

Christian Sacrifice

Romans 12:1-2

Introduction

Good morning Lighthouse! Are you ready for the Word of God? Happy 4th of July! We celebrate our Independence from Great Britain. Unfortunately, there is a recent growing hatred towards the United States. It dishonors our country as a whole and especially those who sacrifice their lives so we can have the freedoms we enjoy today. Those who are here and hate this country are absolutely free to do so. An irony I find is they are enjoying a freedom to hate and criticize the country but would not be able to do so in many of the places they would claim are better to live in. It even leads some churches and Pastors to avoid anything patriot related for the sake of not offending someone. They have gone far enough to falsely claim loving your country interferes with loving Jesus. That the two cannot go hand and hand. I will tell you as the Associate Pastor here, I do love this country, I love the Lord Jesus, and I am not ashamed of it and will not apologize for it. Furthermore, I do not really care if that bothers someone. We know America is not perfect and isn't our true home – our citizenship is in heaven. Yet, this is the place God has and God calls us to be lights in. Be thankful to the Lord for grace shown to this nation and the many benefits and blessings we enjoy. God is glorified when we are grateful for every blessing we have.

As Christians, we have a freedom that goes even beyond what America offers. Those who are in Christ, those who know Him are free indeed. Free from the penalty of sin and freedom available from its power and one day its presence all together. Free to love the Lord and follow Him and serve. Simply what it means free is we get to do what we want and choose. As believers, we have that choice whether to live for and serve Him.

Background

All throughout Romans from chapter 1 to the end of chapter 11, we read wonderful truths about God's grace, His mercies, His righteousness. We read this now when we first come to Romans 12. (1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

All throughout these chapters, we receive information, now Paul is moving on to instruction. Let us back track and look at some of these mercies of God.

1. Romans 5:1-2 where we see we are justified by faith.

(1) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

2. Romans 5:8-9 where we read of God's ultimate demonstration of love for us.

(8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

3. Romans 6 where we read how sin no longer has dominion over us, we are under grace, not law and we are no longer servants of sin but now servants of righteousness.

(14) For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

(17) But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

4. Romans 8:18 where we read about confidence in coming glory.

(For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

5. Romans 8:38-39 where we read about confidence in never being separated from God's love.

(38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

(39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I could keep going on and we can just read wonderful truths in Romans, but it would take up our time and I am looking forward toward our fellowship this afternoon. Here in Romans 12 now, this is the first instance where we now see commands and instructions. Considering all this wonderful information, by the mercies of God – here is what you ought to do. Let us read our passage together.

Scripture

Romans 12:1-2

(1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Outline

As believers, because of God's wonderful mercies, we ought to use our freedom to:

I. Present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, v. 1.

A. Paul beseeches the "brethren" by the mercies of God.

(1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God . . .

1. This word here "beseech" is typically used by Paul to transition from body content to instruction. It means "to beg, to plead." In light of all this information, I beg you to do this.

2. Note he is addressing, he writes "brethren" particularly to the believers in the church in Rome. This would imply this is to saved people, and for the saved person.

a. Those who do not know the Lord can put on a front and try to do these commands, but they will not be pleasing to God.

b. It is impossible for those in their flesh to please Him.

Romans 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

3. He does this “by the mercies of God.” This means it is based on God’s mercy to what he is beseeching them to do. Because of God’s mercies, both to Jew and Gentile, they should be obedient.

a. We read early some snapshots of God’s mercy. Mercy by definition is not receiving something that you deserve. It goes hand to hand with grace.

b. Not only do we know God’s mercy is basic to our salvation.

Ephesians 2:4-5

(4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

It is basic to our every day living and our service to him. Even waking up this morning for a new day is because of God’s mercy. Look what Jeremiah wrote regarding this.

Lamentations 3:22-23

(22) It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. (23) They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

c. If it not for God’s mercy, then his judgment should have killed you already. If you want to start your day on the right track, start with thanking God, you have been given another day.

B. Because of God’s mercies, they should present their bodies a “living” sacrifice.

. . .that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

1. The urge is to present your bodies a living sacrifice.

- a. This word here “present” means to “offer, to place before at one’s disposal.”
- b. It is the same Greek word used when it comes to offering sacrifices on an altar to a deity.
- c. Presenting sacrifices would call to priestly duties. God’s people no longer go to priests for intercessory to Him though. Jesus is our Great High Priest, but we as believers also have our own individual priesthood. This concept would be a message on its own, but here is what Peter wrote in his first letter.

1 Peter 2:5 (5) Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

- d. The recipients of this letter being composed of a lot of Jewish readers would be familiar with this idea of sacrifice, but there is something about this phrase that would pose as an oxymoron to them.
2. The phrase that would appear as an oxymoron is “living sacrifice.” There is one case in the OT where a living sacrifice was being presented to God. That was Isaac, Abraham’s son. The second case we in the entire Bible is none other than Jesus. Being made the offering for the sins of the whole world.
- a. Sacrifices presented to God under the Levitical system were slain. They were dead sacrifices. They foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice that was to come, Jesus.
 - b. These kinds of sacrifices are different and not the one Paul has in mind when he writes this. These sacrifices were ended when Christ died on the cross and the veil was torn.

c. Paul urges the reader to present their “bodies.” Meaning offer yourselves.

