

Confessing Christ in an Antichrist Culture
“Thinking Straight in a Crooked World”
Romans 12:1-2

Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor

In Philippians 2:15, the Apostle Paul exhorted his followers: ***“Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God who live above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.”***

- “Crooked and perverse” are certainly appropriate terms to describe the generation we live in today.
- The cultural structures of our society have been taken over by those who are anti-God, anti-Christ, and who advocate for the very evil and wickedness we, as Christians oppose.
- As it has been in every generation, most of God’s people just want to live their lives in peace and be allowed to raise their children to respect God and continue to follow their way of life.
- As Christians, we now live among those who are diametrically opposed to our way of life, and we are being persecuted because our commitment to our biblical values is such a threat to them.
- However, as Paul told the Christians at Philippi, God has called us to live “above reproach” in the midst of this crooked culture; to do all we can to preserve this civilization until that last elect has heard and received the gospel and Jesus calls us to “Come forth!”

In many ways, our nation is already under God’s wrath. But while we live in the imminent expectation of the rapture of the Church, we are to be living examples to others as to how to live in this evil world without becoming a part of it.

- As long as we are continuously filled with the Holy Spirit, we can maneuver through the depths of cultural depravity without any fear of it affecting us at all.
- However, if we grieve the Holy Spirit by allowing any level of the world’s wickedness to enter our lives, we lose the effectiveness of our witness to the lost, and we also run the risk of perishing with the wicked unless we repent of our sins.
- In Romans 12:1-2, the Apostle Paul explained how those who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord can serve as “salt” to a decaying world and “light” to an ever-darkening world without becoming a part of the world.

While the term “sacrifice” is not a part of today’s Christian lexicon, the Bible says the primary duty of every born-again believer is that daily presentation of themselves as a living sacrifice unto God.

- The contemporary gospel message is, to have victory in our Christian life, we must get more of God in our life, i.e., we must feel good about our godliness.
- The biblical gospel message is, to live the victorious Christian life, we must die to ourselves, take up our cross daily, and allow Christ to live His life through us.

The Apostle Paul based his appeal upon the mercies God has shown to every believer as defined in Romans 1-11.

- Justification from the guilt and penalty of our sins and adoption into the family of God.
- Removed from the condemnation of God's Law and placed under the banner of God's love and grace.
- Indwelt by the Holy Spirit who gives us the assurance of God's presence, the surety of God's election, the confidence of God's protection, and the certainty of the Lord's return for us.
- The Holy Spirit is also our Comforter in all our trials and our Interpreter for our understanding of God's Word.
- Paul said, in light of these mercies, past, present, and future, the only reasonable thing a believer can do is to present themselves before God as a living sacrifice unto Him, and he described that as our supreme act of worship.

Notice the contrast between religion and Christianity:

- Religion says if we *do this for God*, He will *give us that*.
- Christianity says *God has given us everything* by His grace alone, through our faith alone, and in Christ alone, and because of that, our response should be to *give ourselves to Him*.
- Religion required *a living sacrifice to be killed*.
- Christianity requires *those who believe in Jesus Christ to die to themselves and then come before God to be made alive*.

If today's Christians want to be blameless and innocent, children of God, who live above reproach in a crooked and perverse generation, we must come before the Lord each day and present ourselves as a living sacrifice unto God, and that includes our soul, our body, our mind, and our will.

1. The Sacrifice of the Soul – “I beseech you therefore, brethren.”

Paul addressed his readers as “brethren,” those who had benefited from God's mercies, those who had confessed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and their “souls” were saved by God's grace.

- While the Bible does not define the nature of the human soul, seeing how the term is used in the Scriptures, we can discern that it is the part of the person that is not physical – i.e., a person does not “have” a soul, a person “is” a soul.
- In Matthew 16:26, Jesus asked, “*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*”
- The soul of every person who has ever lived or who will ever live will never die. They will live forever in heaven or hell.

2. **The Sacrifice of the Body – “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.”**

The body is that which contains our humanness, which contains our fleshly desires, which has been contaminated by inherent sin.

- In Romans 6-7, the Apostle Paul went into great detail about the evil desires of the flesh, saying:
 - *“Your soul has been redeemed by God’s grace, so let not sin reign in your body that you would obey its lust.”*
 - *“Do not present the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead.”*
- Once we are born again, our physical bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit. With our physical bodies not yet being redeemed and still infected with sin, therein lies the constant battle between the lust of the flesh and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Therefore, we lay our physical bodies on the altar each day as a living sacrifice unto God; dead to the desires of the flesh but alive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

3. **The Sacrifice of the Mind – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”**

As was our soul before we were saved, and as our bodies are today, our minds are infected by the curse of sin.

- The appeal of sin begins in the mind, and the appeal always begins with the devil’s lie. Therefore, when we yield to that sin, at that moment, we *think* we are smarter than God about that issue, and when we *think* our disobedience to God was not sin, we have just deceived ourselves.
- To renew our mind is to allow God to surface every sin we have stored in our minds and replace them with the truth of God’s Word. Then, we take every thought captive, test it by the truth of God’s Word, hold on to that which is true, and reject that which is false.
- *“Do not be conformed”* – believers are not of this world, so we should not give the impression that we agree with the spirit of the age.
- *“Be transformed.”* – believers are to be “metamorphized” – a supernatural change from the inside out.
- *“By renewing the mind”* – believers are to renovate their minds through the persistent and consistent study of God’s Word.

4. **The Sacrifice of the Will – “That you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

The evidence that we have fully presented our souls, our bodies, and our minds unto the Lord is that we have died to ourselves, and Christ can live His life through us, i.e., we accept His will for our lives.

- It matters not where we live, what we possess, or what we have or do not have, for we are convinced that whatever God has for us is far better than anything we could ever want for ourselves.
- Are you ready to say, “Lord, my soul’s desire is to glorify God and to praise Him forever?”