

June 14, 2020

Worship?

"Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is our reasonable act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

Romans 12:1-2

Ultimately it is not what we do when we are gathered on a Sunday morning that is worship. Worship, demonstrating our love and reverence for our heavenly Father, is far more about how we live in the world every day. In his letter to the believers in Rome the Apostle Paul summarizes his discussion of salvation and grace by commanding them to *"...offer your bodies as living sacrifices..."* and he calls this our *"...reasonable act of worship..."*

Our only true act of worship then, is found in our living sacrifice. But what is our living sacrifice? Many or even most of the sacrifices that God commanded the Jews to observe in the Old Testament involved the death and destruction of the thing being sacrificed or offered. In some ways our living sacrifice also involves the death and destruction of the thing being sacrificed. In this same letter to the believers in Rome the Apostle writes, *"...count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 6:11)

In becoming a living sacrifice a part of us, our old sin-filled nature, must be put to death. But another part of us, the renewed part of us, lives on. And, it is that renewed part of us that becomes our living sacrifice, our reasonable act of worship to God.

That being said, it is absolutely essential that our living sacrifice, washed in the blood of Jesus and redeemed by the grace of God, is really what the world sees in us. Paul adds to this definition of living sacrifice, *"...Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."* As living sacrifices, *"...holy and pleasing to God..."*, you and I must stand out from the world around us. We are the transformed and we must live transformed lives before our world if we are to truly be living sacrifices.

A sacrifice ultimately belongs to the one who receives it. If you and I are living sacrificed we no longer belong to ourselves. We absolutely and completely belong to God; not just for an hour or two on a Sunday morning, but all the time.

In this same vein, Paul would write to the Corinthian believers, *"You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God in your body."* (I Corinthians 6:20) When we honor God by living as sacrifices before the world our lives are not, and indeed, cannot be conformed to the *"...pattern of this world..."* As living sacrifices our lives belong to God and because of this we cannot live like those around us.

So, how do we live sacrificed lives before this chaotic world? Paul describes a sacrificed life in his letter to the churches of Galatia. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."* (Galatians 2:20) As a living sacrifice Christ lives in me. He lives in me when I am with the believers in the church building. And, he also lives in me when I am at the grocery store. He lives in me at the office. He lives in me in school. He lives in me at home with my family. He lives in me when I am watching the news and participating in my world.

As a living sacrifice Jesus lives in me all the time and in every situation. As a living sacrifice I no longer exist, but Jesus always exists in me. So, when I am living through a pandemic it is not me, it is Jesus. When I am living through a chaotic and broken world filled with turmoil it is not me, it is Jesus who lives in me. I cannot be conformed to the world. As a living sacrifice, as one in

whom Jesus now lives, I must be transformed. Every thought, every opinion, every feeling, every word, every action must reflect Jesus living in me. For the living sacrifice every action, every word, every thought and every feeling is filtered through the reality of Jesus living in us. May we become those living sacrifices through whom the world can see and know our Savior and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

