

Are We A “Living Sacrifice” Acceptable to our Creator God?

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“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.”*

Matthew 7:21-23 [NIV] *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

This powerful scripture paints a vivid picture of the horror of people who had lived a life totally dedicated to serving God finding out on their judgement day that they are unacceptable to the Holy Sovereign Creator God.

The words “*I never knew you*” will strike unbelievable terror in their hearts.

Where did they go wrong?

Why was their life of sacrificial service, unknown and unacceptable to Jesus Christ, their only hope of salvation?

The short answer is that such people do not understand and accept the Sovereignty of God!

They sacrificed their lives but overlooked three words in the guideline scripture found in **Romans 12:1** “*Holy and pleasing*” [acceptable].

Every sacrifice offered to God must comply to His rules and terms.

Genesis 4:1-7 [NIV] *“Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, ‘With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.’ Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? **If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.**”*

From the first recorded sacrifice it was God who lay down the rules for a sacrifice to be acceptable.

Leviticus 22:1-3 [NIV] *“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron and his sons to treat with respect the sacred offerings the Israelites consecrate to me, **so that they will not profane my holy name.** I am the LORD. ‘Say to them: ‘For the generations to come, if any of your descendants is ceremonially unclean and yet comes near the sacred offerings that the Israelites consecrate to the LORD, that person must be cut off from my presence. I am the LORD.’”*

The ceremonially unclean were not accepted by God to even be near the sacrifices that were made to Him.

Leviticus 22:20 [NIV] *“Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf.”*

No defective sacrifice will be accepted by God.

Deuteronomy 15:19-21 [NIV] *“Set apart for the LORD your God every firstborn male of your herds and flocks. Do not put the firstborn of your oxen to work, and do not shear the firstborn of your sheep. Each year you and your family are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose. If an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.”*

Deuteronomy 16:1-2 [NIV] *“Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night. Sacrifice as the Passover to the LORD your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his Name.”*

The sacrifice that was foreshadowing the saving sacrifice of Jesus the Lamb of God had to be perfect *“without blemish”* [Living Bible].

God in His Holy Sovereignty has from the very beginning told us that anything that is not perfect will not be acceptable to Him.

God has not changed His mind on this matter in the New Covenant He has made with His people.

Matthew 5:48 [NIV] *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

We are to become perfect. Greek *“tēlēiōs”* – [tel-i-os] complete – perfect in physical development [not defective].

Hebrews 6:1-6 [NIV] *“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so. It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”*

The Greek word translated here as maturity is *“tēlēiōs”*, and this becoming perfect was a process in our lives, just as offering a defective animal as a sacrifice in the Old Covenant was profaning God’s Holy name, so under the New Covenant to sacrifice ourselves as a living sacrifice while we are still imperfect [not Holy] is profaning God’s Holy name and will not be acceptable to God.

How than can our “living sacrifice” be made Holy and acceptable to our Holy Sovereign God?

By accepting God’s Sovereignty and doing it His way not our way.

Matthew 25:1-13 [NIV] *“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. “Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ “But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”*

“I don’t know you” – the same rejection by God as in **Matthew 7:21-23**.

Let us examine how those rejected differed from those who were accepted.

This well-known parable of the wise and foolish virgins gives us at least two universal warnings:

- a) **There are certain things we cannot leave until the last moment in our lives.** We cannot leave preparing to meet with our God until the day of our death and judgement.
- b) **There are certain things that cannot be borrowed from other Christians.**

We cannot borrow a relationship with God from another Christian.

We cannot live on spiritual capital that others have amassed.

Just as these virgins became spiritual virgins by a gift from God. So the continual acceptance as fit future brides for their Lord was a gift from God, but a gift that had to be constantly replenished and used.

Matthew 25:14-30 [NIV] *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ “Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. “‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*

The parable of “*the talents*” has to be considered with the parable of “*the foolish virgins*”.

The talents were the property of the master and the oil was something that had to be received from someone other than themselves, the virgins could not generate this oil themselves.

Also sacrifice was involved as it had to be purchased, bought at a price.

The oil and the talents are both symbols of the Holy Spirit.

It is the lack of the Holy Spirit and the unwillingness to use the power of the Holy Spirit that resulted in rejection.

Both parables are linked to holiness, sacrifice and being accepted.

What is the wise course for us to take to avoid rejection?

Proverbs 1:7 [NIV] *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”*

Proverbs 9:10 [NIV] *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*

Fear God by acting in our life as if God is God, Sovereign and Holy, and seeking to know the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 [NIV] *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.”*

It is the special presence of the Holy Spirit in us that makes us Holy, but for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us the “temple” has to be cleansed and made a place fit for Him to dwell in, and desire to remain in.

Ephesians 5:25-27 [NIV] *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”*

Only our accepting the love sacrifice of Jesus can we be “without blemish” and a fit place for the Holy Spirit to dwell in.

Romans 4:20-24 [NIV] *“Yet he [Abraham] did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who **believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.**”*

1 Corinthians 6:14 [NIV] *“By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.”*

God’s Power, the Holy Spirit raised Jesus. We have to be led by and believe the prompting of Holy Spirit.

Our faith, total trust in the love sacrifice of Jesus allows God to credit us with some of Christ’s righteousness that makes us Holy [right with God], by the Holy Spirit being with us.

Now purified and made Holy we can ask God to give us the special presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

Luke 11:13 [NIV] *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

Remember that our request to God goes through our High Priest Jesus Christ.

John 14:15-20 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. **But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.** I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

Job 32:8 [NIV] *“But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.”*

1 Corinthians 2:11 [NIV] *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”*

When the Holy Spirit **in us** joins with the human spirit in us we become one with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 7:25 [NIV] *“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”*

Again our total dependence on Jesus Christ is demanded of God.

Acts 5:32 [NIV] *“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”*

Our obedience is also demanded of God.

One final thing is needed for our *“living sacrifice”* to be accepted.

It has to be a sacrifice.

Matthew 16:24-25 [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. **For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.**”*

We have to deny ourselves of our selfish desires and seek to fulfil the desires of our Saviour and God.

Matthew 26:36-39 [NIV] *“Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”*

We follow the example of our Saviour when we sacrifice our wills to that of God.

Luke 14:26-27 [Living Bible] *“Anyone who wants to be my follower must love me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers or sisters, yes more than his own life, otherwise he cannot be my disciple. And no-one can be my disciple who does not carry his own cross and follow me.”*

The following of our Saviour as His disciple will be a life of sacrifice, and a very restricted lifestyle denying many personal pleasures that are not accepted to our Creator.

Matthew 7:13-14 [Message Bible] *“Don’t look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with sure-fire, easy-going formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don’t fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life, to God, is vigorous and requires total attention.”*

Our path to eternal life requires a total sacrifice of our lives. Being a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ can never be a hobby we do in our spare time, it is a total commitment of every moment of our lives.

The Christian life will be hard, painful at times, but the reward is beyond price, well worth dying for.