

“... A LIVING SACRIFICE...”

Romans 12:1

As children of God through the blood of Jesus, we are all very much aware of the fact that we do not need to

offer onto God any more “blood sacrifices” or “animal sacrifices. We know that Jesus was the ultimate and supreme “Final Sacrifice” for all of man’s sin. There is no longer any more need for any type of blood or animal sacrifice.

However, the Word is very clear that as true believers in the Living God, even for those in the Old Testament, God had prepared the way and even allowed men to offer onto Him the sacrifices that are truly acceptable to Him. Sacrifices that God would truly enjoy and receive.

These “sacrifices” have nothing to do with the blood of any animal. Jesus’ blood paid the price for each believer and was the “final sacrifice.” Instead of each of us truly dying and being sacrificed unto God because of our sin, Jesus became sin and took the punishment for all of mankind. Yes, every sin has been paid for by the blood of Jesus.

The only thing that every person needs to do is accept that fact and allow Jesus to be their Savior and then choose to allow Him to be their absolute, supreme and final authority within their life – they need to allow Him to be the Lord of their life!!!

When Jesus is the Savior and Lord of our life, then we are to continually worship God with the “spiritual sacrifices” that are found throughout the Word of God. Not animal sacrifices but rather “sacrifices” that come from the “born again spirit,” the heart, of the true believer.

Many times these “spiritual sacrifices” are overlooked and even ignored these days by the Body of Christ. Sometimes, we simply forget that we are to offer these “sacrifices” unto our God even now, as true believers in Him. Unfortunately, there are many who feel that we are no longer to offer anything unto God but rather it He who is to give us everything because we chose to allow Him to be our God. That, my friend, is totally incorrect.

As a true believer, it is up to each one of us to continually offer unto our God the things that are pleasing unto Him. We must remember that when we “get saved,” it is not all about us. It is absolutely and most essentially all about God!!! It is we who are to continually serve our God and bless Him and not the other way around.

The “spiritual sacrifices” that are found in the Word of God are as follows: the sacrifice of righteousness, joy, thanksgiving and praise. Also, and most importantly, the ultimate sacrifice that we are to offer unto our God is ourselves as a “living sacrifice” unto our God.

The term “living sacrifice” is literally an oxymoron. An oxymoron are words, when used together, communicate contradictions to make an important point. Some examples are: “jumbo shrimp” or “freezer burn” or “terribly good” or “genuine fake.” They are two opposite meaning words placed side by side to form or create a greater “dramatic affect.” The second word of the phrase is the term that is being described by the first word used. That first word is used to dramatically “amplify” the second word.

We all know that a “sacrifice” is something that is offered unto a deity. It entails the total destruction of what ever is being offered unto the deity. The biblical idea of “sacrifice” concerns the way that a person can approach God and find acceptance before Him. This was accomplished by means of an acceptable substitute (and animal or something else) offered in place of the man/sinner. This “sacrifice” bore the curse of that person’s sin.

A “living sacrifice” thereby denotes the fact that the person is not dead but is very much alive – alive because of what Jesus has done in their lives. They are to now offer all that they are unto their God as they live out their lives every day.

In Romans 12:1, Paul says, *“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.”* Paul’s admonition to the believers was to “sacrifice” themselves to God, not as a sacrifice on the altar, as the Mosaic Law required the sacrifice of animals, but as a “living sacrifice.” We are alive, not dead, so we are to offer onto God our entire life as that “living sacrifice.”

So, as believers, how do we consecrate or dedicate and offer ourselves to God as a “living sacrifice?” Well, under the Old Covenant, God accepted the sacrifices of animals. But these were just a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Because of His ultimate, once-for-all-time sacrifice on the cross, the Old Testament sacrifices became obsolete and are no longer of any effect (Hebrews 9:11-12).

For all of us who are in Jesus by virtue of saving faith in all that He did, the only acceptable worship for us is to **offer all of ourselves completely to the Lord**. Our spirit and soul may be saved but our physical body is still “unredeemed” until that time of the final resurrection. In Revelation 20:6 it tells us, *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”* That is when our bodies will be “redeemed.”

