

A LIVING SACRIFICE

Paul writes to the Romans "present your BODIES as a living SACRIFICE, holy and acceptable to God. (Romans 12:1) The Romans thought that all that was good was the spirit. They viewed their bodies as a sort of prison or ball and chain. They thought of their body as something to be despised and ashamed of. As Christians, we know that the body is from God just as much as the soul is. He created both. We can serve God just as well with our body as with our mind or spirit. Indeed, the body is the place where the Holy Spirit dwells. It is the instrument that the Holy Spirit often uses to do God's will. So Paul's startling words to the Romans, and us, are that we are to take our bodies, take all the ordinary tasks that we do every day, and offer all them as an act of worship to God. Regardless of whether we work in a factory or office or store or home, all that we do should be worship.

But Paul does not just say that we are to take our bodies and worship. He says that our lives are to be a living sacrifice. The Jews in Christ's time had two different types of sacrifice. They offered lambs, goats and pigeons either to reconcile themselves with God or to celebrate that they had been reconciled with God. As Christians we know that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice of reconciliation. We are, as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus, in a right relationship with God. So when Paul tells us that our lives are to be a living sacrifice, he is saying that our lives are to be a sacrifice of CELEBRATION. That does not mean that we are to spend our lives killing lambs or goats or pigeons. In fact, the psalms say that God takes no delight in burnt offerings. Rather, Paul is saying that our lives are to be a constant sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. As we go through the day we are to give thanks and praise to God for all that happens. This is, of course, much easier sometimes than others. When it is a beautiful day or all is right with the family or at work, we can easily praise God and thank Him for all His blessings. But what about when a family member is sick or has died? What about when we lose our job and are thrown into severe

poverty? Are we to give thanks to God and praise Him then? YES! Our response is ALWAYS to give thanks and praise to God. We may not know why at the time. We may never understand. But thanks and praise are still the appropriate response. In the words of the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer "It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth." This is the sacrifice that God wants.

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