

Living Sacrifices (Go To Meeting)

Lyall Johnston—February 2, 2024

Well, greetings to all the saints of God, wherever you might be on this great planet Earth that God has created and formed for His joy, for His purpose. And what He wants us to do is rejoice.

I love the words of Paul. He said, ‘I say rejoice and I say again, rejoice.’ as God’s people, He wants us to rejoice regardless of what is happening in the world around us. With what’s happening now, we certainly see that as being *evil and terrible!* But that is just the beginning.

The subject today, *living sacrifices*, with two question marks, because we want to find out first of all *what a sacrifice is not!* Then what we want to find out is what a sacrifice, *the living sacrifice*, that God the Father through Jesus Christ *is!!*

That’s where the two exclamation points come, because that’s the point that we want to reach. We want to be fully living sacrifices to God our Father through Jesus Christ, through His precious blood, which Jesus Himself says in:

Rev. 1:5, that He, of course, along with the Father washes us in His own blood, 24/7 as we live a life:

- of repentance
- of obedience
- of happiness and joy

regardless of what’s going on in the world around us!

So let’s begin reading in 2- Peter 3. First let’s find out what a living sacrifice is not. What we want to address here is people who are actually in the Body of Christ *who have yet to learn the lesson of what a living sacrifice is*, because some few are opposing themselves, they’re their own worst enemies.

We know in Deut. 28 what God does for us. He sets the background for Scripture. He sets the background for His message, and that message is:

I set before you two choices. either you can obey me and receive this, all the blessings, these countless blessings. Or, on the other hand, **IF** you choose to disobey Me and walk in the opposite direction, **THEN** this is what you’re going to bring on your own heads...

Yes, we bring our problems upon ourselves, but some sadly, and we’ve seen the history of this in the Church right back even to the days of the New

Testament and going right back into the history of the Church of Israel and the problems that they had with their false prophets and teachers.

So let’s have a look here at the 2-Peter 3, and again, this is the negative, but it’s instruction from the Father and Christ themselves for us. Yes, the Christian life is one of happiness and joy, **but** also trials and troubles. God wants us *to understand and to know*.

So, along with the wonderful things that God has in store for us, God also has warnings. Why does He warn us? *Because he loves us!* He doesn’t want to see us taking the wrong steps. As we’ll see here shortly.

2-Peter 3:1: “Now, beloved, I am writing this second epistle to you; in *both...* [I had already written once and in doing so] ...I am stirring up your pure minds by causing *you* to remember *in order* for you to be mindful of the words that were spoken before by the Holy prophets, and of the commandment of the Lord and Savior, *spoken* by us, the apostles” (vs 1-2).

We have no record of any apostles since that day, except the enduring Apostleship of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, the one and only Apostle living at this point in time as far as we know, as far as we understand. If there is to be another apostle, *which we have no indication of in Scripture*, then God through His Spirit will identify.

We know there are many today claiming to be apostles, but when you listen to them, their fruits become very clear that they are not an apostle of Jesus Christ. And the question is, are they even a minister of Jesus Christ? or Are they servant of Satan the devil?

Verse 3: “Knowing this first, that in the last days...”

Are we living in the last days? *Well, God’s people have always been living in the last days*, as far as the physical life is concerned, you know, 60, 70, 80, 90 years or more, and then we go to sleep. Yes, it’s death, but we go to sleep.

The death has been overcome, because in God’s mind, in God’s knowledge, in God’s Word to us, that we are just simply asleep waiting to hear the voice of Christ and then we will be raised from the grave.

“...that in the last days *there* will come mockers...” (v 3).

- Have we seen those? *Yes, we have!*
- What are they doing? *They're walking according to their own personal lusts!*

As John says, talking about the *lusts of the flesh*, the *lusts of the eyes*, and just as important, *the pretentious pride of the physical life!*

That is in opposition to what God wants to see in us *as living sacrifices*.

Verse 4: "And asking, 'Where is the promise of His coming?'... [which gives you an indication of why they're living the lifestyle that they are] ...For ever since the forefathers died, everything has remained the same as from *the beginning of creation*."

