

Living Sacrifice 1

Live Sacrificially

Romans 12:1-2

Memory Verses: Romans 12:1-2

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

(Carrying a baseball bat) Imagine learning to play the game of baseball ever since the day you could stand and swing a bat. The first thing laid in your crib was a ball and a glove. You were playing t-ball before you were talking in complete sentences. Then the rest of your life, every weekend, every summer, every holiday, was built around travel ball. Every conversation, every event, every memory... was about baseball. Baseball was not a hobby or even a game... it was life. This is the story of thousands of kids today. Why? Because if they ever want to make it to the big leagues... this is what it takes. Just ask Benny Frey. Frey sacrificed everything he had in his life to become a professional ball player. Everything. Time, childhood, relationships, everything... and it worked. He played in the major leagues from 1929 to 1936... seven years. His career ended abruptly because of an arm injury. A year later he took his own life. Why? Because his whole identity had become being a Major League Baseball player and when that was no longer a possibility he couldn't find one reason to keep on living. Baseball cost him everything... in the end, even his own life. And it's not just Benny Frey. He was one of the first, but since Frey there have been upwards of 74 more to do the same. That's upwards of 75 people who we have to consider the possibility that they ended their lives because they couldn't live without a future in baseball.

I'm trying to get my mind around this. 75 human beings, within the past 100 years, who sacrificed their lives for a game, and then took their lives when they no longer could play it. How is that possible? Why would they do this? And the only answer I can plausibly come up with is this... **whatever captures your heart eventually commands your life.** This is one of those phrases that we've used a lot here at Stone Creek and seems to come up over and over again.

Why? Because this is a human reality... a default setting if you will. If we let something capture our hearts... we will then let it take over our lives. From Adam to Paul, we can't stop letting things capture us and take over our lives. In other words... we all live sacrificially. We all give our lives over to the things that we believe and love. So the question isn't, are you living sacrificially... the question is who or what is your sacrifice for?

And that brings us right to Romans chapter 12. You see, for

eleven chapters Paul has been telling us about everything Christ has done for us. How Jesus has fulfilled the law on our behalf and become our substitutionary atonement and given us his Holy Spirit and how he has kept every promise in choosing us for his Glory! And now for the first time Paul turns to the church and says "okay, so what will your life look like now?" Now that we know all of this... how are we going to live our lives differently? And so for the next six weeks we are going to contemplate what a life transformed by the gospel actually looks like. Not a perfect life or a religious life... but a surrendered life. A life sacrificed to Christ. So, what will your life look like as a living sacrifice for the sake of Christ? So with that said... let's look at our scripture for today. Let's read **Romans 12:1-2**. Our main point for today, as we begin, is simply this... **The Gospel Calls Us To Place All Of Our Life On The Altar For Christ.** Today we see two fundamental changes that must take place if we are going to live sacrificially for Christ.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First, in order to live sacrificially for Christ... **We Must Surrender Our Bodies To Christ.** Look with me at **vs1**. Paul begins with "therefore." Again, he is changing gears. Everything I've said before has led us to this. If Jesus is and has done what **Romans 1-11** says he is and has done... then how are you going to respond? Paul has a suggestion. Present yourselves as living sacrifices. Those who heard this would not at first understand what Paul was saying. It is a contradiction. Sacrifices are dead... therefore they cannot live. Something cannot be both dead and alive... can it? Can it? Well, we have a term for that in our pop culture saturated society don't we... Zombie. It's dead but alive... and it wants to eat your brains apparently.

Perhaps you noticed the graphics package for this series is a little out of the box isn't it? Well that is for a reason. This verse. You see, back in the day there was a band I liked called Audio Adrenaline and one of their songs was called "Some Kind of Zombie." It was about the fact that though we are alive in Christ, we are also dead to our sins. We still live our lives even though we have given our lives away. It's a contradiction. Like a living sacrifice, we are both dead and alive... we, are in a way, all some kind of zombies. And we are represented by our series mascot... a zombie lamb that I've rightfully named **Zambi**.

You see, in Paul's days, even after Jesus had become the lamb slain for the world, the Jews were still sacrificing lambs for their atonement. The lamb was the most popular, most important sacrifice. But in order for that lamb to be sacrificed... it had to be killed. Paul is saying... that we are like lambs slain in sacrifice... that then get back up off the pile and live both dead and alive. And of course this is all figurative.

So what is Paul really saying? Paul is saying... in order to live lives leveraged for the Gospel... we must give all of our life to Christ on the altar! **Galatians 2:20** is one of the best verses in the Bible and one you should

memorize right now! I've been crucified with Christ. I no longer live as myself. I now live as Christ wants me to live. A living sacrifice doesn't give some... he must give all! **Jesus doesn't want a part of you... he wants all of you.** Why? So he can live his life through you! Me and Lisa celebrated 24 years this year. Steve and Laurie 50 years! Wow! Can y'all remember 50 years... cause it's hard for me to remember 24. Let's try... Imagine me and Lisa getting married and the pastor asks, "Shevi, will you give yourself to Lisa, yadda yadda... till death do you part?" And I answer, "well.. the best I can do is the weekends and some paychecks. Maybe a flower here and there and perhaps an anniversary or two." Is that going to cut it? Of course not. She would've left me right there. And she should. Marriage isn't a negotiation. There's a reason they call the place where you get married an altar. Because you sacrifice your life to the other person... not just some pieces... all of it! God isn't asking for an hour on Sundays or an offering in the plate or a prayer here or there. No, he's asking for you! All of you!

