

## Acceptable to God – I Peter 2:4-5

### I. Introduction:

- A. You have just spent half hour at the grocery store, looking for the supplies you need for a camping trip.
1. You have been planning this little get-away for a month, and in your pocket is the cash you've been laying aside to pay for it.
    - a. As you go through the store, you are displeased at the quality of choices & some of the empty shelves.
    - b. And there are all the store employees with those huge carts blocking the aisles, slowing you down.
    - c. You are getting a little steamed.
    - d. Finally, you've found all on your list that this store has in stock, so you head to the check-out.
  2. But all of the checkers have long waiting lines, so you push your cart down to the self-check-out section.
    - a. You are half way through scanning and bagging your choices when you realize that this is one of those machines which will only take a credit card, not the cash in your pocket.
    - b. Angrily, you ask yourself: "What right does this store have to demand that I use plastic rather than good old American currency?"
  3. The fact is, this store can do whatever it likes, and you have to live with it.
- B. And of course, the opposite may also be true.
1. On a different day, you spontaneously stop at a farmer's market and see some veggies you can't pass up.
  2. But the vendor doesn't accept credit cards, and you have no cash, so you have to find an ATM and then go back to buy those few organic brussels sprouts.
  3. That farmer can demand payment in cash if he so chooses. He can even demand gold coins if he wants.
  4. His choices may limit his sales, but that is his right.
- C. The grocery store and the farmer are within their rights when it comes to payment options.
1. They are kings. They are sovereign over their little, tiny dominions.
  2. But we also have rights within their realms. For instance we can choose not to buy their products.
  3. We can choose to go to another store or another vendor.
- D. Peter makes a comment, almost in passing, which is really quite impactful.
1. It takes us back to this subject of acceptable payment options. It takes us to *"sovereign authority."*
  2. But this time, we are talking about the King of kings and Lord of lords.
    - a. We are talking about real sovereignty.
    - b. Not over a tiny dominion, but over Heaven and earth. This is about time and eternity.
  3. Peter says that Christians have the opportunity and responsibility to *"offer up spiritual sacrifices."*
  4. But he adds, they are *"acceptable to God by (or through) Jesus Christ."*
  5. The service we render to God is **ONLY acceptable** to God when offered to God through Christ Jesus.
- E. **Paul** is a little more bold about this business than Peter is, at least in this text.
1. In *I Timothy*, Paul says, *"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*
  2. Among the many imitation gods, idols and false gods, Jehovah/Elohim is sovereign over all things.
  3. He **REALLY is God** – with authority and power over life and death and everything in between.
  4. Also, Jehovah is so holy, so supreme, so omnipotent and so above you and me that it is inconceivable that sinners like us should even think about approaching Him.
  5. There is no human authority or earthly currency which can buy our way into His presence.
  6. We have no more access to God than a sow bug has ability to fly to the moon.
- F. But, in His sovereignty and in His grace, God has established a means of access.
1. *"There is ... one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*
  2. As mere creatures, we **need** God more than we need life itself.

3. And that God, Jehovah, **THE God**, the sovereign God, has graciously determined to permit us to come to Him – **but ONLY through** His Son, the Lord Jesus.
4. Peter speaks of one aspect of this access through which we have something acceptable to offer God.
5. But in order to fully grasp that thought, we have to take that thought another step back.

## II. You and I, personally, are acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ.

- A. Paul's statement to Timothy which I have quoted twice, comes in a context of personal acceptance.
  1. **I Timothy 2:3** – *“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;*
    - a. *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*
    - b. *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*
    - c. *Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*
    - d. *Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle...”*
  2. Because we are sinners, and therefore alien from the God, we need special permission to approach.
  3. That permission, is through the God-man, Jesus Christ.
  4. And the currency of that permission is His own shed blood; the blood of Calvary.
- B. I trust that you are familiar with this point, so I am not going to dwell on it very long.
  1. Jesus is *“the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by him” (John 14:6).*
  2. *“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).*
  3. **II John 1:9** – *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”*
  4. Of course I could multiply scriptures like these.
- C. The gospel of Christ is a warm, inviting and wonderful thing, which has drawn people to the Lord for thousands of years.
  1. But we need to remember that at the same time it is considered to be mean, divisive and obnoxious.
  2. It is absolutely essential that as evangelists we maintain the negative aspect as much as the positive.
  3. Sinners have **no access** whatsoever to God **except** through the merits and death of Christ Jesus.
  4. And we are all sinners before God.
  5. There is only one way for us to be acceptable to God, and that is through Jesus Christ.
- D. Christians, true saints of God, know this to be true.
  1. But they sometimes forget that there is **STILL nothing** they can do to please God except through Christ.
  2. He is the only currency acceptable to God. This evening I will briefly point out only three scriptures.