Under the Holy Spirit’s leading, the believer’s “unredeemed” body is still to be yielded to God as an instrument to be used by and for Him to bring forth His glory. In view of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus who redeemed the spirit and soul for every true believer, this is, therefore, as Romans 12:1 tells us, our only “reasonable service” unto God as we live on this earth.

What does a “living sacrifice” look like in the “practical sense?” If we continue and read Romans 12:2 we will get a better understanding of this. It tells us, *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye **transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

It states that we are to be a “living sacrifice” unto God by not being “conformed” or being like this world. The world is defined for us in 1John 2:15-16 as *“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”* All that the world has to offer can be seen as these three things.

The *“lust of the flesh”* includes everything that appeals to our appetites and involves excessive desires for food, drink, sex, and anything else that satisfies physical needs. The *“lust of the eyes”* mostly involves materialism, coveting whatever we see that we don’t have and envying those who have what we want. The *“pride of life”* is defined by any ambition for that which puffs us up and puts us on the throne of our own lives.

How can believers **NOT** be conformed to the world? This scripture is very clear on this. We must not “conform” but rather we must be *“**transformed by the renewing of our minds.**”* We do this primarily through the power of God’s Word that will **transform** or totally change us. We need to hear (Romans 10:17), read (Revelation 1:3), study (Acts 17:11), memorize (Psalm 119:9-11), and meditate on (Psalm 1:2-3) the scriptures, God’s Word. That is how we are “transformed” into the people of God.

The Word of God, ministered in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, is the only power that can truly transform us from worldliness to a lifestyle of true "Godliness." In fact, it is all we need to be made "*complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16). The result is that we will have the ability to know and walk in the perfect will of our God throughout our lives.

As we now live our lives as that "*living sacrifice*," we are to continually worship the Lord with this new attitude of heart. We live out this lifestyle of being a "*living sacrifice*" by now offering up unto the Lord, with every moment of our lives, the "spiritual sacrifices" that are to be offered onto the Lord and that He delights in receiving from His people..

1Peter 2:5-9 tells us that we are a "*holy and royal priesthood*." As priests unto God, we no longer offer up animal sacrifices, but rather "spiritual sacrifices." We are to now worship God and live our lives through and with these "spiritual sacrifices."

The scriptures show us that there are basically four "spiritual sacrifices" that we are to offer up. They are (and they are not in any particular order): the Sacrifice of Righteousness; the Sacrifice of Joy; the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving; the Sacrifice of Praise. Notice, that these are referred to in the scriptures as "sacrifices" which means that we are to offer them onto our God with our entire heart and life. Remember, a sacrifice is offered to the Lord until there is nothing left of that sacrifice. Hmmm.....

The "Sacrifice of Righteousness" is found in Deuteronomy 33:19; Psalm 4:5; Psalm 51:19. The term "righteousness" does mean "to be in right standing with God." However, what that really means is that the believer now has the legal, spiritual privilege and right to have a relationship with the Living God. It means that we are able to communicate with the Living God. To be "righteous" in the eyes of God means to be totally accepted by God. He chooses to no longer look at you as a sinner but rather now as a His child.

The "Sacrifice of Righteousness" involves a holiness that begins from the "inside out." In Mark 7:14-23, Jesus was expressing that real holiness comes from within. It comes from a changed heart; a changed "nature" and then flows through that person and then outwardly to God. All that God has given us we give right back to Him as that "living sacrifice" that offers up to our God the "sacrifice of righteousness."

The next spiritual sacrifice is the "Sacrifice of Joy." We find this in Psalm 27:6. We must not look upon the term "joy" with "natural" tendencies. Joy is not happiness or being in the state of "happy." Happiness is a physical emotion that comes when something good takes place. Joy is different. Especially "spiritual joy."

In actuality, when we use the term "joy" in a Biblical perspective, it has nothing to do with "happiness." Happiness is determined by outward circumstances. Biblical "joy" is actually a "spiritual force." It is a **supernatural vibrancy** or excitement that is within the individual. Yet, there is a calmness deep within which is not caused by any outward source or stimulation. True joy comes simply by knowing and being in relationship with our God and He with you.

Spiritual joy is simply knowing, that you know, that you know, that you win – not necessarily in this natural realm but that you will ultimately win all your battles because you will ultimately be with God, no matter happens. It is knowing that being with God is our ultimate victory.

