

# A Living Sacrifice

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There are certain things in religion that should never be changed. God's word contains all of the information that God wants mankind to have, including everything essential to learning about God's character and his plan for saving mankind. If we add to the message, we change the character of God. If we remove from the message, we subvert his commandments. Change, when it comes to the Bible, is a very bad thing.

This concept of change being bad, however, is the exception rather than the rule. Much biblical verbiage advocates change rather than denouncing it. In fact, if you do a search on the phrase "do not change" in the ESV it only appears twice, and only one of those is in reference to mankind (it's not a good reference either). Psalm 55.19 talks about those who are unwilling to change and return to God. They do not have a relationship with God, they do not want a relationship with God, and they don't care about the consequences. They simply do not want to change. It could be stated that, to a certain degree, those who are pleasing to God are people of constant change. As a matter of fact, everyone I know needs to change, at least to some degree (especially moi).

When Paul wrote to the Roman saints that they should make their lives living sacrifices, one thing he meant was that they must be a people of change (Romans 12.1-2). We understand that a living document, like the Constitution of the United States, is a document that can be changed. A living language is not only in use but is being changed by those who are using it. Living water refers to running, or changing, water. If we are to be living sacrifices, then we must be sacrifices that are capable of change. Paul makes this point clearly when he says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

The logical progression of the verse isn't very difficult to follow. If we are to please God, we must be changing or transforming. If we are to be transformed, then we must renew our minds. If we are to renew our minds, then we must be conducting tests to determine the will of God. What should we be testing? Everything! We should be testing things like Camp Takula. We should be testing things like the couples' retreat. Things like our Bible classes, the Lord's Supper, conversations with co-workers this past week, decisions made about money, the jokes that were told, jokes that were laughed at, one's understanding of certain Bible passages or topics should all be tested. There is nothing that is off limits, and there is no time that is inappropriate.

If we aren't constantly conducting tests, we will never change. Yet we must change because we are imperfect. We are imperfect in our desires and in our knowledge compared to the standard of perfection set by Christ. If we are to imitate him, we must be constantly changing as we grow and as we learn. We must be constantly asking questions. We must be constantly testing and reexamining issues that have been "settled" long ago. None of this should be done to "stir up trouble"; it ought to be done because that's what we're told to do. If we never reexamine anything, then we will never learn or gain any of the great insights which are to be found in the scriptures. If we never learn, then we will never grow.

God's word is settled in heaven (and there's no mistaking that), but God's immutability does not transfer directly into our infallibility of either comprehension or knowledge. If we begin to think that we have it all figured out, we tread on dangerous ground. Not only do we cease to change and, perhaps, even suppose to be God's equal, but if we cease to change, then we are no longer living sacrifices; we stagnate and die. We must be people who are constantly changing, constantly growing and constantly becoming more and more like Jesus every day.