

Living Sacrifice 6

Love People, Love God

Romans 13:8-14

Memory Verses: Romans 13:8

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

(Holding Crowbar) For over 7 months I've been carrying this crowbar around. Not because I'm about to start taking the stage apart or breaking into cars. But because it represents something. LEVERAGE. You see a crowbar is a pretty ordinary thing, a long piece of metal, but if you put just the right amount of pressure and weight in the right place then it becomes a tool to move the unmovable. All year we've been asking, "what happens when ordinary people put the weight of their lives behind the Gospel?" What happens when we leverage our lives for the Gospel wherever we are and wherever God takes us?

And so, for the past 5 weeks, we've been looking at Romans chapters 12 and 13 to determine what it looks like when we put the weight of our lives on the altar for Christ. There is no greater measure of leveraging your life than to throw your entire body, mind, and soul upon the altar and write a blank check to God, saying, "Take it all; I'm yours." Look at **Romans 12:1-2** again. As living sacrifices, we are no longer conformed, molded to the way of the world... no, now we are transformed to the mind of Christ. Look at **Romans 12:4-5** again. As living sacrifices, we are one body with one another in the church. We are covenant partners who stand together, using our gifts for others. Look at **Romans 12:9-13**. As living sacrifices, we live hard for Christ. We don't take a break from our faith; we don't merely exist. We resist the exist. Look at **Romans 12:21**. As living sacrifices, we do not seek vengeance, nor do we begrudgingly treat others harshly as they do us. Instead, we love our enemies, and pray for them, and show them good. And lastly, look at **Romans 13:1**. As living sacrifices, we submit to governing authorities and serve our country and community... knowing that God is our ultimate authority.

And so let's bring it all together this morning. What is Paul saying here? What is this all really about? Why sacrifice? Why serve? Why resist? Why forgive? Why engage? Why leverage our lives? Why put everything on the altar? And the answer is quite simple: for love! Look at **Romans 13:8** with me: Owe no one anything, except to love. Love is the reason we leverage our lives and live as sacrifices. Love is our motivation. More than fear, more than religion, more than being good... we want to surrender our lives to God because he has loved us! Love is our motivation, and love is our manifestation. Love is our prompting, and

love is our product. Love is what fuels us and is what is formed by us. We are given it and we owe it.

You see, here's what I've learned about leverage. It's not really about the tool itself. It's about where you put the pressure. You can have the largest crowbar there is... and we do. But if you put it in the wrong place nothing happens. And maybe that's what we are doing wrong. We have put an enormous amount of weight and pressure in the wrong places. Our careers, our houses, our bank accounts, our hobbies, our reputation, our comfort. And we've become incredibly good at leveraging our own lives for ourselves. At sacrificing our lives for ourselves. And so when Paul says owe no anything except to love he really saying... Put the leverage of your life in the place where it actually matters the most... People! The main point this morning is simple... **The Greatest Sacrifice Is Love.** This morning we are going to see three ways we can sacrifice our lives through a love for people and a love for God.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First... **Sacrificial Love Fulfills The Law.** In **Matthew 22:34-40** we see a Pharisee ask Jesus what the greatest commandment is. Love God with everything you got. And, love people as you would love yourself. And then he says, all the law and prophets... basically the whole Old Testament and 10 commandments depend on this! Depend... put the weight of our faith upon. Leverage! Jesus is saying that everything must be leveraged according to this: loving God and loving people. And so now look again at **vs8-10**. Here, we see Paul giving us a list of some of the 10 commandments; four to be exact... don't commit adultery, don't murder, don't steal, don't covet.. and he tells us... these and the other commandments are summed up in "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." And then he says... when you love people like this it fulfills the law! The bottom line is that love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love is never selfish! Love is sacrificial! I don't murder the one I'm angry with... I pray for them. I don't covet or steal what they have... I'm happy they have it. I don't steal their wife... I'm happy they have a good family and... I'm praying for their marriage.

