

July 1, 2018

Be Transformed

"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 your reasonable act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Romans 12:1-2

"If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit, you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

Romans 8:13-14

We are saved by grace! The law of sin and death which demands our destruction has been satisfied by the blood of Jesus, our God-provided, innocent sacrifice. We did not earn this grace. We do not deserve this grace. But, we are ***"...more than conquerors..."*** because of this grace.

Since God has done all of this for us, how should we respond? Paul will tell us that our only reasonable act of worship in response to God's grace is to live our lives as sacrifices. What does this mean? It begins, the Apostle will tell us, by being ***"...transformed by the renewing of our mind."*** This means, I am convinced, that we have to begin with a complete change in the way we think. How? I believe we...

1. accept that we we must be saved by grace because nothing we can do will remove a single sin and its consequences from our lives.
2. accept that the sources of sin in our lives are the natural drives God created in us to ensure our survival, but that those drives are easily perverted by our own selfishness.
3. accept that our drive to survive often tempts us to ignore or set aside God's direct and specific commands because we believe that to obey would endanger that survival.
4. accept that the only way to ***"put to death"*** those natural drives to survive is to absolutely and completely surrender the question of our survival to God.
5. accept that our only reasonable response to the grace of God is the complete surrender of our will to his and our absolute obedience to his direction even when to do so seems to threaten our survival.

Now, here's what that looks like in our day-to-day lives. When someone treats us badly or threatens us, God commands ***"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."*** Our sin-filled natures demand that we protect ourselves, that we get even, and/or that we hold a grudge never forgiving those people. So, which one does a ***"living sacrifice"*** do?

We know that literally millions of people in our world, and in our own neighborhoods live in poverty. God commands, ***"Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."*** Our sin-filled natures tells us that these people don't deserve our help because... Our sin-filled natures tell us that there won't be enough to go around; that our own well-being will be threatened if we share, and/or that we deserve what we have because we have worked hard for it. So, how does a living sacrifice respond to those in need?

In our day-to-day lives the choice to actually be ***"living sacrifices"*** is one we face over and over again. The world, speaking to our own sinful natures, tells us to be self-serving while God

constantly calls us to be selfless servants. Our choices demonstrate who we really are before the world.

Are we those who have accepted the grace of God poured out for us on the cross and responded in the only reasonable way to such an overwhelming love? Are we those who have gladly surrendered our very lives to God's direction and are we living that surrender in our obedience even when our sinful natures demand that we do not obey? Being a "*living sacrifice*" demands a constant decision to obey God no matter what he asks. How well are we doing with that?

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