

Becoming a Living Sacrifice (Part 2)

1/5/2025

In part one of this lesson on becoming a living sacrifice we looked at a few passages where the apostle John refers to both The Holy Spirit and Jesus as being paraklētos or advocates on our behalf.

In John 16 we read that The Holy Spirit upon his arrival would **convict** the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgement. The word translated as 'convict' in the ESV and 'reprove' in the KJV is the Greek word *elegchō* pronounced el-eng'-kho. It is defined as - I rebuke, expose, I reprove, discipline, I expose, show to be guilty.

In 1st John 2:1-2 we see Jesus also being referred to as a paraklētos advocating on our behalf. Where John says of Jesus - *"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate (parakletos) with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*

I then included a few passages on what and how Jesus and The Holy Spirit work, and what the outcome of their work is for us. To include -

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through **Christ reconciled us to himself** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, **in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them**, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. **We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.** (2nd Corinthians 5:17-20)*

And

*"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that **our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.** For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.**" (Romans 6:3-12)*

On Pentecost we see another example of both Jesus and The Holy Spirit working on our behalf - *“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, **in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**”*

We also briefly considered a few of the many passages in Scripture which tells us the The Holy Spirit, Jesus and The Father are all working together as one. In John 17 we see on the night that Jesus was betrayed that he prayed for His disciples - and for you and I - that we be one as He and The Father are one -

*“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. **“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** (John 17:13-21)*

We see in the passage above that Jesus asks that we be Sanctified by the truth. Jesus told Pilate that He came to testify to the truth. The Word of God is truth and The sword of The Spirit is The Word of God, as Paul refers to it in Ephesians 6.

I also included the following two passages of Scripture last week which identified why we are in need of this plan of Salvation from God.

***“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** (Ephesians 2:8-10)*

And

*“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. **For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:1-7)*

All of the things these and many other passages from Scripture reveal to us can be seen as being like pieces of a puzzle. That is they are all go together to form a bigger picture. And when those pieces are placed in their proper place, and interlinked with the other pieces a much clearer picture begins to form before our eyes.

In Romans 11:33-36 Paul presents a doxology or Praise of God. He writes -

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,

and his paths beyond tracing out!

“Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?”

“Who has ever given to God,

that God should repay them?”

For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

Paul who once persecuted Christians now understood the error of his thinking and ways. And now understanding the bigger picture of God’s Salvation for mankind calls upon others to do the same. Paul’s next words in this letter to the Romans are as follows -

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Thus here we have the call to become living sacrifices.

But easier said than done. As Paul himself stated earlier in this very letter of Romans he does not always do what he plans or intends to do. Somewhere along the line his intent and actions do not mesh. Paul explains the problem is sin in our lives. Or as our Lord said the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. But this is not the case with The

Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. They are in sync. They are one. Thus Jesus' prayer for His disciples and us spoken of earlier in this lesson from John 17 that we may be one as He and The Father are one.

In a moment we will look into this call to be a living sacrifice a little closer once again. But as where in last week's lesson we looked at a few of the Greek words, their tense and meaning, this week we will be looking at the order in which things are called for and how we as humans tend to approach things. The following account recorded in Matthew demonstrates how our own desires and way of doing things can misguide us.

"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:20-28)

Understanding as we do now from our perspective in time we can see the errors in their thinking. But the things that John, James and their mother wanted at that time and how they sought to achieve them made sense to them from their perspective. Jesus pointed out to all of them that not only did they not understand what was to come but the very method for achieving that goal would be completely backwards in the Kingdom of God.

Not let's consider what is said about becoming A Living Sacrifice and how our human way of thinking often approaches things. First the passage again -
"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Here are the steps according to Scripture -

1. Present yourself a living sacrifice
2. Holy and pleasing to God
3. This is your true and proper worship
4. Do not conform to the pattern of this world
5. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind
6. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's Will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

But is this how we as humans respond to God's call and Commands. Or is it more like the following?

1. We begin by wanting to know something about God - you know His Will for us
2. We might begin by saying I will read the Bible and maybe start attending church
3. This may help transform my way of thinking
4. Then maybe I can stop doing some of the things I see as wrong
5. And start doing some things better
6. Then I won't be so much like this world, I will become - you know 'more Christian'
7. And maybe start truly worshipping God rather than just going to church
8. This will be pleasing to God - right!
9. And then I will grow in faith and become what one might call a living sacrifice.

Paul after writing in chapter 7 of Romans where he speaks of the battle of sin within us begin chapter 8 by speak of living through the Spirit. That is letting The Holy Spirit direct our lives. And in the middle of chapter 8 of this letter to the Romans he writes the following -

Romans 8:18-21 - "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its **bondage to decay** and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God."

God's Word tells us how to be released from this bondage of decay and reminds us -

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

Jesus stated it clearly when He said - *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock."*

Starting with the right foundation is crucial in building a relationship with our Creator. And God's Word tells us how that is achieved.