

A Sacrifice of Living: Renewed for Worship pt. 2

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Romans Road to Recovery / Romans 12:1–2

True worship isn't just a song we sing; it's a life we offer

Notes

06/07 Rom. 12:1-2, "A Sacrifice of Living," Subtitle: Renewed for Worship, Main Idea: True worship isn't just a song we sing; it's a life we offer, Scripture: Micah 6:6-8 (Communion)

Title: A Sacrifice of Living

Subtitle: Renewed for Worship: *what* to do and *how* to do it.

Main Idea: True worship isn't just a song we sing; it's a life we offer.

Scripture: Romans 12:1-2; Micah 6:6-8

Every great masterpiece—whether a sweeping symphony, an epic novel, or the architecture of a massive stone fortress—has a hinge. It has a specific turning point upon which the entire weight of the structure rests and pivots. In the grand architecture of the Bible, that hinge is found exactly where we are stepping today: Romans chapter 12.

Think about the journey we have been on, both in this letter and in the scope of redemptive history. From the opening words of Genesis 1 all the way to Romans 11, Scripture has been detailing God's sovereign work: **creation, the fall, judgment, and the climax of salvation in Christ**. For the first eleven chapters of this letter, the Apostle Paul has been meticulously laying out this **divine rescue mission**. He has shown us **our utter depravity, our justification by faith, our freedom from sin's dominion, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the unstoppable, sovereign grace of God**.

Last week, we saw where all of this breathtaking theology inevitably leads. Paul spends eleven chapters explaining what God has done to rescue His creation, and by the time he reaches the end of chapter 11, **all he can do is burst into doxology—*Soli Deo Gloria***. "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11:33). It is the absolute peak of the biblical mountain. Up to this point, the story has been a brilliant, blinding declaration of *what God has done*.

But right here, as we open chapter 12, the greatest plot twist in the Bible takes place. As the great commentator Douglas Moo notes, **Paul is shifting from the indicative—what God has done—to the imperative—what we must do**. The camera suddenly pans from the throne room of God directly to the altars of our lives.

Here in Romans 12, Paul shifts from the grand picture of who God is and what He has done, to the inescapable mandate of how we must respond.

Romans 12:1–2 "1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Paul answers **two distinct questions** in these **two verses**.

Today we are going to try and unpack these 2 verses, if we have time. As we do, Lord willing we will see this new scene in the meta narrative—the grand story of the Bible—begin to unfold in a way that will set the stage

for the “mandate” theme that will carry us to the very end of the book of Revelation.

The First question is, “What is a Sacrifice of Living?”

And the Second, **“How do we offer a Sacrifice of Living?”**

Let's look at that first question together.

I. What Is a Sacrifice of Living? (Rom. 12:1)

A. It's a Response to the Bible's Ultimate Plot Twist (Rom. 12:1a)

- From Genesis 1 to Romans 11, Scripture details God's sovereign work: creation, the fall, judgment, and the climax of salvation in Christ.
- It ends in the *Soli Deo Gloria* of chapter 11. That is everything God is and has done.
- Now, the camera suddenly pans from the throne room of God to the altars of our lives.

Writing about these 2 verses, Douglas Moo states, *"The transition from Rom. 11 to Rom. 12... is not, therefore, a transition from 'theology' to 'practice,' but from a focus more on the 'indicative' side of the gospel to a focus more on the 'imperative' side of the gospel."*

"The 'imperative' of a transformed life is therefore not an optional 'second step' after we embrace the gospel: it is rooted in our initial response to the gospel itself. To eliminate this part of Romans would be therefore to omit an indispensable dimension of the gospel itself." I would add to what Moo wrote, that it would indeed undermine the full consummation of the Gospel.

Douglas Moo, The Epistle to the Romans (New International Commentary on the New Testament - NICNT)

So let's begin to unpack these two questions in 2 verses together.

- Paul first says in Rom. 12:1, **"I beseech ("urge") you"** (parakalō; from *para*, "beside," and *kaleo*, "to call")
 - Paul begins this massive transition with a passionate, pastoral plea.
 - He is begging us as our spiritual father.

We cannot hear the staggering truths of chapters 1-11 and remain passive.

- Paul is begging us to pay attention to and respond to what he is about to present.
- Paul doesn't just hand us a light theological pamphlet in chapters 1-11; he hands us the most comprehensive, heavy, and breathtaking rescue manual in human history.
- (Romans 1-3) The Reality of our Ruin: We were not just making mistakes; we were enemies of God, completely dead in our sin, and sitting right under the holy wrath of the Creator.
- (Romans 3-5) The Shock of Justification: While we were still powerless, Christ stepped in. His blood completely satisfied the wrath of God, paying a debt we could never touch.
- (Romans 6-8) The Promise of Freedom: We were severed from the dominion of sin, given the very Spirit of God to live inside of us, and promised that absolutely nothing can separate us from His love.

