

Living Sacrifices

Romans 12:1-2

“Religion says, 'I obey; therefore I am accepted.' Christianity says, 'I'm accepted, therefore I obey.'”

--Timothy Keller

4 BIG therefore give structure to the book of Romans.

“Therefore we conclude that a man cannot be justified by the works of the law” (3:20).

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1).

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1).

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice” (12:1).

12:1 is like a hinge in Romans – it’s what connects 11 chapters of theology with all the following applications.

Big Idea: God has fully accepted us;
therefore, we live our lives for him.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Big Idea: God has fully accepted us;
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Living Sacrifices

1. Build your life on the mercies of God
... and become a living sacrifice. (v. 1)
2. Do not be conformed to this world
... but be transformed by God (v. 2a).
3. Be transformed by God
... and know the will of God (v. 2b).

1. Build your life on the mercies of God

... and become a living sacrifice (v. 1).

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Rom 12:1).

Mercy here implies not only forgiveness for the guilty, but especially tenderhearted compassion for the helpless and desperate

The Mercies of God in Romans 1-11

- I. We all need a savior because of sin (1:18-3:20).
- II. Jesus makes us righteous before God (3:21-5:21).
- III. God sets righteous people apart (6:1-8:39).
- IV. God is good, even when evil exists (9:1-11:36).

The gospel transforms the way we live (12:1-15:13).

- **What do the 11 previous chapters teach us?** Most of the past few months have focused on these previous 11 chapters.
- *The Doctrine of Sin: 1:18-3:20* → THE WAY WE FALL SHORT.
 - Gentiles condemned without the Law; 1:18-32.
 - Jews condemned with the Law; 2:1-29.
 - With or without the law, all are condemned; 3:1-20.
 - One phrase used to describe people before they are saved is to say they are: “Dead in sins”
 - This comes from ***Ephesians 2:1f***. It is seen in Romans 1-3, cf. vv. 1:18, 21; 2:1.
 - What does it mean? How far should we take it? Is man able to choose good when he is “dead in trespasses and sins?” This is a key question to the way people view *salvation*. If dead in sin = can’t do good, why does dead to sin = can’t do bad? I think the idea is one of principle (or dominion) not necessarily one of action.

- Nature of sin → It is something we choose “suppress ... exchange ... did not see fit” (vv. 18, 23, 25, 28). It is also something we are “under” (v. 3:9).
 - Sensuality - Sin is a physical evil. Sin is to be overcome by destroying the influence of the body on the soul. (ex: Gnosticism – WRONG)
 - Selfishness - The preference of one’s own ideas to God’s truth. (INCOMPLETE DEFINITION). This might work for outward acts ... but implies that if I try hard enough I can do it.
 - Choice of evil - Adam’s sin injured only himself. All persons have knowledge of what is evil and the power to do all that God requires. Sin, therefore, consists only in the deliberate choice of evil. (Pelagianism – WRONG). Implies the possibility of “I can save myself.”
 - Hereditary depravity - All persons possess an inherent, hereditary depravity, which involves both guilt and corruption. (Augustinianism). Emphasizes both *guilt* and *corruption*.
 - Corruption of nature - Original sin is transmitted to all people. We are born in sin and oppressed with the corruption of our natures. Emphasizes *corruption* over *guilt*.
 - Biblical – Sin is both *chosen* (v. 1:18) and something we are *under* (v. 3:9). I also believe the Bible distinguishes between corruption and guilt. Corruption → born with; Guilt → from sinful action.
- *The Doctrine of Justification: 3:21-5:21* → THE CHANGE OF POSITION, TO BE **MADE RIGHTEOUS**.
 - Justification explained; 3:21-31.
 - Christ is our propitiation. This makes God both *just* and the *justifier* of our faith.
 - While the law does not justify us, justification does not nullify the law. Instead, the law points us to faith ... *enter Abraham!*
 - Justification exemplified; 4:1-25.
 - Abraham is a prime example.
 - What other examples exist? Must we look to the Bible to find examples? What are some ways we can use ourselves as examples to influence others? Directly, indirectly?
 - Justification experienced; 5:12-21.
 - This is the fruit of justification. We have access to God, security of our salvation because of justification.
 - What else does justification give us? Future glory ... hope ... forgiveness (v. 21).
- *The Doctrine of Sanctification: 6:1-8:39* → THE PROCESS BY WHICH WE ARE **MADE HOLY!**

- Our relation to Sin; 6:1-7:6.
 - We have died to sin. Does this mean we no longer do sinful acts?
 - Last week we talked about baptism. Paul brings it up again in **vv. 6:3-4**. Notice that Baptism primarily relates to a burial and resurrection, not a death. We do not bury living people. Baptism is for people who have died to sin; this means they are already saved. Therefore baptism cannot save you.
- Our relation to the Law; 7:7-25.
- Our relation to Christ; 8:1-39.
- *The Theodicy (a defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil): 9:1-11:36.*
- All of this brings us to **Romans 12** ... Here begins the practical application section of the letter to the Romans. These first **two verses** set the stage for all of the following applications.

