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Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: A Self-Sacrifice

James Willeford

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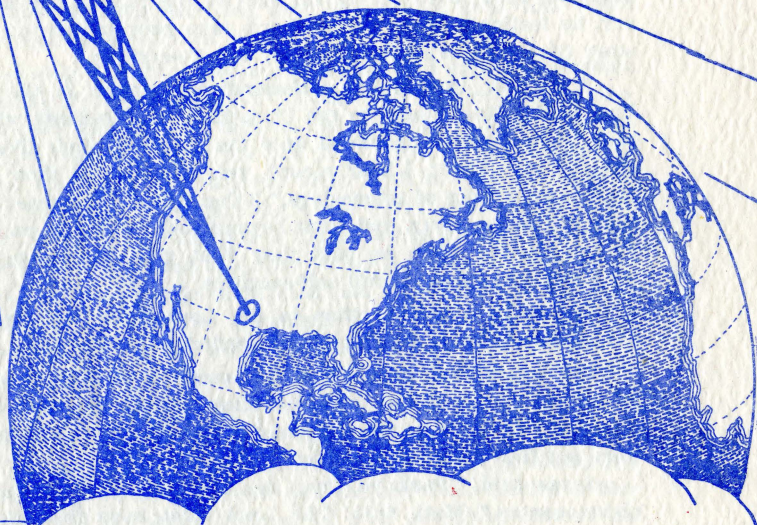
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Churches of Christ Salute You with a



A Self-Sacrifice

James D. Willeford

November 23, 1952

Herald of Truth

Sermons

A Self-Sacrifice

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There is a story told of an Indian chief who was heavily burdened with his sins. Trembling under his guilt, he approached a missionary and offered his rifle to be freed of his guilt. But the missionary replied that Christ would not accept such an offering. The Indian departed, and soon returned with his wigwam, wife, child, and everything he had, hoping by these to obtain forgiveness. But still the missionary insisted that Christ could not accept these. The chief seemed oppressed for a moment; then lifted up tearful eyes to the face of the missionary, he feelingly cried, "Here, Lord, take poor Indian too." This story illustrates what we mean by a self-sacrifice.

A greater example of self-sacrifice is found in the Bible. Paul paid a fine tribute to the Christians in Macedonia when he said "their poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves," 2 Cor. 8:2, 3. The reason they gave of their poverty, and went beyond their ability is explained by the apostle when he said they first gave themselves unto the Lord. Theirs was a full self-sacrifice.

We make a self-sacrifice to the Lord when we surrender ourselves wholly to Him in loving obedience to His will.

God has always required such a sacrifice of His people. He informed the children of Israel that He would not accept thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil as long as they were not first giving themselves to Him.

Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Matt. 6:33. The Lord must have first place in our heart or He can have no place. Christ said, "He that is not with me is against me," Matt. 12:30. There can be no third place in our affections for the Son of God. Our whole self must be given to Him.

Sometimes members of the church are like a group of boys I saw in bathing. One just paddled his feet in the water and cried, "Oh, it's so cold!" Another went in to his knees, and said it was terribly chilly. Another ran to the beach, plunged in full length, and rose all aglow, shouting, "Come on in, the water's fine!" Some church members are just paddling in the shallows of Christianity, shivering between the cold air of worldliness and the warmth of complete consecration. O, that they would end all compromise with the world, and get wet all

over! How it would brace their spirit; what a tone and glow it would give their Christian life!

No man ever made greater sacrifices for the cause of Christ than Paul. He expresses some of his trials in these words: "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." II Cor. 11:25-27. After all these sacrifices he pleads with members of the church in these words, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Rom. 12:1.

This plea of Paul is better understood and appreciated when we remember that Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?" Luke 9:23-25. To be a disciple of Christ we must deny ourselves, bear our cross daily, and offer our bodies a living sacrifice. Jesus teaches that we must do more than just something; we must do our best. He stresses the maximum and not the minimum. We offer a sacrifice to Him when we do all we can; not as little as we can. How many of you are offering yourselves as "a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God?" Phil. 4:18.