- (Romans 9-11) The Mystery of Sovereign Grace: God, in His unsearchable wisdom, orchestrated all of history to graft us into His family.

When you truly comprehend the staggering reality of those eleven chapters, passivity becomes an impossible response. If you are trapped in a burning building and a firefighter kicks down the door, pulls you from the flames, and breathes life back into your lungs at the cost of his own life, you do not just brush off your clothes and casually sit back down in the ashes.

A rescue of that magnitude demands a reaction. That is why Paul says, 'I beseech you.' He is saying, 'Look at the cross! Look at the empty tomb! Look at the wrath you escaped and the grace you received!' You cannot look at the unsearchable, sovereign, saving work of God and simply fold your hands. God's mercy demands our motion. Because He gave everything to rescue us, the only rational, logical response is to give everything back to Him.

- Paul then places the foundation for what he is about to share by saying, **"Therefore, by the mercies of God"**
 - Because of God's sovereign rescue through Jesus Christ of His creation, therefore we must act.
 - Doctrine demands duty.
 - Notice "mercies" is plural—Paul is pointing back to every specific act of compassion he just spent 11 chapters explaining and in reality, that which unfolds for us throughout the entire Bible that precedes it. We don't worship to earn God's mercy; we worship as a compelled—and undeniable reaction to it.

If I don't respond with acts of worship to the mercies of God, it is because I do not understand them.

If I don't respond with acts of worship to the mercies of God, it is because I am not looking for them.

If I don't respond with acts of worship to the mercies of God, it is because I reject them.

If I don't respond with acts of worship to the mercies of God, it is because I have forgotten them.

To see, understand, accept, and remember the mercies of God, compels me to respond in action to them. It is a logical—a reasonable and unavoidable response.

I. What Is a Sacrifice of Living? (Rom. 12:1)

A. It's a Response to the Bible's Ultimate Plot Twist (Rom. 12:1a)

That response is then...

B. It's a life lived for God as Our Acceptable Sacrifice (Rom. 12:1b)

- **"To present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God..."**
 - Paul takes the deeply ingrained Old Testament imagery of the temple and flips it for the Church age.
 - God doesn't just want our spiritual intentions; He wants our "bodies"—our hands, feet, eyes, and our everyday physical reality and focus.
 - This relationship with God that He has given us through Jesus Christ was not meant to be

just a part of your life, it was meant to be the entirety of your life—it was meant to inculcate every aspect of your life, shape it, and direct it.

- When you say that you “love” someone and you truly mean it, doing so demands that you leave in a manner that proves that love to them.
- Paul, as a Pharisee of Pharisees, would have had the *Shema* pulsing through his veins. What he says here in Rom. 12:1 is the culmination of what God taught all the way back at the formation of the nation of Israel. When he writes to the Romans about presenting their “bodies,” he is directly echoing the physical, all-encompassing devotion commanded in Deuteronomy 6.
 - In the *Shema*, Moses doesn't just stop at the inward command to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”
 - Moses immediately translates that love (Just like Paul moving from the doxology of the end of Rom. 11) into physical, bodily terms: binding the Word to their **hands**, placing it as frontlets between their **eyes**, talking about it when they **walk** by the way (feet), and writing it on their doorposts (everyday reality).
- Here is the Paradox of a Living Sacrifice
 - In the Old Dispensation, a sacrifice was brought to the temple to bleed and die.
 - Because Jesus is the final, substitutionary death who bled and died for us, the requirement has now radically changed

The altar for our sacrifice no longer demands the permanent loss of an animal's life as a temporary substitute for us; it demands the everlasting living life that is in Jesus Christ our permanent substitute.

To the outside world, climbing onto that altar and surrendering the everyday reality of your life might sound extreme, radical, or even fanatical. But Paul fundamentally disagrees. When you look back at the sheer magnitude of the rescue mission God just accomplished, and when you consider the staggering depths of the God who orchestrated it, handing over your entire life is not an extreme reaction at all. It is the only logical conclusion.

C. It's a reasonable Response to the “Unsearchable God” (Rom. 12:1c)

- The text says that this kind of sacrifice is our “reasonable” worship (logikēn latreian).
 - The ongoing challenge of being a living sacrifice is that we constantly try to crawl off the altar of surrender that Jesus secured for us, and try to climb right back onto the exhausting altar of performance that He came to save us from.
 - To choose to do so simply just does not make logical sense.

