

The Path of Sacrifice

1.4.26

Message 44

Romans Series

Romans 12:1–2 (CSB)

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. ²Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1–2 (KJV 1900)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Introduction:

A. Romans 12 begins a shift for the Apostle Paul.

1. The first 11 chapters are Paul's clearest and most profound theology; the Gospel displayed through Jesus.
 - a. We are confronted by our sinfulness and our desire to walk according to the flesh.
 - b. Yet, we are told that Jesus has set us free from the power of sin and death, and because of the Holy Spirit, we can walk in newness of life.
2. Chapter 12 shifts from Theology to Practice: From Orthodoxy to Orthopraxy.
 - a. From right believing to right doing.
 - b. Beginning in Romans 12, the Apostle Paul tells us not only what, but how.
3. Throughout our Romans series, we have been confronted by this truth:

- a. Sometimes we have a doctrine or belief, but not a practice.
 - b. Romans 12 refuses to allow us to separate the two.
- 4. So, this great chapter opens with the word, “THEREFORE...”
 - a. Therefore, because all of this is true...
 - b. Then this is how we are to live.
 - c. The rest of Romans takes the theology and puts it in human form.
- 5. Romans 12:1 is a perfect place to begin not only our new year but the new you.

B. As we begin this new year, we begin at the place where new life in Christ must begin: worship and sacrifice.

- 1. Last year, Julie felt in her heart that her theme for her year was sacrifice.
- 2. We also believe that the Lord warns and prepares His people for what is ahead.
- 3. And what a year of sacrifice it was for us personally.
 - a. Sacrifice is by necessity loss.
 - b. The giving up, the giving away.
 - c. Sacrifice is more than money: it's all of oneself.

1. Sacrifice.

A. Sacrifice feels like:

- 1. Giving something up.
- 2. Giving something away.
- 3. The offering of something dear, costly, and precious for the sake or cause of another.

B. Sacrifice is not taking, it's giving.

- 1. If I sacrificed an animal, the animal did not sacrifice its life because it had no choice.
 - a. Instead, I, the one in control, was the one making the sacrifice and the animal is the victim.

b. When we make sacrifices of time, money, health, or anything else, they are not being taken away from me; I'm giving them away.

2. Sacrifice is the relinquishing of control.

a. Sacrifice means I no longer have the last say.

b. Sacrifice means I'm giving something to be fully consumed.

4. The Apostle Paul says to "present your bodies".

a. God isn't taking it from me; I'm giving it to Him.

b. God is not robbing me; I am giving my life as an offering.

5. Paul uses similar language at the end of his life, years after he wrote Romans.

a. Philippians 2:17 (CSB)

¹⁷ But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

b. 2 Timothy 4:6 (CSB)

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close.

c. Paul speaks of his life as a drink offering:

a. Everything inside of him is being poured out, and someday, it will all be gone.

b. As I read this, Paul isn't the one pouring:

c. God holds the vessel; Paul is the contents.

d. God has control of the tilt, the angle, and the rate of pour.

D. Offerings are gifts or sacrifices, not taxes.

1. Sometimes we approach giving to God like a tax:

a. Something required and demanded.

b. And if we don't, we receive a penalty.

c. And too many penalties, we go to jail.

2. But Romans doesn't use the language of taking; he uses the language of gifts and sacrifices.

a. When the believer gives their lives to Jesus, we are responding to the love that has already been shown.

b. We don't sacrifice to earn love, we sacrifice because we are loved.

3. This is clear in Jesus' life, who gave his life as a sacrifice not a tax.

John 10:11 (CSB)

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:11 (NLT)

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.

John 10:15 (NLT)

¹⁵ just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.

4. In John 10:18, Jesus said no one takes my life, but I lay it down on my own.

5. Paul says this about Jesus in Ephesians 5:2;

Ephesians 5:2 (NLT)

² Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

E. My service, my worship, my sacrifice is not a tax; it is an offering.

1. We can present our lives as a sacrifice because Jesus loves us and we love Him.

2. The Apostle Paul gave his life to the Lord.

a. How could he not?

b. Paul understood what Jesus had done for Him, so how could he not give his life to Christ.

3. When we see our lives in view of God's great mercy, we don't give God a tax of our lives, but we give Him our whole life as a sacrifice.

2. Worship

A. The CSB and others end verse one: this is your true worship.

1. Others use the phrase: reasonable service.
2. Both capture well what Paul is saying.
3. Our lives, as sacrifice, are acts of worship placed into the service of Jesus.

