

BURNING ME
ROMANS 12:1-2

INTRODUCTION:

- A. It seems like everywhere that Abraham camped in his nomadic travels about Palestine, he built altars and offered sacrifices to God. He erected an altar at the great tree of Moreh at Shechem (Genesis 12:7), at Bethel (12:8), at the great trees of Mamre at Hebron (13:18) and on a mountain in the region of Mariah (22:9). In each instance except the last one, there is no mention of the offering of a sacrifice on the altar, but it is certainly implied because the Hebrew word for altar means literally “a place for slaughter.”
- B. In the early days of Abraham and the other patriarchs, a man would make an altar from available rocks, start a fire and offer an animal from his flocks or herds on it. Later on, when the Tabernacle was build, the Israelites brought their sacrificial animals to the this holy tent where the victims were slaughtered and bled by the priests and then offered in the perpetual flames of the bronze altar.
- C. Sacrifice was a never-ending preoccupation of the Israelites. Sacrifices were offered on the altar every day, morning an evening. There were special Sabbath sacrifices and monthly new moon sacrifices. There were sacrifices during the great annual festivals like Passover, Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. In additional to all these sacrifices for the people of the nation, there were individual sacrifices for the birth of a child, for unintentional sins, for various kinds of uncleanness, for skin diseases and so on.
- D. Now, you’ve probably noticed that God’s people don’t offer animal sacrifices on altars anymore. When Jesus died on the cross, He fulfilled everything the Old Testament animal sacrifices were about. But the word, “**sacrifice**” didn’t disappear from the pages of the New Testament writers. It fact it is **used 5 times**:
- **Philippians 2:17**, *Paul said that he was “...being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith...”*
 - **Philippians 4:18**, Paul describes the Philippians’ financial gift “...a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”
 - **Hebrews 13:15-16**, “*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*”
 - **I Peter 2:5**, “...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
 - And I have saved the best for last. Here is the most potent, most far reaching New Testament passage about Christian sacrifice--**Romans 12:1-2**, “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s*

mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

BIG IDEA: THE ONLY ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IS TOTAL SURRENDER TO GOD.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN???

1. IT MEANS BODILY SELF-SACRIFICE

1) Urgency:

- The language of this passage is also the language of imperative. It is truth with an explanation point and truth that demands a response. This word “urge” stops short of being a command. In the Old Testament, sacrifice **was** a command and if you even willfully missed one of the great annual festivals in Jerusalem, you were cut off from the people of Israel. But on the other hand, the word “urge” means a lot more than a suggestion. When the Bible uses language like this, it means for us to sit up and take notice.
- **MORRIS:** *[S]omething less than a command is what is needed: “beseech” or “urge” is the meaning.¹*
- This **same word** is used to **urge** Christians to:
 - pray for Paul (**Romans 15:30**)
 - watch out for divisive people who wreck churches (**Romans 16:17**)
 - be united as brothers in Christ (**I Corinthians 1:10**)
 - imitate the spiritual example of Paul (**I Corinthians 4:16**)
 - submit to the ministry of devoted spiritual leaders (**I Corinthians 16:15-16**)
 - reaffirm love for a repentant, disciplined Christian (**II Corinthians 2:8**)
 - not abuse the grace of God (**II Corinthians 6:1**)
 - respond to spiritual correction (**II Corinthians 10:1**)
 - walk worthy of their spiritual calling (**Ephesians 4:1**)
 - love each other more and more (**I Thessalonians 4:10**)
 - confront false teachers (**I Timothy 1:3**)
 - abstain from sinful desires (**I Peter 2:11**)
- All these New Testament urgings focus on Christian behaviors which are “high stakes” issues.
- So when the Apostle Paul thinks it necessary to “urge” me to offer sacrifice to God, He’s got my attention!

2) Motivation

¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 432.

- Motivation: **PAYBACK**
 - (“**therefore...in view of God’s mercies**”)--What is the “therefore” there for? It connects to everything Paul has presented.
 - NOTE: It is a Pauline distinctive to present a doctrinal case and then turn to an exhortation about living out those truths behaviorally.
 - Now, what are we going to do for Him? “...*true Christianity involves both ‘believing’ and ‘behaving’ the gospel.*” - D. Edmond Hiebert, “Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1-2” BibSac, July-September 1994, p. 309)
 - *Four years before missionary William McChesney was martyred in the Congo in 1964, he wrote these words from his Phoenix, Arizona home:*

*If he be God, and died for me,
No sacrifice too great can be
For me, a mortal man to make –
I’ll do it all for Jesus’ sake²*

(Ravi Zacharias, Cries of the Heart, Word, 1998, p. 210)
 - Crisis commitment plus daily renewal
 - 1) The verb tense here means “**Do it and do it once for all.**” **MORRIS:** *The aorist infinitive points to decisive action.*
 - 2) *One day a young Austrian nobleman strolled into a small church in a European village. As he loitered along the aisle, his attention was arrested by a painting of the crucified Christ hanging on the wall....Underneath the picture...the artist had written the lines, “All this I did for thee, What hast thou done for Me?”*

[His name was Count Zinzendorf and he stood there for hours looking at the painting and then began to cry.]