Given the massive weight of God's mercies in chapters 1-11:

Giving God your whole life isn't a radical or fanatical response; it is the only logical thing to do

Paul has answered our first question, “**What is a Sacrifice of Living?**”

- a. It is a response to the Bible's Ultimate Plot Twist.

- b. It's a life lived for God as Our Acceptable Sacrifice.
- c. It's a reasonable Response to the "Unsearchable God"

Sermon Introduction / Review

Last week, we stepped into the grand hinge of redemptive history found in Romans chapter 12. We saw that after eleven chapters of Paul meticulously laying out God's breathtaking rescue mission—our ruin, our justification, our freedom, and God's sovereign grace—the camera suddenly pans from the throne room of God, viewed through the lens of chapter 11's doxology, directly to the altars of our lives as Paul answers two unasked, but assumed questions.

We first viewed Paul's answer to the first question: **What is a Sacrifice of Living?**

- It is a response to the Bible's ultimate plot twist. We cannot take a true and sincere look at the unsearchable, sovereign, saving work of God in chapters 1-11 and remain passive.

A Clear View of God's Mercy evokes/demands our inescapable motion

- That inescapable motion is a life lived for God as our acceptable sacrifice.
 - The altar for our sacrifice no longer demands the permanent loss of an animal's life as a temporary substitute; it demands the everlasting living life that is in Jesus Christ our permanent substitute.

God wants our hands, our feet, our eyes, and our everyday physical reality

- It is a reasonable response to the "Unsearchable God."

Handing over your entire life is not an extreme or fanatical reaction; given the massive weight of God's mercies, it is the only logical conclusion.

But we ended with a massive tension.

- The ongoing challenge of being a living sacrifice is that we constantly try to crawl off the altar of surrender that Jesus secured for us, and try to climb right back onto the exhausting altar of performance that He came to save us from.

It is one thing to *say* we are a living sacrifice while sitting in these pews on a Sunday morning, but it is another thing entirely to actually *offer* that sacrifice on a Tuesday afternoon at work or in school.

So, if our greatest challenge is our tendency to slowly crawl off the altar, how do we stay on it?

That brings us to Paul's 2nd answer to his assumed questions in these two verses of

Romans chapter 12:

Now that we know what a **Sacrifice of Living** is, the second question that is answered by these 2 verses is, "**how do we offer a sacrifice of living on our life's altar to God?**"

II. How Do We Offer a Sacrifice of Living (Rom. 12:2)

If the greatest challenge of a living sacrifice is our tendency to slowly crawl off the altar, then how do we stay on it?

Paul doesn't just give us the command and leave us to figure it out; he gives us precise mechanics.

He shows us that staying on the altar requires a complete change in the fundamental purpose for our lives.

A. We Transform the Purpose of Our Works to Be for Worship of God Rather Than for Self (Rom. 12:2)

Verse 1 tells us **what to do**; verse 2 tells us **how to do it**.

- Paul first says that we must resist the Mold: "**Do not be conformed to this world**" is a command—an imperative to stop allowing the spirit of this present evil age to press you into its temporary, outward mold (*schema*)
 - "The 'world' Paul is talking about—the *aiōn*—is the culture and the age we live in.
 - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his masterful exposition of Romans, captures this perfectly: "*The world is a mentality, a way of looking at things, an outlook on life. It is an organizing of life without God.*"
- We are like a ship placed in the middle of the ocean (the world's present culture). We are supposed to be there. But the ocean of culture is constantly applying relentless, external pressure (*schema*) against the hull of our lives.
- If the internal structure of your mind is soft or has cracks in its seals, the external pressure of the culture will eventually breach your hull. The world will rush in, and you will sink. You will look exactly like the culture around you.
- The only way to survive the relentless, squeezing pressure of this present evil age is to completely renovate your internal structure, strengthen it

and strive to seal all the worlds access into it.

- You must be transformed from the inside out by the renewing (the strengthening or sealing) of your mind.

The world and its sin cursed and redirected culture is trying to squeeze us, crush our defenses, and force us into its mold (schema)

Think about how a heavy industrial mold or a bench vise actually works. It operates by applying relentless, heavy pressure from the outside in. It takes a piece of raw material and squeezes it, presses it, and forces it until that material eventually surrenders and takes on the exact shape of the steel container.

The culture we live in is a massive, high-pressure mold. Every single day, this present evil age is applying external pressure to your life. Through the media we consume, the shifting morals of our society, and the constant outrage of the day, the world is actively trying to squeeze your opinions, your schedule, your family, and your fears into its exact shape. And if you just passively sit there, embrace it, or even pursue it, you will be crushed into conformity—trapped into it's slavery. You will look exactly like the world and will be forced to serve it.

