

A LIVING SACRIFICE—TOTAL COMMITMENT

Romans 1-11 deals with doctrinal truth. Romans 12-16 deals with the application of truth; that is, the transferring of doctrine into action. The book moves from principle to practice, from doctrine to duties, from things believed to things which need to be done.

In Romans 12:1, the very first practical truth is that of the commitment of the body (life) unreservedly to God as a living sacrifice. God asks the Christian for a genuine, real and total commitment. Commitment is not a popular word but it is a very scriptural concept and we need to understand and apply it into our lives.

AN ACT BASED ON SOUND DOCTRINE: “*Therefore*”

The “therefore” takes the reader back over chapters 1-11. In 1-3, all men are condemned sinners desperately in need of Christ’s righteousness to make them acceptable to God. In 4-5, we see how God sent Christ to die in the place of condemned sinners so as to justify them; that is, give them Christ’s righteousness and declare them righteous in God’s sight. In 6-7, we see how God begins to work in the life of the Christian in progressive sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit because the Christian has died in Christ and is spiritually alive in Christ. In chapter 8, we see God’s plan for the glorification of the Christian in eternity when he will receive his new, glorified and resurrected body. In 9-11, we see God’s predestination which tells us that in all of life God has a plan and purpose for this world and for individuals.

In light of these doctrinal truths, it is the most logical, most sensible, most natural thing in the world to present or offer one’s body to God as a living sacrifice. How foolish it is to try and live a life apart from the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

AN ACT WHICH IS VOLUNTARY: “*I urge you*”

This is a plea or a request. The Apostle Paul is asking, not commanding, that the Christian make a presentation of his life to God. God could force us to commit our bodies but He requests, so it will be done out of pure love. We have here an urging or exhorting of believers to make a decision. It is not a begging with men to present themselves to God as if it were some unimportant, optional act.

Having received God’s free and gracious salvation, it is the believer’s responsibility to live a righteous life. We might call this a voluntary-obligation. This would be like a patriot who is drafted into the military service by his government. He must go but he wants to go because he loves his country.

AN ACT BY CHRISTIANS: “*Brothers*”

The request to present the body a living sacrifice is an act for Christians, not for non-Christians. God is asking for a decision by those who have already trusted Christ. This commitment from our human perspective, is the most important step in our Christian lives. This is not a second blessing or a second work of grace but it is a decisive commitment to live for God by the Christian.

AN ACT RELATED TO GOD’S MERCY: “*In view of God’s mercy*”

Because of God’s mercy to a Christian, he is to be so overwhelmed by God’s love that he voluntarily submits his body to God. The word “mercy” points back to Romans 11:32 where Paul made it clear that men are saved by God’s mercy alone, for no human being deserves salvation.

What are these divine mercies to each of us Christians? God in sovereign grace chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to salvation. Christ died for our sins when we were rebellious, Christ-hating sinners. The Holy Spirit sovereignly brought us to Christ when we were seeking our own independent way, regenerating us and granting us repentance and faith. The Holy Spirit in grace entered our lives to begin changing us to be more and more like Christ. God has promised us that because of His love, grace and mercy, each Christian will spend eternity with God. That is pure mercy. If a man is not moved by the divine mercies of God, it may prove that he does not have divine life in the first place.

AN ACT WHICH INVOLVES DECISIVE COMMITMENT: *“To offer your bodies”*

The word “offer” could better be translated “present.” It is an active word which involves the human will. It is not a passive yielding but an active presentation of the life to God. It is voluntarily placing oneself into God’s hands, totally and unreservedly. It is not a yielding ourselves to God, sitting around in a mystical trance waiting for God to move. It is an act of obedience which springs forth from the human will. We actually give ourselves over to God.

The word “offer” could be translated “once and for all offer (present).” It also could look at one’s whole life as a presentation. Perhaps the idea is an initial once-and-for-all commitment with a life of continual renewal of that commitment. This presentation happens once and it is never repeated, but it is often reviewed and renewed.

Notice Paul says we are to present our bodies. Surely this includes all that we are: will, intellect, emotion and body (Rom. 6:13). Yet, why does Paul emphasize the body? When a person finally gets around to making his body available to something, he has given his whole person to that cause.

