

Sacrificial Worship — Romans 12:1-2
James Muldoon - Carey Baptist Church – 13 April 2008

Romans 12:1-2 teaches that the whole of our lives should be an act of worship to the Lord. It starts off with the words, “**Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy...**” This picks up the main theme of Romans 1 – 11: the mercy of God as revealed in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the apostle Paul comes on to teaching about how Christian people ought to respond to the mercy which God has had upon them.

i What you’re to do

Firstly in **v1**, Paul tells the Romans “**to offer your bodies as living sacrifices**”. Just as Old Testament sacrificial animals were given over without reserve to God, so the Roman Christians were to give themselves over without reserve to God. They were to regard themselves as sacrifices offered to him: not dead sacrifices, of course, but living sacrifices which go on offering themselves up to him over and over and over again. That’s what you and I are to do as well. The Lord wants you to give yourself totally up to him. He wants every last bit of you.

The question is: do you and I give him that? One of the greatest blights upon Christianity in the West is that men and women and young people, quite simply, are unwilling to give God everything. Do you need to offer yourself afresh, without reserve, to the Lord?

Secondly in **v1**, Paul tells the Romans that “**this is your spiritual act of worship.**” The word translated “spiritual” there is the Greek word “λογικός” (“logikos”). It’s a word which does not translate too well into English and means a combination of “logical” and “spiritual”. Paul is telling us that offering our bodies as living sacrifices is worship which gives God what he wants (so is logical, rational) and which does it heartily (so is spiritual, deep and genuine).

This is very important. The logical and spiritual worship which God requires of you is that you offer your body as a living sacrifice to Him. The worship which God wants from you is for you to be totally given over to Him. That is worship.

In everything you do, then, in everything you say, in everything you think, every moment of every day, in every area of your life, with every faculty you possess, through every activity in which you are involved, you are to be a worshipper of God. Worship is an every-part-of-life and a whole-of-life activity. Your entire existence should be a logical and spiritual act of worship to God in that you are totally given over to him as a living sacrifice. And that’s a tall order!

Thankfully Paul has more to say...

ii How you’re to do it

Firstly in **v2**, Paul tells the Romans: “**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world...**” or more literally: “**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this age...**”

By nature, everyone on this planet belongs to “this age”. **Romans 5:12-21** tells us that this age has a president over it, a head, and his name is Adam, fallen Adam. It is dominated by sin, thoroughly self-centred, and ends in certain death. In **Galatians 1:4**, Paul tells us that Christ’s God-appointed mission was to rescue us from this age. He did it by dying on the cross and by rising from the dead. As soon as we believe in Jesus, then, we are transferred from this old age of sin and death into a new age of righteousness and life. We will enter into the fullness of it when Jesus Christ returns. (All of this makes it important to ask yourself which age you belong to. Have you seen that you’re a sinner? Have you repented of your sin before God, confessing it to him and turning away from it? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, trusting in him to rescue you? If not, you’re still a part of this age. And it will all end in tears. Repent, believe and live!) While we are still alive on the earth, we are not isolated from the influence this age. We belong to the new age, the age to come, but we live in our bodies in the old age, this age.

What Paul is commanding, then, is that you do not follow fallen Adam but that you do follow sinless Christ. Do not be dominated by sin. Do not be ruled by self-centredness. Do live a life worthy of eternal life. Do not conform to this age. When people look at you, do they see someone who does not conform to this present evil age?

Secondly in **v2**, Paul tells the Romans to “**be transformed by the renewing of your mind**”. We need reprogramming in our thought lives. When we belonged to this age, we were all thoroughly self-orientated. But the Christian’s thought-life must be different. Whether you are thinking about the meaning of life, or the purpose of life, or how to measure greatness, or how to respond to evil, or ambition, or sex, or honesty, or money, or community, or religion, or anything else, your thinking must be different. You must relearn how to think. You must learn to think God’s thoughts after Him.

That’s tough! But thankfully we have the help of the Holy Spirit. And the Greek tense which Paul uses here shows clearly that he has in mind a life-long process of transformation. He’s really saying, “Keep on being transformed, little-by-little, by the renewing of your minds. Take a little step each day. Continue to work at it. Make it a constant effort to make your thoughts more and more God-like.” That, above all else, is how you’ll be able to offer your life as a living sacrifice to the Lord. How is your thinking going?

Thirdly in **v2**, Paul says that, when this happens, “**you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.**” The fantastic outcome of not conforming to this age and of being transformed by the renewing of your mind is that you’ll know what God’s will is, almost instinctively. As your mind is renewed more and more in the image of Christ, you’ll know God’s will (ie you’ll know what is right and what is wrong) better and better.

Offer your body as a living sacrifice to the Lord, then. Do not conform to the pattern of this age. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. That is the worship God requires!