

The Nature of the Sacrifice Romans 12:1-2

As we come to the second part of the passage before us, "The Nature of the Sacrifice" we need to keep in mind that the basis of this sacrifice is "**by the mercies of God**". Those are the introductory words of the Apostle. That's the first thing that he says and that's the first thing of which he want us to be aware. God through Paul is laying the foundation for what follows in this chapter. For without that foundation one's reason for and purpose in living a godly life will be distorted. This is why so many struggle today to make themselves acceptable to God because they do not understand the basis of the Christian life. They do not fully understand that it is the mercies of God that makes one acceptable before God, it is the mercies of God that has provided salvation by Christ alone and a righteousness imputed by grace alone.

Thus we come to the next phrase and we need to ask what is Paul asking us to do? He exhorts us to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God. So, he's telling us this call to holiness that he's issuing here means a whole life sacrifice. Christian living, Paul could say in another way, he could ask us to put Christ first in every aspect of our life.

Now, we don't live in a culture where people are regularly offering animal sacrifices or any type of ritual sacrifices. It's not done in our culture. We're not familiar with it. The people that Paul was writing to knew very well the typical practices of sacrifice. An animal's life was taken and it was sacrificed to God or the gods. So this must have been something of shock. What Paul is saying would have hit home to them. They would have been used to putting something else up on an altar to sacrifice and suddenly Paul says, "Climb up there yourself and give yourself as a sacrifice to God."

It would be like Paul saying, "Here is my evangelistic campaign theme, 'Die for Jesus.'" Now, you're expecting something more uplifting. Something more positive, like, *Here's Life* or *I found it*, or *Change Your World*, or something like that. That is something that would draw somebody to an evangelistic campaign. Positive, uplifting, a "*What's In It for Me*" kind of theme." (Ligon Duncan) The Apostle Paul would not be too popular today for he is calling for us to put ourselves on the altar and to give up everything for Christ.

You see, salvation is the free gift that costs you everything. Do you remember the words of our Lord when He turned and said to them, "*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Luke 14:25-26* And then added "*So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*" Luke 14:33

Today the preacher says, "Give your heart to Jesus". That is not a biblical phrase. What Paul says is the Biblical phrase. It may sound strange but what he says, "I want you to present yourself, I want you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice." He is not saying give a part of yourself to God, or get emotionally involved with God. So many today want to be emotionally involved for hour or two, at most for the whole week. I think that if the Apostle Paul was living today he would say, "I'm not asking you to give Jesus your heart, He wants more than that. He wants all of you. Give your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God."

John Calvin understood that. Here is what he wrote in his institutes, "We are not our own, therefore let not our reason, nor our will sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own, let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own. In so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours. Conversely, we belong to God. Let us therefore, let us live for Him and die for Him, we belong to God. Let His wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We belong to God. Let all the parts of our lives accordingly strive toward Him as our only lawful goal."

What then is the nature of the sacrifice?

A. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God.

1. Not talking about flesh and bones, he is talking about our very being.
2. We need to ask, what is the first and greatest commandment?

Mark 12:29-30 "*The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* This is the first commandment.

3. Heart, soul, mind and strength
 - a. Your emotions
 - b. Your inner being
 - c. Your intellect
 - d. Your physical being
 - e. Not just love God with all your heart, it's with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.
 - f. This is what Paul means when he says "Present your bodies a living sacrifice"
4. God has a two-fold ownership of us.
 - a. Owns us by right of being our Creator.
 - b. Owns us by right of purchase, by being our Redeemer
5. Body is a proper term here for it is inclusive of the whole of us.
 - a. Christ did not suffer humiliation, pain and death to simply occupy a small portion of us.
 - b. He did not suffer humiliation just to have our "felt love" toward him.
6. We must present our bodies because our flesh kicks against this request.
 - a. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.
 - b. Therefore a living sacrifice requires us to put to death the desires of the flesh.

*Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you **put to death the deeds of the body**, you will live.*

7. The Christian life is a life of submission.

B. Three adjectives describe the sacrifice that we are to be; living, holy, and acceptable.

1. Once again we shall see that our sacrifice is on the basis of what God has done in us and for us by the mercies of God alone.
2. First, it is to be a "living" sacrifice.
 - a. Christianity is not a cold dead intellectual state.
 - b. Chap. 6 - Buried with Christ, we now walk in newness of life.
 - c. Our living sacrifice is simply walking in the newness of our standing in Christ.
3. Secondly it is to be a "holy" sacrifice – that is a life set apart.
 - a. Chap. 5 - A life born of the Holy Spirit who was given to us. - The love of God has been poured out in our hearts **by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**
 - b. We now walk in the power of that gift given to us.
4. Lastly it is an "acceptable" sacrifice. (without blemish)
 - a. Chap. 5 - We have been made acceptable by an imputed righteousness.

Rom 5:9 ". . . having now been justified by His blood."

Rom 5:19 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."

CONCLUSION: Be what you are.

By virtue of our union with Christ we are alive – live for Christ

By virtue of our union with Christ we are holy – live separated from the world and its lust

By virtue of our union with Christ we are acceptable – live a life pleasing to God.

We understand we are not yet perfected. We are still in that "Already – not yet state".

We have been justified, but not glorified.

We are presently in the "in between". While we are in between – strive to be what you are in Christ.

You are alive, holy and acceptable – offer yourself to be that before God and before the world.

Let your light shine – others may see Christ in you.

Do this not to make yourself acceptable before God.

But because you have been made acceptable in the Beloved – Let us strive to live that life