B. Worship is sacrifice.

1. When we see people offering sacrifices in the Scripture, it is an act of worship.
2. Sacrifice and worship are connected
3. I can sacrifice, without it being worship, but I can't worship without it being a sacrifice.

C. Not all sacrifice is worship, but all worship is sacrifice.

1. True worship always costs us something.
2. Going the extra mile costs us, turning the other cheek costs us, raising our hands in worship costs us, and buying FireBibles costs us.
3. Every time I worship, I'm laying my life, my will, my emotions, my rights down at Jesus' feet.
 - a. King David danced before the Lord, and when his wife mocked him, he proclaimed:
 1. I'll become even more undignified than this.
 2. David sacrificed his reputation to worship God.
 - b. Mary broke the alabaster box and poured it on Jesus.
 1. Not only did it cost her financially, but even the disciples ridiculed her.
 2. But her sacrifice was an act of worship.

C. I want my sacrifices to be acts of worship.

1. Can I say it like this?
2. Many of us are making the sacrifice but we haven't let the sacrifices become worship.
3. We are giving away, but our hearts are resentful.
4. We are embracing loss, but our attention is not on Jesus.
5. The sacrifice is made, but the worship is delayed.

D. For the worshipper, the living sacrifice is the offering of something.

1. For the thing or the person being the sacrifice, it is the loss of everything dear, including life itself.
2. When we worship, it must cost us.

3. Old Testament Example

In 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21, we encounter a story where because King David has sinned, God is killing the people of Israel.

1. The Angel of the Lord, who is doing the killing, is stopped by God in a place where wheat and grain are threshed and separated.
2. King David is told to go and set up an altar at the property to build an altar to the Lord.

2 Samuel 24:17–25 (CSB)

¹⁷ When David saw the angel striking the people, he said to the LORD, “Look, I am the one who has sinned; I am the one who has done wrong. But these sheep, what have they done? Please, let your hand be against me and my father’s family.”

DAVID’S ALTAR

¹⁸ Gad came to David that day and said to him, “Go up and set up an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” ¹⁹ David went up in obedience to Gad’s command, just as the LORD had commanded. ²⁰ Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants coming toward him, so he went out and paid homage to the king with his face to the ground.

²¹ Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?”

David replied, “To buy the threshing floor from you in order to build an altar to the LORD, so the plague on the people may be halted.”

²² Araunah said to David, “My lord the king may take whatever he wants and offer it. Here are the oxen for a burnt offering and the threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. ²³ Your Majesty, Araunah gives everything here to the king.” Then he said to the king, “May the LORD your God accept you.”

²⁴ The king answered Araunah, “No, I insist on buying it from you for a price, for I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for twenty ounces of silver. ²⁵ He built an altar to the LORD there and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD was receptive to prayer for the land, and the plague on Israel ended.

A. This story is one of the most painful times of King David's reign.

1. He sinned against the Lord by not trusting Him.
2. And that sin led to the death of tens of thousands of innocent people.
3. Again, we see the theme: Moments of brilliance followed by moments of abject failure.

B. Incredibly, this is how 2 Samuel Ends!

1. David builds an altar.
2. Instead of taking the property, which was his right, he buys the land because worship costs us something.
3. Worship often requires us to willingly lay down our rights.

C. Here is what made David a man after God's own heart.

1. David's response to his sin was repentance and worship.
2. Pride is opposed to worship.
 - a. David could have claimed his right as king, and sacrificed someone else's land.
 - b. David could have arrogantly stood before God and told Him he was unfair.
 - c. But David humbled himself, and the sacrifice became an act of worship.
3. What makes all of this possible?

4. Because of Mercy

A. Worship and Sacrifice flow from a place of mercy.

1. In view of the mercies of God.
2. By the mercies of God...
3. Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.
4. None of this is possible if God's mercy is removed.

B. Mercy sums up the first 11 chapters of Romans.¹

1. The Apostle Paul knew it was only because of God's mercy that he was able to live for Jesus.
2. David knew that his life was completely dependent on God's mercy, because his sin deserved a terrible death.
3. We are here today not because of anything good we have done, but because God is merciful.

C. Because of God's mercy, I can and will present my life as a living sacrifice.

1. No part of my life is to be withheld, because Jesus held nothing back from me.
2. As a recipient of God's mercy, I offer my life back to Jesus.
3. If He asks:
 - a. Of my time, I give it to Him.
 - b. Of my attention, it is His.
 - c. Of my vocation, it is His.
4. We go where He says go, we stay where he says stay.

