

**Living a Spiritual Life in a Physical World**

Romans 12:1

LAST WEEK we studied **THE WHY** of dedicating our lives. It is in light of *the mercies of God*. TODAY we will discuss **HOW**. It is by presenting ourselves as a **LIVING SACRIFICE**.

Our text is Romans 12:1 *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."*

A living sacrifice is the picture of a born again person who has dedicated their entire life to God's use, in light of the wonderful blessing God has given through his salvation. It is a life that says, "Lord, you have saved me entirely, without merit of my own, and when I was your enemy. Therefore, the only reply that I can possibly have is to surrender the remainder of my life, in all of its aspects, to your service.

This week in California, **John McDonald** rescued a 3 year old from a **burning van**. Dramatic video footage captured the heroic drama, and TV interviews recorded the reaction of the humble hero, and the child's grateful grandmother. The grand-mother escaped but could not get her child. Mr. McDonald unhesitatingly rushed to the van, fully engulfed in flames and untethered the child who was contorted in the up-turned vehicle. He pulled her before any serious harm occurred.

*How would you have responded if you were that grand-mother? Would you not have an attitude of gratefulness? Would you not feel that any gratitude, no matter how sincere, could never be adequate to express the degree of your happiness? Would you not ask, at least to yourself, "**How can I every repay you?**"*

Welcome to Romans 12! The Apostle Paul has explained fully the love of God in the precious 11 chapters. The logical question for the reader at this point it, "**Lord, how can I every repay you?**"

Many dedicate their lives at **CAMPFIRE SERVICES**, challenged by the **GREAT NEED** of a lost world. Other messages challenge our **SINFULNESS** and move us to points of new commitment. TODAY, we are will take a **SERIOUS, STUDIOUS** examination of a greater motivation, the mercy of God, and the response it ought to generate in all those who have been touched by God's grace.

The first thing to notice about this response, is that God is Asking. He is not demanding (although that is certainly his right). He is urging. *I urge you therefore...*

This is the main verb of 12:1. It is a strong, urgent request. *Where as the Law thunders from the mountain, grace calls through the tender mercies of Christ.*”

What is God Asking? He asks that we **Offer your bodies**. The phrase “body” entails all of our being, body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

This idea was first raised by Paul in Romans 6:13 *"Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."*

A W Tozer wrote *“Present your bodies.. that is, present your vessel. That must come first. A vessel that has not been presented will not be filled. God cannot fill what He cannot have.* (Quotation from Preceptaustin.org Romans 12:1)

Nothing is to be left out! Consider this picture. At their wedding, the bride does not turn to the groom and say, “I give you my cooking ability.” The groom does not say to the bride, “I give you my bank account.?” In marriage ceremony they vow, “I give you myself.” This is how we ought to respond to the Lord, with nothing held back.

When we hold any part of our lives from the Lord, we lose the ability for our lives to be filled by Him. If you were in a bread line in some poor country, and you stood back and would not present your cup, you would not get any milk. And if you did not present the plate or basket, you would not get any bread.

*Have you presented your children?  
your money?  
your home?  
your career?  
your emotions?  
your past?*

PARTIAL SACRIFICES were not accepted in the OT.

### **How do we make this presentation?**

1. It is a LIVING SACRIFICE

**Two ideas** here in the word LIVING.

The sacrifice is a **complete life**. (Philippians 1:20) *"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death."*

2. The sacrifice is **perpetual, ongoing**.

- a. “Perpetual, lasting, never neglected” (Hodge, 604) The idea is expressed in several uses throughout the NT. When Jesus speaks about “*living bread,*” he is speaking of bread that continually satisfies. (John 6:51) When he speaks of “*Living water,*” he refers to the continual source of power we have through the Holy Spirit. “*Living hope*” is a hope that is strong and sure and that will not diminish. (1 Peter 1:3)

To understand “Living Sacrifice,” we must **turn to the OT**. In the OT, there were **sacrifices for SIN and for PRAISE**. **Leviticus 1-5** explain 5 different offerings

1. **The burnt offering.** 1:3, 17
2. **The Grain offering.** Leviticus 2
3. **The fellowship (peace) offering.** Leviticus 3. *The only offering where the worshiper shared in eating of the sacrificed animal. Illustrated the fellowship between God and man.*
4. **The sin offering.** Leviticus 4
5. **The trespass offering.** **Leviticus 5:14-15**

