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## A Sweet Orange?

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of you mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:1-2*

One of the weaknesses in many skeptics is the fact that they have never tried the very thing that they are criticizing. It is easy to pass judgment and condemn things about which we know precious little. Mark Twain was once asked if he thought that Christian principles were some of the best a person could practice. His reply was, "I don't know; I've never seen them tried." The fact is that no Christian has ever followed Christ perfectly, but that is not so much a commentary on Christian principles as it is a confession of the weakness in men.

The story is told of an infidel who was lecturing to a great audience. He finished his address and then invited any who had questions to ask to come to the platform. After a short interval a man who had been well known in the town as a notorious drunkard, but who had lately been converted, stepped forward. He took an orange from his pocket and began to peel it. The lecturer asked him to propound his question, but without replying to him the man finished peeling his orange and then ate it. When he had finished his orange, he turned to the lecturer and asked him if it was a sweet orange. Very angry, the lecturer retorted, "Idiot, how can I know whether it was sweet or sour when I never tasted it?" To this the converted drunkard answered, "And how can you know anything about Christ if you have not tried him?"

Presenting our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord Jesus Christ is the only revealed path to proving what truly is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. We may have certain notions about what following Christ is all about and some of them may be true, founded in the word of God, and some of them may be false, based on what men say or think. The only way to know whether the orange is sweet or sour is to taste it. Unless we are submitted to Christ and his word we are not being nourished by the strength and health that it provides.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul talked about how he had counted everything as loss that he might gain Christ. He said, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14).

The presenting of ourselves as living sacrifices may sometimes seem crazy and at other times seem hypocritical to the world. We always seem to be striving for but never quite reaching perfection. We understand that pressing along on the road toward the goal is fraught with potholes, rough patches of road and dangerous curves. It is repentance that keeps us on the path, and it is the promise of forgiveness that encourages us in our wearisome journey. As Peter admonishes us, "...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:2-3).