When I build my life on the mercies of God;
the mercies of God flow from my life (12:3f).

I'm a living sacrifice:

- i. It's our choice to "present" ourselves before God.
- ii. A holy sacrifice belongs 100% to the Lord.
- iii. The value of a sacrifice is measured by what's left over.
- iv. A sacrifice will cost us and it will be consumed.
- v. This is our act of worship – it's a way of life.

Sacrifice -- If we are to judge it, the measure of a sacrifice is not the size of what is given, but the size of what is left over. A sacrifice will cost us and it will be consumed. There is no taking back the investment of our energies, gifts or material possessions given up in the service and pleasing of God. The last distinction is important. In service we see tangible results. But God is sometimes pleased by our giving up of things. Ask yourself: How much cash would you put on the offering plate if, as it was in Old Testament times, what was giving was then burned? That's what our Old Testament predecessors did with the best of their grain and animals.

Set-Apartness -- If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? You have been set apart as holy to the LORD your God, and he has chosen you from all the nations of the earth to be his own special treasure. – Deuteronomy 14:2 NLT He gave himself to rescue us from everything evil and to make our hearts pure. He wanted us to be his own people and to be eager to do right. – Titus 2:14 CEV In a world that values conformity, no one wants to be the odd duck. Yet the book of Leviticus is essentially God wanting to insure that his people could maintain a distinct identity. It was all about showing yourself to be different.³

Sinlessness -- Jerry Bridges has written, Jesus said, "Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). We must honestly face the question, "Am I willing to give up a certain practice or habit that is keeping me from

holiness?” It is at this point of commitment that most of us fail. We prefer to dally with sin, to try to play with it a little without getting too deeply involved. 4

Sovereignty-- “There is a God. You are not Him,” Many plans are in a person’s heart, but the LORD’s decree will prevail. – Proverbs 19:21 CSB Jesus himself deferred to his Father on many occasions; providing us a reminder of who is in charge.

Surrender -- When Abraham is asked to sacrifice his only son, we have the advantage that Abraham and Sarah didn’t; we know how the story ends. They did not, and yet Abraham is willing to do whatever it takes to obey God.⁵ Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” – Genesis 22:2 Although we speak very different languages, two symbols are universal throughout the worldwide church. One is the word “Hallelujah” which I’m told is rendered the same in most languages. The other is lifted hands as a sign of surrender. A writer at Charisma points out that our fingers, hands and arms are also most associated with human strength, power, creativity; both in a human sense and if we examine the Biblical record of God’s actions presented in a way we can best understand them.

True worship is found in the way we live our lives; not just the way we do church.

For the believer, putting our life on the altar before God is a great act of worship.

You know, I think it is great that we come here to meet in this building and sing praises and worship God.

But now for certain – that is your living sacrifice (or mine) – is limited to the time that we spend in this building ... we are falling far short of what God desires of us ... and we have not become the “living sacrifice” that is “holy and pleasing to God” which Paul is describing here.

2. Do not be conformed to this world
... but be transformed by God (v. 2a).

“² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind”

Conformed: an artist forcing clay to take the shape of the world's mold (cf. 2Co 4:4; Gal 1:4).

Transformed: God supernaturally molding us to be like Jesus (cf. 8:29; 9:20; Mt 17:2; Gal 5:16f).

Mind renewal: God's work in us.

- i. Hope to break free from the world's mold.
- ii. Long for freedom from duty-driven Christianity.
- iii. Seek to love what God loves.
- iv. Desire a life lived as a spiritual act of worship.
- v. Pray and trust God to do his part (Rom 8:29).

May the mind of Christ, my Savior,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus

As I onward go.
May His beauty rest upon me,
As I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel,
Seeing only Him.

(Kate B. Wilkinson, "[May the Mind of Christ, My Savior](#)")

3. Be transformed by God

... that you may know his will (v. 2b).

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Discerning God's will.

- i. God's will is good, acceptable and perfect.
- ii. We know God's truth/will from the Bible.
- iii. This is the will God does not force.
- iv. We test and approve this will to show it to be genuine.

Knowing God's will, means we know how to apply the Scriptures to new situations in life by means of a renewed mind.

3 steps to knowing God's will.

- i. The Bible allows/promotes it.
- ii. It feels right (because you've be transformed).
- iii. Other transformed people confirm it.

Build your life on God's mercies and live for him.