Offerings for SIN were Propitiatory. They ALWAYS offered something living. The offering ALWAYS resulted in the victim’s DEATH. Our living sacrifice is different. The sacrifice for sin has already been paid by Jesus. The Living Sacrifice he asks of us is a sacrifice of our lives. It is the sacrifice referred to in Hebrews 13:15: “*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.*”

It is a **HOLY Sacrifice**. This was clearly understood in the Old Testament. “*If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a **male without defect**. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be **acceptable to the Lord**.*” (Leviticus 1:3) This is why Jesus was presented as a pure, holy sacrifice. “*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

It is a sacrifice “**Pleasing to God**” (KJV “*acceptable to God*”)

Every believer should desire to live a life pleasing to God. Notice the emphasis in the following verses:

(Ephesians 5:8-10) “*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) **and find out what pleases the Lord.***” (KJV *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*)

(Psalm 19:14) “*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*”

(2 Corinthians 5:9) “*So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*” (Pleasing God is also emphasized in Philippians 4:18 and 1 Peter

2:5.

In contrast, the worship of the ISRAELITES were NOT pleasing to God...*"What do I care about incense from Sheba or sweet calamus from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices **do not please me.**"* (Jeremiah 6:20) This should never be said of us.

### **Why Should I Make This Sacrifice?**

Because of God's mercies. **In light of all that He has done for you. We have an obligation of gratitude.** The phrase *"This is your spiritual act of worship"* uses the Greek word "logikon." Much like it sounds, the word emphasizes something that is sound, logical or reasonable. As we consider God's mercy, the only reasonable thing for us to do is to offer him our entire being!

A story is told about Queen Mary, who made it her practice to visit Scotland every year. She was so loved by the people there that she often mingled with them freely without a protective escort. One afternoon while walking with some children, she went out farther than she'd planned. Dark clouds came up unexpectedly, so she stopped at a nearby house to borrow an umbrella. *"If you will lend me one,"* she said to the lady who answered the door, *"I will send it back to you tomorrow."* The woman didn't recognize the Queen and was reluctant to give this stranger her best umbrella. So she handed her one that she intended to throw away. The fabric was torn in several places and one of the ribs was broken. The next day another knock was heard at the door. When the lady opened it, she was greeted by a royal guard, who was holding in her hand her old, tattered umbrella. *"The Queen sent me,"* he said. *"She asked me to thank you for loaning her this."* For a moment the woman was stunned, then, she burst into tears. *"Oh, what an opportunity I missed,"* she cried. *"I didn't give the Queen my very best!"* (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI.)

Have we given God our best? Our all?

As I consider this, it is really a matter of FAITH. We know God deserves our best, but we are sometimes afraid of surrendering everything to him out of our own personal fear. Complete surrender is a matter of faith because we must ask ourselves the question, Do I trust God?

We have established that our living sacrifice is not propitiatory, it is not a sacrifice for sins. Only Jesus could accomplish that. So we must consider whether it is possible for a person who has professed faith in Christ's vicarious sacrifice to live a life that is somehow less than fully committed. Such a conclusion is illogical! It doesn't make sense. It runs against the very nature of the grace that we have received.

Paul does not write Romans 12:1 as some kind of option for Christians to consider. It is as logical a point as any that he has written in the previous 11 chapters. For a Christian to

“beg out” of a fully committed life (Romans 12), they might as well consider begging out of Justification (Romans 3:20- 5:21), or Sanctification (Romans 6-8). No Christian who would consider a life which restricts commitment to Christ would also deny God’s Sovereignty (Romans 9-11). The kind of commitment Paul addresses in Romans 12 is simply the next logical development of the theme of God’s Righteousness!

Mounce write, *“In view of God’s acts of mercy, it is entirely fitting that we commit ourselves without reservation to him. To teach that accepting the free gift of God’s grace does not necessarily involve a moral obligation on our part is a heresy of gigantic proportions. The popular cliché, “He is Lord of all or not Lord at all” is absolutely right”* (Mounce, NAC, 232)

Have you completely surrendered to Him, in light of all that He has done for you?