

Romans – Gospel of God Exalted

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

Thursday March 13, 2025

Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 (NASB2020) Therefore I urge you brothers and sisters by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

The Believer's Supreme Act of Spiritual Worship Continued

POINT 2 - THE BODY MUST BE GIVEN TO GOD

to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (12:1b)

The second and consequent element of presenting ourselves to God is that of offering Him our **bodies**. After it is implied that believers have given their souls to God through faith in Jesus Christ, they are specifically called **to present** their **bodies** to Him as **a living and holy sacrifice**.

In the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament), (**to present**) was often used as a technical term for a priest's placing an offering on the altar. It therefore carried the general idea of surrendering or yielding up. As members of God's present "holy priesthood" (**1 Pet. 2:5**), Christians are here exhorted to perform what is essentially a priestly act of worship.

The first thing we are commanded **to present** to God is our **bodies**. Because our souls belong to God through salvation, He already has the inner man. But He also wants the outer man, in which the inner man dwells.

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Our **bodies** encompass not only our physical being but also the evil longings of our mind, emotions, and will. “For while we were in the flesh,” Paul informs us, “the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death” (**Rom 7:5**). Long after he was saved, the apostle confessed, “For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members” (**Rom. 7:22–23**). In other words, the redeemed soul must reside in a body of flesh that is still of sin, a place that can readily be given to *unholy thoughts* and longings. It is that powerful force within our “mortal bodies” that tempts and lures us to do evil. When we succumb to the impulses of the fleshly mind, our “mortal bodies” again become instruments of sin and unrighteousness.

It is a fearful thing to consider that, if we allow them to, our fallen and unredeemed bodies are still able to thwart the impulses of our redeemed and eternal souls. The body is still the center of sinful desires, emotional depression, and spiritual doubts. Paul gives insight into that sobering reality when he said, “I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified” (**1 Cor. 9:27**). In order to maintain a holy life and testimony and to minister effectively, even the great apostle had to exert himself strongly and continually in order to control the human and sinful part of himself that persistently wanted to rule and corrupt his life and his work for the Lord. In Romans 8, we learned that he had to kill the flesh. Paul also said that God had given him a “thorn,” or a stake, on which to impale his otherwise proud flesh (**2 Cor. 12:7**).

Paul clearly taught that the body can be controlled by the redeemed soul. He told the sinful Corinthians that the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body” (**1 Cor. 6:11–13**) As with our souls, the Lord created our bodies for Himself, and, in this life, He cannot work through us without in some way working through our bodies. If we speak for Him, it must be through our mouths. If we read His Word, it must be with our eyes (or hands for those who are blind). If we hear His Word it must be through

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our ears. If we go to do His work, we must use our feet, and if we help others in His name, it must be with our hands. And if we think for Him, it must be with our minds, which now reside in our bodies. There can be no sanctification, no holy living, apart from our bodies. That is why Paul prayed, “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

It is because our **bodies** are yet unredeemed that they must be yielded continually to the Lord. It was also for that reason that Paul warned, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts” (Rom. 6:12). Paul then gave a positive admonition preceded by its negative counterpart: “Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” **(Rom. 6:13).** Under God’s control, our unredeemed bodies can and should become instruments of righteousness.

Paul *rhetorically* asked the believers at Corinth, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?” **(1 Cor. 6:19).** In other words, our unredeemed bodies are temporarily the home of God! It is because our bodies are still mortal and sinful that, “having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” **(Rom. 8:23).** Our spiritual “citizenship is in heaven,” Paul explained to the Philippians, “from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” **(Phil. 3:20–21).**

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DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson?

We cannot prevent the remnants of sin from persisting in our mortal bodies. But we are able, with the Lord's power, to keep that sin from ruling our bodies. Since we are given a new, Spirit-indwelt nature through Christ, sin *cannot* reign in our souls. And it *should not* reign in our bodies (Rom. 8:11). Sin *will not* reign "if by the Spirit [we] are putting to death the deeds of the body" (**Rom. 8:13; cf. 6:16**). Paul admonishes us, by God's mercies, to offer our imperfect but useful bodies to the Lord as a **living and holy sacrifice**. Paul uses the language of the Old Testament ritual offerings in the Tabernacle and Temple, the language of the Levitical priesthood. According to the Law, a Jew would bring his offering of an animal to the priest, who would take it, slay it, and place it on the altar in behalf of the person who brought it.

But the sacrifices required by the Law are no longer of any effect, not even symbolic effect, because, "When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (**Heb. 9:11–12**).

Sacrifices of dead animals are no longer acceptable to God. Because the Lamb of God was sacrificed in their place, the redeemed of the Lord are now to offer themselves, all that they are and have, as **living** sacrifices. The only acceptable worship under the New Covenant is the offering of oneself to God.

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Hebrews 11:19 makes clear that Abraham was willing to slay Isaac because he was certain that God could raise him from the dead if necessary to keep His promise. Abraham was willing to commit absolutely everything to God and to trust Him, no matter how great the demand and how devastating the sacrifice, because God would be faithful.

God did not require either father or son to carry out the intended sacrifice. Both men already had offered the real sacrifice that God wanted—their willingness to give to Him everything they held dear.

The living sacrifice we are to offer to the Lord who died for us is the willingness to surrender to Him all our hopes, plans, and everything that is precious to us, all that is humanly important to us, all that we find fulfilling. Like Paul, we should in that sense “die daily” (**1 Cor. 15:31**), because for us “to live is Christ” (**Phil. 1:21**). For the sake of his Lord and for the sake of those to whom he ministered, the apostle later testified, “Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all” (**Phil. 2:17**).

Because Jesus Christ has already made the only dead sacrifice the New Covenant requires—the only sacrifice that has power to save men from eternal death—all that remains for worshipers today is the presentation of themselves as living sacrifices.

Our living sacrifice also is to be **holy**. **Holy** has the literal sense of being set apart for a special purpose. In secular and pagan Greek society, the word carried no idea of moral or spiritual purity. The man-made gods were as sinful and degraded as the men who made them, and there simply was no need for a word that represented righteousness.

Under the Old Covenant, a sacrificial animal was to be without spot or blemish. That physical purity symbolized the spiritual and moral purity that God required. Like that worshiper who was to come to God with “clean hands and a pure heart” (**Ps. 24:4**), the offering of a Christian’s body not only should be **a living** but also a **holy sacrifice**. Only the giving of ourselves and the giving of our best, is **acceptable to God**. Only in that way can we give Him our **spiritual service of worship**.

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True worship does not consist of elaborate and impressive prayers, stained-glass windows, lighted candles, flowing robes, incense, and classical sacred music. It does not require great talent, skill, or leadership ability. Many of those things can be a part of the outward forms of genuine worship, but they are acceptable to God only if the heart and mind of the worshiper is focused on Him. The only **spiritual service of worship** that honors and pleases God is the sincere, loving, thoughtful, and heartfelt devotion and praise of His children.

During a conference in which a Minister was preaching on the difference between true and false believers, a man came with tears running down his cheeks, lamenting, “I believe I’m a sham Christian.” The Minister replied, “Let me ask you something. What is the deepest desire of your heart? What weighs heaviest on your heart? What occupies your mind and thoughts more than anything else?” He answered, “My greatest desire is to give all I am and have to Jesus Christ.” The Minister said, that is not the desire of a sham Christian. That is the Spirit-prompted desire of a redeemed soul to become a living sacrifice.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What stood out to you in this lesson?**
- 2. Is there anything in this lesson that you can apply to your life?**

Closing Prayer