From that little church Zinzendorf went forth to become leader of the mighty missionary activities of the Moravian church that have reached to the ends of the earth.” (Hiebert, Op. Cit., p.313)
 - 3) Living sacrifice: no need any longer for dead sacrifices. Why is the emphasis on BODY here?
 - 4) NOTE: **MORRIS:** *As offered they are alive. The sacrifice of which Paul writes demands not the*

² Quoted in Ravi Zacharias, *Cries of the Heart*, (Nashville: Word, 1998), 210

destruction but the full energy of life. It is positive and dynamic.

- Some Christians love to know that their sins are forgiven and they're on their way to Heaven, but they don't want to put their bodies on the altar of dedication to God. It's a lot like the difference between a couple just living together rather than getting married and taking their Wedding vows.
- If you had lived in Bible times, you would have known that the Temple in Jerusalem was a very sacred place and that no Gentile could walk past the wall that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Holy Place. And you would have known that no average Israelite could walk into the inner sanctum of the Holy of Holies. In fact, only the High Priest could go in there, and then only once per year on the Great Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, and he had to watch his step lest he did anything wrong and God strike him dead. The High Priest tied a rope around his ankle so that if God killed him, the other priests could pull his body out, since no one would ever dare to go in after the body.
- Phillip Yancey comments, "*The worship instructions in a book like Leviticus remind of a manual on handling radioactive material.*" (The Jesus I Never Knew, Zondervan, 1995, p. 265)
- Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Your body doesn't belong to you, it belongs to God. If you are a Christian, you need to remember that God purchased your body with the blood of Christ and you must use your body to honor God. I Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."
- I made that commitment when I was in Junior High School. Ephrata, Washington. My heart had been far from God. I tried to hide it from my parents and Sunday School teacher. But my heart was conformed to the world. But God pricked my conscience. And I got down on my knees and told the Lord that I wanted to live the rest of my life for Him. I accepted Christ years before that. But that was the day that I put my life on the altar.
- Now, it costs something to do that. You pay for it every day of the rest of your life. It is a watershed decision. It can even cost you your life. Like the fellow in one of Abraham Lincoln's jokes: *the young man [was] about to go to war whose loving sisters were making him a belt handsomely embroidered with the motto, "Victory or*

death.' 'No, no,' said the youth, 'don't put it quite that strong. Put it 'Victory or get hurt pretty bad.'" (Lincoln by David Herbert Donald, Simon and Schuster, 1995, p.271)

- Romans 12:1 is about pay-back time to God. "After all He's done for me, how can I do less than give Him my best and live for Him forever. After al He's done for me."
- Motivation: **CELEBRATION/WORSHIP**
 - Worship is a celebration of the wonder and greatness of God. Worship comes from a word that means "worthiness." So how do we best worship God? Here's what John MacArthur has to say, "*Modern Christianity as a whole tends to view worship as an activity that takes place in church on Sunday, or perhaps occasionally during devotions or with a Bible study group. But our preoccupation with forms misses the real point: Worship is a lifestyle.*" Moody, Feb 1987, p. 64)
 - He makes a good point. How authentic is my worship if I come devoutly to church every Sundays, and I really pay attention in doing all the religious things that we do in church...BUT, I go our and live my life pretty much like an unbeliever the rest of the week? What does the Bible have to say about that?

It says, God isn't satisfied with just Sunday. He wants my living sacrifice worship seven days a week. That's the only act of worship I can give that comes close to acknowledging just how worthy He is. It has to cost me something. Part-time worship, bargain basement priced worship just doesn't cut it.
 - I have long admired the expensive worship words of David in **II Samuel 24: 22** *Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. 23 O king, Araunah gives all this to the king." Araunah also said to him, "May the LORD your God accept you." 24 But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."*
 - In the film, My Father's Glory, a husband and wife take a vacation in the countryside with their two boys and the boys' aunt and uncle. The older boy, who thinks highly of his dad, is dismayed that his uncle dominates and intimidates his father.

When the two men go hunting, the boy follows them secretly, hiding behind bushes. Quite by accident, he flushed two of the most prized quail, Royal Partridges, out of the bush. As the birds rise, the two men raise their guns.