D. God is speaking to all of us to be living sacrifices.

1. This isn't just for missionaries or pastors but for every believer!
2. What God asks of you might be different than what He asks of me, but all of us are called to give our lives as a living sacrifice.

Next week, we will discuss what it means for the sacrifice to be living, holy, pleasing, and reasonable.

I want to put handles on this to help us carry it better this week.

¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 378.

How do we walk the paths of living sacrifices?

1. A command, not a suggestion...

1. This is written to the Church at Rome, not the pastors of Rome.
 - a. It is written for all the Saints, and that includes us.
 - b. Sacrifice is not only for pastors and missionaries; it is for all.
 - c. There are no exceptions or exemptions.
2. Stop looking for an exception where God is looking for absolute surrender.
 - a. This calling to being a living sacrifice is for all of us.
 - b. But we can't focus on what someone else is doing, we have to focus on what God is asking of us.
 - c. Paul's obedience was different from Peter's.
 - d. Peter and the other disciples got angry when it was discovered that John's path was different than theirs.
 - e. What God has asked of me might look different than what He asks of you.
3. But I have to remember that the call to present our lives as living sacrifices is for all of us.

2. Pay attention to resentment, envy, jealousy, and hypocrisy.

A. This one is probably for me.

1. One danger of walking the path of sacrifice is that we can become frustrated when God asks of us what He isn't asking of others.

2. When God requires of me what He isn't requiring of you, it exposes my level of surrender.

3. It exposes areas that need to stay surrendered.

B. When I feel resentment, envy, or jealousy, my worship is being challenged.

1. My sacrifice might be resolute, but my worship is gone.

2. I might still be tithing, going, serving, or doing, but the worship is getting off the altar.

3. When my sacrifice feels like a tax, an obligation, and not my response to God's love and mercy, then I'm in trouble.

C. These emotions (especially resentment) expose what I'm in danger of picking up off the altar.

1. God, why do they get to have what I don't?
2. God, why can they have Sundays off, and I don't?
3. Why do I have to work in the nursery? Why do I have to...
4. Sacrifices don't ask why me.

3. Redefine Surrender.

A. When I think of surrender, I usually think of it in the military sense.

1. A soldier is captured and taken prisoner.
2. But deep inside is the desire to escape, to resist, to hinder the enemy.
3. My hands might be held up, but my spirit is resilient and combative.
4. To quote William Wallace in Braveheart: You can take our lives, but you will never take our freedom. (The English we met in England and Scotland thought the movie was trash.) But we did see where Wallace was executed.

B. How many of us are surrendering parts to God, but resisting elsewhere?

1. You are giving to God, but looking for a way to escape pain, suffering, persecution, and difficulty.
2. You hope that you won't be marked for sacrifice and that someone else will take your place.
3. When I define surrender in my terms, I always hold something back just in case.
4. But we are called to lives of sacrifice...fully at the mercy and will of God.

4. A daily commitment.

A. D.L. Moody observed, "The problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar."

1. There have been multiple times in my life I've had to recommit myself to being a living sacrifice.

2. Not questioning my love or commitment to Jesus.
3. Questioning the altar with which I have been committed.
4. Not the reality of the sacrifice, but the location of the altar.

B. To stay yielded is a hard, ongoing thing.

1. To not “flinch” when every part of me wants to run.
2. To not question the time or the place that God chooses to bind me.
3. To not question where He chooses to pour me out as a drink offering.

C. Daily, we commit to laying our lives down as a living sacrifice.

1. Moment by moment, I choose to stay yielded to God and focused; otherwise, I drift and wander.
2. The old song “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” has a line, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it.”
3. I know I’m prone to wander, therefore, daily and sometimes moment by moment, I yield my life to God not only as a sacrifice but as an act of worship.

How is God calling you to be a living sacrifice?

A. There are things we need to add to our lives.

1. More Scripture reading.
2. More Worship.
3. More time with Him.

B. There are areas that we need to become acts of worship.

1. Instead of giving out of obligation, make sure it is worship.
2. When you serve others, is it worship to God or just a sacrifice?
3. Sacrifice becomes worship when it is a response to God’s love and mercy.

C. There are some things that need to go.

1. Maybe this is the year you put down that habit or addiction.

2. Maybe this is the year you stop some good things so that you can focus on the best things.

3. Maybe this is the year that radically reorients your life around what God wants for you.

Prayer.