## III. THANKSGIVING is only acceptable to God when it is offered through Jesus Christ.

- A. In **Luke 18**, the Lord Jesus presented a parable to those who proudly trusted in their personal merit.
  1. He said, *“Two men went up into the temple to PRAY.”*
  2. Ordinarily we would say that prayer is a good thing, and thanksgiving is the best part of prayer.
  3. *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.”*
  4. *“God, I thank thee.”*
  5. Despite that man's introductory remark, God did not accept this thanksgiving.
- B. Among other things, it didn't meet the qualifications specified in **Colossians 3:17**.
  1. *“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”*
  2. **Colossians 3** is filled with warm exhortations for Christians to serve and glorify God.
    - a. *“Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”*
    - b. *“Set your affections on this above, not on things on the earth.”*

3. Paul uses some strong verbs: “*mortify*,” “*put off*,” “*lie not*,” “*put on*,” “*forbear*” and “*forgive*.”
    - a. “*And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness,*
    - b. *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*”
    - c. “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*”
  4. At that point he says, “***Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.***”
  5. Every act of service and every expression of thanksgiving will be unacceptable to God when not carried to Him through our mediator, the Lord Jesus.
- C. It may not be practical to deliberately, verbally and specifically dedicate everything we do to God’s glory through the merits of the Saviour.
1. I can’t remember if it was real or imaginary, but my mind wants reminds me of people in Bible school who tried to thank God before slurping water at the drinking fountain.
  2. That is not particularly practical or necessary.
  3. And yet, we need to train our hearts to think of the Lord throughout the day, and whenever possible to dedicate what we are doing to God through Christ.
  4. We need to begin each day thinking about how we might glorify God the Father through God the Son.
  5. We need to end each day praising God for victories He has given us in Christ.
  6. With real and absolute humility, we should be able to pray, “*God I thank thee, through the Lord Jesus, that I am not the man I once was or the man I was heading to become an extortioner, unjust, an adulterer, or even as a publican.*”

#### IV. Any of our **SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES** are acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ.

- A. Peter says, “*Ye also, as lively stone, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*”
1. On my very best day, I am not a worthy priest before the Lord.
  2. His magnificence, His majesty, His perfections and His holiness are so far above my best, it is a wonder He doesn’t wear a Hazmat suit to protect Himself from me.
  3. When I offer the spiritual sacrifice of thanksgiving, it is contaminated as it leaves my heart and my lips, because it often is about the joy it has afforded me.
  4. When I offer my tithes and offerings, it is tainted because I do it without thought and therefore without joy.
  5. When I give Him my service on the Lord’s day, it is not perfect, because I still keep so much of that day for myself.
  6. When I preach a reasonably good message, I measure it by your response and my pleasure in it.
  7. If it is not offered to God, preached through the Holy Spirit and presented through the Lord Jesus Christ, my contamination of the thing spoils it.
  8. **Peter** says in **4:11** – “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any minister, let him do it as the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*”
  9. Paul adds, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*” through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Please turn to I read **Philippians 1:11**, because I’d like you to see it as you hear it.
1. I am going to read it in one way and then again another way.
  2. Remember that the punctuation marks we have in our Bible were not a part of the original Greek.
  3. “*Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ – unto the glory and praise of God.*”
    - a. Reading it in that way we learn that the fruits of our righteous service are through Jesus Christ.
    - b. That is certainly the truth. He is the vine and we are the branches.
    - c. And perhaps that is the way the verse should be read. But listen again.

4. *“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness – which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.”*
  - a. With this inflection, we are reminded that our works of righteousness bring glory and praise to God the Father through Christ Jesus.
  - b. That is also the truth.

## V. Conclusion

- A. People who have been born again, are saints of God only because of the merits of the Saviour.
  1. His death has given us life, and the life we live is actually His life.
  2. *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*
- B. At the same time, those saints of God need to remember that everything within that life, is made holy and acceptable only through Christ Jesus.
  1. Whatever is done for God cannot be done at the same time for ourselves.
  2. What is done strictly for ourselves is not glorifying to Him.
  3. Our thanksgiving is acceptable to the Father only when purified through Christ.
  4. Our spiritual sacrifices become holy and acceptable only through our mediatorial Great High Priest.
- C. We need to learn to live in this light.
  1. It needs to become a part of us; a part of our hearts, as it appears to have been in Peter.
  2. He didn't go out of his way to teach this thought, as I have tried to do this evening.
  3. It simply flowed out his heart which was continually surrendered to God's will and for His glory.
  4. He says without apparent emphasis because it was so ingrained in him, *“offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”*