The sacrifices you offer to Christ are made on an individual basis. No one can make the offering for you. If it is made, you must make it. Jesus will never ask nations what sacrifices they made. He will not judge families by their combined efforts; He will judge you by what you alone have done. That is why the challenge of self-sacrifice is so piercingly keen. It is a personal matter.

There are many ways we can offer our bodies a living sacrifice. We can give up some of our comfort that the cause of righteousness may spread more rapidly over the world. Our Lord expects us as Christians to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to "Teach all nations," and to "Preach the gospel to every creature." What a small sacrifice of comfort we have made when we crowd the family car on Sunday to take people to the Lord's house. All of us could give up many little things as candy, gum, and soft drinks to help the needy. We could even give up a meal now and then to help in the crusade for righteous-

YOU MAY HEAR THE HERALD OF TRUTH OVER THESE STATIONS

Alabama, Anniston	WHMA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Auburn	WAUD	1230	1:00 p.m.
Birmingham	WSGN	610	8:00 a.m.
Florence	WJOI	1340	9:30 a.m.
Gadsden	WGAD	1350	1:00 p.m.
Huntsville	WHBS	1490	1:00 p.m.
Marion	WJAM	1310	9:30 a.m.
Mobile	WABB	1480	6:30 a.m.
Montgomery	WAPX	1600	1:00 p.m.
Selma	WGPC	1340	1:30 p.m.
Tuscaloosa	WJRD	1150	9:00 p.m.
Arizona, Clifton	KCLF	1400	1:00 p.m.
Phoenix	KOY	550	7:00 a.m.
Tucson	KCNA	580	3:00 p.m.
Arkansas, Eldorado	KDMS	1290	1:00 p.m.
Ft. Smith	KFSA	950	1:00 p.m.
Hot Springs	KTHS	1090	1:00 p.m.
Little Rock	KGHI	1250	1:00 p.m.
Springdale	KBRB	1340	6:00 p.m.
Calif., Bakersfield	KPMC	1560	10:00 a.m.
Blythe	KYOR	1450	3:30 p.m.
Brawley	KROP	1300	3:30 p.m.
Eureka	KIEM	1480	8:00 a.m.
Fresno	KARM	1430	3:30 p.m.
Indio	KREO	1400	3:30 p.m.
Los Angeles	KECA	790	3:30 p.m.
Modesto	KTRB	860	3:00 p.m.
San Francisco	KGO	810	3:30 p.m.
San Luis Obispo	KATY	1340	3:30 p.m.
Colorado, Craig	KRAI	1230	5:30 p.m.
Denver	KVOD	630	3:00 p.m.
Conn., Bridgeport	WNAB	1450	2:00 p.m.
Hartford	WTHT	1230	2:30 p.m.
Delaware, Wilmington	WILM	1450	2:00 p.m.
Florida, Gainesville	WGGG	1230	1:00 p.m.
Jacksonville	WPDQ	600	8:30 a.m.
Miami	WQAM	560	1:00 p.m.
Panama City	WPCF	1400	1:00 p.m.
Pensacola	WEAR	1230	11:00 p.m.
Tallahassee	WTNT	1450	5:00 p.m.
Tampa, St. Pete	WSUN	620	1:00 p.m.
Georgia, Atlanta	WGST	920	1:00 p.m.
Augusta	WGAC	580	2:00 p.m.
Brunswick	WGIG	1440	1:00 p.m.
Cairo	WGRA	1300	3:00 p.m.
Columbus	WGBA	1460	7:30 a.m.
Macon	WNEX	1400	1:00 p.m.
Rome	WLAQ	670	1:00 p.m.
Savannah	WDAR	1400	1:00 p.m.
Valdosta	WGAF	910	1:00 p.m.
Idaho, Boise	KGEM	1140	3:00 p.m.
Pocatello	KEIO	1440	9:30 a.m.
Illinois, Chicago	WENR-WLS	890	2:30 p.m.
Quincy	WGEM	1440	8:00 a.m.
Indiana, Anderson	WHBU	1240	1:30 p.m.
Bloomington	WTTS	1370	1:00 p.m.
Evansville	WJPS	1330	1:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne	WGL	1250	1:00 p.m.
Iowa, Cedar Rapids	WMT	600	7:30 a.m.
Des Moines	KSO	1460	1:00 p.m.
Sioux City	KSCJ	1360	10:30 p.m.
Waterloo	KXEL	1540	5:30 p.m.
Kansas, Coffeyville	KGGF	690	2:00 p.m.
Topeka	WREN	1250	1:00 p.m.
Wichita	KWBB	1410	3:30 p.m.
Ken., Bowling Green	WKCT	930	1:00 p.m.
Harlan	WHLN	1230	3:00 p.m.
Louisville	WKLO	1080	1:00 p.m.
Mayfield	WKTM	1050	4:15 p.m.
Newport	WNOP	740	2:00 p.m.
Louisiana, Baton Rouge	WLCS	910	1:00 p.m.
Monroe	KMLB	1440	2:00 p.m.
New Orleans	WDSU	1280	1:00 p.m.
Shreveport	KRMD	1340	1:00 p.m.