They've lost sight of the fact that God has a plan, that God has a timetable. Why? *Because they're following the lusts of the flesh!*

They don't really want to recognize God's Plan. But this fact is hidden from them. What's hidden from them? *They themselves choosing to ignore it!* Not just something about their mindset. Oh yes, they claim to be following the Father. They claim to be walking in Christ's footsteps. But by their actions, by their fruits, they're denying it.

"...everything has remained the same as from *the beginning of creation*. But this *fact* is hidden from them—they themselves choosing to *ignore it*—that by the Word of God *the heavens* existed of old, and *the earth* came forth out of water and amid water" (vs 4-5). *It had been destroyed:*

- *first* because of Satan's rebellion
- *secondly* because of the rebellion of all human beings

God destroyed the earth! He promised never to do it again, and I was just reminded of that. I called my wife to have a look through the window, and there was this beautiful, brilliant rainbow.

It was only more like I guess they call a sundog. It wasn't completely perfect, and it sort of faded as it rose up. But right at the bottom near the ground, it was absolutely gorgeous with all the colors, as they say, of the rainbow. Just a beauty to behold; ***God's promise that He would never again flood the earth or destroy it in that fashion!***

However, we'll see here in a moment that something else is going to happen.

Verse 6: "By which the world at that time, having been deluged with water, had itself been destroyed. But the present heavens and earth are being held in store by His Word..." (vs 6-7)—*the Word of God!*

It says in Jer. 23 how that God has created the whole heavens as well as the earth, which means that His power is there upholding everything that exists.

The earth is just one infinitesimal part of that. Yet, it is so important in God's Plan. That's why you and I have been placed on it, because God, through us, the saints—the *ones who are striving to be living sacrifices before God*—have been put here.

God tells us how we can do that, how we can accomplish it. What seems to us when we compare the earth to the heavens is almost insignificant.

God works through the plan of humility. The mind of God is humility in all things. God Himself has the most humble of all minds, along with Jesus Christ and the entirety of the universe. So, He wants us to have that mind so that we can avoid vanity and that we can become the living sacrifices that He has called us to be. In spite of these individuals caring about their works of evil.

Verse 10: "However, the Day of *the Lord* shall come as a thief in *the night* in which the heaven itself shall disappear with a mighty roar, and *the elements* shall pass away..."

It's interesting what Peter does here. He's really talking about the Day of the Lord. But what that is, is from the time of Christ's return right through to the new heavens and the new earth. It's all contained into just a very short verse or two. And we understand that.

We have to go to other places in the Scriptures that fill in what Peter doesn't say, because he's making a point.

Verse 10: "However, the Day of *the Lord* shall come as a thief in *the night* in which the heaven itself shall disappear with a mighty roar, and *the elements* shall pass away, burning with intense heat, and *the earth* and the works in it shall be burned up."

Take careful note of v 11: "Since all these things are going to be destroyed..."

Everything about us, everything that we've had, that we've owned, we've possessed, if we've had silver and gold, it's all going to melt down. The homes that we live in and you read Isa. 24; it just shows you—and other Scriptures—God is just going to totally level the earth before all this final destruction takes place or the renewing of the heavens and the earth.

The cities are going to be laid waste. Think of all the tall buildings, they're all going to be demolished, destroyed, virtually back to dust from which they came.

So, it's quite a thought for us, since all these things, not only the physical, but also all the evil works and deeds of men, they're going to be destroyed.

"...What kind of persons ought you to be?" (v 11). *What should I be in Holy conduct and goodness?*

- we're on the path
- we're working toward becoming those total living sacrifices
- we're going to continue
- we're going to strive for that right till the end

But for the godless, destruction is coming!

"...what kind of *persons* ought you to be in Holy conduct and Godliness?" (v 11).

We think of these things often, but you know, the Scriptures we're going to be turning to today, you know them, you've been over them at least once and some of you will be over them hundreds of times. But we need to have them repeated so that the more we hear them, ***the more they become a part of our thinking, and the more they become a part of our heart and our expressions and who we are!***

Verse 11: "Since all these things are going to be destroyed, what kind of *persons*... [is the question for each one of us] ...ought you to be..."