This is not a one-time event. If it is a living sacrifice it means it is continuing.

d. The sacrifice is living because it is brought alive to the altar. The sacrifice is living because it stays alive at the altar; it is ongoing.

3. While this sacrifice is different from them old, there is a similarity they share. It has been about the heart. The sacrifice itself was not what appeased God. It was the heart matter. This is why we read this in two OT passages.

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Psalms 51:17 (17) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

a. It starts with the heart then obedience, the obedience would then be followed by the instruction laid out.

b. A sacrifice from one's who heart is not in it is rejected.

4. Look what God told Israel whose heart was far from him.

Amos 5:22-23 (22) Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. (23) Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

a. I do not ever want us as a church to have our hearts removed from worship and serving of the Lord.

b. Service not done out of a heart in love is rejected by God. You may fool those around you and the local church on the outside may even benefit from the work, but the service itself is rejected by God.

5. This is why we read next “holy, acceptable unto God.”

a. Holy – set apart. Acceptable – well- pleasing.

b. We offer ourselves in service to God. Our goal is in doing so is to love and please Him above all.

c. This is our reasonable service. We derive the word “logic” from the word used here “logikos”. After all God has done for us in His Son. It is logical for us to offer our lives back to Him. My prayer this morning for each and every one of us here, is that we would delight and offer our hands and feet to God and use us for His glory.

II. Resist conforming to the world and embrace the transformation that comes from Jesus, v. 2.

(2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

A. Be not conformed to this world.

1. This word here conformed comes from the word that means “be fashioned after.”

2. We are not to be fashioned after this world. Yes, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. This word here world is not “kosmos” as in John 3:16 and is not functioning as all the people of the world. This word here is “aion” referring to the “age.” The “world” or age in which we live is everything around us that is from the satanic system. Christians are not to live according to the values of the age in which they live. We are to live above it.

a. The same word is used here in 2 Corinthians 4:4.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

- b. Conforming to the world is the effort of man to satisfy his needs apart from God. God created us to have relationship and fellowship with Him, but Satan cannot break that relationship, but he wants to break that fellowship.
- c. It is an absolute shame when a believer lives after the world and you cannot tell the difference of the lifestyle between one who is saved and one who is lost. How you talk, what you watch, what you listen to, who and what you spend your time with.
- d. This is what Jesus said to his disciples about how the world is towards him.

John 15:18 “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”

- e. Why would you want to live after something that hates Jesus? When you take a stand in God’s Word, and you follow Jesus – you can expect to be hated by the world.

B. The contrast: Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

- 1. Paul’s call is not to abandon culture in general but the anti-Christian values of culture.
 - a. The contrast is to be transformed. Not go live in isolation. We cannot live apart from the world because the world needs our light.
 - b. We are to be in it, but not of it.
 - c. This word here used for transforming in the original is the word we get our word “metamorphosis.”

d. In the natural realm the caterpillar becomes a butterfly. That is fundamental change. Christians must experience vital change if they are going to walk with God. A transformed life makes everything different.

Your worldview will change. The lens in which you see through.

2. Some have taken this verse way far from its application intention and call for no movies, no shopping in gas stations because that “sell alcohol and cigarettes” yet, shopping at Walmart is okay, and even women can’t wear jeans. It is simply legalism. And if we get caught up in this, we are just like the Jews who tried getting Gentiles to live after the law. This verse is not caught on the outward, but the inward. This is indicated by its contrast “by the renewing of your mind.”

3. The “mind” here is the center of our thoughts, emotions, will, and attitudes. Our minds need “renewal.” It is not enough to think about God’s values occasionally. The mind is the inner direction of thought and will.

Ephesians 4:22-23.

(22) That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (23) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

4. To think biblically is not only to observe Christian truths but also to think in a Christian way about all of life.

5. We do so that we may prove what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Present our bodies to the Lord, Be not conformed to the world, Be transformed by the renewal of our mind.

6. If you want to know God’s will for your life. It is not so focused on vocation, it is transformation.

Conclusion

Whom the Son sets free is free indeed. In Christ, we are free to serve, free to live for him if we choose to do so. For those who have never truly trusted in Jesus to save them. The freedoms you experience in America will be the best you get. You can be free. It is none other than Jesus. The Bible says there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. No other came to live among men and live a perfect life – He did what you could not do – No other died on a cross for your sin – No other rose again from the dead. It is only Jesus who can save. If you would put your trust in Him, you will have everlasting life. Here at Lighthouse, we can show you by this Bible here how you can know for sure you're going to heaven or not. I love this country, I love the Lord Jesus, and I love this church. I find great joy in seeing the Lord preserve us and grow us. Happy Independence Day. We enjoy our everyday freedoms and thank those who serve this country. Let us as Christians use our greater liberty to serve the one who gave it all.