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True Worship—“Self” Sacrifice

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Romans 12:1).

How do you worship God? With hymns and praise songs? Do you know that all things in this universe are created to worship God by the obedient sacrifice of their lives (or life-cycle) to His perfect will?

Prior to sin, the creation flawlessly worshiped God in the performance of its innate duties as appointed by God. In the same way, man was created to worship God—he could not help but sacrifice his body to God’s will with his time, energy, interests, desires, etc. But then man rebelled. Man’s rebellion against God was not a rebellion against his need to worship something, because his very rebellion was an act of worship—self-worship: *“You will be like God”* (Gen. 5:3b), *“for rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry”* (1 Sam. 15:23a). And ever since that moment, man has worshiped himself and his own works.

As Isaiah lamented, Israel was *“filled with idols; They worship the work of their hands, That which their fingers have made”* (Is. 2:8). When man makes idols to worship, they’re created in the “image” of man, representing the character, desires, and works of man. Man’s “gods” whom he worships are little more than celebrations of man’s will for himself. In pagan religions, idols represented the things man honored and wanted: food, prosperity, pleasure, fertility, victory—there was a god presiding over everything man desired for himself—NOT what God wanted for man. And in pursuit of these things, man sacrificed his body—his time, energy, and resources, in hope that he

would receive a greater yield of what he desired in return—sort of a spiritual stock-market or lottery. But behind every idol satan and demonic entities play; after all, satan is the origin—the patient zero—of the creation’s self-worship. Satan’s ploy is simple, if you sacrifice your body (your time, energy, treasures) to your desires, you might just “come out ahead” and get more of what you want.

This is exactly our modern “religions” of self-fulfillment. Hear Oprah Winfrey saying, “create the highest, grandest vision possible for your life, because you become what you believe,” and “you only have to believe you can succeed, that you can be whatever your heart desires, be willing to work for it, and you can have it.” Yes, sacrifice to yourself! But in so doing, you are not sacrificing your body to God. And God has said, *“He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed”* (Ex. 22:20), even if it is a god of our own making—an idol to celebrate our desires and what we want for ourselves.

Man is supposed to sacrifice his body to celebrate God’s nature and His desires—love, holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy. **Our very lives are supposed to be a worship-service to God in how we live for Him and how we live for others.** For *“to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices”* (Mark 12:33). This is true worship: the sacrificing of your “self”—your body—by living out God’s will in celebration of who He is and what He wants. In this, we *“offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (1 Pt. 2:5). How fitting that Jesus is our example of sacrifice: He *“gave Himself up for us [love for us], an offering and a sacrifice to God [love for God] as a fragrant aroma”* (Eph. 5:2b). This is true worship. Even so, Amen.

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