Now you say, 'I don't need to do this.' ***We all do!*** There's not one human being that does not need these words because they're inspired by the very Spirit of God. As Jesus says in John 6, 'the Spirit is what's important, the flesh profits nothing.'

Here's what Peter goes on to say, v 12: "Looking forward to and striving for the coming of the day of God, during which *the* heavens, being on fire, shall be destroyed, and *the* elements, burning with intense heat, shall melt? But according to His promise, we look forward to **a new heaven and a new earth**... [singular] ...in which righteousness dwells." (vs 12-13).

Part of our pursuit of ***becoming living sacrifices*** is be putting on that righteousness of God. And bear in mind that the long-suffering of our Lord is *Salvation!*

These things have not happened, yet. They have not occurred, but because Christ has not yet returned, is not God long-suffering as it says?

Verse 15: "And bear in mind that the long-suffering of our Lord *is* salvation, exactly as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has also written to you; as *he has* also in all

his epistles, speaking in them concerning these things; in which are some things *that are* difficult to understand, which the ignorant and unstable are twisting *and distorting*, as *they* also *twist and distort* the rest of the Scriptures to their own destruction" (vs 15-16).

We've seen that many of us *in the Church of God in our time*—as well as the theologians and those who are in mainstream Christianity—***have rejected:***

- the law of God
- the commandments of God
- the statutes and judgments of God
- the ordinances and precepts of God

'Because we don't need those, we just need Christ Jesus, we just need his cross and we're saved.'

As we've heard many times, 'say that little prayer and you're saved.' ***No, you're not!***

- ***that's a damnable lie***
- it's a ***heresy***
- it is ***contra***
- it's going in ***the opposite direction of the Word of God***

and people are deceived!

Thankfully, for the second resurrection—that deception, the blindness—God is going to take away that veil. When they see the Truth of God, do you think they're going to rejoice? ***Yes, indeed, they will!***

Verse 17: "Therefore, beloved, since you know this in advance, be on guard against *such practices*, lest you be led astray with the error of the **lawless ones**..."—*within the Church of God; if it's not there now, it's coming!*

There are always going to be the lawless ones, even within the Body of Christ who are opposing the very Word of God. Why? ***Because they are not living the life of living sacrifices!***

They're walking according to the flesh, deceiving themselves. They think they're walking according to the Spirit, ***but not so!***

The apostles and the prophets warn us of these things continuously, because God does not want us to be deceived. But there are those who are deceived and we've got to accept that factor.

The ministers of the Gospel of Christ, we will be negligent if we fail in our responsibility of preaching all the Word of God, the whole Word of God.

Let's remind ourselves of Deut. 28, *cursings and blessings, blessings and cursings!*

It sets the tone for the whole of the Scripture. God is warning us because we've got an enemy—Satan—who does not want you or me to be *a living sacrifice* and he will pull out all stops. He'll throw every fiery dart in his weaponry in order to deceive, in order to turn us away.

I was reading just recently Eph. 6 and the armor of God, about the shield that the Roman soldiers have. After one battle, one soldier counted 220 darts in his shield, 220!

Of course, back in those days, I guess they dipped in tar and other subjects that set fire to them. Those arrows then were sent toward the shield. And of course, the shield protected the soldiers.

That's why we need the Shield of Faith! You know, in Eph. 6, what it says by the Shield of Faith, 'we quench,' put out, destroying the fiery darts.

Just like Jesus did, using the Shield of Faith (Matt. 4:4). where He said, *'mankind, shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'* Shielding the fiery darts that Satan was throwing at Him.

What happened? *Satan had to leave! Jesus overcame him!* He had the *Shield of Faith* as a man, a flesh and blood human being; yet, *the Son of God!*

Verse 17: "Therefore, beloved, since you know this in advance, be on guard against *such practices...*"—*a warning, we must never forget it!*

Yes, we were looking for the fruits of the Spirit, but in looking for the fruits of the Spirit, remember who is going to be attacking us, who's going to be attacking the Church from without.