(Climax)

Paul is pleading with us to step out of that press. But here is the catch:

- You cannot survive the external squeezing of the world just by trying to push back with your own willpower, or by just polishing up your behavior on the outside.

If your internal composition is soft, the mold of the world will always win.

To stop being squeezed into the world's form, you have to fundamentally change what you are made of on the inside. You have to undergo a complete internal transformation, becoming a material that is so deeply changed, so compact and sealed, that the world can no longer bend you or infiltrate you."

The only way to survive the relentless, squeezing pressure of this present evil age is to completely renovate your internal structure. You must be transformed from the inside out by the renewing of your mind.

Restate: "So, We first must Transform the Purpose of Our Works to Be for Worship of God Rather Than for Self (Rom. 12:2)"

B. We Accomplish that Transformation By the Renewing of Our Minds

"but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.."

- This is renovation (not a restoration) through the Word

The Greek word translated as "renewing" is *anakainōsis*. It is built on the root word *kainos*, which specifically means "new in quality or nature" (something unprecedented).

- Restoration implies taking something back to its exact original state. Theologically, God is not just trying to "restore" our minds to the untested, naive innocence of Adam before the fall.
- Renovation involves tearing out the old and compromised framework and building something fundamentally new and functionally superior. We are being upgraded into the likeness of Christ, which makes "renovation" the better English understanding of "renewing" in this verse.
- Because the root word *kainos* implies something unprecedented, Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit does not just repair our old way of thinking. He installs a completely new operating system—the mind of Christ—that processes the world in a way our old minds (that was like Adam's) never could.
 - We are called to undergo a complete, inward transformation (metamorphosis).
 - The Biblical Connection: This exact Greek word (metamorphoō) is used in only one other major context in the Gospels: Matthew 17:2, on the Mount of Transfiguration.
 - The text says Jesus was "transfigured [metamorphoō] before them; and His face shone like the sun."
 - What happened on that mountain? Jesus did not suddenly become something He wasn't. Rather, the dazzling, divine reality of who He truly was on the inside finally broke through His physical flesh for Peter, James, and John to see.
 - **Application:** When Paul tells us to be transformed, he is saying: "Let the new nature and the Holy Spirit that God placed on the inside of you break through to the outside! Let the reality of who you now are in Christ shine through your hands, your feet, and your daily life."
 - You cannot transform yourself; you must submit to the Holy Spirit's work by the renewing of your mind.

So, what is the tool that the Holy Spirit uses and how do we submit to God through them so that we can renew our mind?

To answer that question, we simply have to look to Scripture itself.

- Scripture gives us the exact mechanism for this renewal: **The Word of God.**

- Colossians 3:10, 16

Colossians 3:10 NASB95

¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is **being renewed to a true knowledge** according to the image of the One who created him—

So...

Colossians 3:16 NASB95

¹⁶ Let **the word of Christ** richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

- Paul says the new self is "**renewed in knowledge**" by letting the "**word of Christ dwell in you richly.**"

Ephesians 4:23 NASB95

²³ and that you **be renewed in the spirit of your mind,**

Ephesians 5:26 NASB95

²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water **with the word,**

- Paul says you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, sanctified by the cleansing of the washing of water that is accomplished with the word.
- These verses tell us that we cannot experience renewed minds without a steady, rich diet of the reading and learning about the Bible.

So:

- a. We repurpose our works to be worship of God through transformation**
- b. ++...and we accomplish that transformation of our minds — from the inside out through a steady diet of the Word of God**

One last question in our minds then must be asked about this transformation in place of being conformed:

What is the purpose why this transformation is so imperative?

C. We Renew Our Minds For the Ultimate Purpose, so that Our Works Become True and Sustained Worship of Our Compassionate God

- It is so that we enable ourselves through the Word's transformation of our minds to remain on our life's altar, as we present our sacrifice of living, and not slowly crawl off of it.

Ephesians 2:10 NASB95

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

(Illustrate: Butterfly)

- That word "workmanship" *poiēma* directly connects to the idea of metamorphosis (transformation) in Romans 12:2. You are being renovated into a completely new creation, from the inside out, never again to be compressed into the old mold, never to return to Adam's original state, but rather breaking out of both to be freed to live in the continual beauty of what God intended for you from before time itself was created by Him.
- This was God's plan all along
- The Purpose of the Renovation in Ephesians: **"...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them,"** perfectly parallels Rom. 12:2 proving **"what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."**
- You aren't renewing your mind just to be smarter or to win theological debates; your mind is being renovated so that:

You can actually *do* the works of worship that God has already laid out for your everyday life (the hands, feet, and eyes we just talked about).