The "sacrifice" aspect of this comes into play when at times you may not feel like you win or it may not look like you are going to make it through the difficulty. It is at this time that you "die to the flesh" and do the works of the Kingdom. The spiritual atmosphere begins to tremble from the "joy" that is within the true believer. The enemy shudders.

Always remember, Nehemiah 8:10 tells us "*The joy of the Lord is my strength.*" True joy comes from, and is found, in God. We are to offer all that we are unto our God with a joyful and cheerful heart. It is rejoicing in triumph because the power of God that is within us has made us to be strong and mighty to defeat the enemy and bring glory unto our God - WE WIN!!!!!!

The "Sacrifice of Thanksgiving" is found in Psalms 107:22 and 116:17. The terms, "thanksgiving, thanks, and thankful" all come from the root Hebrew word, "yadah." It means to express and make a confession of gratitude. It also means to have deep appreciation of someone or something and the acknowledgment of being pleased by having your desires and needs satisfied and met. It is the acknowledgment of benefits and favor that have been received.

In this Hebrew word it expresses the idea of “shooting arrows into the air.” The actual physical expression of this for the worshiper is the extending of the hands. We shoot our “arrows” of not only praise but “thanks” to the Lord. The arrows of thanks and appreciation are to be aimed right to the heart of our God. It gives him a joy and a delight that floods His heart and “blesses” Him. That is why “thanksgiving” is such a powerful force. It is all about our God, not us. We are simply thanking Him for all that He has done and given to us.

Psalms 100:4 tells us that with thanksgiving, we are able to enter into the “gates” of His presence. Many times we seem to run out of ways of saying, “Thank you, God.” we must remember that it is really, again, an attitude of your heart. We are to live in this attitude all the days of our life. Remember, the sacrifice of thanksgiving is knowing who our God is and remembering **ALL** that He has done for us.

The last one we will review is the “Sacrifice of Praise” as found in Hebrews 13:15. We must always remember that “praise” is really the actions that stem from the attitude of my heart towards God. “Worship” begins from within my heart and “praise” becomes the physical manifestation of what is in my heart. The “sacrifice of praise” is the offering up to God our praise according to all the ways the Word shows us. It is the physical expression of the attitude of our heart towards God.

Praise is actually a part of “true worship.” Remember, true worship is defined to us by Jesus in John 4:23-24, *“But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* Worship is the “attitude of our heart;” praise are some of the actions that come forth from my heart unto our God.

Again the term “sacrifice” means to utterly destroy and annihilate any flesh. It suggests that, again, regardless of what may surround us or how we “feel,” we must utterly destroy and annihilate my fleshly desires. I must simply worship the Lord with the actions of praise.

There are many ways to “praise the Lord.” Some are very simple and we all know them such as: singing or playing instruments; dancing and clapping unto the Lord; lifting hands to the Lord; bowing and kneeling before the Lord. There are some ways that we should, or I should

say, we must “praise the Lord,” because they are or should be the lifestyle of the true believer in acknowledging God for who He is. These may include: to testify to everyone who our God is and what He has done; to celebrate, shout and make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

The highest form of “praising our God” is praising Him with our “spirit language.” The Holy Spirit will lead us in our praise as we sing “spiritual songs” of praise rising up from down deep within our spirit. It is the Hebrew word “tehillah.” As God comes and dwells and inhabits our praise the child of God is able to be brought into a higher level of praise that comes truly from out of their spirit allowing for even a greater outpouring of God's presence.

We see this in the following scriptures: Psalm 51:15; Psalm 104:33; Psalm 22:25. The word “praise” used in these scriptures is the Hebrew word, “tehillah.” In 1Corinthians 14:15 and Ephesians 15:19, Paul exhorts the believer to sing with or in the spirit and to make a sweet melody **that comes from out of their spirit.**

Yes, these are all aspects of what it truly means to be a child of God. As mentioned, we are to literally be a “**living sacrifice**” unto our God. My life is no longer my own. It is totally His. At least it should be. Is it??? I encourage all of us who are true believers in our God to check out if each one of us is truly living our lives as a “living sacrifice” onto our God.