

Mercy And Not Sacrifice

The expression “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” serves as an obvious test case for various ethical systems. Virtue (aretic - Phil 4:8), deontological (Mal 1:1ff) and consequentialist ethical systems (Rom 3:8; 5:1ff) compete for supremacy in the moral market place. The goals of character development, duty for duty's sake and results drive each respectively. How does this expression, “mercy and not sacrifice,” reflect the twin need for motivation/intent as well as duty/performance as they together develop a certain kind of virtuous character?

Possibilities:

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. mercy - no | sacrifice - no | <i>not approved</i> |
| 2. mercy - no | sacrifice - yes | <i>not approved</i> |
| 3. mercy - yes | sacrifice - no | <i>not approved</i> |
| 4. mercy - yes | sacrifice - yes | <i>approved</i> |

Methodology:

1. examine the sentiment in each of the passages where it occurs
2. note the intent of the passage and thus the meaning of the expression in context
3. find other “I desire X and not Y” passages if they exist
4. are the ranges of meaning in those passages parallel to those in the mercy/sacrifice passages
5. determine the range of meaning of those passages and specifically those similar expressions as they are used in those passages
6. answer the questions re the options/possibilities chart above
 - a. why is mercy-no/sacrifice-no unacceptable before God?
 - b. why is mercy-no/sacrifice-yes unacceptable before God?
 - c. why is mercy-yes/sacrifice-no unacceptable before God?
 - d. why is mercy-no/yes/sacrifice-yes the only acceptable situation before God?

Parallel passages in the New Testament #1

1. Matt. 9:10-13 ¶ Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¶ When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”
2. Context and meaning of Matthew 9
 - a. Jesus came to his own city (9:1)
 - b. He healed a paralytic (9:2) and incurred the criticism of the Pharisees when he said "your sins are forgiven you" (9:2)
 - c. Accused of blasphemy (9:3), Jesus defends himself by equating forgiveness and healing (both demanding the power of deity; 9:5) and affirming that he had power to forgive (9:6)
 - d. This prompted praise among the multitudes and an appreciation/glory toward God for Jesus' power (9:8)
 - e. Jesus called Matthew, tax collector, to follow him (9:9) and sat in the presence of many tax collectors (9:10), which prompted the Pharisees' question "why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (9:11)
 - f. Jesus' response: only the sick, not the well, need a doctor (9:12) and admonished them to "go and learn" the meaning of "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." (9:13)
 - g. Jesus came to call the sinners to repent (not the righteous, which the Pharisees assumed they were) (9:14)

3. What is the meaning of Hosea 6:6 in this context?
 - a. sacrifice here is synecdoche, part for the whole, standing for "strict obedience to the commandments of God." (Beale/Carson 34)
 - b. The form of "not x but y" (not sacrifice but mercy) means "y much more than x" (Ibid.), thus does not rule out X (sacrifice).
 - c. In Hosea 6:1ff we see what looks like repentance on Israel's part, but find out that it is only feigned
 - d. 6:6 repeats what Samuel told Saul in 1 Sam 15:22 (Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.")
 - e. In 1 Samuel 15:22 obedience (as a demonstration of mercy) was better than sacrifice. This demonstrates that obedience was not rejected as part of Samuel's criticism of Saul's sacrifice.; cf. Ps. 39:7 and Pr 16:7
 - f. This is not mercy without obedience, as 1 Sam 15:22, and it is not mercy without knowledge. The latter part of Hos 6:6 demands a knowledge of God's will, a knowledge the logically and chronologically precedes offerings/sacrifice.
 - g. Jesus, in Matthew 9:13 is not rejecting sacrifice. Hosea was not rejecting sacrifice. Both declared the meaninglessness of blind obedience (in this case sacrifice and mere commandment keeping) apart from genuine change of heart (repentance, mercy, etc.
 - h. Matthew 23 clearly states that God expected both the fastidious and minute forms of obedience that defined Pharisaism, but he wanted them to keep the weightier matters of the law as well.
 - i. Jesus' demand that the Pharisees should learn this is clear: they missed "the application of a fundamental moral principle of the OT that continues throughout the new age that Jesus is inaugurating." (B/C 35)
 - j. Contemporary application - if God expected this level of mercy-and-not-sacrifice obedience under the law (cf. Deut. 10:16, et. al.), he will expect much more under the perfect law of liberty (cf. Heb. 2:1ff)
 - k. Contemporary application - "I desire devotion and not hymn-singing, service and not sermons." (B/C 35)