It seems reasonable that Paul mentions the body in light of the sexual sins and temptations of that day as well as our day or any day. When the body is committed, we guard what our eyes see, our ears hear, what our tongues say, where our hands roam and where our feet walk. We are conscious that our bodies belong to God.

Have you made this commitment to God? Have you ever told God, “Father, I am yours. You have redeemed me from sin by Your grace through Christ. I now commit my life to You unreservedly, for I want Your will more than anything else. Here is my whole body; do with it as You see fit.”

AN ACT OF A BELIEVER-PRIEST: *“As living sacrifices”*

An analogy is made between Old Testament ritual sacrifices of animals and New Testament spiritual sacrifices offered up by the believer which include the presentation of the whole person to God. In the Old Testament, dead animals were offered to God. In the New Testament, living sacrifices are offered to God. As believer-priests, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God. Our English connotation for a sacrifice is voluntarily giving up something we have the right to keep. This concept is foreign to Old Testament sacrifices, for when a Jew brought a sacrifice to God, he was voluntarily giving back to God what was rightfully God’s. When a Christian presents his life to God, it is not as though he was making a big sacrifice as we think of the word. No! He is simply presenting to God what is actually God’s already (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Notice the Christian is to be a living sacrifice, not a dead one. God calls very few of His saints to martyrdom. He calls the average Christian to live for Him. It may be easier for a man to work himself up under the stimulus of emotion and circumstances to make the supreme sacrifice of a martyr than to live a daily routine and perhaps humdrum existence for God. It is much harder to live for Christ than to die for him. Why? Living sacrifices keep crawling off the altar.

AN ACT OF CONSECRATION: *“Holy”*

The Christian’s sacrifice to God is to set himself apart to God and to have a life of ethical and moral holiness. All the Old Testament sacrifices were set apart to God and were to be free of blemishes and defects.

When we present our bodies, we are striving to live a pure life, a life of obedience to God's commands. We will at times fail. We will come short. We will sometimes sin, but our goal is holiness, Christ-likeness.

AN ACT PLEASING TO GOD: *“and pleasing to God”*

We belong to God; we are owned by God; we are possessed by God, and we are to be used by Him and for Him. How then can we please God? By presenting our total being—body, soul, spirit, conscience, mind, will and emotions—to God as a living sacrifice. This simply means the only life pleasing to God is the life given over to God to be used for His purposes. We set aside our plans, our programs, our ideals, our desires, for His plans, His programs; His ideals and His desires. This is all done through the consciousness of the human will. God will not be satisfied until He has all the Christian.

Nothing the Christian will ever do will bring more delight and pleasure to God's heart than the presentation of the life to God. Commitment takes all of us.

AN ACT OF SUPREME WORSHIP: *“this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

True worship is related to the presentation and commitment of the life to God. This act is very satisfying. Man was made to worship God, and when he does he has a sense of fulfillment and joy beyond anything the world knows.

Christian worship is not confined to those few minutes on Sunday morning when one gathers with others at church—that is just our corporate worship. We worship God all day long and anything and everything we do to glorify Him is true worship.

When a housewife does dishes and cleans house, or a mother changes dirty diapers, or the father finds time to spend with his children, or a businessman does his work for the glory of God, true worship has taken place. Worship is being occupied with Christ in everything and doing all things for the glory of God.

CONCLUSION

Why don't Christians present their bodies to God? The main reason is fear. They fear, almost like a superstition, that if they surrender themselves fully to God, God will do something with them or to them that will hurt or that they won't like. Yet, this is such faulty reasoning. It is logical that when we do the thing God wants—present our total beings to Him—this will please Him and we will receive His blessings. When our earthly children do things that please us as parents, we are pleased and do more to show our love for them. How much more true will this be of a Heavenly Father?

When we present our bodies to God, we will experience joy and blessing. We may also experience tragedy at times, but even this is part of our learning experience to make us more Christ-like. Being a living sacrifice could even lead us to physical death in martyrdom for Christ.

What we learn from Romans 12:1 is that the most logical, sensible and natural thing in the world to do is present our body to God as a living sacrifice. The only life worth living is the life abandoned to God. The most illogical position is to be a Christian who has never really presented his life to God. Surely this makes God unhappy and should cause us to fear His discipline. Never fear commitment but always fear lack of commitment!