We see this in the news, world news, where churches are being attacked and destroyed, mainstream churches! Fortunately for Churches of God, most of the Churches of God, we don't have buildings; we rent them, we hire them.

But yes, they're attacking and the whole nature turning the nations of modern Israel away from the true God. And sadly, we as those people, for those who are of the descendants of those tribes, we have been deceived as a people.

Going back to Dan. 9, perhaps we should be thinking of praying for our nation, just as Daniel did. He put himself among his people, taking on board all the problems of the nation or of the Jewish peoples upon himself. He didn't see himself as being separate. He saw himself as one of the people and

crying out to God for God's help and God's intervention.

Look at the prophecies that God has given us through Daniel. Amazing!

"...lest you be led astray with the error of the lawless ones, *and* you fall from your own steadfastness; rather, be growing in *the* grace and *the* knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and into *the* day of eternity. Amen" (vs 17-18).

2 Peter 2:1: "But there were also **false prophets** among the people..."

Yes, Peter is talking here of the people of Israel, ancient Israel, right up to the time even when Jesus was walking in the land of Israel amongst the Jewish people, His own people in that sense.

"...as indeed there will be false teachers among you..." (v 1).

I'm not trying to set up some scare tactic here. This is the Word of God. This is what God is warning us about. This is *the cursing part* of the plan, *and that we have to be aware of it!* If we don't warn, what's going to happen to the brethren? Well, if we don't warn, as Ezekiel is told, *the blood will be on our heads!*

If we warn you, then you have the opportunity of fleeing from those disastrous activities. You have the opportunity of being *the living sacrifices* and *living God's way* and recognizing these:

- false teachers
- false ministers

They don't necessarily have to be ordained to be false prophets or false ministers in our midst!

But what they're doing is they're ministering evil attitudes through the words that they speak:

- hostility
- contention
- anger
- disruption
- turning brethren against brethren

They will be false teachers! So, that labels them among you.

Who's Peter talking to? *He's talking to the brethren of the Church of God* from the day that he spoke this. it was written for:

- our learning
- our understanding
- our protection

“...who will stealthily **introduce destructive heresies**, personally denying *the* Lord...” (v 1).

- by their actions
- by their attitudes
- by their thoughts

“...introduce destructive heresies, **personally denying the Lord**... [by their actions, by their words] ...**Who bought them**... [they’ve been bought by the blood of Christ, but they’ve turned, they’ve gone back] ...**and bringing swift destruction upon themselves**” (v 1).

It doesn’t mean that they’re going to be destroyed immediately at the time, **but when their destruction comes, it will come swiftly!**

We’ll all be warned by that and know that we have a need to take care. Many people will follow them; we’ve seen this happen. How many was it in Worldwide Church of God? Multiple, tens of thousands attending Feast sites, 10-15,000 people at one Feast of Tabernacles. Amazing!

God has mercifully delivered those who remain faithful to Him so that we continue to learn the way of becoming living sacrifices!

Verse 2: “And many people will follow as *authoritative* their destructive ways...”

Brethren, let not any one of us follow a man, **but let us follow the teachings of God as He gives them to us through His true and faithful servants!**

Even then *we have to prove that those servants are faithful!* That’s our responsibility. That’s my responsibility.

After resigning from Worldwide, there’s no way that I was able to follow any other group until I heard a voice in which, for me, I knew this was my Master’s voice speaking, **because the Truth has been speaking!**

That resonated in my mind as I’m sure it did for those of you who went through some of the circumstances.

“...and because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed. Also, through insatiable greed they will with enticing messages exploit you for gain...” (vs 2-3).

Many not from the pulpit, although that can happen, but behind the scenes, quietly whispering, sometimes pretty loudly. It may come through e-mails or some other communication where they’re criticizing and condemning those who are the true followers of Christ. **We need to recognize that those types because they are not living sacrifices!**

And as Peter shows us at the end of this chapter, that they really are:

“...enticing messages exploit you for gain...” (v 3)—*they’re after your money!*

One of these so-called apostles on the Internet is telling people they’ve just got to pay more money. Demanding it, otherwise, they’re not pleasing to God.

- What sacrilege?
- What lies?
- What false words?

