

Dear FRIEND,

I recently completed a teaching series on the book of Malachi. I hope you have a chance to hear it and I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed teaching it. In the first part of the book the Lord is scolding the people through the prophet Malachi because they were bringing worthless lambs as offerings to God.

They were supposed to bring the very best lamb they had. Their favorite. Their pet. The one they hand fed. But that would have cost them something, so instead, they were bringing lambs that were sick, blind, or crippled. They were bringing their worst lambs just to do "barely enough" by "going through the motions" but there was no honor for God in their hearts.

Here is an amazing truth. God would not accept such worthless offerings from them. In fact, God would have preferred one of the priests to shut the temple doors to prevent people from offering such empty, pointless offerings to Him.

Malachi 1:10 *Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.*

Of course, we don't offer animal sacrifices to God today, because Jesus, the Lamb of God, has shed His blood for us, sanctifying us once and forever.

Hebrews 10:8-10 *Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; (9) Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. (10) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Since we don't offer animal sacrifice anymore, I was asking the Lord how that portion of the book of Malachi would apply to born again Christians today? What sort of sacrifice are we to offer to the Lord? The answer of the Holy Spirit was swift, and I heard the following verse:

Romans 12:1 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.

The word "acceptable" just stood out to me and I understood the application from the book of Malachi instantly. If we don't present our bodies to Him "holy," He will not accept our offering today any more than He would accept those broken, blind, worthless offerings then.

It was like I was reading Romans 12:1 with new eyes of understanding. How many times have we all prayed something like, "Use me, Lord. I offer myself to you. Here am I, send me. Use me, Lord."

Because the word "holiness" has been abused in the past, we have almost made a disconnect in our thinking ... like it doesn't matter whether we keep our bodies "holy" for His use or not. But what does the verse say? That we present our bodies HOLY, ACCEPTABLE unto God.

Don't get me wrong. God is not limited by anything. I remember in the very early days of my being born again and Spirit filled, I was still very much in a purging process, and I continued smoking cigarettes for a long time after being converted. I saw God flow through my nicotine-stained fingers to heal the sick.

But that was by the Gifts of the Spirit, which is the only way God can use spiritual babies ... like I was at the time. But we are to mature and grow up. The Bible says our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We want to mature beyond the Gifts of the Spirit so God can flow through us all the time, as mature sons like He did through Jesus. Jesus said if we want to be His disciple and follow Him, there were several requirements. Here is one of them:

Luke 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

What is the purpose of a cross? Crucifixion. What is the purpose of crucifixion? Death! This is why we are told that mature sons of God, through the new nature within them, MORTIFY [put to death] the deeds of the body.

Romans 8:13-14 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons [Greek = mature sons] of God.

Here is a second witness:

Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Here is a third witness:

2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

It is not that keeping our bodies holy "earns" us anything with God. Not at all. Paul said in Romans 12:1 that it is simply our "reasonable service." After all that God has done by His grace to save us and empower us to walk free from sin, the least we should do is offer our bodies to Him as living sacrifices, holy, and acceptable for His use.

Please join me as I ask the Holy Spirit to show me if there are any areas of my life that seem "okay" to me but are "unclean" to Him. Jesus is our prototype. Jesus is the strength of our life. We can do this because "We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us." Hallelujah!

Your co-laborer for Christ,

GARY