

A Living Sacrifice

In ancient times, the Israelites were given numerous types of animal sacrifices to perform, including the burnt, sin, trespass, peace, and grain offerings. These days, all animal sacrifices have been replaced in the New Covenant with a different type of sacrifice: “I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy *and* well pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service” (Rom. 12:1).

What kind of sacrifice is a *living* sacrifice? Jesus Christ presented His whole body as a sacrifice unto God and it was *completely accepted* (the meaning of “sweet-smelling savor”): “And walk in love, even **as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor**” (Eph. 5:2).

The final, perfect offering of Christ was a total sacrifice in death: “For this reason, when He comes into the world, He says, ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but You have prepared a body for Me. You did not delight in burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin. Then said I, ‘Lo, I come *as* it is written of Me in *the* scroll of *the* book to do Your will, O God.’ ’ In the saying above, *He said*, ‘Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin [which are offered according to the law] You did not desire nor delight in’; Then He said, ‘Lo, I come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first *covenant* in order that He may establish the second *covenant*; by Whose will **we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ** once for all” (Heb. 10:5-10).

Because of this, there is no greater or more acceptable sacrifice to God than the death of His Son. So how can we be a living sacrifice unto God? What can even be remotely acceptable or pleasing unto our Father?

One that most have heard about is the *sacrifice of praise*—that is, the words of praise we offer of our lips in prayer and hymns to God: “And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and grain offerings, and incense, and bringing **sacrifices of praise** to the house of the LORD” (Jer. 17:26). Note that the “sacrifices of praise” are in *addition* to the animal sacrifices.

“The voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who shall say, ‘Praise the LORD of hosts, for the LORD *is* good, for His steadfast love *endures* forever’; and the voice of those who shall bring the **sacrifice of praise** into the house of the LORD...” (Jer. 33:11). “Accordingly, let us offer *the sacrifice of praise* continually to God through Him; that is, *with the fruit of our lips* openly professing *our faith* in His name” (Heb. 13:15).

However, just as there was more than one type of animal sacrifice, there are other sacrifices we can offer up. Closely resembling the sacrifice of praise is the sacrifice of thanksgiving: “And let them sacrifice the **sacrifices of thanksgiving**, and declare His works with rejoicing!” (Psa. 107:22).

How thankful are we for the total sacrifice of Christ, which makes possible our eternal salvation? How thankful are we for God, who has called us to be His children now and forever? Is this a daily sacrifice we ignore? We must perform this sacrifice every day! Remember, these are our *reasonable* services—a minimal expectation of God.

Did you know that there is a sacrifice of righteousness? “They shall call the people to the mountain. There they shall offer **sacrifices of righteousness**, for they shall suck the bounty of the seas and treasures hidden in the sand” (Deut. 33:19). “Offer the **sacrifices of righteousness**,

and put your trust in the LORD” (Psa. 4:5). “Then shall You be pleased with the **sacrifices of righteousness**, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then they shall offer bulls upon Your altar” (Psa. 51:19).

Righteousness is the keeping of God’s commandments (Psa. 119:172). This is a daily offering because we cannot escape this incredibly sinful world, nor are we ever clean before God for long. Every time we *choose* to obey God in the face of evil or our own lusts, it is a sacrifice to Him.

Another sacrifice that God desires is joy: “And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me; therefore **I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy** in His tabernacle. I will sing; yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD” (Psa. 27:6).

Interestingly, the word for *joy* is translated *jubilee* in Leviticus 25:9: “Then you shall cause the trumpet of the **jubilee** to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month; in the Day of Atonement, the trumpet shall sound throughout all your land.”

How do we understand this? Just as the Day of Atonement is a day of fasting from all food and drink, whereby we suffer physically and are in a spirit of dying, it is also a day to rejoice before God—for we have eternal promises through the sacrifice of Christ! Therefore, on that day the Israelites were commanded to blow the Jubilee trumpet for joy!

Finally, just as the Israelites had five animal sacrifices, there are five spiritual sacrifices mentioned in the Bible. The last one is humility: “The **sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart**, O God, You will not despise” (Psa. 51:17).

Knowing the sacrifice of Christ and coming face-to-face with our own sins, whereby we killed the Son of God, can we be anything other than humble? What did the people say at the preaching of Peter? “[T]hey were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, ‘Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?’ ”(Acts 2:37). Their cry was one of desperation; they were truly repentant and saw how hopeless their situation had become.

Over time, Israel lost the meaning of the animal sacrifices they were commanded to offer. “**They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of My offerings, and eat it; but the LORD does not receive them.** Now He will remember their iniquity and punish their sins. They shall return *to* Egypt” (Hosea 8:13). The Israelites were sacrificing flesh as offerings unto God, forgetting the *purpose* behind them and the *attitude* they needed behind them. This is why God said: “**Sacrifice and offering You [God] did not desire; My ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required**” (Psa. 40:6).

It is not about the killing of an animal, it is what is in the *heart* of a person that makes a sacrifice a “sweet-smelling savor.” Knowing what Jesus gave for us, can our sacrifices be anything less than offerings of praise, thanksgiving, righteousness, and joy—all done with a humble and contrite heart?