Maine, Bangor	WABI	910	1:00 p.m.
Portland	WPOR	1450	9:00 a.m.
Maryland, Baltimore	WFBR	1300	3:00 p.m.
Cumberland	WDYK	1230	8:00 a.m.
Mass., Gardner	WHOB	1490	1:00 p.m.
Lawrence	WLAW	680	1:00 p.m.
Springfield	WSPR	1270	2:00 p.m.
Worcester	WAAB	1440	2:00 p.m.
Michigan, Battle Creek	WELL	1400	1:00 p.m.
Bay City	WBCM	1440	1:00 p.m.
Detroit	WXYZ	1270	1:00 p.m.
Flint	WFDF	910	10:00 p.m.
Lansing	WILS	1320	1:00 p.m.
Ludington	WKLA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Muskegon	WKBZ	850	2:00 p.m.
Minn., Minn.-St. Paul	WTCN	1280	7:30 a.m.
Mankato	KTOE	1420	2:00 p.m.
Miss., Centerville	WGCL	1580	8:00 a.m.
Aberdeen	WMPA	1240	1:00 p.m.
Columbus	WCBI	1340	6:00 p.m.
Greenwood	WABG	960	1:00 p.m.
Jackson	WSLI	930	2:00 p.m.
Kosciusko	WKOZ	1340	1:00 p.m.
Laurel	WLAU	1490	1:00 p.m.
McComb	WSKB	1250	1:00 p.m.
Missouri, Kansas City	KCMO	810	12:30 p.m.
Rolla	KTTR	1490	8:45 a.m.
St. Louis	KXOK	630	2:00 p.m.
Springfield	KWTO	560	1:00 p.m.
Montana, Butte	KOPR	580	9:15 a.m.
Great Falls	KMON	560	7:30 a.m.
Nebraska, Lincoln	KFOR	1240	10:30 a.m.
Omaha	KOIL	1290	5:30 p.m.
Sidney	KSID	1540	9:30 a.m.
N. Hamp., Claremont	WTSV	1230	1:00 p.m.
Lebanon	WTSL	1400	1:00 p.m.
Manchester	WMUR	610	3:00 p.m.
N. Mexico, Albuquerque	KOAT	1450	3:00 p.m.
Carlsbad	KPBM	740	check sta.
Clovis	KCLV	1240	1:00 p.m.
Los Alamos	KRSN	1490	3:00 p.m.
Santa Fe	KTRC	1400	3:00 p.m.
New York, Albany	WXKX	850	2:00 p.m.
New York	WJZ	770	12:30 p.m.
Olean	WHDL	1450	1:00 p.m.
Rochester	WARC	950	3:00 p.m.
Saranac Lake	WEAV	960	2:00 p.m.
Syracuse	WAGE	620	12:00 n.
N. Carolina, Asheville	WLOS	1380	1:00 p.m.
Charlotte	WAYS	610	1:00 p.m.
Durham	WTIK	1310	2:00 p.m.
Elizabeth City	WGAJ	560	12:00 n.
Fayetteville(Sat.)	WFLB	1490	1:00 p.m.
Salisbury	WSAT	1280	1:00 p.m.
Wilmington	WGNI	1340	8:30 a.m.
Winston-Salem	WAIR	1340	1:00 p.m.
N. Dakota, Fargo	KFGO	790	1:00 p.m.
S. Dakota, Huron	KIJV	630	9:00 a.m.
Ohio, Cleveland	WJW	850	1:00 p.m.
Columbus	WHKC	610	1:00 p.m.
Lima	WIMA	1150	9:00 a.m.
Youngstown	WBBW	1240	8:30 a.m.
Oklahoma, Ada	KADA	1230	1:00 p.m.
Enid	KCRC	1390	1:00 p.m.
McAlester	KTMC	1400	1:00 p.m.
Muskogee	KBIX	1490	2:00 p.m.
Oklahoma City	KTKO	1000	9:30 a.m.
Tulsa	KRMG	740	2:00 p.m.
Oregon, Eugene	KASH	1600	1:00 p.m.
Klamath Falls	KFLW	1450	4:30 p.m.
Medford	KMED	1440	7:30 a.m.
Portland	KEX	1190	3:30 p.m.
The Dalles	KODL	1230	1:00 p.m.

