

Title: Rebuilding the Altar: A Call to Renewed Worship and Sacrifice

Sermon Summary: Drawing from the confrontation on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18, this sermon calls believers to examine the condition of their personal altar of worship and sacrifice before God. The pastor weaves together the story of Elijah rebuilding a fallen altar with Paul's exhortation in Romans 12 to present ourselves as living sacrifices and Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 about true worship in spirit and truth. The central argument is that the altar of personal devotion can fall into disrepair either through defilement or through neglect and lack of use, and that God calls His people to rebuild it through genuine repentance, renewed surrender, and authentic worship. The sermon concludes at the communion table, where the brutality of Christ's sacrificial death is held up as the ultimate standard of what true sacrifice looks like and the foundation upon which all genuine worship rests.

Key Points:

- The altar of the Lord had fallen into disrepair not necessarily through defilement but through lack of use, and many believers find themselves in the same condition spiritually
- Romans 12 calls believers to present themselves as living sacrifices, which is described as a spiritual act of worship, not merely an emotional or musical experience
- The greatest obstacle to being a living sacrifice is the tendency to keep crawling off the altar, returning to self-centered living rather than God-centered surrender
- True worship, as Jesus taught the Samaritan woman in John 4, is worship in spirit and in truth, not confined to a place, a building, or a song service
- Rebuilding the altar requires either repentance and cleansing when defilement is present, or renewed commitment and consistent use when neglect is the problem
- Elijah's prayer before the fire fell was simple and God-centered, focused not on personal vindication but on the people coming to know that the Lord alone is God

- The public nature of God's judgment on the prophets of Baal reflects a biblical principle that sin and evil carry genuine consequences, and the church must not soften this reality
- The brutality of Christ's death on the cross is the measure of what sin truly deserves and the foundation of gratitude that should fuel all genuine worship and sacrifice

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Kings 18 -- the confrontation on Mount Carmel, the rebuilding of the altar, and the fire of God falling
- Romans 12:1-3 -- the call to present our bodies as living sacrifices as a spiritual act of worship
- John 4:10-24 -- Jesus and the Samaritan woman discussing living water and worship in spirit and truth
- Romans 8 -- God working all things together for good
- Hebrews 11 -- without faith it is impossible to please God
- Revelation 5 -- the image of the slaughtered Lamb who alone is worthy to open the seal

Stories:

- Elijah mocking the prophets of Baal as they cry out for hours without any response, then stepping forward at the time of the evening sacrifice to rebuild the altar and pray a simple, God-centered prayer before fire falls from heaven
- The Samaritan woman coming to draw water at midday and being drawn into a conversation with Jesus about living water, her personal sin, and true worship, ultimately recognizing Him as a prophet
- The pastor's personal memory of wishing he had spent more time being present with his grandparents rather than being consumed with tasks, used as an illustration of taking familiar things for granted
- The pastor's story from senior high church camp where he rigged a dramatic fire demonstration using a toilet paper roll, a wire cable, and a can of gasoline to illustrate the Elijah narrative, winning the drama competition
- A reference to the Fort Hood shooting and the public debate over capital punishment, used to illustrate the biblical principle that evil deserves proportionate justice and that public accountability serves as a deterrent

- The image of David dancing before the Lord as the ark came to Jerusalem, used to illustrate what it looks like to worship with genuine passion and a heart after God