

SACRIFICE 316

A Living Sacrifice

"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

Your sacrifice. This exhortation to present your body as a *"living and holy sacrifice"* is often misunderstood. However, it is very important in showing you the correct way to be more than just a Believer in Jesus Christ. Verse one challenges each Believer to make a specific sacrifice to God *after* salvation. Verse two gives instructions for life *after* that sacrifice. Submit to God every day as part of taking up your cross daily, Luke 9:23. However, that is not the intent of Romans 12:1. Its command to *"present your bodies"* is to make a *once for all time* dedication, surrender, and full submission to God. It is not salvation. Salvation is based solely on the sacrifice of Christ. This is different. This is your sacrifice. It is not a daily sacrifice. It is giving your life unconditionally and permanently to God as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice. It is your voluntary gift of yourself to God for His glory and for His unrestricted use.

Why make this sacrifice? It is because of His mercies. Romans chapters 1-11 describe God's mercies. Romans 12:1 tells you what God wants you to do because of those mercies. Romans 12:2 gives you two exhortations for life *after* your sacrifice. God's great mercies in saving you and sanctifying you are described in those first eleven chapters. Therefore, present yourself to God. He will bless you in this life and in eternity. However, the proper motivation for your sacrifice is not in front of you. It is behind you. Your proper motivation is based on what God has already done. Imagine Jesus holding up His nail-scarred hands to you as He says, "After all I have done for you, do this for Me." That is the meaning of Romans 12:1.

Why a one-time sacrifice? It is because that is the meaning of the words in Romans 12:1-2. The verbs in *"do not be conformed"* and *"be transformed"* in 12:2 are present tense. That means do those two things now and keep on doing them throughout your life. However, the verb in *"Present your bodies"* in 12:1 is not in the simple present tense in Greek. In Greek, it means a singular act. It does not mean keep on doing it. It means do it once for all time. It is a decisive dedication of yourself to God. Offer yourself as a sacrifice to Him. Romans 12:1 is about your sacrifice. It is about you placing yourself permanently on God's altar.

Two illustrations. Deuteronomy 15:12-17 provides an illustration for this. A freed Hebrew slave could decide to *voluntarily* and *permanently* re-enslave himself to his master. That choice was based on the past mercies of the master. It was prompted by the slave's love for his master. It was permanent. An awl was used to pierce the slave's ear indicating that he was the master's servant for life. This enslavement was the slave's choice. It was not forced on him. It was a permanent decision. Another illustration is in the Old Covenant's animal sacrifices. An animal had to be acceptable to be placed on the altar. A diseased or blemished animal was not acceptable, Leviticus 1-5. That illustrates the holy and acceptable part of your Romans 12:1 sacrifice. The sacrificed animal being dead illustrates the permanence of the sacrifice. No sacrificed animal crawled off the altar when it got hot. No priest took an animal back at the end of the day to possibly offer it on another day. It was a permanent sacrifice. If you take your Romans 12:1 sacrifice off the altar when it gets hot, it was never a Romans 12:1 sacrifice.

Repeating your sacrifice. Should you ever repeat your Romans 12:1 sacrifice? Yes, if your sacrifice was not acceptable. A Romans 12:1 sacrifice needs to be living, holy, and acceptable. You are alive because, upon believing in Christ, you *"passed out of death into life,"* John 5:24. Being a holy sacrifice is your responsibility. Old Testament animals had to be acceptable to be sacrificed. No animal could be perfect. But it had to be without disease, healthy, and without blemish. That illustrates two things for a Romans 12:1 sacrifice. First, your sacrifice must be disease-free. The disease of sin and separation from God must be cured by salvation. That is why Romans 12:1 is written only to Believers (indicated by the word "brethren" in that verse). A non-Believer's sacrifice is not acceptable because it must be offered *after* salvation rather than *before* salvation. You must come to Jesus before you can follow Him. To be sure of your salvation visit www.Gospel316.org. The holy part indicates an acceptable level of spiritual cleanliness in a Believer's life. Only then will your Romans 12:1 sacrifice be acceptable to God. *"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 2:21. You cannot be perfect. However, you can present yourself at an adequate level of spiritual health and holiness. After your living and holy sacrifice has been accepted by God, you never need to offer it again. However, if your sacrifice was not acceptable to God because it was temporary or because it was not holy, then repeating it is needed. Offer yourself as a permanent, living, and holy sacrifice. Voluntarily and permanently enslave yourself to God. Do not do this casually. It is a very serious decision after salvation. After your sacrifice is accepted, move on to your Romans 12:2 non-conforming and transforming life as a true follower of Jesus Christ. After all He's done for you, do this for Him!

Life after your sacrifice. *"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 12:2. This verse gives exhortations for life after your Romans 12:1 sacrifice. The exhortations are present tense meaning keep on not being conformed and keep on being transformed by the continual renovation of your mind. Do not be conformed to, do not acquiesce to, the sinful practices of this world. Do not let the world shape who you are as a Believer. Romans 12:2 exhorts you to *"be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* The Greek word translated as *transformed* is the same word used of Jesus in Mathew 17:2 and Mark 9:2 where it states that He was *transfigured*. Romans 12:2 is an exhortation to be transfigured by the renewing (renovation, complete change for the better) of your mind. That metamorphosis (more extraordinary than a caterpillar becoming a butterfly) is accomplished as you learn and live God's Word. Make your Romans 12:1 sacrifice. Do not be squeezed into the world's mold. Be transfigured as you learn and live God's Word. Then you can discern and live God's will.

"So that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
Romans 12:2

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