Parallel passages in the New Testament #2

1. Matt. 12:1-8 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" ¶ But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
2. Context and meaning of Matthew 12
 - a. Jesus and disciples go through grainfields on the Sabbath, the hungry disciples pluck and eat some of the grains (1)
 - b. The Pharisees criticize Jesus for allowing the disciples to do what is not lawful (2)
 - c. Jesus reprimanded them by saying if they had read the scriptures they would know that David, technically, violated the law - they seemingly allowed what David did, but not what the disciples did; even the priests profane (according to some interpretations) the Sabbath by eating the showbread on that day (4-5), yet they were blameless
 - d. Jesus, one great there the temple said that they should know what "I desire mercy and not sacrifice means" ... if they did, they would not have condemned the guiltless (i.e., the disciples) (6-7)
3. What is the meaning of Hosea 6:6 in this context?
 - a. as in Mt 9, sacrifice here is synecdoche for the entire ritual law" (B/C 41)
 - b. Christ's mercy, allowing the disciples to eat, trumped the Pharisaic interpretation that forbade their actions

- c. Principle: "fundamental morality (is) above ritual law" (B/C 41)
- d. Four possibilities of how Hos 6:6 is used in Mt 12
 - i. critique of Pharisees' lack of love
 - ii. justification of disciples' action
 - iii. emphasis on covenant loyalty as Godward
 - iv. merciful Savior releases us from legalism (B/C 41)

Parallel passages in the New Testament #3

1. Mark 12:28-34 ¶ Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" ¶ Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ¶ So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ¶ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." ¶ But after that no one dared question Him.
2. This passage clearly delineates the order that God sought, both logically and chronologically. The proper heart and understanding must prompt obedience. When that heart puts loving God first and loving neighbor second, assuming that love is the pursuit of the highest objective valuation of both, then it surpasses the entirety of the sacrificial system. This does not mean that the sacrificial system was worthless, but that the sacrificial system without the proper ground, the motivation to serve God and man out of love, was worthless. Matthew 23:23 specifically notes that God did not expect the minutia of the law to be overlooked, but that obedience must be an outward manifestation of the attitude of humility of heart, justice, mercy, faith, etc. (jla); lot. cit Mk 12:29 - "Thus, echoing the language of both covenant loyalty and the father-son relationship, Deuteronomy is the first book of the Torah to call Israel to love Yahweh with their whole being unreservedly and exceedingly, even to the death." (B/C 217)

Parallel passages in the New Testament #4

1. Matt. 23:23-24 ¶ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"
2. This passage does not absolve the scribes and Pharisees from specific, and minute, details of obedience; rather it assumes that they would not only observe them, but that they would do so in the greater context of observing "weightier matters." In context, weightier matters are "justice and mercy and faith." Jesus simply shows the proper context of obedience to be within the parameters of following the divine guidelines of justice, mercy and faith.; cf. this to Micah 6:off - "With what shall I come before the LORD, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?"]

Hosea 6:6

1. Hos. 6:6 For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.
2. This passage is cited in Mt 9:13; 12:7; alluded to in 1 Samuel 15:22 (cf. Mk 12:27ff; Mt: 23:23ff)
3. Gal. 4:21 ¶ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? [jla - this passage emphasizes the need to be both doers as well as desirous to be under the law (of Moses) ... principle, of course,

applies with equal force to the NT. You can't just claim to be God's, you must do it. In this regard all of these passages are parallel to what we see in James 1:22 - be doers, not just hearers, and 1 John 1-3 that addresses the need to be doers not just claimer of doing; cf. Mt 7:13ff - they claimed to do God's will, but Jesus said he never knew them; attitude, motivation and intent always count; cf. Titus 1:16 - they claimed to be God's but in works they denied him; this is not just an obedience problem, it is an attitude problem, one manifest through working for working's sake and not working for the sake of demonstrating full submission to the will of God; cf. examples of Saul in 1 Sm 13 and 15

4. Deut 10:16 - the heart matters under the law

Exegesis of Hosea 6:6

1. Background of Hosea [cf. Longman, Short Guide, Dillard/Longman 1994, Longman/Dillard 2006, Hill/Walton 2009]

- Hosea - a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah
- his message was primarily about judgment on Israel
- but occasionally judgment on Judah
- it anticipates a day when Israel's relationship with God would be renewed
- though politically/militarily successful under Jehoaash/Jeroboam II, God measured Israel's success differently, thus prompting his suit against them [2009 584]

2. It uses the illustration of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, as a parallel of the relationship that exists between God and Israel.

