

How Do You Offer Yourself As A Living Sacrifice?

Romans 12

In the Old Testament, all sacrifices were involuntary. No animal volunteered to be sacrificed.

However, we do get a glimpse of a living sacrifice.

What Does The Bible Say?

Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am." 2 "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you." (Genesis 22:1-2 NLT)

9 When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice.

11 At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from

heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!” 12 “Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said. “Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God.

You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.”

(Genesis 22:9-12 NLT)

We are ready to present ourselves as a living sacrifice when we withhold nothing from God.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. (Romans 12:1 NLT)

We serve God because of gratitude.

2 Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:2 NLT)

Therefore, we allow Him to change who we are.

How Can You Obey?

3 Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. (Romans 12:3 NLT)

7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

(Romans 12:7–8 NLT)

Understand how we are to see ourselves.

9 Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. 10 Love each other with

genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

(Romans 12:9–10 NLT)

Understand how we see others.

15 Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! (Romans 12:15–16 NLT)

Understand how we are part of God's family.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

This week's Talking Theology is from Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 57.

Verses used in Bible & Science:

Then God gave the people all these instructions: 2 “I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. 3 “You must not have any other god but me. (Exodus 20:1–3 NLT)

4 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. 5 Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? 6 What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone 7 as the morning stars

sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? (Job 38:4–7 NLT)

9 This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels. (Revelation 12:9 NLT)

12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12 NLT)

37 Jesus replied, “ ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matthew 22:37–38 NLT)

Explore:

We Should Respond to God's Mercy by Giving All to Him (Romans 12:1-2)

The word therefore in verse 1 indicates a key transition in this epistle. The practical teachings that follow have their basis in the doctrinal content given in the previous chapters. Here, Paul alluded to the Old Testament sacrificial system to help his readers understand how they were to respond to all God has done for us. Those mercies are outlined in chapters 1 through 11. In the Old Testament system, the burnt offering was to be completely devoted to God. It all belonged to Him.

Considering this example, followers of Christ are to do the same, offering all we have and all we are to God. And, likewise, we are to do so without compromise or negotiation. However, instead of an animal that was an involuntary sacrifice with no control over its own life, we are encouraged to willingly give our lives

completely to God. This is to be a conscious, rational, thoughtful, and intelligent offering of one's self as an act of worship (verse 1). Then, as we learn and apply God's Word we are transformed to think and act more and more like Christ (verse 2).

This type of offering can only happen as the believer understands the necessary changes to be made, one of which is negative and the other is positive. The negative admonition is do not be conformed to this world. This conforming speaks of the individual assuming attitudes and behaviors that do not match who he or she is in Christ. The underlying danger is that believers will allow the present evil system that pervades this world to shape and mold them into sinful patterns.

Instead, the believer should be transformed with- in and without. This speaks of a total transformation and is the Greek word from which we get the word metamorphosis. The word is intended to

convey a change from within that becomes visible from without. This type of transformation begins in the mind, the seat of intellectual and moral judgment. The Holy Spirit uses the truths of the Word of God to shape and transform our thinking. That leads to a change of our hearts and lives. As believers' minds are transformed through God's Word, prayer, and Christian fellowship, they come to approve and desire God's will for their lives, rather than their own plans or purposes. There can be no greater fulfillment than to be experiencing a daily, close walk with the Lord. This only happens, however, through nonconformity to the world and through transformation that occurs by the Holy Spirit through God's Word.

Explore:

The opening exhortation to be a living sacrifice finds its roots and significance in the Old Testament sacrificial system. The Lord's instruction, given in Leviticus 1:6-9, includes the elements of

order, arrangement, cleansing, and totality. These details portray the seriousness of the sacrifice. A living sacrifice is no different in this regard. There are specific commands and principles the Lord wants us to follow as believers.

Explore:

We Should Respond to God's Mercy by Using Our Gifts to Serve (Romans 12:3-8)

As believers we are called to serve God and the others who make up His body. It is this encouragement to service and the use of one's spiritual gifts that Paul focused on in this section.

His first instruction is to have an appropriate attitude and view of oneself. Having already established the importance of renewing our minds and thoughts (verse 2), he emphasized a spirit of humility in how we view ourselves and in the use of our gifts (verse 3).

The grace of which Paul spoke in verse 3 is the grace that saved him and made him an apostle of Jesus Christ. As an apostle, he could warn the Romans about thinking more highly of themselves than they should. Instead, all believers must view themselves soundly and humbly, understanding their faith and giftedness come from God and are to be used to serve the Lord in the manner in which He sees fit.

Paul emphasized the reality that God had given believers all they had as expressions of His grace, including their spiritual gifts. He then reminded them of the importance of having unity, even with the diversity of gifts God had given them (verses 4-6). Using the illustration of the human body, Paul spoke of every believer having specific functions in the body of Christ. He referenced that they were members of one another. The term gifts in verse 6 referred to the special abilities given by God to serve Him, many of which were listed in verses 6 through 8.

God, as a result of His grace, allots these gifts for use in ministry to the body.

From this summary, Paul alluded to some specific gifts of grace and reminded the readers of the need to exercise their gifts faithfully and enthusiastically. While this list is not exhaustive, below are those Paul felt necessary to mention in writing to the Roman believers along with a brief definition drawn from interpretations of how these gifts are often evidenced.

