

The Measure of Our Sacrifice

Romans 12:1, Revelation 12:11, Romans 12:2, Mark 10:28-30, Matthew 6:21, 1 Samuel 15:22, 2 Timothy 4:7

One day God is going to measure our lives and one of the things He'll most certainly measure is our sacrifice.

Now, many hear the word sacrifice and immediately think of suffering, pain, and death. Of course this is a part of sacrifice, but that's not the true measure of sacrifice.

The true measure of our sacrifice isn't the ability to endure pain and suffering, but a heart that lives to honor God regardless the cost.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible speaks of a godly sacrifice that pleases God. Righteous and holy sacrifices are so pleasing to God that one day He'll measure the greatness of our lives by our sacrifice.

Knowing how important this is, I want to show you, from God's Word, how your sacrifice can please God and bring eternal rewards.

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One of the most important ways to measure our life for eternity is by our willingness to sacrifice for the name of Jesus.

The Bible tells us that the Christian life is a life of sacrifice, not a life of ease and comfort, but a life of sacrifice.

However, it's possible to perform a great sacrifice that changes lives and the course of history and yet not be the kind of sacrifice for which God's looking.

The big question is, *"What is the kind of sacrifice for which God's looking?"*

Romans 12:1, *“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.”*

God’s looking for a living sacrifice, not a once-a-month sacrifice, but a living sacrifice that lives day by day to know God, love God, and honor God.

One of the greatest calls upon our life is to be a living sacrifice that’s holy and acceptable to God.

God’s not looking for a sometimes sacrifice. He’s not looking for those who say they’ll do it and then don’t.

He’s looking for those who desire to be a living sacrifice, a daily sacrifice, a sacrifice that’s given out of love and devotion.

He’s looking for those who love Him so much they’re devoted to Him as a living sacrifice. That’s the kind of sacrifice that pleases God.

It’s like Abraham and His commitment to offer his son, Issac as a sacrifice, but what many forget is that Issac was old enough to say no. He wasn’t a little boy.

It was out of his obedience that Issac allowed himself to be placed on the altar. To do that, he had to surrender his will to God’s will, even though he didn’t understand it.

As he lay on the altar, Issac was a picture of a sacrifice. However, when God sent a ram to be sacrificed in his place, and Issac got up. Because of that act, He became a living sacrifice.

Jesus Christ is the perfect picture of a living sacrifice. He died as God’s sacrifice for our sins, in obedience to His Father’s will, but now He reigns in heaven as a *“living sacrifice.”*

That means when you believe in Jesus Christ, you become a living sacrifice.

When the world sees you, they see a picture of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. That's why a living sacrifice is so important and pleasing to God!

As a living sacrifice, we dedicate our bodies and lives to God. We keep living for God each day until He calls us home.

And most importantly, the only time we can be a living sacrifice for God is right now, while our bodies are alive.

Once our body dies we obviously can no longer use our bodies, our minds, or our abilities, as a living sacrifice. That's why Paul said we're to present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice.

It's only in this life that we can be a living sacrifice that honors God. Every day we don't live a sacrificial life for God's glory is a day wasted for eternity. So, what does a living sacrifice look like?

A living sacrifice is to sacrifice our own desires to live fully for God's kingdom and glory. To be a living sacrifice is to dedicate our hands for godly service.

It's to dedicate our feet to godly service. It's to dedicate our eyes to see as God sees, and our ears to hear as God hears.

It's to dedicate our mouth to speak of His love and mercy. It's to dedicate our mind to understand His truth, and to fill our mind with the knowledge of His eternal Word.

To be a living sacrifice is to dedicate our whole body to God in every way that can glorify Him.

I encourage you, in the name of Jesus, to measure your life by your willingness to offer your body to God as a living sacrifice.

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Now, I want you to clearly understand, there's a cost for being a living sacrifice. To be a living sacrifice requires that we take up the cross and follow Jesus.

Notice, the cross isn't placed upon us. We must choose to voluntarily take up the cross and follow Jesus daily, but as I said, there's a cost for following Jesus as a living sacrifice.

