

The Path of Sacrifice Part II

1.11.26

Message 45

Romans 12:1 (CSB)

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.

Romans 12:1 (NKJV)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

Introduction

A. The first 11 chapters of Romans contain amazing theology and doctrine.

1. Then Paul shifts the discussion in Romans 12.
2. He now begins to describe what it looks like to live our lives in view of all that Jesus has done.

B. Paul begins with the theme of sacrifice.

1. Not changed thinking, personal transformation, or other important topics.
2. First, he begins with our lives as a sacrifice and worship.

C. We all have sacrificed to be here this week.

1. But if the sacrifice is not done as an act of love and worship, our sacrifice feels like a tax.
2. Not all sacrifice is worship, but all worship is sacrifice.

D. Back in the summer we had a short series through the book of Malachi.

1. In Malachi, God was angry at His people because they believed any sacrifice was better than no sacrifice.

2. But what God said was that NO sacrifice is better than a wrong sacrifice.

Malachi 1:10 (CSB) ¹⁰ “I wish one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would no longer kindle a useless fire on my altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD of Armies, “and I will accept no offering from your hands.

E. When we read about the believers’ sacrifice, we see that there are certain characteristics that our lives should have as an act of worship.

Living Sacrifice

A. The worship and sacrifice God asks of us is characterized by life.

1. Jesus said for us to pick up our cross and follow Him.
2. To be a Christian is to embrace Jesus in such a way that life feels like death and death feels like life.

Matthew 10:38–39 (CSB)

³⁸ **And whoever doesn’t take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.**

³⁹ **Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life because of me will find it.**

3. We cannot follow Jesus without picking up our cross and embracing sacrifice.

Jesus said it like this in Luke 9:23

Luke 9:23 (CSB) ²³ Then he said to them all, **“If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.**

B. I’ve always read this passage with a sense of finality.

1. I’ve understood it to mean that just as Jesus carried a cross to a place of crucifixion and died, we too have a moment where we carry our cross and die too.
2. Paul uses this kind of language a lot in Romans: Dying to sin and living for Christ.
 - a. In the life of a believer, there is a death and a resurrection to new life.
 - b. When I confessed Jesus as Lord, the old me died and the new me, the new creation, lives.

C. But, there is a different side to this picture.

1. We pick up our cross “daily.”

2. Let him deny himself and take up his cross...daily.
3. My sacrifice is not a one-and-done situation; it's daily.

D. Daily, I pick up the reminder of sacrifice.

1. A reminder of the end of myself.
2. A reminder of the cost of my sin and the cost of following Jesus.
3. Just as we do not become healthy by eating a salad or skipping one dessert or going for one walk, we do not follow Christ by only making one decision.
4. We DAILY deny ourselves, carry a cross, and choose to follow Jesus.
5. We are to be living sacrifices.

E. And as I carry the cross, the symbol of sacrifice and death to self, Jesus says follow me and I'll show you where to set it.

1. Follow me, and I will show you where you will suffer.
2. Follow me, and I will tell you where you will be sacrificed.
3. Follow me, and I will point you to the place where you are to be consumed.
4. And when the day is done, we do it all over again.

F. The opposite of alive is...dead.

1. There are no dead sacrifices here.
2. Dead sacrifices have no feelings, no emotions, no struggles.
3. Dead sacrifices have no choices, desires to overcome, or questions to ask.
4. Dead is dead, and there is no coming back from that.

G. But our sacrifice is living.

1. My sacrifice is full of emotions.
2. My Sacrifice is full of feelings,
3. My sacrifice feels like one constant struggle.
4. Daily, I have choices to make, desires to overcome, and questions to ask.

H. This choice, this opportunity to choose, is what makes my sacrifice living.

1. And when it's my turn to be on the altar, it's my desire not to flinch.
2. To not pull away.
3. To not look for a way to escape the call of God.
4. Jesus calls us to a life of living sacrifice.
5. And because it is living, I have to put myself back on the altar every day.

Holy Sacrifice

A. The easiest way to define holy is "set apart."

1. When something is set apart, specifically for worship, it is holy.
2. Another word is "sacred".
3. Paul encourages and implores us to present our lives as a holy sacrifice.

