

Presenting Your Body as a Living Sacrifice

Air Dates: September 11 - 15, 2023

Day One

When I say the word "sacrifice," what comes to your mind? Some words I associate with "sacrifice" are *relinquishing, giving away, losing*. Not exactly words to warm our hearts, are they? At least, not our human hearts, which on their own are not prone to want to sacrifice anything.

The first two verses of Romans 12 are about sacrifice:

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2).

There's that word: sacrifice. Have you ever wondered exactly what it means to give your body as a living sacrifice? It conjures up visions of burning at the stake, being attacked by lions, and other similarly distasteful events.

Then, when I think that my life is full of activity and schedules and commitments, I wonder how am I supposed to do all this and sacrifice at the same time?

Well, it's good to note that it is to be a *living* sacrifice. This is not a sacrifice to take our lives away from us, but one that requires us to keep on living. But what does it mean to be a living sacrifice?

A dictionary definition of sacrifice says: *The surrender or destruction of something prized or desirable for the sake of something considered as having a higher claim*. I think this definition comes close to what Paul had in mind. A living sacrifice would require surrender of something we all prize—our bodies—for something that has a higher purpose—worshiping the God of all creation, who has given us this life to begin with.

But the question becomes: How do we live day in and day out as a living sacrifice to God? How do we offer our bodies as living sacrifices?

Day Two

You've probably heard lots of sermons on Romans 12:1-2, where we are told to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Does that mean check into a monastery, walk on hot coals, throw ourselves to the lions? We want to get a biblical view of what it means to present your body as a living sacrifice.

This sacrifice is a living one, not dead. That's encouraging. Presenting our bodies does not imply some physical death or bodily punishment. But what does it mean?

Well, we read in Romans 6:19b: *Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.*

Did you ever realize that you've been offering your body as a sacrifice all along? It's true; we all do it throughout life. For example, when you relinquish your feet to go where sin takes you, to the wrong places, your feet are slaves to impurity and wickedness. When your tongue speaks words that hurt and harm, your hands to do things that are not pleasing to God, your eyes and ears see and hear the trash of this world, that's what it means to sacrifice parts of your body to impurity. And we've all done it.

Some people sacrifice their bodies to meaningless and trivial things. While they might not be classified as evil, their hands and feet, eyes and ears, tongues and hearts are sacrificed to time-consuming activities that are largely insignificant.

But, as a child of God, you and I have the opportunity to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to bring glory to Jesus. Instead of using your body in acts of evil and triviality, you can, if you choose to, be a part of God's eternal plan and have his power working through your body. Then your hands and eyes and feet and tongue—and all your other body parts—will be living sacrifices to God instead of to evil. And this leads to holiness in your life. Presenting your body as a living sacrifice begins to sound more like a privilege than a drudgery, doesn't it?

But the question remains: How do you offer your body as a living sacrifice? I've found some practical ways of doing that on a daily basis that have made a difference in my life.

Day Three

How do I apply the passage in Romans 12:1-2, where we are admonished to give our bodies as living sacrifices? How do we do that? Well, here's what I often do.

At the beginning of my day. I literally go through the parts of my body and relinquish each of them to God's service for the day, like this:

"Lord, here are my feet. They are yours today. May I walk as Jesus would walk, go where you want me to go." If my feet are given to God as a living sacrifice, for sure there will be places that I won't go, because Jesus wouldn't go there. Such places as social scenes that would cause me to compromise.

But that's probably the easy part. Feet that are living sacrifices will take me places I might not think of going otherwise. I'll go to people who need me, I'll be in places of worship, I'll use my feet to take me where Jesus would go so that I can minister to them as Jesus would.

Then I continue to present my body as a living sacrifice: *"Here are my hands, Lord. I give them to you today so that what I do with them will bring honor to you."* Hands that are given over to God will be busy servant hands, doing things for others.

Once while visiting a dear godly woman, her husband commented that she was always on the clean-up crew at church, staying behind and mopping and cleaning when everyone else had left. She replied, "I do it for Jesus, so what difference does it make if I'm mopping?"

Those are hands given to God as a living sacrifice. Nothing is too menial for them to do; nothing too hard; nothing beneath them.

So, our hands and feet are a good place to start with as a daily living sacrifice. Wherever you are right now—wherever you're headed—would you offer your hands and feet as a living sacrifice? Tell the Lord that you want them to be in his control, not yours. You may be surprised to see what God wants to do with your hands and feet when they are living sacrifices.

Day Four

Romans 12 tells us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, for this is a reasonable service.

We do this by remembering at the beginning of each day to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. For example, you can pray: *"Lord, here are my eyes; I want to see as you see. Here are my ears; may I listen to what you would listen to."* If your eyes and ears are committed to God each day as living sacrifices, you're going to be much more careful about what you look at and hear, don't you think?

There are going to be television programs and movies you'll never watch because they are not pure and clean. There are going to be YouTube videos and some podcasts you'll never watch or listen to because they contain immoral and unedifying material. Also, you'll be able to see this world and other people through the eyes of Jesus, and that perspective will make incredible changes in your everyday actions and reactions.

Here's another part of your body to give over to God: *"Lord, I give you my tongue today. I ask you to control all the words formed by my tongue, that they be words of help and healing."*

My, how powerful our words are. The Bible tells us they have the power of life or death. I want to choose my words carefully so that they are words of life and they refresh others. A tongue that is presented to God each day as a living sacrifice will be an instrument of peace, it will be non-judgmental, it will speak words of encouragement.

You can also pray: *"Lord, my brain is yours; I want to think your thoughts."* It is very important that you present your mind to God, asking him to control your thoughts and reasoning processes.

I strongly encourage you to consider doing this regularly—presenting parts of your body individually to God each day, being reminded of what it means to be a living sacrifice. It is one of the best ways to prepare yourself for the day ahead, because it reminds you that you are not your own, you are bought with a price. And therefore, your body—every part of it—should be a living sacrifice all day long every day.

Day Five

The last body part to present is probably the most important. You pray: *"Here's my heart, Lord. Put in my heart your love and compassion for all the people I will see today."* Do you find it difficult to like some of the people you deal with each day? All of us do, don't we? But with our hearts given to God as living sacrifices, then he is free to give us his love for people, and we'll start to discover that we care about people we never cared about before.

Then close by saying, *"Lord, I present my body to you as a sacrifice that will live for you today, not for me. I do this by faith and trust you for the reality."* It's important that you understand we do this by faith. There may be absolutely no feelings associated with it. But God will honor that obedience on your part and you'll be amazed to see the changes that start to happen in your life.

I believe you will be much more aware when your feet are trying to take you somewhere you shouldn't go; when you're doing something with your hands that is not Christ-honoring; when your eyes and ears are focused on things that are harmful; when your tongue is saying words it should not say, when your mind is dwelling on the wrong things; when your heart is not loving and kind toward others.

I would encourage you to take the Word of God literally, and put every part of your body before the Lord as a sacrifice. If you'll sincerely do that on a regular basis, you're going to discover that you'll be learning what it means to present your body as a living sacrifice. And you'll discover how exciting and rewarding it is to see that God can and does use you in ways you never imagined.