

Living Sacrifices

Romans 11:33—12:8

Introduction

Chapter 12 begins with Paul appealing to us to *present our bodies as living sacrifices* to God. Before we break down what it means to be a **living sacrifice**, notice the word, *therefore*. My Dad taught me that when a Bible passage begins with “therefore”, you must find out what it’s **there for**. “Therefore” means “based on what I just said.” It answers the question, “Why?” Why does Paul want us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices? That’s why today’s pericope begins with the last four verses of **chapter 11** (read **11:33-36**). Because of the greatness of God, we are to give Him glory. How do we give glory to God? By offering our bodies up as living sacrifices.

What Is a “Living” Sacrifice?

We think of a sacrifice as **killing** an animal on an altar. You give up that animal. It is dead. In baseball, a sacrifice is when you intentionally make an out in order to advance a teammate already on the basepaths. Your giving up any possibility of scoring a run yourself. You are dead. So, what’s a “living” sacrifice? This is what Jesus is talking about in **Matthew 10:39**, when He says, “*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*” When we give up our body, our earthly way of life, we find new life in Jesus Christ. That’s why salvation is also called “regeneration.” Christ gives us new life.

Why Do We “Present” Our Bodies?

If Jesus gives us this new life at **conversion**, why do we have to do something? Are you reverting to your Quaker and Baptist roots and telling us we must live a certain way in order to be Christians? Paul’s not talking here about **salvation**. He’s talking about Christian lifestyle. Saving faith is a faith that changes the life. This is about the **relationship** we have with God. What does it mean to be a child of God? It is our *spiritual worship* because this is how we give glory to God.

What Is a “Living” Sacrifice”?

Paul goes on to paint a picture of a living sacrifice. It has three basic traits.

Sober Judgment

In **verse 3**, Paul says *not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment*. We see this sober judgment in the 5th Petition of the **LORD’S PRAYER**. *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*. When we remember that we are sinners before God, we won’t be so quick to look down on those who sin against us. As Luther says, *in God’s presence all must tuck their tails and be glad that they can gain forgiveness*.

Live as One

In **verse 5** we read that we are *one body in Christ, and individually members of one another*. While sober judgment applies to our relationship with all people, this is about our relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ. If the church is going to be a healthy organism, all members must work

together just as the members of our bodies work together. When one is hurting or not functioning, it causes pain and trouble for the whole body. When all are working together well, life is good.

Using Spiritual Gifts

How do we work together? God has given each of us different gifts and placed us together here in His church. The gifts were given to build the body of Christ (See ***Ephesians 4:11-16***). He's also given these different gifts to each of us because one person can't do it all. It takes all of us working together. Paul lists 7 of the gifts and how they are to be used.

1. **Prophecy**—*is primarily the explanation of things which are unclear, whether future or past, whether present or hidden*—Diodore, 4th Century bishop of Tarsus and teacher of John Chrysostom.
2. **Service**—is just what it says, serving one another.
3. **Teaching**—is teaching the **WORD** to the people.
4. **Exhortation**—is a type of preaching that encourages Christians to live a certain way and unbelievers to believe in Jesus.
5. **Generosity**—the gift that keeps on giving.
6. **Leadership**—Paul says our leaders are to have zeal, to lead with enthusiasm.
7. **Mercy**—acts of mercy are acts of kindness done to those in need.

He says to do all these in proportion to our faith. if we try to do too much, we will burn ourselves out.

How Can we “Present” Our Bodies

How do we *present our bodies as living sacrifices*? Paul gives the answer to that question in **verse 2: be transformed by the renewal of your mind**. Our minds are renewed through the Word and Sacrament. In fact, Origen said, *I doubt whether a mind which is lazy toward the Holy Scriptures and the exercise of spiritual knowledge can be renewed at all. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. The tense of the word “renewal” means that this is an ongoing process, not a one and done. God continually renews our mind when we daily spend time in the **WORD** and when we regularly receive the **BODY** and **BLOOD** of Christ. This how we can present our bodies as **LIVING SACRIFICES**.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