B. If something is sacred, we don't use it for common things.

1. Most of our families have a set of fancy dishes.
 - a. Dishes we pull out only rarely.
 - b. Dishes for special holidays, friends, and families.
 - c. Sometimes, we are even careful not to use those dishes around kids or clumsy family members.
 - d. In a sense, those dishes are holy, set apart, and sacred.
2. Because of Jesus, our lives are holy.
 - a. Jesus has set us apart for Himself.
 - b. Therefore, our lives are not our own.
 - c. There are certain activities and behaviors we don't use the good dishes for.
3. For example, I learned that I can't use the measuring cups from the kitchen to do plumbing work in the bathroom.
 - a. Even though you can wash it, some things just shouldn't be used for cooking after they've been in the toilet, trying to fix an issue.
 - b. Just because something fits, it doesn't mean it's suitable.

C. And when something is holy, “there is a sacredness to our service to God and his church.”¹

1. When I gave my life to Jesus, He added a sacredness to it.
2. There are now things that I don’t do because of Him, and things I do because of Him.
3. My life isn’t my own because it is a living sacrifice, set apart for the Kingdom of Jesus.
4. Just as there are behaviors we can’t do when on duty, in uniform, or on the company’s dime, there are actions and behaviors that are no longer befitting of a servant of God.
5. And the greater the call, and the greater the gifting, often the greater the sacrifice.

D. Jesus is calling us to a life of holiness.

1. Not defined by the length of our sleeves or by wearing a tie.
2. Holiness defined by the setting aside of our lives for His purpose.
3. To be used, poured out, and sacrificed on altars of the Spirit’s choosing, not our own.

Pleasing/Acceptable Sacrifice

A. Another characteristic of our sacrifice unto God is that it is “pleasing”.

1. Just because I’m sacrificing, it doesn’t mean what I’m sacrificing is good.
2. And it doesn’t mean that the result of my life is pleasing.

B. What makes our sacrifice pleasing?

1. It must be true.
 - a. We worship God in Spirit and in truth.
 - b. When we lie about our sacrifice, our motives, or attitudes, our sacrifice and our life become unacceptable.
2. It must be our best.
 - a. Without adding guilt, we don’t always give God the best of ourselves.
 - b. The path of Sacrifice is a process of discovering.

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

c. Piece by piece, the Spirit shows us where we are holding back and asks us to relinquish that piece and that part.

d.

Reasonable.

Romans 12:1 (NKJV)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

A. The Greek word is “logikos.”

1. This is where we get the word, logical.
2. To the Apostle Paul, it is logical, it makes sense, that in light of what God has done, we should give Him everything!
3. To live a life that is holy and pleasing is logical.

B. Whatever God asks of us, it is reasonable.

1. We offer ourselves not ignorantly, like animals brought to slaughter, but intelligently and willingly. This is the worship that pleases God.²
2. The next verse talks about being transformed by the renewing of our minds.
3. Serving God in this way is logical and results in our minds being transformed and renewed.

C. The more we get to know Jesus and truly understand Him, the easier and more logical it becomes to give Him everything we have.

1. “To be a Christian means to give as much of myself as I can to as much of Jesus Christ as I know.”³ Sam Shoemaker.

² Douglas J. Moo, Romans, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 395.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 214.

2. The more we grow, and the more we know, the more we give!
3. We all have people in our lives that we would trust with everything:
 - a. You would easily give them your S.S number, access to your bank account, trust them with your family, and give them keys to everything you own.
 - b. You can do this because you know them and fully trust them.
4. The better we know Jesus, the more fully we will trust Him.
 - a. The easier it is to give Him our will.
 - b. The better we know Jesus, the more we surrender.

How do we walk the paths of living sacrifices?

