



The Sacrificed Life ... a Second Decision

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1-2.

Are you sacrificing or sacrificed? Are you presenting your sacrifice to God ... or have you presented it? Do you present your body as a daily sacrifice to God ... or have you done it once-for-all-time? All Christians should submit daily to God as part of their walk with Him ... part of taking up one's cross daily, Luke 9:23. However, the intent of Romans 12:1 is *not* such a daily submission. It is a once-for-all-time dedication, surrender, and submission to Him. It is the sacrifice of one's life unconditionally and permanently to God as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice. It is a voluntary life-long enslavement back to Him ... for His glory and for His unrestricted use.

God's mercies motivate the sacrifice. *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God..."* It is because of His great mercies, described in Romans 1-11, that we should *therefore* present ourselves to God. Some follow God because of what He *will do* for them rather than primarily because of what He *has done*. That is conformity to the world's motivation. Our proper motivation should be based on the already accomplished mercies of God. He will bless us in this life and in the life to come ... but that should not be our primary motivation. Our motivation should be Him ... not us. Do not be conformed to the world's me-me-me attitude. Instead, have a Him-Him-Him attitude. God is God. He is not our celestial vending machine.

Present your body as a living sacrifice. In Romans 12:1, the Holy Spirit exhorts us to present ourselves as living, holy, and acceptable sacrifices. From an overly simplistic interpretation of the English text, one could conclude that this should occur daily in a Christian's life. Daily submission to the Master is not wrong. However, Romans 12:1 does not exhort us to a daily sacrifice. Instead, it exhorts us to a once-for-all-time sacrifice to God. Both the English and Greek present tense represent something that happens now or is continually happening. However, the verb *"present"* in Romans 12:1 is not in the present tense. In the Greek, there is an aorist tense ... one that has no direct English equivalent. This use of the aorist tense represents punctiliar action ... meaning without regard for past, present, or future. This use of the aorist tense does not mean a continuing action ... but a timeless act. If the present tense were used in Romans 12:1, it could be translated as *keep on presenting*. However, the aorist rather than the present tense is used. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to translate or interpret this as *keep on presenting*. There is no English equivalent of the Greek aorist command to *"present your*

bodies". However, the Williams New Testament and the Amplified New Testament render it more clearly as "*make a decisive dedication of your bodies*". This decisive dedication is not a daily occurrence. Instead, it is a one-time act of sacrifice. It is a once-for-all-time offering.

It is a second decision. In Romans 12:1, the believer is both priest and sacrifice. Because of the great mercies accomplished by Jesus, as priest and sacrifice of our salvation, we are exhorted to present our bodies as sacrifices to God. Salvation was accomplished by the sacrificial death of Jesus. Our sacrifice is a living sacrifice. Each believer needs to make a second decision beyond salvation, to enslave himself or herself to God ... ultimately and finally submitting to Him. There is a good example of this kind of voluntary and permanent enslavement in Deuteronomy 15:12-17. Freed Hebrew slaves could re-enslave themselves to their masters. That choice was based on the past mercies of the slave master ... was prompted by the slave's love for the master ... and was permanent. Then an awl was used to pierce the slave's ear ... signifying that he was the master's servant *forever*. That is the same as the Romans 12:1 sacrifice. This re-enslavement is not forced on the slave. It is the freed slave's choice. It is the slave's once-for-all-time decision.

Two examples offer insight. The once-for-all-time aspect of a Romans 12:1 sacrifice can be seen in the Biblical example of Old Testament sacrifices. Those sacrifices were given to God with no strings attached. After the sacrifice was over, the sacrificed animal was not removed from the altar and sacrificed again on the next day and then again and again, day after day. When those sacrifices were made, they were complete and final. If someone placed a sacrifice on the altar and then took it back, it would not have been considered an actual sacrifice. A withdrawn sacrifice was not a sacrifice. A popular statement in some Christian circles goes something like this, "*The problem with living sacrifices is that when the altar gets hot, they keep crawling off.*" That may be somewhat cute and even be a catchy statement ... but it does not apply to Romans 12:1 any more than to Old Testament sacrifices. If a Romans 12:1 sacrifice crawls off the altar, it never was a Romans 12:1 sacrifice. Another example, one from daily life, shows similar intended permanence. Consider the difference between co-habitation and God's intended life-long commitment in marriage. In essence, without a once-for-all-of-life commitment, cohabiters decide daily if they will stay together or not. It is essentially a daily decision ... a once-a-day commitment. If you were cohabitating, would you be reassured each morning by hearing, "*I'm totally, completely, and without limitations, yours for 24 more hours*"? You would not. Real commitment is in the wedding vow, "*Till death do we part.*" That, when meant, is real commitment. A Romans 12:1 commitment is a life-long commitment ... not a 24-hour cohabitation commitment.

