

# Romans (12:1)

## *Living the Sacrifice*

Part 58 - January 8, 2006

### FOUNDATION TO APPLICATION

We are turning quite a corner as Paul begins chapter twelve. So far, Romans has been all about what to believe. From now on it's gonna be all about how to behave. Paul progresses from foundation to application because:

- Belief *must* be followed by behavior.

It's our behavior - how we treat God and people - that reveals and validates what we truly believe. So Paul will challenge the way we regard and react to the world, the church, our friends, our enemies, and even the government. But first and foremost, he covers our relationship with God:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.  
- *Romans 12:1 NIV*

Let's read that again, in a couple different translations.

With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. - *Romans 12:1 J.B. Phillips*

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. - *Romans 12:1 The Message*

### THEREFORE

Paul shifts from principles to practice in a single word: "Therefore"

Whenever you see a "therefore" you should pause and see what it's there for. It's always setting up a response to *something*.

Paul says "therefore" on the basis of all the teaching he's covered in eleven chapters ... and we've covered in 19 months! Sin and corruption; Christ and the cross; righteousness through faith; peace, joy, freedom, and adoption; and no condemnation!

[And] neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons ... neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. – *Romans 8:38-39 NIV*

**Therefore!** We should respond with our lives.

- Only Christianity can have a “therefore” like this one!

Every other religion turns it around: You accomplish this list of things, and you can *earn* God’s acceptance and approval. But for the Christian, Jesus has already offered it!

**Therefore!** Every act of faith - every effort to do what is right and to not do what is wrong – is all done in view of one great and glorious and gracious thing. It is all ...

“In view of God’s mercy”

- The motivation is grace, the behavior is gratitude.

Paul uses “God’s mercy” to sum up *eleven chapters* of theology! The book of Romans to this point has been one long description of the mercy of God in the work of Christ. So Paul says, “THEREFORE, be mercy-minded, mercy-moved, mercy-shaped people.

- We exist to put the glory of God’s mercy on display.

Or as Paul says: “To offer your bodies as living sacrifices”

You’re the one who offers *and* the thing offered. You’re the high priest *and* the sacred sacrifice. And as the priest we must dedicate ourselves to God’s will even before knowing what it is.

Earlier we sang: Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes, Yes Lord! We need to offer God an attitude that says, “You’ve heard my answer, Lord. Now just tell me what You want me to do!” Or, we could change the song to: “Maybe Lord, maybe Lord, not right now.” Or just: No Lord, no Lord, no way Lord!”

Now a “living sacrifice” sounds awfully painful, because we know that in OT times it was usually an animal that was put to death, its blood was shed, and its flesh burned on an altar. That’s not something I really want to be involved in. But there’s a big difference here: the OT sacrifices died for man’s sin; our sacrifice lives for God’s glory.

- The word “living” tells us it’s an: ongoing commitment
- The word “sacrifice” tells us it’s: complete surrender

So, a *living sacrifice* is an ongoing commitment of complete surrender.

I used to refer to this as the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit”. Such powerfully felt things can happen when someone offers themselves to the Lord this way that I thought they must be getting a greater measure of His Holy Spirit.

- But in Acts 2:38 Peter says we get His Spirit when we repent.

I now believe it isn't about God finally giving all of Himself to me ... it's about me finally giving all of myself to Him!

- The more I surrender, the more he receives
- The more He receives, the more He cleanses
- The more He cleanses, the more He fills
- The more He fills, the more I feel it!

Last Sunday during communion, I started to tell God that I surrender all ... but then a little voice said that I *don't*; I have some attitudes and behaviors I *know* I'm not giving up yet.

Q: How do you surrender the things you want to hang onto?

Q: How do you get *those things* onto the altar?

As I prayed, it hit me; I just needed to go “upstream” until I could find an honest level of complete surrender. So, I surrendered my lack of desire to change! Brokenness is about finding that level of submission where you genuinely desire to be broken from self and surrendered to God. I honestly desire-to-desire to surrender those things to God. Maybe you'll have to desire to desire to desire.

Go “upstream” till you can surrender everything onto the altar.

But this also means committing ourselves to whatever steps it might take to develop the desire to change: support, accountability, scripture memorization, confession, etc. Everyone goes: “Aw, I thought we found a loophole!”

## HE WANTS YOUR BOD

Paul's Greek readers would've been surprised that he says to offer our “bodies”. They regarded the body as something God *didn't* want. It's aging, awkward, blotchy, achy ... wrinkled ... I can never remember all seven dwarves! Achy, Wrinkled, Blotchy ...

Q: What kind of sacrifice is that? Didn't the OT demand flawless animals?

Yes, but the sacrifice of our bodies isn't a sacrifice for sin. Christ accomplished that. My body isn't significant because of the way it looks, but because of the way it acts.

God doesn't demand America's Next Top Model, he demands models of His mercy; visible evidence that He forgives the guilty and pities the helpless. That's why He wants Achy, Wrinkled, and Blotchy on the altar!

Q: Have you seen the "Bod Man" cologne commercial at the theater?

I *hate* that commercial. Muscular, bare-chested men play sports while a woman's voice breathlessly says: "I want your bod." It bothers me for two reasons: 1) It's just so in your face. 2) I don't remember giving them permission to use my image!

I want to neutralize that awful ad for the Kingdom. So, the next time you see it, I want you to remember this: God wants your bod!

And while it's playing you be praying - and reminding yourself: these hands are Your hands; these ears are Your ears; these eyes are Your eyes; this mouth is Your mouth.

## **HOLY & PLEASING**

When Paul says that our offering must be, "holy" he means that our body parts should be set apart for God's business.

Offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. - *Romans 6:13 NIV*

But God's business isn't as much about showing this world what's wrong with its music, movies, and "Bod Man" ads. It's far more about acting and speaking in ways that display the worth of Jesus *above* all the music and movies and "Bod Man" ads.

When Paul says that our offering must be, "pleasing to God" he's using OT language for when they would offer their very best.

If a child gives you a drawing, and they've put their heart into it, you're pleased with it in spite of its artistic flaws.

- God isn't interested in half-efforts and leftovers.

We don't have to be perfect, but we do have to offer our best.

This is your spiritual act of worship

Our body becomes a holy, pleasing, living, spiritual, sacrifice of worship when we find an honest level of brokenness and surrender, and then model the mercy we receive.