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## A Living Sacrifice

### Romans 12:1-2

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### Introduction

Romans 12:1-2 is a plea by Paul to sacrifice our bodies to God. But the basis of it is the mercies of God.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

—Romans 12:1-2

There are three Principles in this passage:

1. Sacrifice Your Body to the Lord
2. Sacrifice Your Mind to the Lord
3. Sacrifice Your Will to the Lord

### A. Sacrifice Your Body to the Lord (12:1)

Paul asks the believers in Rome to present their bodies as a sacrifice to God. He doesn't use force or fear as a motivator but God's mercies. Paul uses the word "therefore" to point us back to God's mercies.

#### GOD'S MERCIES

1. Rom 11:27 - I take away their sins (mercy)
2. Rom 11:30 - You once disobeyed God but now have received **mercy**
3. Rom 11:31 - they too have now disobeyed, resulting in **mercy** to you, so that they also may now receive **mercy**.
4. Rom 11:32 - God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may have **mercy** on all.
5. Rom 1:7 - He gave his divine love.
6. Rom 3, 4, 5, & 6 - He gave grace repeatedly.
7. He gave peace, comfort, hope, patience, kindness, freedom, righteousness, and justification (chapters 1 through 11).
8. "Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways!" (Romans 11:33)

Paul urges the believers to sacrifice. This is a relational but urgent appeal. The word is like a father putting his arm around the shoulder of a son and pointing to Christ's past mercies toward us, the present response of sacrificing our body, and finally, to God's future will for them.

The appeal is to continually present our bodies, not just flesh and bones, but our whole person. The word 'present' is a temple sacrificial term. It means to surrender fully and hold nothing back.

**Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and [present] your members to God as instruments for righteousness (Romans 6:13, emphasis added).**

The OT sacrificial system of presenting bulls, goats, lambs, turtledoves, and grain offerings was standard. The primary purpose of a sacrifice is not in losing something but in loving someone. A sacrifice expresses love and worship, not in a thing, but to God.

In the OT, animals had to be killed, and their blood poured out on the altar.

1. In contrast, he calls us to be a living sacrifice. We offer our bodies, our entire person: body, soul, mind, and will.
2. We offer God our whole self for our whole life.
3. The sacrificial system of offering dead animals is done away with at the death of Christ when the veil of the Temple is torn from top to bottom.
4. 1 Peter 2:5 says we are priests who offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
5. Abraham offered Issac on the altar as a living sacrifice.

**The sacrifice of our bodies is to be living, holy, and acceptable.**

1. Animals offered to God in the OT had to be first fruits, animals without a blemish.  
When you **present** a blind animal for **sacrifice**, is it not wrong? And when you **present** a lame or sick animal, is it not wrong? (Micah 1:8)
2. We are only holy through Christ. So, we examine our hearts, confess our sins, repent, and receive forgiveness. A living, holy life given to the Lord as a sacrifice will be acceptable.
3. This is your true worship, your logical response.

## **B. Sacrifice Your Mind to the Lord (12:2a)**

**2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...**

1. Paul warns us not to be conformed by the world system or squeezed into its image.
  - a. "World" is translated as "age," which means the present sinful world system dominated by Satan, the god of this world.
  - b. Conforming or masquerading as the world expects or demands is not pleasing to God.
  - c. This present secular world believes here and now is all that there is or will be. They don't live with eternity in mind or God in mind. They only live with self in mind.

2. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
  - a. “Transformed” is the Greek word metamorphosis.
  - b. Metamorphosis happens when a worm becomes a butterfly.
3. A transformed and renewed mind conforms not to the world but to the Word.

**1** So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2 Set your minds on things above**, not on earthly things...**10** and have put on the new self. You are being **renewed in knowledge** according to the image of your Creator...**16** Let the **word of Christ** dwell richly among you, in all wisdom **teaching and admonishing** one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts (Col. 3:1-2, 10, 16, emphasis added).

### C. Sacrifice Your Will to the Lord (12:2b)

**2** Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

1. A sure sign of maturity in a child is when they stop getting angry when they don't get their way. That's a spiritual sign of maturity among Christians, as well. We grow up in Christ when God's will is more worth pursuing than our will.
2. Dying to self and living for Christ is a holy calling for every Christian.
  - Jesus tells his disciples he must suffer many things, be rejected, and be killed. If we aren't willing to face suffering, rejections, and death to our personal wills, we are not following Jesus.
3. When our minds are transformed by the word of God, we can more easily discern the will of God.

### D. Jesus is Our Perfect Sacrifice

1. Under the OT system, the blood of animals could cleanse people's sins to avoid judgment for one year. Jesus is the better and more perfect sacrificial lamb.

But Christ has appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation), he entered the most holy place once for all time, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12).

#### 2. Jesus is our perfect sacrifice: living, holy, and acceptable.

- a. **He was living**—the perfect human who willingly died in our place, and he gave his life on his initiative. No person took his life from him.

- b. **He is a holy sacrifice** who lived among sinful people, yet without sin. It was essential that Jesus, as the Lamb of God, live a sinless life on earth so that he could be the perfect sacrifice for all sin.
- c. The Bible expressly declares that Jesus was sinless. The writer of Hebrews tells us that **He was "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens"** (Heb. 7:26). The apostle Paul boldly asserts that **"He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us"** (2 Cor. 5:21).
- d. God's holy character requires that sin be punished (Rom. 3:4, 24-26). **Jesus paid the price on our behalf by laying down His own life, satisfying God's demand** (John 10:17-18; 2 Pe. 2:21).

## E. Our Response

- 1. For those who are not followers of Jesus, you can confidently accept the sacrifice of Jesus to pay your sin debt on your behalf. According to the Scriptures, sin must be paid for. When Jesus Christ died, He suffered as a substitute in the place of and on behalf of your sin. His death made it possible for you to be declared righteous based on your child-like faith in Him.
- 2. For followers of Jesus, you are recipients of multiple mercies of God and are declared righteous through no action of your own. Your reasonable spiritual worship is to present your body, mind, and will as a living sacrifice to God.

## Discussion Questions

- 1. Paul calls us to present our bodies as living sacrifices, but how can we practically live this out in our daily routines and choices? What might this look like in your life?
- 2. How can we resist being conformed to the patterns of this world and instead be transformed by renewing our minds? Can you identify areas where a renewed mind is particularly challenging?
- 3. How can we discern God's perfect will when our desires strongly conflict with His? Can you share an experience where sacrificing your will led to spiritual growth?
- 4. Paul uses the mercies of God as a basis for his plea. How have you experienced God's mercies in your life, and how does this impact your willingness to sacrifice for Him?
- 5. How does the concept of a living sacrifice differ from the Old Testament sacrificial system, and what implications does this have for our understanding of worship and service to God today?