“...for whom the judgment of old is in full force...” (v 3).

Yes, they’re being judged right here and now **because they’re claiming to be a part of** the Body of Christ.

“...and their destruction is ever watching” (v 3). *When it comes, it will come suddenly!*

Then it goes on to about God not sparing the angels, and it talks about God saving Noah and Lot and delivering Lot and that righteous man. And hopefully this describes each one of us:

Verse 8: “(For that righteous man, dwelling among them, through seeing and hearing *their* lawless activities, *was* tormented day-by-day *in his* righteous soul).”

And I think in the world today that happens for us when we see the lies, when we see the terrible things that we as human beings can do to another human being. I won’t go into all the details, but you know it’s there, it’s before us every day. Bombarding us! Bombarding our minds!

Verse 9: “*The* Lord knows *how* to rescue *the* Godly out of temptation...”

Thankfully, we always can trust in our God and Father and our elder Brother, our High Priest, our coming King and Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

- They’re there for us
- They’re our backstop
- They’re our shield
- They’re our protection
- They are our everything

Verse 9: “*The* Lord knows *how* to rescue *the* Godly out of temptation, and to reserve *the* unrighteous to *the* day of judgment to be punished.”

Yes, the judgment’s coming for sure **unless they hear messages like this and they repent!**

Verse 10: “But particularly those **who walk after the flesh in corrupting lust...**”

Part of the Church of God, part of the Body of Christ, yes; but departed from the way, **'leaning to their own understanding'—their own judgments!**

"...and hold in utter contempt..." (v 10)—*because of:*

- the words they speak
- the attitudes of mind and heart

that they have!

"...corrupting lust, and hold in utter contempt the lordship of God..." [such a powerful statement against all these people]: ...*They are audacious and self-willed.... [they are not living sacrifices] ...They are not afraid to blaspheme the Divine powers whereas angels, who are greater in strength and power, do not bring a railing condemnation against them before the Lord" (vs 10-11).*

These are a good description of them; sadly we have seen and we will see again people like this in our midst. This is a warning against these kinds of people:

- don't be sucked in
- don't be drawn into:
 - ✓ their lies
 - ✓ their heresies
 - ✓ their vanity

Here's the master of vanity and corruption and evil: Satan the devil.

Verse 12: "But these... [now realize these are people who's in our midst]: ...as irrational brute beasts, born to be caught and destroyed... [unless they repent] ...blaspheme those things of which they are ignorant...." *Yes, ignorance!*

- Why are they ignorant?
- Are they studying the Word of God?
- Are they filling their minds with the Word of God?

Maybe they are, but *from their own perceptions*, because ***they're not willing to obey what they read!*** They'll look for Scriptures that will back up their particular perceptions, their particular way of living.

"...and shall be utterly destroyed in their own corruption. They are bringing upon themselves the reward of unrighteousness..." (v 12-13).

We all do that! That is why we repent and God freely forgives us ***when we truly repent!*** That's very important right now as we approach Passover.

"...while finding pleasure in satisfying their lustful desires day-by-day...." (v 13).

Notice particularly this next statement. This is important because this is talking about people who are within the Body of Christ. I'm not saying they are now, but they have been in the past. They will be now, as Peter said, that 'they will be among you.' We can't ignore that fact.

"...They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their own deceptions... [they're self-deceived] ...while feasting together with you" (v 13).

Who are you? ***We are the Body of Christ!*** This is talking about *within* the Church.

In 2-Peter 3 we read ***the last days***, we're living in the last days!

Verse 14: "Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, *they are engaged in* seducing unstable souls, having a heart trained in *lustful* cravings—cursed children."

These are the words through Peter inspired by Christ Jesus, the Word of God.

We need to move on to the positive side now as we look at the subject of living sacrifices. We have so much, yes, there's all those warnings for us, for the members of the Body of Christ, but the answers, the solutions, shall I say overpowering. There are so many. There's an abundance of them. Why? ***For our protection!***

- for our ***shield*** to protect us from the darts
- the ***helmet*** to protect our mind
- the ***breastplate*** that protects our heart

from those fiery darts that come from Satan and all his agents within and without the Church

Ephesians 4:8: "For this *very* reason, He says *that* after ascending on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."