Penn., Johnstown	WCRO	1230	7:00 p.m.
Philadelphia	WFIL	560	2:00 p.m.
Pittsburg	WCAE	1250	3:00 p.m.
Wilkes-Barre	WILK	980	5:00 p.m.
R. Island, Providence	WPJB	1420	1:00 p.m.
S. Carolina, Florence	WJMX	970	10:30 a.m.
S. Dakota, Aberdeen	KSDN	930	10:30 a.m.
Tenn., Chattanooga	WDEF	1370	1:00 p.m.
Jackson	WTJS	1390	1:00 p.m.
Johnson City	WJHL	910	10:30 p.m.
Knoxville	WBIR	1240	1:30 p.m.
Memphis	WMPB	650	9:30 p.m.
Morristown	WCRK	1450	check sta.
Nashville	WSIX	980	4:00 p.m.
Texas, Abilene	KRBC	1470	1:00 p.m.
Amarillo	KFDA	1440	1:00 p.m.
Austin	KNOW	1490	2:00 p.m.
Beaumont	KFDM	560	1:00 p.m.
Big Spring	KBST	1490	1:00 p.m.
Brownfield	KTFY	1300	4:30 p.m.
Brownsville	KVAL	1490	1:00 p.m.
Brownwood	KBWD	1380	6:30 p.m.
Corpus Christi	KEYS	1440	9:00 a.m.
El Paso	KEPO	690	3:00 p.m.
Ft. Worth	WBAP	570	1:00 p.m.
Graham	KSWA	1330	4:30 p.m.
Houston	KXYZ	1320	8:00 a.m.
Longview	KFRO	1370	1:00 p.m.
Lubbock	KFYO	1340	4:00 p.m.
Midland	KCRS	550	1:30 p.m.
New Braunfels	KGNB	1420	8:00 a.m.
Paris	KPLT	1490	9:00 p.m.
San Angelo	KGKL	960	1:00 p.m.
San Antonio	KMAC	630	9:00 p.m.
Texarkana	KCMC	1230	1:00 p.m.
Wichita Falls	KFDX	990	2:00 p.m.
Utah, Provo	KCSU	1490	3:00 p.m.
Salt Lake City	KUTA	570	7:30 a.m.
Vermont, Brattleboro	WTSA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Burlington	WJOY	1230	1:00 p.m.
Montpelier-Barre	WSKI	1240	1:00 p.m.
Virginia, Charlottesville	WINA	1280	9:15 a.m.
Fredericksburg	WFVA	1230	check sta.
Marion	WMEV	1010	2:00 p.m.
Norfolk	WGH	1310	6:30 p.m.
Richmond	WRNL	910	1:30 p.m.
Washington, Aberdeen	KBKW	1450	9:00 p.m.
Omak	KOMW	680	9:15 a.m.
Pasco	KPKW	1340	3:30 p.m.
Seattle	KJR	950	3:30 p.m.
Spokane	KGA	1510	3:30 p.m.
Washington, D. C.	WMAL	630	1:00 p.m.
W. Virginia, Beckley	WVNR	620	1:30 p.m.
Huntington	WHTN	800	8:00 a.m.
Parkersburg, Sat.	WCOW	1230	5:30 p.m.
Wheeling	WKWK	1400	1:00 p.m.
Wisconsin, Green Bay	WDUZ	1400	5:30 p.m.
LaCrosse	WKTY	580	4:00 p.m.
Madison	WIBA	1320	8:00 a.m.
Milwaukee	WCAN	1250	2:00 p.m.
Neenah	WNAM	1280	8:00 a.m.
Wyoming, Casper	KSPR	1470	9:15 p.m.
Cheyenne	KFBC	710	12:00 p.m.
Cody	KODI	1400	12:00 p.m.
Laramie	KOWB	1340	12:00 p.m.
Rawlins	KRAL	1240	12:00 p.m.
Riverton	KWRL	1450	12:00 p.m.
Torrington	KGOS	1490	12:00 p.m.
Worland	KWOR	1490	12:00 p.m.
Alaska, Juneau (Sat.)	KJNO	630	1:00 p.m.
Canada, Trail, B.C.	CJAT	610	9:30 a.m.
Toronto, Ont.	CKEY	580	9:15 a.m.