But there is more. In **verse 13** we see that we are not only to not wrong people... but we should also not use people as objects, or engage with them in sinful activity as to defile them. As the end of **vs14** suggests... we are not to use people to gratify our desires. Again, treat people the way they want to be treated... not the way you want to treat them. Turn to **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**. Love is not self seeking. Love is a focus on others over yourself. Look at **Philippians 2:3-4**. That's love. That's a love that makes a difference. That's a sacrificial, leveraged kind of love! **The crowbar doesn't create energy... it redirects it! Love puts pressure here... to move someone there! If you want to move people toward Jesus... love them!**

Many of you in here are retired. Many of you have had that special retirement party. You worked 30 years, showed up, did the job. But at that retirement party, people aren't going to be talking about how many spreadsheets you completed, or how many accounts you closed, or how many quarterly reports you crushed. No, they are talking about how you treated them... how you influenced them... how you cared for them... how you loved them! Why? Cause the job mattered... but people matter more! Sacrifice for people by loving them the way the Bible says to love them! **The Greatest Sacrifice Is Love.**

Second... **Sacrificial Love Lives Urgently.** Look again with me at **vs11-12a**. Paul reminds us, we don't have enough time to sit around existing while people are dying without the love of Christ! We must live urgently! We must have a sense of obligation to live everyday with a mission and commission to go to people and love them like Jesus. Notice he says that we must wake from our sleep. This is "resist the exist" language! This is stop being apathetic and complacent in your walk with Christ.. and get busy about the business of salvation! Salvation is near! Meaning, the day of the Lord, the time for which God has allowed for people to be saved, is coming to an end. It's daytime for evangelism. **It's time to go to work and see people come to Christ and bring in the harvest!** You know what it's not time for... "I'll do it eventually," or "there's plenty of time," or "someone else will do it." But it is time for... "I'll love them despite their shortcomings," and "I'll be their friend though they're not very friendly," and "whatever it takes," and "this is what I'm called to," and "I owe it to them to do everything I can."

How... by loving them sacrificially! By leveraging your life for them with the love of Christ. (With Crowbar) You know what a tragedy would be? To spend your whole life holding onto the crowbar and never actually putting it under anything. You have the tool, you have the opportunity, you have the strength, you have the influence... but you never actually apply any pressure. **Don't waste a life that God intended you to leverage.** **The Greatest Sacrifice Is Love.**

Lastly... **Sacrificial Love Looks Like Jesus.** It's time to love according to the Bible. It's time to live urgently and sacrificially for others. But it's also time to love God! Again, **Matthew 22:36-37** tells us that loving God is the greatest commandment. That is why a large portion of Romans is pointing us to the cross and to our savior and to our God who loves us. We love him because he first loved us!

To fulfill the law means to love people, but first it means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. With everything! We leverage everything because we love God. We sacrifice everything because we love God. And what is one of the greatest ways we can show

God that we love him? By trying to look like him! Look at the end of **vs12b**. Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light! In other words, take off the clothes that dishonor God and put on the clothes that are fitting of his glory! What is this armor of light? **Ephesians 6:10-18a**. This is what it means to love God by being clothed with the power of his spirit. This is why the chapter ends in **vs14** with put on the Lord Jesus Christ! Put on the salvation and character of our Lord and look like Him! **When we model Christ for all to see, we show him and others that he is our first love!**

But I don't want you to lose the bigger picture either. When we love Christ first and model him for others to see... they will be further drawn to Christ! And I think that's the whole point! We genuinely love others more when we love Christ first! And **The greatest way we can show love to others is by loving Christ and modeling Him for them!** Love people, love God... It's not that hard. **The Greatest Sacrifice Is Love.**

Application

The bottom line is this. You are not your own... you were bought with a price. You are a living sacrifice. You have been crucified with Christ and now you no longer live, but Christ lives in and through you! You have put yourself on the altar and you have agreed to leverage your life for the Gospel! So we love one another in the church. So we love our enemies and pray for them. So we submit to our authorities and love our country and community. So we love our neighbors as ourselves. So we wake up from our sleep and live with urgency to see people come to Christ! So we clothe ourselves with Christ and love our God with sincerity!

Conclusion

In 1945, during the Battle of Okinawa, there was an Army medic named Desmond Doss, who refused to carry a weapon because of his convictions. When the army came under devastating fire, they had to retreat from the ridge where they had been fighting, leaving behind 75 wounded soldiers. Doss stayed. He moved through the battlefield under enemy fire, found the wounded, dragged them to the edge of the cliff, and lowered them down one at a time. Each time he returned, he prayed, "Lord, please help me get just one more." Later, in his own words, Doss said, "They were my men, and I couldn't go off and leave them even if it cost me my life." By the end all 75 men were rescued by one man, without a weapon, who was willing to sacrifice everything, even his own life for others.

Why do we sacrifice our lives for Christ? Why do we leverage our lives for the Gospel? Because there is one more to rescue. We owe it to them to love them with the love of Christ! **The Greatest Sacrifice Is Love.**