PLEASANT SPRINGS CHURCH • SERMON • WHEN THE FIRE DIES OUT, PART TWO

What Are We Laying on the Altar?

A broken and contrite heart — an exploration of Psalm 51:17

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When the Fire Dies Out, Part Two — Psalm 51:17

Preached Sunday, November 1, 2026 by Pastor Jeremy Arnold

Psalm 51:17 • Genesis 2:15–18 • Genesis 3:6 • John 15:1–8 • John 10:17–18 • Genesis 22:13 • John 1:29 • Hebrews 10:1–4 • Hebrews 10:12 • Numbers 32:23

When the fire goes out in our spiritual lives, we must return to God, surrender what is keeping us from Him, and abide in Jesus Christ, who alone gives us life.

THE SERMON TEXT

> **Psalm 51:17 (ESV) · Hebrew 51:19 · Septuagint 50:19**
> “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

WE WANT THE FIRE, BUT WHAT ARE WE WILLING TO LAY DOWN?

We often talk about revival. We want the presence of God. We want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We want to see His power working in our lives.

A QUESTION

> *So, what are we willing to lay on the altar?*

- We want God's presence, but are we willing to lay down our pride?
- We want His power, but are we willing to lay down our bitterness and unforgiveness?
- We want revival, but are we willing to let God deal with the sin we have been hiding?

Point

Sometimes we want the fire of God without surrendering the very things that are keeping us from walking closely with Him.

The altar reminds us that God is holy, sin is serious, and our relationship with Him is not something to take lightly.

The altar also reminds us of God's provision.

We could never make ourselves right with God through our own efforts. That is why He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to become the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

THREE QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. What did humanity surrender when sin entered the world?

2. What did Jesus surrender to redeem us?

3. How should we respond to Christ’s sacrifice?

1. WHAT DID HUMANITY SURRENDER?

> **Genesis 2:15–18 (ESV)**
> "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

> **Genesis 3:6 (ESV)**
> "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."

God created Adam and Eve in His image and gave them responsibility over the earth.

- We were created in His image.
- We were created to walk in fellowship with Him.
- We were created to represent His authority on the earth.

In Genesis we see the serpent challenged God's Word, and Adam and Eve chose their own desires over God's will, purpose and plan.

They surrendered their trust in God's Word and His goodness and chose independence from His authority. Their rebellion brought sin and death into the world.

The problem was not simply that they ate forbidden fruit. The problem was that they wanted to determine for themselves what was right and make their own decisions instead of trusting the One who had created them — and we struggle with that same thing today.

THINGS TO PONDER

- Are we laying down our pride, or are we protecting it?
- Are we surrendering our bitterness, or are we feeding it?
- Are we trusting God's Word, or are we making excuses for our disobedience?
- Are we giving God our hearts, or just going through the motions?
- Are we giving Him genuine praise, or are we giving Him lip service?

Point

Sometimes the fire goes out because we refuse to lay down what God has been asking us to surrender.

In John 15:1–8, Jesus describes Himself as the vine and us as the branches.

> **John 15:1–8 (ESV)**
> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

A branch cannot produce fruit apart from the vine. It must remain connected to its source of life. Jesus tells us that apart from Him, we can do nothing.

We can attend church, sing songs, serve in jail ministries, and still allow our hearts to drift away from God.

The answer is not to do more religious stuff, but to get honest and become obedient to Christ.

Before we can talk about what we need to lay on the altar, we need to understand what Christ has already done for us.

2. WHAT DID JESUS SURRENDER TO REDEEM US?

Jesus willingly laid down His life. In John 10:17–18, Jesus explains that no one takes His life from Him; He freely laid it down and has the power and authority to take it up again.

> **John 10:17–18 (ESV)**
> "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Under the Old Covenant, God established sacrifices and taught His people about sin, forgiveness, and His holiness. The sacrifices reminded Israel that sin was serious and that approaching a holy God was not something to take lightly.

But those sacrifices also pointed forward to something greater.

In Genesis 22, God provided a ram in place of Isaac.

> **Genesis 22:13 (ESV)**
> "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son."

In John 1:29, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

> **John 1:29 (ESV)**
> "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Just as God provided a substitute for Isaac, He provided what we could never provide for ourselves. He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, to bear our sin.