Acceptable or unacceptable? We are exhorted to present our bodies as living and holy sacrifices. The *living* part is easy to accomplish. However, it is the *holy* part that is difficult. After an Old Testament animal was sacrificed, it could not take itself off the altar to be sacrificed again. An accepted sacrifice was permanent. However, sacrifices could be rejected by God. Sacrificial animals that were blind, lame, sick, or deformed were rejected, Malachi 1:6-11. Obviously, no sacrificial animal was perfect ... but an adequate level of physical health was required for acceptance. The same is true spiritually for our Romans 12:1 sacrifice. Moreover, if our sacrifice can be *acceptable*, it could also be *unacceptable*. God accepts holy sacrifices ... clean vessels for His use. "*Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses*

himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." 2 Timothy 2:20-21. You cannot be perfect ... but you can present yourself at an adequate and therefore acceptable level of spiritual health. Do not offer a sacrifice that is spiritually blind, lame, sick, or deformed. God requires a holy sacrifice ... a clean vessel ... one that is an acceptable offering.

Why should anyone repeat the sacrifice? Once your Romans 12:1 sacrifice has been accepted by God, you do not need to re-offer it. However, there is a place for re-offering your sacrifice. If you have offered a spiritually lame, blind, sick, or deformed sacrifice to Him, your sacrifice was unaccepted. You offered an unacceptable sacrifice ... and He said, "No thank you." God demands a holy sacrifice ... and rejects an unholy sacrifice. Maybe the reason that some attempt to offer a daily Romans 12:1 sacrifice is that they sense that it has not been previously accepted. Or maybe they have just blurred the line between taking up one's cross daily and laying down a once-for-all-time Romans 12:1 sacrifice. If you have offered an unacceptable sacrifice to God, work on your holiness and then re-offer your sacrifice. That is a legitimate repetition of Romans 12:1. However, move on when it has been accepted.

Life after the sacrifice. When your sacrifice is accepted, you need to move on to a disciple's life after the sacrifice. Move on to the exhortations of Romans 12:2, "*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*" The *do not be conformed* and the *be transformed* are in the present tense (not aorist tense) indicating a present and continuing action. The present tense used in verse 2 distinguishes these two commands from the aorist command in Romans 12:1. These commands could be rendered *keep on being not conformed to the world...* and *keep on being transformed by the renewing of your mind.* This is to occur daily and hourly ... part of taking up your cross daily, Luke 9:23. Then you will be able to prove what the will of God is in your life. The word translated as *prove* means to *recognize as genuine*. As acceptable Romans 12:1 sacrifices, our exhortation in Romans 12:2 is to become better and better slaves by our continuing rejection of the world's pressures to conform and by the continuing transformation of our minds through the Word. Both of these make us to be better servants ... servants who recognize the genuine will of God.

What will you do? The exhortation of Romans 12:1 is for every Christian ... it is for you. Present yourself to God as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice. It is your *reasonable service of worship*. This sacrifice of oneself is not one in a series of crises of faith. It is a once-for-all-time crisis of submission to God. You do not need to re-offer your sacrifice after He has accepted it. If your ear was pierced by His awl, it is pierced for life. The choice is yours. Will you offer yourself as exhorted in Romans 12:1? Will you submit yourself once-for-all-time to God? Will you place yourself as a living and holy sacrifice on His altar for His unrestricted use? When you have done that, move on. Move on to your non-conforming and always transforming life as a disciple ... to life *after the sacrifice*.

The Sacrificed Life, copyright 2003, was printed by permission from www.MyDisciplemaker.org. You may copy this article for free or at cost distribution ... without change to the content ... and with this complete copyright/reprint statement attached. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright 1960, et al, by the Lockman Foundation, La Habra, California, USA. For answers to questions about this article, contact its author, John Morris, at questions@MyDisciplemaker.org. Acts One Eight, inc., PO Box 50200, Colorado Springs, CO 80949, USA.