

A LIVING SACRIFICE

The apostle Paul wrote this extraordinary letter to the church in Rome, clearly laying out solid gold principles of sound Christian living.

He taught us how God's perfect law applied in the most practical ways to develop and build the righteous character of God in us.

After Paul was struck down on his way to Damascus, he fully devoted his life to God, telling Him "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

In other words, Paul acknowledged that he was now God's servant. Dedicated to upholding God's standards. Pledging to do what he ought to do. What God wanted him to do, and not what he wanted to do.

Romans 12:1

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

What does Paul mean by "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God?"

The Christian converts in Rome were very familiar with sacrificial offerings, and Paul uses that to drive home a most important point.

They were to present themselves as a living sacrifice to God. And God expects all true Christians to do the same thing today.

To present yourself means to dedicate; to yield; and, to commit to the service of God. And so, as a living sacrifice, we are to put EVERYTHING on the line for God: our thoughts, our plans, our emotions, our material possessions, our lives, our entire being.

That's the first thing a living sacrifice is.

So, we all say the exact same thing Paul said: “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

We’ve all come to the realization that He’s our Master and Lord. As a living sacrifice to Him, God requires our total, unconditional surrender.

To become His disciple, His follower, He requires us to love Him more than father, mother, spouse, children, brothers and sisters; and, if need be, put our own lives on the line for His sake (Luke 14:26).

He comes FIRST and FOREMOST! He will accept nothing less!

We chose, we freely decided to give up everything and everyone to obey God, follow Him and live according to HIS way of life.

Jesus Christ said, “Not MY will but YOUR will be done, Father.”

Peter said, “We must obey God rather than men.”

As a “living sacrifice,” we admit that we’re no longer our own. We’ve been bought and paid for. Redeemed from an aimless, unprofitable, useless and ultimately deadly way of life by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We have become literally CONQUERED by God!

Second, a living sacrifice has to be “holy and acceptable to God.”

For their sacrifices to be holy and acceptable to Him, God required the Israelites to offer an animal that was free of any defects (Leviticus 22:21).

Being a “living sacrifice” means giving of our UTMOST BEST to God! We go above and beyond in our duties and responsibilities to Him. We keep the letter AND the spirit of His laws. Prayer and Bible study must not be hit or miss, now and then or whenever we get around to it.

We carry out even seemingly insignificant tasks in a quality and praiseworthy manner (Colossians 3:22-23).

We don't do shoddy, shabby and sloppy work.

In our communities and neighborhoods, in our families, we strive to be individuals of excellence.

Pleasant. Helpful. A joy to be around.

Our conduct, our words, our thoughts, our way of life is pure, clean, wholesome and uplifting.

We stand out, not to draw attention to ourselves; but because all we do, say and think is for the greater honor and glory of the God we serve.

Finally, being a living sacrifice is our "reasonable service."

The word "service" is referring to a proper worship of and deep respect for God.

The Greek word — translated in the English as "reasonable" — is best expressed as sincere service from the heart. Not phony, only honoring God with our lips; while, deep down, our hearts are actually far from Him.

Jesus called out the Pharisees as hypocrites or actors. Everything they did was a production, designed to show off how good and righteous they were (Luke 11:42-44).

Being a living sacrifice then involves serving God, unblemished by pride, self-centeredness and hypocrisy.

Rather than putting on airs and pretenses, a living sacrifice worships God in sincerity and truth.

That is the transformation, the renewal of our minds that Paul refers to in Romans 12:2.

2 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.

We are no longer conformed to the wretched ways and false values of the world. A major change has taken place in our minds and in our hearts.

Outwardly, we may look the same, but our goals, our aspirations, our priorities have changed. Because inside, we are a new person.

Let's make this our objective so we can realize our greatest aspiration to become that living sacrifice to God.