But the boy's father is faster, and fires twice. Both birds come plummeting to the ground at the boy's feet. Ecstatic at his dad's triumph, the boy forgets that he is not supposed to be on the hunt. He grabs the quail and lifts them high, one in each hand, his shout echoing through the hills, 'He killed both of these; he did it.' The narration quotes him as saying, 'With four wings hanging from bloody fists, I raised my father's glory to the sky.' (Joseph Stowell, "Putting Pride in Its Place," Moody, March 1994, p.58)

- And Christian, we lift our Father's glory to the skies by lifting our bodies a non-bloody, living sacrifice, onto the altar of irrevocable dedication to Him.

2. IT MEANS MENTAL TRANSFORMATION (COUNTER CULTURAL ACT)

A. Why Have a Worldly You... *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold"* - **Phillips**

1. In some parts of the country, they have problems with sinkholes. When too much water gets pumped out of the earth, in some places empties underground cavities...and then one day, the earth caves in. The problem didn't start that day the sinkhole appeared. The problem had been quietly developing for a long time.
2. Worldly living and worldly values do that to the soul of a Christian. We can fool ourselves into thinking that it really isn't having an impact on us, but watch out, the Sinkhole can appear any day. World Magazine addressed this issue several weeks ago in an article called, "Christ and Culture." The lead question is, *"Does the church evangelize the world, or does the world evangelize the church?"* **READ EXCERPTS**

Now all that is pretty extreme and I doubt that any of us are at risk to go running after those cultures. But we all face the temptations of letting the culture press us into its mold. And the scary thing is, it has. I know it has. And we didn't even know it was happening. So we've got some ground to take back from the Devil. He has some pieces of my soul that belong to God and I want to get them back and put them on the altar so that all of me is there for God.

3. Why would any Christian want to be conformed to the world? Think about what the sinful world is like! Look what sin produces: *"Every day, over 2,500 American children witness the divorce or separation of their parents. Every day, 90 kids...are committed to foster homes. Every day, thirteen Americans age 15 to 24 commit suicide, and another sixteen are murdered. Every day, the typical 14-year-old watches 3 hours of TV and does 1 hour of homework. Every day, 2,200 kids drop out of school. Every day, 3,610 teenagers are assaulted, 630 are robbed, and 80 are*

raped....Every day, 1,000 unwed teenage girls become mothers.”
(Neil Howe and Bill Strauss, *13th Gen*, Vintage Books, 1993, p.33)

8. **I Corinthians 14: 20** *Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.*
 9. **Ephesians 5: 8** *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light* 9 *(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)* 10 *and find out what pleases the Lord.* 11 *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.* 12 *For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.*
 10. **II Corinthians 6: 17** *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 7:1* *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*
 11. Not everything in culture is sinful. There's nothing wrong with symphonies and Fourth of July fireworks and 4H horse shows.
 12. But not everything in culture is wholesome either and that's why the Christian has to be so **vigilant**. We've got a God to please and a distinctive to maintain.
 13. Let's be done with trying to see how close we can get to the world and not get into trouble with God. Let's stop living where we keep getting chalk on our toes.
 14. Why Have Worldly You....
- B. When You Can Have a Godly You? "*Be transformed...*"
- **MORRIS:** *The force of the present tense should not be overlooked; Paul envisages a continuing process of renewal.*
 - *Metamorphosis*, "In the Gospels this verb is used of the transfigured body of Christ - Matt 17:2, Mark 9:2. Also of the Christian in **II Cor 3: 18** *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*
- The verb tense here and the clear teaching of II Corinthians 3:18 reminds us that we don't transform ourselves. That's something the Holy Spirit. But we must cooperate with Him by turning away from conformity to the world and wanting and asking Him to transform us. This is exactly what SCC exists for, "*Learning together to live like Christ...*" We are committed to being transformed, Holy Spirit empowered people.
1. Remember **Daniel**. He chose godliness over worldly culture. **Daniel 1: 8** *But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.*
 2. And David learned that it gets right down to the details of life. The story is in II Samuel 6. David was so happy and proud to be bringing the Ark of the Covenant to the capital city of Jerusalem. But God rained on his parade. God struck Uzzah dead because he

reached out to steady the ark when the oxen stumbled and nearly upset the cart on which the Ark was being transported. Later on David figured out what went wrong. He overlooked some details, **I Chronicles 15: 2** *Then David said, "No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the LORD chose them to carry the ark of the LORD and to*

12 He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. 13 It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way."