All times are Sunday unless otherwise indicated.

ness. We need the mind of Job who said, "I esteemed the words (of God) more than my necessary food." Job 23:12. If we are Christians we can surely give up our easy chair on the Lord's day to be with Christ in worship.

A preacher in Bournemouth, England, wrote during the war, "We have preferred motor travel to church-going—now there is a shortage of motor fuel. We have ignored the ringing of the church bells calling us to worship—now the bells cannot ring except to warn of invasion. We have left the churches half empty when they should have been filled with worshippers—now they are in ruins. We would not listen to the way of peace—now we are forced to listen to the way of war. The money we would not give to the Lord's work is now taken from us in taxes and higher prices. The food for which we forget to return thanks now is unobtainable."

In presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God we must give much of our time to His work. We have plenty of time to provide a living for our family, and we spend much of our time looking after the health of our children. We do all within our power to see that our little ones do not take some dreaded disease. And we are careful to see that their heads are filled with the knowledge of mathematics, history and language. But according to a statement in a paper published by a leading manufacturer, "25,000,000 American boys and girls of each generation are not taught to read the Bible, go to church, or to pray." Jesus said we should put the kingdom of God first, but many Christian parents do not make the sacrifices necessary to teach and train their children. Some Christian parents permit their children to miss the Bible study that they may stay home and study history. Listen friends, Caesar is dead, but Christ is alive! Your child needs to learn of Him, for He is the way, the truth and the life.

In the process of self-denial for Christ we could easily give up some of our fine clothing. In describing the sacrifices of early Christians the inspired writer of Hebrews said, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Heb. 11:37. No disciple of Christ in America has had to make any such sacrifice. We can surely deny ourselves a few luxuries that the Lord's work may go forward.

