**Living Sacrifice**

In about 57 AD, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in the city of Rome. In the first half of the letter he taught them about God’s scheme for redeeming both Jews and Gentiles in one body. Beginning in chapter 12, he emphasized that, in light of who God is and what He has done on our behalf, He has every expectation that we will devote our lives to Him.

Romans 12:1 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.” Most of the rest of the letter is devoted to describing sacrificial living in everyday circumstances.

As a priest of God (Revelation 1:5-6), every Christian naturally has sacrifices to offer. But unlike the Levitical priests, these sacrifices are not slaughtered animals; rather he offers his body to God while he is still living in it! Set apart for service to God, the body becomes a holy sacrifice, dedicated to glorifying Him in every way.

Paul describes this total surrender of the body as “reasonable service”. This is not to say that my obligation to serve God is limited to what I consider reasonable. What he is saying is that devoting my entire life to pleasing God is a perfectly rational expectation considering who He is. Romans 11:33 says, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!...(v.36) “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory forever, Amen.” To offer up my body as a living sacrifice to God is a perfectly reasonable thing to do.

Finally, if I am to use this body in such a way that God is glorified, I have to know what is acceptable to Him. Paul talks about being approved by God in 2 Timothy 2:15: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” There are two dimensions to obtaining God’s approval in this verse. The first is devoting the diligence in service for which I will not be ashamed when I face Him. The second is to ensure that the nature of the service I offer is in keeping with the teachings of the word of truth. If I am sincerely committed to doing what He has authorized in Scripture, He will be pleased.

Every Christian should view every thought, every decision, every action as a priest’s offering. Each of us should thoroughly furnish ourselves unto every good work by studying the inspired Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17), then devote ourselves to diligently serving Him. In so doing, we present the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:13).

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