Prophecy—the gift of conveying to others the message from God in either a foretelling (especially in the Old Testament) or a preaching of God’s revealed truth.

Ministry or service—this term speaks of helping others or carrying out specific duties of service to the church.

Teaching—imparting the truth of God’s message to people with the intended purpose of understanding and clarification.

Exhorting or encouraging—often used as simple encouragement but likely speaks specifically of encouraging and urging people to live as taught in the Scriptures.

Giving—the idea of giving with generosity. While all believers are to give, there are those that are especially gifted to make money specifically for the purpose of generosity to the Lord's work.

Leading—to manage something well with a strong emphasis on caring.

Showing mercy—demonstrating kindness, especially toward the sick and needy.

For other lists of spiritual gifts in Scripture, see 1 Corinthians 12:4-31, Ephesians 4:11-16, and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Explore:

We Should Respond to God's Mercy With Christlike Conduct (Romans 12:9-21)

In this section Paul focused on how a life transformed by the gospel responds to God's blessings. The relationships mentioned, and the corresponding instructions, provide insight for believers in their interactions with both other believers and nonbelievers. Exhortations range from love for other Christians to hospitality to strangers, all with a series of short commands that include both positive and negative exhortations. The whole of this section is rooted in the primacy of love in all of our relationships.

In verse 9, the specific action is love, the primary ingredient for relational success. This love has been best demonstrated by God and should be practiced without hypocrisy. In other words, the love of a believer should be akin to God's love and must be done without any pretense, insincerity, or showmanship. The one who sincerely loves God and others should also hate evil and cling to what is good.

The apostle began to deal with relationships within the church in verse 10. The same type of love demonstrated by God must be demonstrated to fellow believers. Paul commanded brotherly love or family affection, a term that spoke of being bound by family ties. In loving like this, the child of God will find him or herself giving honor or preference to one another instead of seeking it for themselves. This same principle was taught by Paul in Philippians 2:3-4 and should be emulated by every believer. This act alone would either repair or prevent division

that Satan loves to cause in the church today. (See also 1 Peter 1:22.)

In verses 11-12, Paul spoke of remaining patient or steadfast as we serve the Lord with diligence. While this principle could be applied to any hardship, commentators feel it was likely the apostle had persecution in mind. The only way to remain steadfast is for the believer to be constant in prayer. It is God who enables the believer to stay true to the faith. Paul then admonished the church to be hospitable to outsiders and generous with one another (verse 13).

In verses 14-17, Paul's instructions were more generic and included those outside the church. When facing adversity and persecution, the typical way of responding to those persecuting us is to reciprocate and treat them in a similar fashion. In contrast, Paul encouraged the reader to bless or speak well of these individuals and not to curse them. Scholars believe Paul

may have had Jesus or Stephen in mind when penning these words. What an example they provided of blessing, rather than cursing, their persecutors.

Verse 15 serves as a reminder that the believer must be able to empathize with others, whether they follow Christ or not.

Practicing this type of empathy leads to rejoicing with others when things are good and to weeping with others when things are bad. Living in such a way will enable believers to live in harmony with one another (verse 16).

Paul's exhortation went even further in directing our attitudes and actions toward those we may consider to be enemies (verses 17-21). While the governing authorities follow the Old Testament principle of "an eye for an eye," Paul commanded individual believers not to repay evil for evil. We are instead to strive for peaceful relationships with everyone, even when experiencing opposition and hatred from others (verses 17-18).

While the natural tendency is to “distribute justice” ourselves, it is God who has the final word and He has promised to avenge His followers (verse 19).

While the fleshly tendency is to respond negatively to those who would harm or oppose us, the apostle encouraged the believer to act contrary to this tendency. This is demonstrated as the Christian feeds the hungry enemy and gives him water to drink. In doing this, the enemy of the gospel may become ashamed and penitent. It is possible that Paul had in mind an Egyptian ritual in which a person showed penitence by carrying a pan of burning charcoal on his head. In summary, verse 21 asserts the need for the believer to respond with love and blessing as opposed to hate and revenge.

Explore:

God established the church to make disciples and transfer the faith. He allows us to be part of that process as we use the gifts

and abilities He gave us to serve Him and His church. Encourage parents and grandparents to discuss this truth with family members at home.

Explore:

Gifts are not to be utilized just as a matter of routine but in being Christlike. Paul gives nearly 20 examples, then sums these all up in v. 21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

The qualities form a composite just as “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22–23). In fact, the “fruit” of the Christian in a new servanthood to a new Master (Rom. 6:22), a new Husband (7:4) is fruit of the Spirit. Every element in the “fruit” of John 14–15 and Gal. 5 is essentially evident here—love (9), goodness (9), longsuffering and joy (12, 15), meekness (16), gentleness (18), peace (18), self-control and faithfulness throughout the list.

James E. Rosscup, *An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2008), 2038.

Question 1 of 5

How would you counter the argument that the first commandment makes God out to be selfish or that Christians are narrow-minded and intolerant?

Question 2 of 5

How does God use the Bible to make us more like Christ?

Question 3 of 5

What does it look like to surrender everything to God?

Question 4 of 5

Why is it essential for every believer to use their spiritual gifts to serve God and His church?

Question 5 of 5

Why do we need the Holy Spirit's help and power to live as God calls us to live?

