

Service – Offer your body as a living sacrifice

(Romans 12:1)

All from Songs of Fellowship

Intro:

Our Service today is based around what Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans in chapter 12: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."

Let's sing:

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WHEN WE WALK WITH THE LORD

In the light of His word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey!

*Trust and obey!
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

Not a shadow can rise,
Not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt nor a fear,
Not a sigh nor a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey!

Not a burden we bear,

Not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay:
Not a grief nor a loss,
Not a frown nor a cross,
But is blessed if we trust and obey!

But we never can prove
The delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for those who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do,
Where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey!

Prayers

519 – Take my life and let it be

TAKE MY LIFE, AND LET IT BE

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine:
Take my heart, it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store:
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Reading – Romans 11:33 – 12:21

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

35 "Who has ever given to God that God should repay them?" **36** For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. **4** For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, **5** so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. **6** We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your^[a] faith; **7** if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; **8** if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. **13** Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. **18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. **20** On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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Lord, You have my heart,
And I will search for Yours;
Jesus, take my life and lead me on.
Lord, You have my heart,
And I will search for Yours;
Let me be to You a sacrifice.
And I will praise you, Lord. (Men)
I will praise You, Lord. (Women)
And I will sing of love come down. (Men)
I will sing of love come down. (Women)
And as You show Your face, (Men)
Show Your face, (Women)
We'll see Your glory here. (All)

The Message

I want to start this Message by listening to today's Reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans again, but this time from The Message Bible:

33-36 Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It's way over our heads. We'll never figure it out.

Is there anyone around who can explain God? Anyone smart enough to tell him what to do? Anyone who has done him such a huge favour that God has to ask his advice?

Everything comes from him; Everything happens through him; Everything ends up in him. Always glory! Always praise! Yes. Yes. Yes.

12 1-2 So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

3 I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

4-6 In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvellously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

6-8 If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

9-10 Love from the centre of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

11-13 Don't burn out; keep yourselves fuelled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

14-16 Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

17-19 Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

20-21 Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good."

May God add His Blessings to the Readings from His Holy Word.

Many of you know that I read Bible in one Year from Rev. Nicky Gumbel and he writes about this Reading like this:

"in this Reading we see 4 sacrifices that you can make in response to Jesus' sacrifice for you:

1. **Sacrifice of your LIPS** – the writer of Hebrews says 'Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess His Name... for with such sacrifices God is pleased (Hebrews 13:15-16).
2. Much of the first 11 chapters of Romans are about the sacrifice of Jesus for us. Paul, having set out all that God has done for us, responds with a sacrifice of praise (Romans 11:33-36).
3. **Sacrifice of your LIFE** – Paul continues, 'therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy (because of all that Jesus has done for us through the sacrifice of Himself on the cross), to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship' (12:1 AMP).
God wants you to offer all of yourself and all of your life – your time, ambitions, possessions, ears, mouth and sexuality – as well as your mind, emotions and attitudes. Paul's description of a living sacrifice also reminds us that we have to go on offering your life as a sacrifice to God, offering the whole of your life, for the whole of your life.

As Eugene Peterson translates in The Message Bible: "take your every day, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking-around – and place it before God as an offering." (MSG v.1).

In Old Testament times, 'living sacrifice' would be a contradiction in terms. The whole point of the sacrifice was that it was killed. Jago Wynne writes, 'our act of worship is no longer to bring a sacrifice,

but to be one ourselves. We remain living, it is all of us that is being offered. Worship is about what I say with my tongue. It's about what I watch.... What I think.... Where I go with my feet.'

4. **Sacrifice of your *LOOT*** – Generous giving is another New Testament sacrifice. Paul encourages the sacrifice of generosity in contributing to the needs of others (v.8). 'Share with God's people who are in need' (v.13). this is another sacrifice the writer of Hebrews says pleases God: to share with others. (Hebrews 13:16).

'Doing good' means giving up things that are not good. 'Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould' (Romans 12:2, J.B. Philips). Although God only asks us to give up the bad stuff in our lives, it can feel costly to do so because that stuff is superficially attractive. Repentance is a very positive word, but at the time it may seem sacrificial.

Sacrificial Love involves allowing God to transform us by a complete change. Our love must be sincere (v.9). the Greek word for 'sincere' means 'without hypocrisy' or literally 'without play acting' or 'without a mask.'

Often relationships in the world are quite superficial. We all put up fronts or masks to protect ourselves. When we see governments doing this, we call it 'spin'. When we do it ourselves, we call it 'image'; we are projecting something. In effect we are saying 'I don't really like what I am inside, so I will pretend that I am somebody different'.

If other people are doing the same then there are 2 fronts or masks meeting. The sad result is that the 2 real people never meet. This is the opposite of 'sincere love'. Sincere love means taking off your mask and daring to reveal who you are. When you know that God loves you as you are, you are set free to take off your mask.

This means that there is a completely new depth and authenticity (or realness) in your relationships. Instead of trying to impress people with our masks, as we reveal who we truly are with all our flaws, we connect through our vulnerabilities.

Paul urges Christians to live in harmony with one another and to be generous (13), hospitable (v.13), forgiving (v.14), empathetic (v.15) and to live at peace with everyone (v.18). it is a glorious picture of the Christian family into which God calls us, beckoning us into an atmosphere of love, joy, patience, faithfulness, generosity, hospitality, blessing, rejoicing, harmony, humility and peace; where good is not overcome by evil, but evil is overcome with good (vv9-21). (Source BioY day 210).

Let's pray:

Father, I offer You my body as a living sacrifice. I am available to You. I give everything I have to You again – my life, time, money, ambitions, plans, hopes and desires. Please show me Your good, pleasing and perfect will. Please help me to live my life to the full, being true to You in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Holy Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Jesus Christ in all I do and say, **Amen**.

Let's sing:

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I will offer up my life
In spirit and truth,
Pouring out the oil of love
As my worship to You.
In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord, receive the sacrifice
Of a broken heart.

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of Your name
For the things You have done?
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part,
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart.*

You deserve my every breath
For You've paid the great cost;
Giving up Your life to death,
Even death on a cross.
You took all my shame away,
There defeated my sin,
Opened up the gates of heaven,
And have beckoned me in.

Let's say *The Grace to each other*:

May the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of The Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more, **Amen**.

This Service has been prepared by: Christopher Stirling of Steeple Bumpstead Congregational Church, Haverhill, UK.
If you have been sent this Service by a friend and would like to receive a Service every month, please email your request,
titled "Please add me to your Emailing List" to: vewtreehouse@btinternet.com

Sources: Hymns are from Songs of Fellowship and as shown. The Readings are from the NIV and as shown.
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