



On October 31, 1517, a man by the name of Martin Luther turned “Christianity” upside down. Martin Luther was a “small town monk” who, on that date, marched up to the castle in Wittenberg, Germany and nailed his “95 Theses” to the door of that church. It was this little action that ignited the flame of what was to become known as the “Protestant Reformation.” In other words it was a “protest” which led to many who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church to break away from it and “reform” their ways of worship and approaching God.

The three main aspects of the “95 Theses” stated that; 1) the people may reach salvation only by their faith in God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, not by their deeds; 2) the Bible is the final and only authority concerning God and relationship with Him and 3) the priesthood of all believers. From this action there sparked a new movement that changed the course of religious and cultural history in the Western world. It is important to remember that the church was divided already at that point in time between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church – both which are still in existence today.

Luther did not believe that the Roman Catholic Church itself had the power to pardon people sins. Rather, Luther thought that salvation and the forgiveness of sin could only be achieved through the actual receiving of God’s mercy through a true heart of repentance towards sin and the acceptance of Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. This movement became known as the “Reformation.”

Martin Luther also used these “95 Theses” to display his unhappiness with the Roman Catholic Church’s sale of “indulgences.” Indulgences were a monetary payment of penalty which, supposedly, absolved an individual of past sins and/or released one from purgatory after death. What did “indulgences” mean?

In the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, an indulgence is “a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for their sins.” It is important to note that this was not a Biblical concept but rather it was a manmade concept. An “indulgence,” in Roman Catholic theology, means that temporal punishment (punishment here on Earth) for sins which have already been forgiven is taken away from the sinner and therefore the “punishment” for that sin is absolved.

An “indulgence” reduced the Church’s punishment for a sin or, in many instances if enough payment was made by the individual, the sin would be totally absolved. Indulgences were controversial because although the Church had given out indulgences before, they never sold them. In the 1500s, however, the Pope needed money to repair the Church of St. Peter in Rome. To get that money, the Pope decided to sell these “indulgences.”

The church had taught that - true repentance desires God’s punishment of sin, but “indulgences” teach and allow the person to avoid that punishment by purchasing the “indulgence” – an actual physical payment for their sin. In “Theses 41–47,” Luther criticizes “indulgences” on the basis that they discourage works of mercy by those who purchase these indulgences because they do not cause the individual to truly make things right – they simply pay their way into “righteousness.”

As many of us look at this today we may or may not agree with Martin Luther’s actions. If you are in accordance with many “protestant” churches you would most likely be in agreement with Luther’s stance and comments on this aspect of the Roman Catholic Church. The problems that have risen from this throughout the ages is that many have argued and have been in disagreement so much with the Roman Catholic Church that it has brought them to the point of coming to the place of actually hating or, at the very least, disliking immensely those who belong to the Roman Catholic Church.

Unfortunately, it does not simply stop at this point. The arguments and disagreements, even within those in the many “Protestant” faiths, have become so harsh that even they do not really have fellowship with each other. Yes, there has been and still are attempts to “bring a unity” between the many different faiths. We have seen prayer meetings and other events that have tried to bring people together. However, as we all know and have seen, there has not been much improvement to the situation.

The main problem is “people.” I know that this may seem like a silly thing to write about yet I believe it is something that we need to deal with in these end times. Basically what I am saying is that those who are truly within the Body of Christ, those who truly have a relationship with God, the Father through His Son Jesus, need to truly begin to pray and honestly seek after their God.

The time for quibbling over many things that are simply not that important to the true faith in God the Father and His Son, Jesus, needs to truly come to an end. No one is truly correct. Oh sure, an individual may have started off right but it seems as if the devil has been allowed to come in and veer them, as well as the Body of Christ in general, off course.

The time has come because we are nearing the end times. Those who truly seek after the one and only true God need to simply turn towards that true God and only that true God. It seems as if God is quiet in these days. I believe that He has been very quiet and He has been very quiet – deliberately. He is allowing those who, down deep within their heart, truly desire to have the opportunity to truly seek Him and Him alone. These people are getting tired of the way church and the problems that have evolved within the church, has become. They simply want God, the Father, Jesus, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The bottom line is that we need to – no, we must - simply return to the full understanding and meaning of the full Bible – from Genesis to Revelation. Yes, that is what I am saying - the full Bible. I am not saying that we are to simply read only the New Testament. I am not saying that we need to read only some of the New Testament letters. I am not saying that we need to only read the Old Testament. No, what I am saying is that we must, yes we must, read, take in, digest and then live out the entire Bible – Old and New Testaments.

Now, I do want to make one thing very clear. I fully believe, without a shadow of a doubt, that Jesus has fulfilled every aspect of both the Old and the New Testament. He became the final sacrifice for our sins. There is no longer the need for sacrifices such as animals or anything else in the natural realm that need to be used to bring us back into relationship with God. No, the sacrificial system ended with Jesus, who was the perfect and final sacrifice, when He went on the cross and finished it when He presented Himself to the Father three days later. That ended the sacrificial system that was brought about in the Old Testament.

Today, we are now to offer unto our God what the writers of the New Testament refer to as “spiritual sacrifices.” Yes, there are still sacrifices that need to be made unto God by each and every one of those who accept and believe in Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. It was His final human sacrifice that now brings us to the Father. Now as His people we are to continually offer and present unto Him the new sacrifices which are referred to as “spiritual sacrifices.”