Christ has taken captive Satan and his demons. He's in control. They're His prisoners. He allows them to do what they are to do in order to accomplish God's Plan. Mostly that is to test us to make sure that we remain obedient.

Verse 9: "Now He Who ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" *Christ, of course, was crucified.*

Verse 10: "He Who descended is the same One Who also ascended above all the heavens... [right to the very Throne of God the Father Himself where He came from in the first place] ...so that He might fulfill all things."

Verse 11: "And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists..."

These are **not** officers of authority! These are statements of what a person does. Basically we can say their ‘job descriptions.’ That is something I hope we’ve all come to understand, particularly those who came out of the Church of the past where that was the case.

“...and some pastors and teachers” (v 11). *Basically today we’re looking at ministers and elders*, because that’s the primary term that’s used in Scripture. Why?

Verse 12: “For the perfecting of the saints... [so that we can be warned of the evils and taught the path that we can walk in] ...for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the Body of Christ; until we all come...” (vs 12-13).

Ministers and brethren, *saints*, we’re all saints; that includes all men, women, anyone who’s a minister, anyone who’s a deacon or deaconess in the Church.

Verse 13: “Until we all come into the unity of the faith...”

Read the rest of 2-Peter 2, because he says that these people are like dogs returned to their vomit and swine that have been washed clean, returning to rolling over in the filth again. *Very apt description!*

But this is “...for *the* edifying of the Body of Christ; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man... [man and woman God created mankind, male and female] ...**unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**” (vs 12-13).

We understand, of course, to accomplish that we are committed at the baptism ceremony. ***We committed ourselves to become living sacrifices!***

Before that, the Bible says we were dead. We were the living dead. We were like zombies without the knowledge of God. Once baptized, following repentance, once having God’s Spirit sealed... Paul mentions that at least a couple of times; ***we are sealed with the Spirit of God!***

So, when it comes to Revelation and the sealing of those people, it’s not the Church. It’s those who are called out of Tribulation. ***You and I are already sealed!***

It’s like a scroll. A king or some very important person would take a document and they’d fold it up and they’d put a little wax on here. Then they’d take their insignia, which was really like for us today, our signature is our word. They would sign that document and nobody was supposed to touch that.

So, we’ve actually been sealed. The Holy Spirit is like that physical seal of old. ***God Himself sealed you!*** You’ve got His seal in your mind and in your heart:

- as your protection
- as your way of life
- as your way of living

Verse 14: “So that we no longer be children...”

This is why we need initially the elders until we become that place of maturity when we can then begin to help others and teach others and be instant with God’s Word and preaching and speaking to one another. Perhaps we need to do more of that. Not perhaps, we should do more of that!

Verse 13: “Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine... [by these incumbents in the Church, these ones that are working against the very spirit and Word of God] ...by the sleight of men... [yes, even within the Church] ...in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error; but holding the Truth in love, **may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, even Christ from Whom all the Body, fitly framed and compacted together...**” (vs 13-16)—*and we are, God wants us to be together!*

God wants us to be like the Roman legions, you know, when they’re under attack, each of the soldiers would come forward, they’d bring their shields and put them together and keep out those who were attacking them as a defense. We defend one another.

We’re not fighting one another. ***God forbid that we fight one another in the Body of Christ!*** We love each other, not contend with. Contention is God’s to contend with those who oppose Him. We’re called to love with all our heart, mind, soul and all our being.

We’re called in that love to do good for those who hate us and despitefully use us and rather do good to them. It’s a hard lesson sometimes, but it’s one we have to learn.

I just encourage you to read the rest of that. Let’s have a look now at:

Romans 12:1: “I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...”

Paul is exhorting; he was totally wholehearted to his love for the present, because he had worked personally with them.

Today we don't have that same opportunity except by means like this of the Internet, but the time is coming. This is why we need to be growing. This is why we more and more need to be coming a living sacrifice.