1. Don't treat sacrifice as a suggestion...

A. I'm afraid that Americans hear a suggestion here.

1. Suggestions become exceptions.
2. We are a bit immune to suggestions right now.
 - a. Everywhere we go, there is a suggested tip option.
 - b. I was at a restaurant in Springfield the other day.
 - c. I'm ordering my food at the counter, give them my card, and I choose the "no tip" option.
 - d. The young man looked at it, glared at me, and in front of him he had a sticky note with NT written on the top. And he makes a mark.
3. Everywhere we go these days, there are suggestions.
 - a. And many of us ignore them.
 - b. And I'm afraid that we are reading Romans 12:1, and we are interpreting the invitation to sacrifice as a suggestion to be ignored at our pleasure.

B. What if each one of us were determined to be living sacrifices for God?

1. What would change in your home if you lived a sacrificial life?

2. What would change in your workplace if your attitude went beyond servant leadership to sacrificial leadership?
3. How would our church and our community be different if we were presenting all of ourselves to God as living sacrifices?

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...

4. Sacrifices don't ask why me.

5. Instead, sacrifices and servants respond with the immortal words of Wesley from Princess Bride, "As you wish..."

3. Beware of the flinch.

A. A living sacrifice is not a momentary act.

1. It begins with a confession and continues with a million little moments.
2. Sometimes it's as simple as not picking up the phone to scroll when I have my Bible out.
3. Sometimes it's confessing Christ before someone with the power to hurt us, harm us, or kill us.

B. The most common “flinch” are the little compromises that tempt us every day.

1. Rarely do people walk away from God because of one moment.
2. Spouses don't betray their mate in a single, random temptation.
3. It's the slow fade, the small moments, that result in our walking away.
4. Are there temptations, habits, or people that are making you flinch?

C. There are a million reasons we want to flinch, and only one reason to stay:

1. Because God is merciful, kind, and loving, I present my life as a living sacrifice.
2. **It is not the fear of hell that compels me; it is the love of Jesus.**

4. Am I keeping my sacrifice living, holy, and pleasing?

A. Not just any sacrifice will do.

1. In the Old Testament, there was no offering of lame, blemished sacrifices.
2. There was no offering of B-Stock or Factory Seconds.
3. Only the best will do.
4. And if that was an Old Testament Law, how much more should we be attentive to our sacrifice now?

B. What does your best look like right now?

1. How is God asking you to live?
2. How is God asking you to be set apart?
3. How is God asking you to be pleasing?
4. What does it mean for you to be a living, walking, breathing, sacrifice?

C. And I'm not so sure that sacrifice gets easier as we get older.

1. The way we sacrifice may change, but the calling to live as a living sacrifice doesn't.
2. Don't stop giving your all to Jesus just because the season of life has changed.

5. Remember that whatever God asks is reasonable.

A. Because Jesus gave everything for us, there isn't anything He can ask that isn't reasonable.

1. Wherever He chooses to send me, it's reasonable.
2. Whatever I might suffer for His sake is reasonable.
3. Whatever God requires of me is reasonable.

B. We have to let God choose the altar.

1. He tells us where to plant our cross.
2. He determines where we are to be consumed.
3. He chooses the speed and angle of us being poured out as a drink offering.
4. As Tasha Cobb sings: You provide the fire, I'll provide the sacrifice.

Close: Love makes the sacrifice possible.

An old preacher named Donald Greyhouse told a story that went something like this:

A man once shared an experience from early in his marriage. Years before, he had been involved with a woman who was not a good match for him. While he was away in military service, that relationship ended, and in another city he met a woman of deep character whom he later married.

After returning home with his wife, the former girlfriend unexpectedly stopped by one evening while his wife was away. Her interest was clear, and the pull of temptation was real. But instead of responding, he began speaking warmly about his wife—her character, their love, and the joy of their life together. He showed her photos and praised his wife without hesitation.

Before leaving, the woman said, "She must be someone special if she can keep you from reaching."

The man said he felt no sense of loss in that moment—only joy. His love for his wife felt stronger and more honorable than ever. What looked like sacrifice from the outside was, in truth, an act of devotion.

That is the picture Scripture gives us in Romans 12:1: a living sacrifice—not a grudging denial, but a wholehearted turning of our lives toward what truly deserves our love.⁴

My friends, God is not calling us to a grudging denial, but to an act of sincere worship.

⁴ Based on a story told by Barnhouse in his commentary on Romans 12