We have lost this aspect of our relationship with our God. Yes, even today, as an individual who desires to be in and to serve the Living God there are always “sacrifices” that need to be presented unto Him. The scriptures refer each and every true believer to these “spiritual sacrifices.” So what are these “spiritual sacrifices” that we are now, as true believers in Christ and joint heirs of the Kingdom along with Jesus, are to now offer to Him – continually.

In Romans 12:1-2 we read, *“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.² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* We read in 1Peter 2:5 says, *“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering **spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**”*

In both of the scriptures above we see that we are now, as His people, to offer unto Him ourselves (to present ourselves), our very being, as **living sacrifices** unto Him. It is interesting to note that the word “sacrifice” infers the giving up of everything, including our very life, all that we are, for the One we are now choosing to worship. We are to worship Him and Him alone because God is the only one worthy to be worshipped.

The word “sacrifice” as found within the Bible simply means, “an act of offering to a deity (a god) something precious through the killing of an animal on an altar. It is the destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else. As we have just seen, the scriptures are clear when it states that, as His child, we are to be “living sacrifices.” What this implies is that each of us, if we are truly His, are to, even though we are living, offer unto our God our very lives to be given for His purposes and for His glory. It infers that our lives are no longer our own – we now live for and unto our God.

We are to present ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God. We are to come before our God and offer unto Him all that we are. When we go to His “altar” we must go with the concept and idea that I am to leave everything – everything - there for His purposes and for His use and for His use only. It is vital that we realize and know without a shadow of a doubt, that we can only do this through the acceptance of Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior.

The scriptures reveal to us many “spiritual sacrifices” that we are to bring to our God. Let us just name a few – the sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15); the sacrifice of thanksgiving (Psalm 116:17); the sacrifices of joy (Psalm 27:6) and the sacrifices of righteousness (Psalm 4:5). These are all “spiritual sacrifices” that must be offered unto our God only by and through the born-again spirit that has been given to us through the acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

They are sacrifices that are borne out of our spirit being and not the natural things of this earth. Only then can they truly touch the heart of God in a way that is truly pleasing to Him. We offer these “spiritual sacrifices” unto Him as our God because He alone is worthy to receive them. They are birthed and expressed from our spirit and then manifested in the natural realm unto our God.

Yes, these are just some of the “spiritual sacrifices” that now, as born again children of God, that we are to now present and worship unto Him. There are many ways of worshiping God. You see, that is the point. Our lives now as children of God are to be lives that worship and glorify and point others to Him and salvation that comes only through the blood of Jesus. Not just in music and song as most believers do, but most of all, our worship must come through our everyday lives and lifestyle.

Let’s face it. It is easy to go to a time of gathering together and sing songs, listen to music and worship God. However, we must understand that true worship of God goes far beyond simply singing and making music unto the Lord. Unfortunately, in the world we live in that is what it has become. However, if we go back to the times of Jesus we see that music and song were a very small part of the worship of God. Jesus, never really mentions the aspect of music and song in the worship of God.

In the New Testament we really do not see the writers tell us much about worshipping God through music and song. They rather speak and write mainly about the lifestyle of the believer and having faith in Jesus. This should be an indication to us today as believers. It is not singing or music that is the foundation for our worship but rather it is the lifestyle of expressing the “spiritual sacrifices” in, through and out from the true believers, to our God.

The concept of worship is not necessarily what we do but it is why we do what we do. Worship, when it comes to being a true believer in Christ and truly being a child of the most High God, is really a noun, not a verb. It is not what we do but rather it is a state of mind that we are to live our lives in.

If we return to the beginning of this essay we read of the changes that came through the “Protestant Reformation.” Since that time many things have come about. The Body of Christ has been through many twists and turns. Where we stand now is very precarious no matter if you are a Protestant, a Roman Catholic, an Eastern Orthodox or anything else that you may call yourself. We could be moving to a view that is really very far and very foreign from the truth of the full Word of God that is found and given to us through the entirety of scripture – from Genesis to Revelation

I believe a new movement may be starting, although it is really not such a “new thing.” It is simply returning to the truth that Jesus taught us as well as all the writers of the entire Bible. Jesus never did away with what was written in the scriptures. He simply expressed them in the way that they should be understood by everyone. Yes, through His final sacrifice, the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament are no longer needed to bring anyone into a relationship with God, the Father. However, every other aspect, the moral aspects of God’s Word, is still intact and is there for each of us to learn and to live by.

The New Testament writers express and explain this in new ways so that both the Jew and Gentile could understand God’s truth and enter into a relationship and lifestyle that would ultimately glorify and truly worship our God in the way(s) that He truly receives and is blessed by. Paul really never differs from God’s Word as it is found in the Old Testament scriptures. Actually, if we truly read Paul’s letters in the order that they were written, we see a man who is constantly growing in his faith, understanding his faith and maturing in his faith.

From his first letter to the Galatians to his last letter to Timothy (2Timothy) we see a man growing in his faith and learning more and more of the truth of who his and our God truly is. This is what all of us need to do – continually grow in the things of God. No one has it all – no one except God.

I encourage each of us, no matter where we may go to church on Sunday, to truly seek after our God, personally. We are never to find out who God is from someone else and then live off of that. No, rather, we are to grasp and seek after Him for ourselves. We can glean from others but we must come to know Him personally and for ourselves. We must remember that it is not where we go on Sunday that will get any of us into the presence of God, now or for eternity. No, it is truly knowing Jesus and giving all that you are to the one and only true Living God and Him alone that will be your key to entering into His presence forever and ever.