- Israel, like Gomer, was unfaithful to her mate (God/Hosea)
- yet God commanded Hosea to marry (remain married to) Gomer
- their children's names are consistent with their broken relationships (Hosea/Gomer and God/Israel)
 - Lo-Ruhamah - "not pitied (loved-ja), the name of the prophet Hosea's first daughter, a type of Jehovah's temporary rejection of his people (**Hos. 1:6; 2:23**)."[Easton]
 - Jezreel - "God scatters" - (3.) A symbolical name given by Hosea to his oldest son (Hos. 1:4), in token of a great slaughter predicted by him, like that which had formerly taken place in the plain of Esdraelon (comp. Hos. 1:4, 5).[Ibid.]
 - Lo-Ammi - "not my people, a symbolical name given by God's command to Hosea's second son in token of Jehovah's rejection of his people (**Hos. 1:9, 10**), his treatment of them as a foreign people. This Hebrew word is rendered by "not my people" in ver. 10; 2:23." [Ibid.]

3. The second chapter pronounces judgment against Israel, but is quickly followed by a ray of hope

4. The third chapter encourages/commands Hosea to remain with, and continue to love, Gomer

5. Using several different images the remaining chapters go back and forth between judgment and hope.

- The judgment images - jealous husband, frustrated shepherd, moths that destroy, consuming rot and decay, fierce lions, trappers, etc.
- The hope/salvation images - a husband that forgives, a doctor that heals, life-bringing rain, parents that love their children, a protective lion, life-giving dew, fertile trees, etc.
- Israel, and sometimes Judah, are depicted in various images - rapidly disappearing morning mist, silly birds, a broken bow, wild animals, etc.
- When God comes in judgment it will be like: a whirlwind, washing away the dirt and mire, yoking a reluctant cow, etc.

6. Though no clear structure exists, the text alternates between warnings and promises (cf. Deuteronomy), but it ends with a strong admonition to pay attention to God's will, understand it, and remain on the right road. [1-6 Longman, Short Guide]

7. God's message

- God's covenant with Israel at Sinai was still in force [1994-360]

- His love for Israel never changed [2009-581]
- God wants Israel to know that his covenant has been broken (by Israel) [1994-360]
- God's marriage to Israel reflects a relationship anticipated since physical marriage among mankind first began (cf. Gen 2; Eph 5)
- Unfaithfulness in marriage represents unfaithfulness to God, thus a rejection of who God was and what God stood for
 - Turning to idols was equal to denying their marriage to God
 - Israel's leaders were guilty
 - Israel's priests were guilty
 - Israel's prophets were guilty
- This lack of faithfulness equals a lack of trust/faith in God
- This lack of faithfulness was realized in a life consistent with that unfaithfulness
- For God, the marriage relationship was a covenant relationship, one not to be taken lightly nor broken, and one always worthy of working to maintain; to parallel marriage with the divine covenant was to show the value and relationship of both; we are to value a right marriage relationship between husbands and wives just as much as we are to value a right relationship between ourselves and God; the relationship aspect is key in that God wants us to know that his love and care for us does not differ at all from the love and care we expect to receive, and must also give, from/to our mates; God does this for us in a superlative way, being more faithful in purity, principle and in practice than any spouse (1994-361 up to ";" - jla; cf. 2006)
 - It requires/d constant vigilance (jla)
 - It's importance equals/ed everything worthy living for and everything worthy dying for (jla)
 - It represents an all-consuming relationship (jla; cf. 1 Cor 6:19ff, re sin against the body)
- Israel's broken relationship with God (vis-a-vis the corresponding failed marriage) was due to Israel's
 - Repeated failure to obey God in worship
 - Continual desire to follow/serve idols as substitutes for service to the one true God
 - God threatened them with punishment because they failed to know his will
 - God threatened them with punishment because they failed to do his will
 - Israel was quick to search for "solutions" elsewhere (other "gods," other nations, etc.), but slow to search for God's truth
 - God promised to be faithful to them, protect them, guide them, etc., and had done so for hundreds of years; why would they turn aside again after so many repeated admonitions to be faithful
 - Israel's punishment would be parallel to a return to the wilderness (exile), where they floundered (due to their own unfaithfulness) and missed one great opportunity to obey God after another; nevertheless, even in the wilderness there was hope of better things to come
 - In spite of their continued waywardness, God continued to love Israel
- "Worship without Sacrifice is inconceivable" (Hamilton 233); sacrifice without worship is just as inconceivable (jla) [Evernote > Pages, 12/16/12]

Conclusion

1. God wants all of what we are and do to be exclusively his
2. That includes what we think, say and do
3. God wants us to be partakers of his divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4), therefore we must be like him
4. We must, to be the holy people of God, be virtuous by doing what is right as it flows from a heart that is right in God's sight.