SOMETHING TO PONDER

- We surrendered our obedience to sin; Jesus surrendered His life in obedience to the Father.
- We turned away from God's authority; Jesus remained faithful to the Father's will.
- We cannot overcome sin or death in our own efforts, yet Jesus went to the cross, died and rose again!

Point

Jesus laid down His life so that we could be reconciled back to God.

THE SACRIFICE IS FINISHED

Hebrews 10:1–17 explains that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were a shadow of what was to come. The blood of animals could not permanently remove sin.

> **Hebrews 10:1–4 (ESV)**
> "For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

But Hebrews 10:12 tells us:

> **Hebrews 10:12 (ESV)**
> "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,"

RETURNING TO THE ALTAR

So when we talk about laying things on the altar, we are not talking about earning God's love. We are talking about responding to the love He has already shown us through Christ.

And that brings us to the question.

If Jesus willingly gave His life for us, what is it that we are unwilling to surrender to Him?

3. WHAT MUST WE LAY ON THE ALTAR?

> **Psalm 51:17 (ESV) · Hebrew 51:19 · Septuagint 50:19**
> “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

David is not saying that God wants us to feel miserable or that our brokenness earns forgiveness.

David understood that God was not looking for empty religious activity. He desired a heart that acknowledged its sin, stopped making excuses, and turned back to Him.

FOUR THINGS WE NEED TO LAY DOWN

1. Lay down our pride.

Pride says, “I can handle this myself. I don’t need anyone telling me what to do.”
Surrender says, “Lord, I need You. Your way is better than mine.”
We must be willing to say, “Lord, not my will, but Yours.”

2. Lay down our bitterness and unforgiveness.

Some people have been carrying hurt for years. They continue to replay what someone did to them, allowing yesterday’s wounds to shape today’s attitudes.
Our bitterness does not change God’s character or separate a believer from His love, but it certainly damages our fellowship with Him and our relationships with others.
Laying it on the altar does not mean pretending the hurt never happened or excusing wrongdoing. It means bringing that hurt to God and refusing to let bitterness rule us.
We have received mercy through Christ, and we should allow His grace to work in us to forgive others.

3. Lay down our secret sins.

We may fool some of the people all the time, and all the people some of the time, but we can’t fool all the people all the time — and we can’t fool God!

> **Numbers 32:23 (ESV)**
> “But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.”

> *The question is, what are we tolerating on the inside?*

- What habits have we grown comfortable with?

We cannot expect to grow spiritually while holding on to what pulls us away from the Lord.

4. Lay down our divided loyalties.
This brings us back to the unseen battle. Who or what have we compromised our allegiance to?
Scripture also warns God's people against idolatry and giving their allegiance to anything that takes the place of the Lord.
An idol is not always a carved image. Anything we love, trust, or obey in a way that competes with God can begin to take His rightful place in our hearts and lives. It may be money, comfort, reputation, relationships, success, or our desire to have everything our own way.

> *Who has our greatest loyalty?*

- What controls our decisions?
- What are we unwilling to surrender to God?

Point

The altar is where we stop negotiating with God and surrender ourselves to Him.

A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART

Psalm 51:17 does not say that God is impressed by our performance. He desires a broken and contrite heart.

He is simply calling us to come honestly before Him, acknowledge our sin, and turn back to Him.

IN CLOSING

Remember, we do not lay our sins on the altar to pay for them. Jesus has already paid the price. We lay down our pride, our rebellion, and our divided loyalties because we belong to Him. We return to Him because He is the One who gives us life.

> *The question is not simply, 'Lord, send the fire.' The question is, 'Lord, what must I surrender to You?' — Pastor Jeremy Arnold*

GROW FURTHER

WHEN THE FIRE DIES OUT, PART ONE

Going Through the Motions

Last week — Jesus names the one thing Ephesus had lost, and calls them to remember, repent and return.

DEEP RESEARCH

Psalm 51

David's psalm in the Hebrew and the Greek, and why Romans 3:4 quotes the Greek.

DEEP RESEARCH

Genesis 22:1–19

The binding of Isaac: God will provide the lamb, the ram in the thicket, and how Moriah previews the cross.

DISCIPLESHIP

What Goes on God's Altar?

A short lesson on the five offerings of Leviticus and what a holy people brings to God today.

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