

Be a Living Sacrifice

Therefore I [Paul] urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable [well-pleasing] to God, which is your spiritual service of worship [reasonable service]. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

In the first eleven chapters of Romans we learn, among other things, that all people are lost in sin and do not even seek after God; Christ died for our sins; we are saved by grace through faith apart from works; we were enemies of God but now have peace with Him; Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are our spiritual death, burial, and resurrection; we have received the gift of eternal life; we continue to sin because of our old nature but are not condemned by God because we are in Christ; God has adopted us as His own children; and nothing can separate us from His love. Because of all of this, we are now strongly urged to live our lives set apart to God because it is the reasonable, and right, thing to do.

We are in the world, but we are not of it (I Corinthians 2:12; Philippians 3:20). God has sanctified us—set us apart as sacred—to Himself (I Corinthians 6:11), and He wants us to live sanctified lives (II Timothy 2:21). Christ was crucified for our sins, and was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). His death was our death and His resurrection was our resurrection; therefore, we are to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (Romans 6:1-11). Our desire should be to say with Paul (as he admonished Peter for his hypocrisy—Galatians 2:11-21):

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in [the faith of] the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Is it easy to be a living sacrifice, sanctified unto God? Can we expect to fit in and be accepted by the world and still be pleasing to God? It is not natural to live for Christ in this evil world. Think about what the world finds acceptable. Are the things of the world pleasing to God? We must think about what we do and say and with whom we fellowship and ask ourselves if it is honoring to God. As Christ suffered because He lived according to truth and righteousness, we will suffer if we live for Him (Philippians 1:29-30; II Timothy 3:12). However, if we continue to live as we did before we were saved (or, as if we were not saved), we will be living contrary to what God desires for us, suffer the loss of fellowship with Him, and be miserable. That is, we will be less apt to recognize how God is working in us and, therefore, we will not experience His peace.

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted [is corrupt] in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:20-24)