

PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE

Intro: *I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Romans 12:1)*

Stop and think for a moment about this verse. Doesn't it seem unusual that God would ask us to offer our bodies as a sacrifice? Are not sacrifices offered for forgiveness? And did Jesus not give His body on the cross for us? So how can we present our bodies as a sacrifice? Do we atone for our own sins?

To understand Paul's words it might be helpful to quickly review:

SACRIFICES IN THE OT

In the OT, two kinds of sacrifices were offered to God. The book of Leviticus talks about these sacrifices and serves as a basis for this command of God (Lev. 1-6)

Sacrifices for atonement (to obtain forgiveness.)

The sin offering (Cf. Lev. 4:27-31)

The trespass offering

The yearly sacrifice of atonement

Sacrifices after atonement (after forgiveness). They were not designed to seek God's pardon but to show gratitude for what God had done and to thank Him..

The peace offering

The free-will offerings

The thank offering

The Hebrew writer explains that these sacrifices were inadequate to perfect those who drew near to God by them.

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Hebrews 10:1-4)

If these sacrifices cannot make us perfect, then what hope is there for us?

JESUS GAVE HIS BODY AS A SIN OFFERING FOR US!

Let read Heb. 10:5-18.

Observe these points:

Though God had commanded animal sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, what He really wanted was for man to live a life of obedience to Him. His preference was not sacrifice but obedience!

What man failed to do, Jesus did. He never offered a single sacrifice for sin because He obeyed God's law without sin. But, having lived

without sin, He could offer His sinless life in death as a sacrifice in our behalf.

Jesus' one sacrifice is sufficient for all time to satisfy the demands of justice and make forgiveness possible for all mankind!

When a person becomes a Christian he enters a new covenant with God in which sins are remembered never again!

Have you thought about what Jesus did for you on the cross?

Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

We could not present our own bodies as a sin offering. No matter how good we are, we sin against God and that sin keeps our bodies from being a perfect sacrifice for sin.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

But Christ, the sinless son of God, offered Himself as a lamb for us!

The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

If then, our bodies can never serve as sin offerings why does Paul say "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice". Though we cannot present our bodies as a sacrifice of atonement, we can present them as a sacrifice of appreciation!

WE MUST GIVE OUR BODIES AS A THANK OFFERING TO GOD.

Just as only Jesus could offer his body for our sin, so only we can offer our body in gratitude for what he has done! We can freely give ourselves to him and acknowledge the peace that we have with Him through Christ! Our life becomes our peace offering, our free-will offering, our thank-offering!

The offering we make to God is our "spiritual service of worship".

What Paul is describing is our service as God's priests in offering up spiritual sacrifices to God.

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13:15-16)

When we give ourselves to God in service, we are making an offering of ourselves to him.

Every day when we live for the Lord we are saying...

I am serving you because I am at peace with you!

I am serving you of my own free will.

I am serving you because I appreciate what you did for me!

Paul says that such...

It is a living sacrifice!

It is a holy sacrifice!

It is an acceptable sacrifice!

It seems the least that we could do for one who has so loved us is to serve him in His prescribed way! To do less is to really not appreciate what Christ has done for us! We could go further and say in view of what we know about sacrifice, we ought to give God our best. Our attitude should not be

what is the least I can do but what is the most I can do! What is the best I can give?

Conclusion: What about you? Have you accepted Jesus' sacrifice for you? We accept Jesus' offering by faith (Jn. 3:16); by repentance (by dying to the old man of sin) and by being baptized (Rom. 6:3-5). No other sacrifice can get us to heaven; there is no other way to get God's forgiveness for the alien sinner.

But if you are a Christian, are you giving God the service He deserves?! The hosts of heaven praise Jesus for his sacrifice--Worthy is the Lamb (Rev. 5:12). How about you? Are you giving Him the praise and service he is due?