

LIVING SACRIFICE

„I Beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Rom. 12:1.

This is Paul’s exhortation to the church—a comprehensive sermon in one verse. They were „brethren” in Christ, having been „planted together in the likeness of his death” (6:5), and yet had not made a complete sacrifice. They had not yet apprehended that for which Christ had apprehended them. Phil. 3:12.

That condition is the „mark”—the winning post—“for the prize of the high calling,” toward which all in Christ are urged to „press.”

This is attainable, but a sacrifice is demanded—the crucifixion and death of the „sinful affections and lusts.” Death by *crucifixion* is a painful process. „They that are Christ’s have *crucified* the flesh,”—“the old man,” „that the body of sin *might be* destroyed.” Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24. This is Christ’s object in reference to us, and we are urged to keep this object ever in view. „He that is dead is freed from sin.” Now if we be dead with Christ we believe that we shall also live with Him:

„Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye yourselves also to be *dead* indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.”

„Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” Rom. 6:7-12. The practical import of all this is, that we sin not, keeping the body under subjection to the law of the spirit, the new nature in Christ Jesus, and so bring forth fruit unto holiness. This kind of dying is indeed a painful process, but it is a *voluntary* sacrifice which is required. This is not the curse which was pronounced on Adam: „Dying thou shalt die.” *That* death „passed upon all men,” „even upon those who had not sinned, after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” Rom. 5:12-14. From *that* curse reconciliation is effected by the death of Christ, who gave Himself a ransom for all. Rom. 5:10. It is the *voluntary offering of redeemed* life which God seeks and which is pleasing to Him. He, by the price paid, had become rightfully possessor. „Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are His.” He is Lord and Master we are called upon to admit his claims, and thus be at agreement with God. „Be

ye reconciled to God," may be applicable to the unconverted, but it was addressed to Christians. See 2 Cor. 5:20.

It is not to be inferred that because Christ's death is presented as an example of *voluntary obedience* to the will of God, which we are to *follow*, that therefore this was the only feature or object of his death. His death is as a ransom, *meritorious*, but it is none the less exemplary on this account. He *gave* His life, on which the law had no claim, to redeem man's life, on which the law had a claim, and thus made it *possible* for man to make a willing sacrifice to God, as He Himself had made,

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and hence it is that „if we suffer we shall also reign with Him.”

The service which the Lord requires is „reasonable,” because He *is* Lord. He claims but His own when He asks *all*. The process of mortifying the deeds of the body involves a separation from the world. „Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind.” (Ver. 2). „Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day.” „Daily bread” is provided by the word of God to *enable* us to grow, and to overcome self and the world. The maxims and pleasures of the world are not friendly to grace to help us on to God, and the command to be *separate* is not so unimportant as it seems to be estimated by many professed followers of Christ. Non-conformity is the safeguard against shipwreck of faith.

The motive to make the sacrifice is „The mercies of God.” There is reference by the word „therefore” to the merciful dealing of God with Israel, recorded in the eleventh chapter. Oh, that all knew something of the plan of the ages, by which God's love and mercy is manifested, but now we deal with the *principle* that the *goodness of God* leadeth to repentance. Rom. 2:4.

That goodness is revealed in Christ. The plan of ages is the work of Christ. He is indeed the Rock of Ages. The Cross of Christ—His sacrifice—is central and from it emanates the world's life and hope. Hence Paul could say: „God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In referring to the mercies, Paul appeals to gratitude and love, and these are the springs of true human life. His love shed abroad in our hearts—known and appreciated—is the cause of the greatest victories.

We know only in part, but the little we know is great. What He has done *for* us, is the reason of the call for return. His sacrifice is both the reason and the pattern for ours. Both His and ours look to God and then to man. His satisfies justice; ours is a *grateful* offering, giving evidence of His success and the power of the gospel over us. The object of his, humanward was to save mankind.

Ours should be the same—He is the Way; while we point the way to others. His was complete, no reserve; we must withhold nothing. Have we not lived for self long enough. Let the time past suffice in that direction.

„Love so amazing so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my **all.**”

The condition of the surrendered heart is: „Lord what wilt *Thou* have me to do?” „Present your bodies”—*All powers; talents, time and property*. We are stewards for the Lord. Where? On the altar of God’s appointing, and as he may direct. The good Samaritan feature of Christ’s life may indicate the altar of *human hearts*. God will give the willing worker something to do. The spirit of the Gospel both in this age and that to come, is to give light and to bless mankind. The *spirit* of the *present* should be as the spirit of our *hope*: to save mankind. Here we have but the *earnest* of grace and power. „*Then shall the righteous shine.*” With *all* consecrated to Christ and exercised in his service we may reasonably expect his smile and fellowship. The fellowship of Christ is the fellowship of the sons of God.

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