As we read in the prophecies, there's going to become a famine of the hearing of the Word. We need to have that level of maturity. We need to be so filled with:

- the Word of God
- the mind of God
- the Spirit of God so that

We're not going to have to rely on the preaching that comes from the ministers or the elders, but that we know the Word of God ourselves.

We've been brought to that maturity and the urgency, the mission is on each one of us personally. We can't trust in any man; that's what used to be said: 'We're not going to get into the Kingdom of God on the ship.

Tell of any man of any individual, only Jesus Christ; He's the door; He's the window for us into the Kingdom of God, the Family of God in the resurrection. **No one else!**

Now, on the other hand, we're to respect those who are our leaders, elders, and ministers. We're not to be contemptible towards them. And yet, day-by-day, I would say that the majority of most ministers and elders do have those that contend against them. But not for righteous reasons.

Now, on the other hand, if an elder or a minister makes a mistake, then yes, if it's serious enough, it needs to be brought to the attention of all the people.

- Can he repent? *Of course!*
- Will God forgive? *Yes!*
- What about his ongoing service? *Well, that's something that would have to be determined depending on the nature of the sin!*

But where repentance is, we all sin every day!
That's why every day we pray:

Father, forgive us our trespasses, we trample all over Your Laws. Please apply the blood of Christ. Please wash us in the blood of Christ. Lead us not in temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

That's our daily prayer!

- God knows our heart

- God knows when we make mistakes
- We know it when we make mistakes

That reminds me the statement my dad used to make of Fritz Kreisler, Hungarian-American violinist back in the, let's see, he was born in the 1860s. He died in 1962.

My dad was very keen on the violin. He used to play a little himself. I think one of our daughters now has that same instrument. Whenever Fritz Kreisler was on the radio, everyone was hushed quiet, and my father would be listening. Then he would tell us a story about Fritz Kreisler. He said Fritz Kreisler was asked, you know, how often do you need to practice?

How often do you practice? Kreisler's response was very interesting, and I think we can take a lesson from it. He said:

If I don't practice for a month, my audience knows it. If I don't practice for a week, my family knows it. If I don't practice every day, I know it.

So he had that need to practice every day in order to maintain the beauty of his playing. Apparently his expression was just simply, shall we say 'simply devine,' but obviously a man of great talent, blessed by God, and many were able to enjoy.

You can go online, I think, and still hear some of his recordings. Anyway, that was just a little story as a fill in there on that point.

Romans 12:1: "I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies... [that's everything: body, mind, soul, spirit] ...a living sacrifice..." *Yes, we're alive to God, but:*

- we're dead to Satan
- we're dead to the world
- we're dead to the lust of the flesh
- we're dead to the lust of the eyes
- we're dead to the pretentious pride of the physical life

At least that's our commitment, and every day we're striving to overcome those areas!

Verse 2: "Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed... [that's the path, the walk] ...by the renewing of your mind... [every day, every morning, every time we pray; every time we talk to God] ...in order that you may **prove what is well-pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God.**"

- Who was the one who was the ultimate in a living sacrifice?
- Was it not Jesus? *Yes!*

We can read in the history, Heb. 11, of all those who presented their bodies to God as living sacrifice:

Moses—he chose not to become Pharaoh’s son, denying himself and denying the pleasures of this world, which we are all to do.

We are to involve ourselves in the joys and the pleasures that God provides for us, the pleasures of reading His Word and understanding it, knowing that it is the Holy Spirit that is giving us that understanding.

John 6:63: **“It is the Spirit that gives life...”**

Yes, this is the Spirit that we receive that seal God seal us was after the waters of baptism with the laying on of hands.

Verse 63: **“It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing...”**

We need to spend time thinking on that and meditating on that and asking ourselves questions, finding ourselves with Passover coming up: Is the Spirit in my life meaning more to me than the flesh?

We must live in the flesh according to the flesh to provide for ourselves, provide for our families and to do those things that are good and natural and right that agree with the Scriptures.

But anything other than that, *no, that’s the negative! Yes, it is the Spirit that gives life! Eternal life!* The Spirit you have within you now is your seal that when you die or when you go to sleep, you will hear the voice of Christ in the resurrection when He raises the righteous from the grave, the first resurrection, which is the better resurrection.

