



Thinking About Worship

By

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“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 spiritual act of worship.” Romans 12:1 (NIV)

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” Romans 12:1 (NKJV)

The Apostle Paul had little to say in his writings about the formal worship of God, but what he said went a long way. Paul believed a Christian’s spiritual act of worship was to offer their bodies as living sacrifices. Christians of that day understood what a sacrifice was because many of the religions, including Judaism, practiced it.

Worshippers would bring something of value – animals, vegetables, fruit and precious metals – and give it to a priest or priestess as a gesture of “worship” to their gods. They often did it out of fear or desire for a special blessing. Paul said a Christian’s “act of worship” was to offer their bodies as **living** sacrifices. It was a willing act of love, not fear.

“Worship” is *latreian*. It means “to render religious service or homage.” The word is translated as “act of worship, ministry, service, minister.” Paul is saying the way we worship, serve and minister to God, is by offering our bodies as living sacrifices. The way we live is worship. We give ourselves to Him completely. That is what God wants from us!

Christians often ask the question: “What does God want me to do with my life? What is His will for me?” Here’s one of God’s answers: ‘offer your body to Him as an act of spiritual worship and service.’ Easier said than done. How does a Christian “offer” their body as a “living sacrifice”?

“Offer” is *parastesai*. It means “to place beside or near, to present, to offer, to put at one’s disposal.” Pagan priests would “offer” their sacrifices to the gods. The Levitical priests of Judaism would “offer” their sacrifices to God for Him to do with as He pleased. Offering our bodies to God as a living sacrifice is to place our bodies (*somata*) at God’s disposal. We give ourselves to Him! We say: “God, here I am. Take me, use me. My life, my heart, my mind, my body, my time, my talents, my gifts, my money, my possessions are at your disposal. Do with me and what is mine as you will.” That’s the attitude of a “spiritual act of worship.”

“Living sacrifice” is *zosan thusian*. Jewish and pagan priests killed their sacrifice, burned it and offered the sacrifice to God or their gods. They would eat a portion of it as payment for their service. The sacrifice was demanded by the deity to pay homage, often for forgiveness of sins. Christians do **NOT** offer God their bodies as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus Christ did that already; once for sin. We offer our bodies to God as living sacrifices because we love Him and owe Him everything. It is how we “praise” God and worship Him in the deepest way possible. It is how we enjoy God. Jews gave God at least a tenth of their earnings. Pagans gave a portion of what they

had. God does not want a tenth. He does not want a portion. He wants Christians, His children, to give Him **everything!** God wants **all** of us; not because we have to do it to receive forgiveness, but because we **can** as a way of showing our love and gratitude. It is the power of Christ “in” us.

God is pleased with this act of worship. Why? Because He knows that is how Christians will experience real peace. God knows we can never be fully at peace until we do. Paul said that offering our bodies as living sacrifices is “holy and pleasing to God.” Do you want to live a holy life? Do you want to please God? Do you want God’s joy and peace running through your life? Give Him your body. That is your “spiritual act of worship!”

One last thought: this act of worship is logical. It makes sense. The word “spiritual” is *logiken*. The word pertains to our faculty of reasoning. It means “reasonable, rational, logical, following reason.” Jewish and pagan priests worshipped in an “outward” fashion. They did their worship for “physical show.” A Christian’s worship is private and “inward.” It is not for show. That’s why it’s called “spiritual” worship. Our worship is between us and God. We offer our bodies to Him so He will be pleased. We are not trying to please people around us. That’s where so many Christians fail in their service to God. They get the physical and spiritual sides of worship confused. Jesus said some very harsh words to and about people who worshipped outwardly and physically but not inwardly and spiritually. God wants worshippers to give their bodies to Him as living sacrifices.

Think about this as you serve God and others at home, in the neighborhood, at work and school, and in church this week.

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