Ringlets and poles

Swindoll: *"What's the big deal, the big message, about the poles and the ringlets? The message is our life. It is the details - the poles and the ringlets - that drive us crazy in our carnal life. (p. 151) The world's system says, "Don't worry about those little details; God's bigger than little golden ringlets." No, He's not. Because He sees the whole scene, He puts our obedience to the test in little things like a ringlet and a pole and a shoulder. (p. 153) (David)*

3. We are be **transformed!** Christian pollster, George Barna, published a new report on Christian behavior just before Christmas last year. I'm not happy with the numbers. You won't be either. For instance, he reports that:

33% of nonChristians watched MTV as did 26% of Christians

40% of nonChristians viewed R-rated movies in a given week as did 30% of Christians.

Barna says there needs to be a gap of at least 40 percentage points between the habits of Christians and nonChristians before a "Transforming difference" exists between the two. This gap identifies Christians who are acting so differently from the world that others not only notice but question their own actions. (Summary in Current Thoughts and Trends)

4. Don't get discouraged if this takes time. It will take time. It's supposed to take time. Progress vs. perfection, **I Timothy 4: 15** *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*
5. What's wrong with testimony times...always achieved victories, never process.
6. The Operative Method: Mind Renewal
 - **PETER PAN:** *Mrs. Darling first heard of Peter when she was tidying up her children's minds. It is the nightly custom of*

every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. If you could keep awake (but of course you can't) you would see your own mother doing this, and you would find it very interesting to watch her. It is quite like tidying up drawers. You would see her on her knees, I expect, lingering humorously over some of your contents, wondering where on earth you had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to her cheek as if it were as nice as a kitten, and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. When you wake in the morning, the naughtinesses and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind; and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on.³

3. IT MEANS PRACTICING THE WILL OF GOD

A. Check It Out

1. There is actually just one word behind the expression “test and approve.” And that’s exactly what it means. To test something with a view to showing that’s it’s good. When Boeing takes a new jet up on a test flight, they put it through all its paces. But they’re not trying to crash it. That’s not the goal. They’re testing and approving it. That’s what we do with God. We step out in faith to live the way He tells us to live. And in so doing, we prove the goodness of His will in our actual experience.
2. When I was in my 20’s I could talk to people about trusting God through times of deep discouragement. That was the theory. Then God took me through deep discouragement. Now when I talk to people about discouragement, I can tell them how I have tested and approved the will of God.
3. I can say, “I have tried it...and just as I expected, it worked. You ought to try it too. It will work for you too.”

B. Why Not the Best?

1. **Carter**
2. **Proverbs 10:9**, *The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out. INTEGRITY: THE STATE OF BEING WHOLE OR ENTIRE*
 - A. The lies in our auto accident
 - b. Gordon’s roof, **Psalm 15:4** *who keeps his oath even when it hurts,*
3. Do you want real authenticity?
4. Why fool around with the foolish, unworkable schemes of the world. God’s ways work. The ways of the world only look good.

³ J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan* (NY: Viking, 1991), 4-5.

But they really aren't good! **Like this modern parable of clever foolishness.** *The Russians invented the "dog mine." The plan was to train the dogs to associate food with the undersides of tanks, in the hope that they would run hungrily beneath advancing [German] Panzer divisions. Bombs were then strapped to the dog's backs, which endangered the dogs to the point where no insurance company would look at them.*

Unfortunately, the dogs associated food solely with Russian tanks. The plan was begun the first day of the Russian involvement in World War II...and abandoned on day two. The dogs with the bombs on their backs forced an entire Soviet division to retreat. (Chuck Swindoll, Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life, Multnomah, 1984, p. 30)

CONCLUSION:

- A. *"At the coronation of an English Monarch, he is given a sword. Elizabeth II took it last, and as she held it before the altar, she heard these words: Receive this kingly sword, brought now from the altar of God and delivered to you by us, the Bishops and servants of God, though unworthy. With this Sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform that which is amiss, and confirm what is in good order, that doing these things you may be glorious in all virtue; and so faithfully serve our Lord."*
(Imprimus, Hillsdale College, p. 5, May 1998?)

- B. *We're pilgrims on the journey
Of the narrow road
And those who've gone before us line the way
Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary
Their lives a stirring testament
To God's sustaining grace.*

*Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
Let us run the race not only for the prize
But as those who've gone before us
Let us leave to those behind us
The heritage of faithfulness
Passed on through godly lives.*

*After all our hopes and dreams have come and gone
And our children sift
Through all we've left behind
May the clues that they discover
And the memories they uncover*

*Become the light that leads them
To the road we each must find.*

*Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave
Lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey
Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful.*

(“Find Us Faithful,” Jon Mohr, 1987 Birdwing Music/Jonathan
Park Music -administered by The Sparrow Corporation)

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