“...The words that I speak to you...” (v 63).

What words has Jesus spoken to us? Well, it begins with Gen. 1:1 and goes right through to the last verse of Revelation. He is the Word of God. Everything that’s written, regardless of whether it’s history, whether it’s prophecy or whether it’s the way of living, which are the three parts of the Bible is basically made up of.

“...The words that I speak to you, they are Spirit and they are Life” (v 63).

So, if we’re drinking in the Word of God, we’re going to want to follow them. *Think about that!*

We need to pray about that because this is the past becoming living sacrifices by walking in those words.

Let’s have a look at another Scripture 2-Cor. 10. These particular passages have been on my mind

so much over the past weeks and months. When I’ve spoken about it and it’s still in my mind, but the words are so incredible that we want to repeat them.

2-Corinthians 10:4: “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, **but mighty through God...**”

All the power of God are there in our weapons, both for offense and defense. We’re lacking nothing. We just have to use those weapons through God

“...to the overthrowing of strongholds” (v 4).

Yes, we need to examine ourselves. We can’t just say, ‘Oh, I don’t have any strongholds anymore.’ I can’t say that personally. I have to go before God’s Throne on a constant basis and ask Him:

Father, if there are still strongholds in me, or where there are strongholds within me, please show me because I don’t want anything standing between You and me and becoming the living sacrifice that you want me to be.

Verse 5: **“Casting down vain imaginations...”**

Where do they come from? *The devil, the master, the king of vanity, the king of pride!* That’s why he’s called the devil today. He’s no longer an angel of light. He’s an angel or a demon of absolute darkness!

We can say this is an ellipsis: v 5: “Casting down *vain* imaginations, **and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.**”

This is the path to becoming more and more the living sacrifice that we can become more than where we are today. It’s an ongoing job. It’s an ongoing process.

I would like just to challenge you to encourage you to spend a lot of time thinking and praying about this:

“...and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ” (v 5). *Think about that!*

Paul was a bit frustrated with the Galatians because he wondered if his preaching had been in vain. He said earlier that he didn’t know if his preaching was in vain and I’m sure that distressed him.

Galatians 4:19: “My little children, for whom I am again laboring in pain until Christ has been formed in you.”

I believe that all those who are faithful ministers of Christ do the same. As we see people taking a wrong step, we try to help them to bring them back on the right path. There are many who are already walking that way. They're already mature and that's good, because they can be there helping also like Paul said that he had 'many helpers in the work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.'

- Matthew 4:4
- Daniel 9
- Hebrews 11
- Philippians 3

LJ:bo/po
Transcribed: 2/22/24

"...I am again laboring in pain until... [something else that we can think about deeply in prayer and in meditation] ...until Christ has been formed in you" (v 19).

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A thought I had, Paul didn't say until Christ is *fully* formed in you, but I think *just my thought here* is that Christ ***will be fully formed within us at the resurrection!*** In the meantime, we are living the life of living sacrifices so that that can be accomplished in the resurrection.

Please read Philip. 3 and see what Paul had to say.

Paul said, 'I'm prepared to give up. I have given up everything and counted as dung that I might gain Christ and the power of His resurrection.'

Powerful passage, Phil. 2, please do take time out to read that and to see how you fit into that as we all need to do as far as the Scriptures. This is a big subject. This is like most Biblical subjects, much more can be said, so many Scriptures.

I hope what has been said will be of some help and of some profit to you as you and I continue to work toward becoming the ***truly living sacrifices, living our life as sacrifice to God our Father and to Jesus Christ!***

Let's not forget that we sacrifice ourselves also for our brothers and sisters!

Scriptural References:

- 1) 2 Peter 3:1-7, 10-13, 15-18
- 2) 2 Peter 2:1-3, 8-14
- 3) Ephesians 4:8-14, 13-16
- 4) Romans 12:1-2
- 5) John 6:63
- 6) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5
- 7) Galatians 4:19

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 1:5
- Deuteronomy 28
- Jeremiah 23
- Isaiah 28
- John 6
- Ephesians 6