But why should we want to do these works?

"So that by them you may prove to yourself and others what the will of God is. God's will is that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

- Unpack "Prove" (*dokimazō*): In modern English, the word "prove" often sounds like we are just passing a written exam or trying to win a theological argument. But Paul uses a word here that carries a vivid, physical weight.
 - The Greek word is *dokimazō*. It was a metallurgical term used in the ancient world for **assaying metals**.
 - The process of putting gold or silver into a blazing furnace to burn away the dross and authenticate that the metal was genuine, pure, and free from counterfeiting.

- John MacArthur emphasizes this beautifully in his commentary on Romans:
"A renewed mind becomes an assayer of the things of God. It becomes capable of testing and proving what is right and what is wrong."
- When you bring your life to the altar and allow the washing of the Word to renew your mind, your life actually becomes the testing ground.
 - Through your renovated hands, feet, and everyday actions, you become the authenticated **proof** to a watching world.

Your Sacrifices of Living Prove God's way is truly good, acceptable, and perfect.

By doing the good works He has prepared for you, you become genuine currency in Satan's counterfeit age.

We stay on the altar of being a living sacrifice through a steady diet of the Word of God, allowing it to transform our minds.

The result of a Word-renewed mind is clarity: A transformed life of good works proves and approves that God's will is—good, acceptable, and perfect, to yourself and to others around you.

What Paul wrote here is the point of **all** Scripture — it is the crescendo of the whole Old Testament that leads all the way through the doxology of Romans 11. It is then described from these 2 verses all the way through the end of the Bible.

As is stated by the prophet Micah.

Micah 6:6–8 NASB95

⁶ With what shall I come to the LORD *And* bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? ⁷ Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to **do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?**

Micah 6:6-8 is the perfect Old Testament shadow of Rom. 12:1-2. Micah asks: "*With what shall I come before the Lord?*" Should I bring thousands of rams? God's answer anticipates Paul: He doesn't want dead animals; He wants a lived-out faith (doing justice, loving mercy, walking humbly).

Conclusion:

For thousands of years, the people of God brought dead sacrifices to a physical altar. They brought the blood of yearling calves and thousands of rams, bringing the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.

But the grand narrative of Scripture (the Meta Narrative)—from the opening words of Genesis all the way through the magnificent doxology of Romans 11 to the full Consummation of Revelation 22—declares a breathtaking reality: **God Himself stepped directly into the inevitable course of creative history to accomplish the sovereign rescue of all His creation, from the ravaging and consuming destruction of sin.**

And here, in Romans 12, we arrive at the grand hinge of redemptive history — the plot twist.

Because the final sacrifice has been made by Jesus Christ, the altar has fundamentally changed.

God does not want another dead offering. He does not want a superficial religious performance. As the prophet Micah reminded us,

God now wants and has enabled through Jesus a lived-out faith

—It is a life of doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with Him.

He wants your hands.

He wants your feet.

He wants your eyes.

He wants your mind completely renovated by the washing of His Word.

The altar no longer demands the loss of life that is in the blood; it demands us to live the life that is in Jesus Christ. True worship isn't just a song we sing; it's a life we offer.

We have just seen that the only logical, reasonable response to the mercies of God is to climb onto the altar and become a living sacrifice. But I want to remind you of something crucial this morning: You and I can only be *living* sacrifices because Jesus Christ was willing to be the *dying* sacrifice, one time for all, to end for all time the need for any other.

Paul urged us by 'the mercies of God.'

Jesus paid the debt we could not pay, so that we could live the life we otherwise could not have lived.

Today, instead of being invited to come to a physical communion table like we did last week, when you leave this place today, you are being sent out into a high-pressure world. You are being sent back to your workplaces, your schools, your homes, and your neighborhoods.

And as you go, you are called to carry this new sacrifice with you, your sacrifice of living for God so that you might prove to yourself and to others that God's will is good, acceptable, and perfect.

Take a few moments of silent prayer with the Lord right now, before I pray.

Wayne, come and play the song we are going to close with while we spend some time with the Lord in quiet prayer with Him.

Before you walk out those doors and back into the relentless pressure of this present age, ask yourself—ask the Lord if your life is currently on the altar for Him. Ask Him for the grace to stay there, and the discipline to let His Word continually renew your mind.

As you finish praying, resolve in your mind today that you will commit to:

- Being transformed by a growing and continual diet of God's Word
- So that you are increasingly able to present your bodies as a sacrifice of Living
- So that you might better — more clearly prove to yourself and others that God's will is good, acceptable, and perfect.