

A LIVING SACRIFICE



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'A Living Sacrifice'
by
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Romans 12:1 says – *‘Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.’* Does that sound worrying or daunting?

Body Sacrifice

Notice that God asks us to sacrifice our bodies, not our spirits. When we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and were born-again, He gave us a brand-new spirit which is just like Jesus and which is ours for eternity. So He isn’t asking us to sacrifice our spirit. But does He mean us to kill ourselves by sacrificing our physical bodies? Obviously not. (To read more about being born-again, go to the end of this booklet.)

Romans 6:6 says – *‘knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be in bondage to sin.’* Our old man was our old sinful spirit that God took away and replaced with our perfect new spirit. But the old man left behind a body of sin – patterns of behaviour which we can still live by out of habit – old ways of thinking, talking, acting and reacting. This is what the Bible calls living by the flesh. It is this flesh body that we are called to sacrifice. It’s our own way of thinking and acting – our own will.

What a Sacrifice Isn’t

Under the law, people had to make an animal sacrifice for God to forgive their sins. Jesus then became the once-for-all, perfect, final sacrifice. It was once for all sins; once for all people and

once for all time. From the moment of His death on the cross, no-one could obtain God's forgiveness by offering an animal sacrifice any more. Now we receive God's forgiveness by accepting the once-for-all sacrifice Jesus made in our place. So when we're called to sacrifice our own will, it isn't so that we can be forgiven. If we are born-again, we are already forgiven.

Nor is it persecution. Persecution is something that is done to us. Self-sacrifice is something that only we can do. No-one can do it for us and no-one can do it to us.

It isn't what the Bible calls works – trying to earn favour with God. It isn't something that will make God love us more or want to bless us more.

It's not religious observance. It's not a formula which has no value other than the fact of doing it. It's the result of sacrificing ourselves that makes it worthwhile, not the action itself.

It isn't punishing ourselves. God put all the punishment for our sins on Jesus and Romans 8:1 tells us that – *'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.'* We are no longer condemned, so there is no need for punishment.

And it's not dying daily. Galatians 2:20 says – *'I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.'* Because Jesus died in our place, we're now dead to sin so we don't need to die daily. Romans 6:11 tells us to – *'consider yourselves also to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* We just need to believe it and walk forward in it.

So What Is It?

It's a sacrifice when we give something up utterly. It doesn't argue or even discuss terms – it just yields completely.

True self-sacrifice is done voluntarily. If someone made you do it, then it wouldn't be a self-sacrifice. God gave us free will when He created us. He asks us to become a living sacrifice, but He doesn't force us to do it. We always have a choice.

A sacrifice is usually done as a response to something. In Romans 12:1 God asks us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice *'by the mercies of God.'* This should be our motivation. Sacrificing our own will to God's is a right response to the overwhelming mercy He showed us when Jesus gave His life for us as a perfect sacrifice, so we could be saved and enter into eternal life

Jesus' Perfect Sacrifice

Jesus' crucifixion was a true sacrifice. No-one made Him do it. He easily escaped the clutches of the religious leaders many times. But when He knew the time was right, He gave Himself up to them willingly. No-one made Him do it – it was completely voluntary. He said in Matthew 26:53 – *“Or do you think that I couldn't ask my Father, and he would even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?”* And when He had fulfilled everything that was needed on the cross, He died voluntarily. Matthew 27:50 says – *'Jesus ... yielded up his spirit.'* He didn't wait for the crucifixion to kill Him, but left His body exactly when He chose. He had said in John 10:18 – *“No one takes it (my life) away from me, but I lay it down by myself.”* Jesus' death was a true, perfect self-sacrifice – He yielded to God completely.

Why Does God Ask Us for a Sacrifice?

God wants the best for us. Sacrificing our will may not sound the best course to you, but if you will do it, it will always work to your advantage. In Jeremiah 29:11 God says – *'I know the*

thoughts that I think towards you,” says the LORD, “thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope and a future.’ Everything God wants for us is designed to give us peace and not evil. He wants us to have hope and a good future. And the only way to find it is by living according to God’s will and not our own. We can never repay God for all He did for us through Jesus’ sacrifice. All He asks is that we respond by yielding totally to Him.

How to Do It

Remember our main verse in Romans 12:1 – *‘Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service.’* When we think of God’s great mercy in sending Jesus to save us by dying in our place and bringing us into a personal relationship with our Father God, yielding our lives to Him should seem a fitting response. And yet, so often it isn’t our response. We still have a strong desire to do things our way. But, as I said in the previous paragraph, yielding to Him is the best thing we can do in order to lead a fulfilling and satisfying life.

Before Jesus gave Himself up to the soldiers who had come to arrest Him, He struggled with all the pain and anguish that lay ahead of Him. He asked God if there was another way He could accomplish what God had sent Him to do, but He knew in His heart that there wasn’t. So in Luke 22:42 He said – *“not my will, but yours, be done.”* This should be our whole attitude to life – not in a fatalistic way, but knowing that God’s way is always the best no matter what. God has made His will known to us through His Word and gives us more details through His Holy Spirit, if we are willing to hear. So it’s not a case of ‘whatever will be, will be’, but of seeking God’s will and saying ‘yes’ to it. When Jesus said these words, He knew exactly what He was submitting to.

Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to – *‘Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and don’t lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.’* This sums up the sacrifice God asks of us – following His way and not doing what we want to do. God can then make our way ahead straight which is the way of hope and a future. I’m sure at some time we have all felt God guiding us to do something a particular way, but we’ve chosen to do it our way instead. And then when it’s gone wrong, we’ve thought, “I knew I shouldn’t have done that.” We need to learn to recognise God’s voice and choose to obey it. It will save us so much heartache.

Our main verse tells us that this sacrifice is our ‘spiritual service’. The King James Version translates it as our ‘reasonable service’. Sacrificing our way of doing things and going God’s way instead, isn’t something that’s only for Christians in full-time ministry or for those who are mature in their faith. No, it’s the reasonable thing for us all to do. In fact, it’s going to help us to mature in our faith as we trust God and see His faithfulness.

Paul says in Philippians 3:8 – *‘I count all things to be a loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them nothing but refuse, that I may gain Christ.’* He had sacrificed his own will and now saw everything he had achieved by himself, without reference to God as ‘refuse’. Other translations say ‘garbage’, ‘filth’, ‘worthless’ and even ‘dung’! These are strong words which demonstrate just how real Paul’s self-sacrifice to God was.

We have to make our own decision to sacrifice our will to God’s, but we won’t achieve it purely by our own will power. We need to bring our thinking into line with God’s truth in His Word. Jesus says in John 8:32 – *“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”* And Romans 12:2 says – *‘Don’t be conformed to*

this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.’ It’s only by renewing our minds in line with God’s Word that we can know what His will is, so we can submit to it and know what to resist. James 4:7 says – *‘Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.’*

And we also need to turn away from anything and everything that stands in the way of us yielding to God. Romans 13:14 tells us to – *‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, for its lusts.’*

Jesus sums it up in Luke 9:23-24 saying – *“If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”* We need to deny our own will and submit to God’s. Yes, it may lead to difficulties and persecution as well as peace and joy, but it is the only way to find true fulfilment.

Our Ongoing Life of Sacrifice

Being a living sacrifice isn’t a one-off thing, but I believe it does need to have a conscious starting point. I’d read this verse many times, but a day came when I decided to actually do it. I consciously handed over my will to God’s once and for all. But does this mean that I have always followed through on it perfectly? The answer is ‘No’. The problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar! It can be on purpose, or it can happen bit by bit without us noticing until we hit the floor.

God asks us to sacrifice our will completely and for the whole of our life. But He knows we aren’t perfect and He never condemns us when we go our own way instead of His. He just encourages us to get back on the altar and keep going forward with Him, not looking back in regret and guilt.

We need to continually decide to stay on course and to get back on course when we veer off. Remember the verse in John 8:32 – *“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”* The more we know God’s Word, the more we will be alert to when we are going off course and the easier it will be to get back on.

God made us with free will. He will never try to control us. We always have a choice. You can spend your entire Christian life not presenting your body to God as a living sacrifice or you can make a decision and commit to do it and also to get back on course when you stray from it. After making Jesus your Lord and Saviour, it’s one of the best decisions you can make.

The Benefits

We’ve seen that God asks this of us for our benefit. Here are some of the benefits the Bible tells us about:

- Psalm 37:4 – *‘Also delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.’* Live God’s way and He will put His desires in your heart.
- James 4:7 – *‘Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.’* Submit to God and you can command the devil to get out of your life and he has to flee.
- Luke 9:24 – *“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever will lose his life for my sake will save it.”* If you live life your way, ultimately it will rob you of a satisfied life. But if you hand your life over to God, you will find the life He has for you is far more fulfilling and is the only way to true peace and joy.
- James 4:10 – *‘Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will exalt you.’* It’s when we give up trying to make things happen ourselves and promoting ourselves, that God can lift us up and often in a way beyond anything we can imagine.

– Mark 10:31 – “*But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*” Those who put themselves first, living life their own way, will be last in God’s kingdom. But those who submit to God’s way will be first.

These are some of the amazing benefits of presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. And they won’t only benefit us, but also other people as we live our lives God’s way instead of our own.

We’re called to live by faith. Let’s decide to put our faith in God and in all Jesus has done and won for us and present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Paul sums it all up in Galatians 2:20 – *‘I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. That life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.’*

Being Born-Again

When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you become born-again. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal relationship with Him.

Romans 10:9 says – *‘If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’* Say this prayer out loud and believe it in your heart – “Jesus, I declare that You are Lord and that God raised You from the dead to live forevermore. Thank You for dying for me personally. I receive my forgiveness and my salvation now. Thank You Jesus, my Lord and Saviour.”

You are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. All your sins are forgiven, past, present and future, and you have a new perfect spirit. And after this life is over, you’ll live in love, peace and joy with your Father God for ever.

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God calls you to be a living sacrifice –
to yield your will totally to His.
Does that sound worrying?

Find out why it's one of the best things you can do
and learn how to do it.

It may seem a difficult decision,
but it will make all the difference to your life,
giving you a hope and a future.



Katherine Hilditch has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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