

RAISE THE STANDARD

Romans 12:1 NKJV - “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.”

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 NKJV: - “For the love of Christ compels us... and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

You don't really understand what Christianity actually means until you understand this:

The highest standard of Christianity is not what I am willing to do for Jesus. It is how much of me I am willing to surrender so Jesus can live through me.

Pray...

There are moments in the life of a church when God begins calling His people deeper. Not necessarily because something is wrong, but because **God is preparing us for something greater!**

I believe we are standing in one of those moments...

We are praying for revival. We are believing for awakening. We are asking God to save our families, touch our children, heal bodies, deliver people, transform our city, and pour out His Spirit.

But there is a question we must ask:

What if the level of what God wants to release requires another level of surrender from us?

- Paul says, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice.”

Under the Old Covenant, they brought the sacrifice. Under the New Covenant, we become the sacrifice.

The altar is no longer simply somewhere I bring something.

The altar is where I bring myself...

- My ambitions.
- My habits.
- My finances.
- My relationships.
- My sexuality.
- My attitudes.
- My time.
- My priorities.
- My secret life.

- My public life.

Everything belongs on the altar. We cannot ask God for a greater move while continually offering Him a lesser surrender.

If we want to see the standard of God's activity rise among us, we must be willing to raise the standard of our consecration before Him.

1. THE ALTAR REQUIRES CONSECRATION

There is a word the modern Church does not use nearly enough anymore:

HOLINESS!

1 Peter 1:15-16 NKJV - “But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”

Holiness is not legalism! Holiness is belonging completely to God. It means there are things I could do that I choose not to do because **my life belongs to Someone else.**

We have become very comfortable asking, “Is this a sin?” Maybe the better question is: **“Does this honor the God who purchased me?”**

There ought to be a difference between somebody who has encountered Jesus and somebody who has not.

- Not arrogance.
- Not religious superiority.
- Not judgment.

Difference! – Ephesians 4:17-32

- The way we speak should be different.
 - The way we handle relationships should be different.
 - The way we conduct business should be different.
 - The way we treat people should be different.
- What happens when nobody is watching should be different.

The Gospel does not simply change where I am going when I die. **The Gospel changes how I live while I am alive.**

2. THE SACRIFICE MUST COST SOMETHING

David came to a moment when someone offered to give him everything necessary for an offering. David refused.

2 Samuel 24:24 NKJV - “Nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing.”

David understood something: **If it costs me nothing, it isn't much of a sacrifice.**

- Serving costs something.
- Forgiving costs something.
- Prayer costs something.
- Generosity costs something.
- Tithing costs something.
- Faithfulness costs something.
- Holiness costs something.
- Obedience costs something.

There is a Christianity being marketed today that says, “Come to Jesus and He will make your life more comfortable.”

Jesus said something radically different: **“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”**

The cross is not an accessory, The cross was an instrument of death.

There are things in every one of us that need to die.

- Pride has to die.
- Bitterness has to die.
- Greed has to die.

- Lust has to die.
- Selfish ambition has to die.
- The need to always get our way has to die.

**Because Christianity is not Jesus becoming part of my life.
Christianity is my life becoming completely His.**

That includes our finances.

- We cannot sing, “I surrender all,” while deliberately placing entire areas of our lives beyond God's reach.
- Generosity is not God's attempt to take something from us.

Generosity reveals whether our possessions belong to us or whether we belong to God. – Matt. 6:19-21

- We cannot preach sacrifice publicly while practicing convenience privately.

At some point, following Jesus must cost us something.

What is it costing you?

3. THE STANDARD STARTS WITH US

Israel stood on the edge of something they had never experienced.

Jordan was in front of them. Promise was on the other side. And Joshua gave them an unusual instruction.

Joshua 3:5 NKJV - “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”

Look at the order: **SANCTIFY yourselves TODAY. God will do WONDERS TOMORROW.**

- Consecration preceded manifestation.
- Surrender preceded wonders.
- The altar comes before the breakthrough.

We love the second half: “Tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you!” But **We cannot separate the promise from the preparation: “Sanctify yourselves.”**

I believe God has more for this church:

- More people to reach.
- More families to restore.
- More young people to encounter.
- More broken people to heal.
- More territory to influence.
- More nations to touch.

But before we ask God to do something greater **through us**, perhaps we need to allow Him to do something deeper **in us**.

This cannot begin with looking across the sanctuary thinking about somebody else.

It begins here: **“Lord, raise the standard in ME.”**

- Search me.
- Correct me.
- Convict me.
- Cleanse me.

Whatever I have tolerated that grieves You, expose it. Whatever I have withheld from You, show me. Whatever has become more important than You, confront it because I do not just want Your blessing...

I want Your presence - I don't just want a bigger church.

I want a holy church - I don't just want crowds.

I want disciples - I don't just want emotional services.

I want genuine encounters with God that transform people's lives.

- So, before we raise the volume, **raise the standard.**
- Before we enlarge the platform, **deepen the altar.**

- Before we ask for greater anointing, **offer greater surrender.**

Before we pray, “Lord, send revival,” perhaps our first prayer should be: **“Lord, start revival in me.”**

Because the next level of what God wants to do among us cannot be sustained by a lower level of consecration within us.

The question today is not: **“God, what are You going to do?”** The question is: **“God, what do You want from me?”**

And perhaps the answer is the same answer Paul gave two thousand years ago: **“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.”**

Church, it is time. **RAISE THE STANDARD...HOW DO WE DO THAT?**