And notice that Paul specifically says, offer your bodies as living sacrifices. God wants your body! The first part to living sacrificially is to surrender your actual body to Christ on the altar. Effectively making it... no longer your body! It's not your, it's his! That is why the church is called the Body of Christ! We are his body! Why bodies? Because bodies are where our worship becomes visible. Where belief becomes action.

Giving your body for obedience to the Lord is... your spiritual act of worship! Worship isn't just singing or lifting hands... it's everything you do with your body that glorifies the Lord! And that's hard. Your body's have desires and reactions that need to be controlled. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 9:27** that we should beat our bodies into submission and make it our slaves. Why? So it is a submissive sacrifice for the sake of Christ! So it can be leveraged for the Gospel. Bodies determine your work ethic, your speech, your screen time, where you go, who you go with, what you do. This is why we have maintained as one of our core values; **authentic worship is a lifestyle of joyful obedience, not reluctant religious observance.** When your body is surrendered to Christ as a living sacrifice... you can choose to worship God through your actions of obedience. Over time these acts of obedience with your body, your spiritual act of worship, becomes natural, joyful, obedient. Not forced!

The bottom line is clear... you do not belong to Jesus if your body isn't his to command! In Christ, there is no such thing as my body my choice! In Christ, we are all his body, and His Spirit guides us to do his will! Therefore... **The Gospel Calls Us To Place All Of Our Life On The Altar For Christ.**

Second, in order to live sacrificially for Christ... **We Must Surrender Our Minds To Christ.** Now, look with me at **vs2**. Paul moves from our bodies to our minds. Paul begins by pleading with us to no longer be conformed to the thinking of the world. The word conformed gives us a picture of something being pressed into a mold. Like PlayDoh pushed into a cookie cutter. The world has a mold, doesn't it. Success, comfort, popularity, more money, more entertainment, more followers, more likes, more possessions. Think like the world... look like the world!

Think about white tennis shoes. If you mow the grass in them they turn what color? Green. If step in mud they turn what color? Brown. If you walk on fresh asphalt they turn... black? The shoes didn't choose to change colors, they simply absorbed whatever environment they walked through. Do you ever wonder how you started thinking just like everyone else you are around? Simple. You've been walking in the culture so long that you've taken on its mold and absorbed its colors without even noticing it. Again... **whatever shapes your thoughts will eventually steer your life!** Have your thoughts been shaped by the world or by Christ?

We need to have our minds transformed, renewed. We need to get out of the mold! This isn't behavior modification, rather this is spiritual rehabilitation. Look at **Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:2, and Proverbs 23:7.** We have to surrender our minds to Christ and let him transform us through His Spirit. This means we must put more of Christ's thoughts in our mind than the world's. This means we read the Bible more and social media less. This means we absorb Christ glorifying content more and fleshly garbage less. This means we worship more than we are entertained, we pray more than we play, we minister more than we meander, we share and care more than we shop and slop. However you have to do it... you need to absorb more Jesus and less world or you will never be a successful living sacrifice! **If the world can capture your way of thinking, it will capture your way of living.** And if you are living for the world... you can't be a living sacrifice for Christ! This is why... **The Gospel Calls Us To Place All Of Our Life On The Altar For Christ.**

Application

So... it's simple! You want to live a life after Christ? You want to leverage your life for the Gospel? Then you must place your life on the altar and surrender your body. You must refuse the world's mold and surrender your mind. And God promises that if you do that he will transform your life so that you can discern and delight in his will!

Conclusion

Let's go back to the start of this message. This (baseball bat) isn't evil. There's nothing wrong with baseball or any other sport. In fact, there's nothing wrong with a career or success or hobbies or money or retirement or

dreams. The problem isn't the bat... the problem is when we build our entire life around something that can't satisfy our souls and in the end doesn't really matter. Francis Chan once said, "Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter."

All it takes is one injury, one layoff, one diagnosis, one funeral and suddenly everything you've been living for could be gone. And you are left asking.. who am I now? You're asking the wrong question. Paul says the question isn't "what have I been living for?" the question is "who have I been offering my life to?" (Put the bat down) This is what Romans 12 is asking you to do. Put the thing you've made your life about down. Not because it's bad, but because Jesus is better. (Pick up crow bar) This is what life is all about. Leveraging your life for Christ. Church, we have to get real. God cannot leverage a life that has never been surrendered to him! **The Gospel Calls Us To Place All Of Our Life On The Altar For Christ.**