



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

December 12, 2017

Your Body or God's?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1

When Paul wrote his classic letter to the Romans, he spoke of sacrifices—something that both Jews and Gentiles understood clearly. Wherever anthropologists have unearthed the remains of a temple, they have found sacrifices of one kind or another. Temples and sacrifices went together as part and parcel of the same experience: this god, no matter how the deity was defined, had to be worshiped; and because of our shortcomings, of necessity, sacrifices should be offered as an acknowledgment of human frailty.

Never will I forget visiting the museum of ancient Tyre and Sidon and seeing the remains of hundreds of infants whose charred remains were a sober reminder that even humans were sacrificed to these pagan deities. Most of the time, however, a sacrifice represented something that was part of everyday life—grain, pieces of meat, an offering of flour, sometimes even fruit or produce.

Thus when Paul spoke of sacrifices he was addressing an issue they fully understood, but Paul approached it in a novel way. He said our response to God's mercy is to present our bodies as living sacrifices.

For a moment think of the uniqueness of the human body. You, friend, are not a blob of protoplasm but a living organism of some 50 trillion cells. Your brain weighs about a kilo—roughly 2 ½ to 3 pounds. It consists of two hemispheres of gray matter connected by an interface called a *corpus collosum*. Daily, 10,000 thoughts flit in and out of your brain. A hundred billion neurons process information. Its complexity is something that we are just beginning to understand. Your heart pumps 18,000 gallons of blood daily through 75,000 miles of vessels and arteries. Try building something like that. Then there is the iris of your eye that automatically opens and closes depending on the intensity of light and lubricates itself with fluid called tears. Your hand, though, is perhaps the most amazing part of your body. Dr. Paul Brand, the great hand surgeon of the past century, believed it proved your uniqueness as a human being as does nothing else.



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Your body, friend, is what Paul says should be presented as a living sacrifice. Surprisingly, the Bible says a lot about the human body, more than I can begin to describe in four minutes. Just what does it mean to present your body as a living sacrifice? The problem with living sacrifices is that they keep crawling off the altar, so whatever you do has to be done every day. It means you daily yield control to Him who has redeemed you—what your eye beholds, what you think about, what your hands touch, where your feet take you—everything from the top of your head to the soles of your feet.

Don't forget, God made all the parts of your human body, and He pronounced it good. What Paul says is our reasonable response to what God has done is an act of the will. Your body is God's gift to you, and giving it back to Him is the highest form of worship and the greatest possible sacrifice. Why is this so difficult?

Sacrifices placed on altars were consumed by fire, and living sacrifices sometimes feel the consuming fire, purifying us, making us into His image, and prefer to crawl back into our caves of darkness and lust.

Does God ask too much? Or is it that we simply give too little? It is because of God's great mercies, says Paul, that this is our reasonable service. You can read about it in Romans 12 of your New Testament.

Scripture reading: Romans 12