been destroyed. It could no longer feed or reproduce: its beauty had been vandalized. It could no longer be recognized for itself; and even its power to survive in all weathers would be challenged.

This wanton act of destruction might seem a senseless waste of God-given beauty. It might be measured as a high price to pay to allow children the fun of making bows and arrows. Yet if from the destructive process, the polished shaft of the arrow that emerged was able to rid the community of hordes of preying birds, preserving for us an essential source of health-producing food, would not the “cost” seem more acceptable?

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our





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eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Could I see that God wanted to transform my life from a somewhat ugly, useless branch to an arrow, a tool usable in His hands, for the furtherance of His purposes? It was said of the Lord Jesus Christ: *“Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. He said to me, ‘You, are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendour’.” (Isa. 49:1-3, NIV).*

To be thus transformed, was I willing – am I still willing – for the whittling, sandpapering, stripping processes necessary in my Christian life? The ruthless pulling off of leaves and flowers might include doing without a television set or washing machine, remaining single in order to see a job done, re-evaluating the worthiness of the ambition to be a “good” doctor (according to *my* terms and values). The snapping off of thorns might include drastic dealing with hidden jealousies and unknown prides, giving up prized rights in leadership and administration. The final stripping of the bark might include lessons to be learned regarding death to self – self-defence, self-pity, self-justification, self-vindication, self-sufficiency, all the mechanisms of preventing the hurt of too-deep involvement. Am I prepared for the pain, which may at times seem like sacrifice, in order to be made into a tool in His service? My willingness will be a measure of the sincerity of my





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desire to express my heartfelt gratitude to Him for His so-great salvation.

Can I see such minor “sacrifices” in the light of the great sacrifice of Calvary, where Christ gave all for me? Can I see the apparent cost as minimal compared to the reality of the gain? Do I accept His right to demand my willingness to pay such a price in order to enter into the privilege and joy of being used in His purposes?

God so loved me that He gave all, His very Self, to redeem me. How can I love Him in like manner? How can I show Him that love?

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me” (John 14:21).

What are His commandments, which I must obey to show Him my love?

Jesus answered: *“THE FOREMOST IS, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31).*

To love the Lord my God with *all* my soul will involve a spiritual cost. I’ll have to give Him my heart, and let Him love through it whom and how He wills, even if this seems at times to break my heart.

To love the Lord my God with *all* my soul will involve a volitional and emotional cost. I’ll have to give Him my will, my rights to decide and choose, and all my relationships, for Him to guide and control, even when I cannot understand His reasoning.





Living Sacrifice

To love the Lord my God with *all* my mind will involve an intellectual cost. I must give Him my mind, my intelligence, my reasoning powers, and trust Him to work through them, even when He may appear to act in contradiction to common sense.

To love the Lord my God with *all* my strength will involve a physical cost. I must give Him my body to indwell, and through which to speak, whether He chooses by health or sickness, by strength or weakness, and trust Him utterly with the outcome.

The sum of these apparent costs (as with the stripping of the branch to create the arrow) could be considered as the sacrifice that I am invited to offer Him as the response of my whole being to His love for me in that one “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” It is my way of expressing my gratitude to Christ for all He is, and for all He has done and given for me.