A few years ago the church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa was trying to buy a more accommodative place in which to assemble for worship. An elderly couple in the congregation who lived on a pension took their meager savings of forty-five dollars,

borrowed five, and gave fifty dollars. These good people had learned the lesson of sacrificial giving. Jesus admonishes us to lay up treasures in heaven. The way to do this is through using what we have to help others. When you die you can take your money with you, but you must first change it into the currency of the country to which you are going. Money can be taken with us by changing it into food for the hungry and teaching for the lost.

Not only does the Lord expect individual Christians to make a sacrifice, but he expects the church to make an even greater one. There are some church leaders who seem to think the church is some kind of a sacred chest into which members are to pour their money for safe keeping. It is just as wrong for the church to hoard money as for individuals. Giving into the church treasury is not an end within itself; it is a means to an end. The church was established by Christ as a means of saving the world. It must be active and it must use the Lord's money in the Lord's work. It is the obligation of the church to preach the gospel to the whole world. Mission work may begin at home but it must not stay at home.

Among the tales coming out of the world war is one of a tank and its map. A big "push" was in progress on the British front. The Nazis were in retreat. The great tanks that could flatten out anything in front of them were lumbering forward. Then one tank stopped. The mechanism was not damaged and they had plenty of gasoline. An officer came, demanding in vigorous language why the huge beast had halted. "The trouble is, sir," was the reply, "we have got to the edge of our map." Some congregations do not have far to go to get to the edge of their map. They go to the city limits and stop. But the risen Christ said go "unto the uttermost part of the earth." Every congregation should have the world as its map!

The Lord expects the church to sacrifice that it may help the needy. In the first century the Christians in Palestine were in dire need because of a severe drouth and the congregations as far as Europe assisted them. Those early congregations visited the fatherless and the widows in their affliction. In the twentieth century a great deal of stress is laid on splendid church buildings and ornate trimmings. In 1936 I drove by an exceedingly expensive church building in a large Texas city. My companion in the car was a steward in this particular church. He volunteered the information that many members of that very church were at that moment in the bread lines down town. Our missionaries in Italy report that people fight for food directly across the street from a guarded statue studded with diamonds.

A recent issue of Life Magazine carried the picture of a statue in Spain set with precious gems that are worth nearly five million dollars. In a recent letter a church of which he is a member and said it must be the Lord's church, because it is the richest one. Friends, the Christ did not establish His church to be rich. He built it to be poor in purse and spirit. He built it to serve the world. I know of congregations that borrow money to help the needy and to preach the gospel. The ambition to have glittering church buildings, and full treasuries is opposed to the teaching of Christ. Jesus came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and gave His life a ransom for many. The church must make every sacrifice to save the world.

Have you ever thought of how few personal favors Jesus ever asked? They could be numbered on the fingers of one hand: a drink of water from an old well, the hospitality of a home in Bethany, an hour's watching with Him in Gethsemane, use of a guest chamber for the Last Supper, and, finally, "this do in remembrance of me." He asked much for others—for the poor the friendless, the sick, and the sinful—yet so very little for Himself.

Have you ever thought of what Christ gave? He gave His head to the crown of thorns. He gave His back to the cruel lash. He gave His cheeks to those who smote Him. He gave His face to the rude, dirty, human spittle. He gave His clothes to His murderers. He gave His hands and feet to be transfixed with nails to the accursed cross. He gave His blood to this earth for the remission of sins. He gave His body for the life of the world. He gave His spirit to God.

Abandoned and desolate, with no friend or acquaintance near Him, Christ gave Himself unto death. While He was on the cross the sun withdrew, and behind the black pall of mourning a cold, cruel world shivered. Finally, He said, "It is finished" and He gave up His life.

Friends, His sacrifice was made for you. Paul said, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that ye might be rich." II Cor. 8:9.

What have you given to Christ? All He asks is your heart and life. He asks that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice to Him. He becomes the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. Heb. 5:9. He asks you to believe in Him, repent of your sins, and be buried with Him in baptism that you may rise to walk in newness of life with Him. Why not resolve at this moment to do these things in obedience to your Lord?