In the first century, the Romans killed Christians by the thousands for their faith in Jesus.

They were sawn in half, burned at the stake, and thrown to the lions, but they willingly gave their lives as a living sacrifice for the glory of God.

When given a choice between Cesar and Jesus, they chose Jesus. Their love and commitment to Jesus was greater than their desire to live. They'd rather die than deny Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

In many countries today, Christians are dying for their faith in Christ, because they'd rather die than deny Jesus. Again, there's a cost to be a living sacrifice that chooses Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

In Daniel 3, we read the story of the three Hebrew boys who defied Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of Babylon.

He commanded these boys to bow before him, or he'd burn them to a crisp, but they refused to bow. They refused to bow because they chose to give their lives to God as a living sacrifice.

In Revelation 12, John saw in the tribulation a huge multitude that loved Jesus so much they chose to die as a living sacrifice rather than bow to the antichrist and take his mark.

Revelation 12:11, *“They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”*

That’s what a living sacrifice looks like! Another example of sacrificial living is found in Ephesians 4 that says we are to put off the old way and to put on the new.

Ephesians 4:22-24, *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

To do that, we must be willing to sacrifice our old way of living to gain a new and greater way of living. That’s what it means to be a living sacrifice.

Every decision is an opportunity to be a living sacrifice that honors God, and the choice you make will serve as a measure for your life.

The cost of your sacrifice may seem high, it may even cost you your life, but the rewards of heaven are far greater and will last forever.

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Also, a living sacrifice is obedient to the will of God.

Romans 12:2, *“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.”*

The most important thing we'll ever do is to know and do God's will. It's God's will that we be a living sacrifice, which means there will be times when the will of God will require us to sacrifice and sometimes it may require us to make a great sacrifice.

Abraham sacrificed his understanding to obey God when he took Isaac to sacrifice him. Noah sacrificed his time and energy to build an ark and save his family.

Peter sacrificed to preach God's word knowing he'd be persecuted and killed for it. Ananias sacrificed the risk of his life when God called him to pray for Saul, the killer of Christians, who became Paul the Apostle.

Obedying the will of God requires sacrifice.

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Because of the high cost that comes with sacrificial living, God promises to reward us with great rewards, even for our smallest act of sacrifice that we made because of our love for Him.

Look at Mark 10, where Peter talks about the high cost of following Jesus.

Mark 10:28-30, "Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!" "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life."

I want to point out a couple of things. First, Peter wanted to know just what would he and Jesus' other followers get out of following Him.

Jesus didn't scold Peter for asking this question but explained that it's God's desire to reward us for our sacrifice to follow Him.

But did you catch what Jesus added to the rewards at the end of this passage, *“along with persecutions.”*

The point is, anytime you follow Jesus Christ, there will be a sacrifice. It's very possible that because of our love for Christ, we could lose our home, and our loved ones might turn against us.

But no matter how big or how small the sacrifice, no matter how great the cost, God promises our sacrifice for His glory will be rewarded with great rewards that are beyond earthly measure.

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Another example of a living sacrifice is our willingness to be transformed from a worldly person, who loves the things, to a heavenly person who loves Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

Paul said in Romans 12:2a, *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”*

One piece of evidence that proves you've been transformed to a new life in Jesus Christ, is your hunger and desire to live a sacrificial life that loves and honors Jesus.

When we surrender our lives to Jesus, the Holy Spirit transforms us from the old way of living, to a new, godly way of sacrificial living that follows Jesus.

Thomas is a perfect example of the power of the Holy Spirit to transform our lives. When Thomas walked with Jesus, he was a constant doubter.

Thomas once said, *“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*

Those are the words of doubting Thomas, who went from being a constant doubter, to living a life of sacrifice and devotion.

History reveals that Thomas became perhaps the most zealous, and fearless Apostle besides Paul. Records indicate that Thomas traveled to Syria, Iraq, Iran, southern Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

He traveled everywhere and made great sacrifices to preach the love of Jesus. Tradition points to the hillside in Madras, South India, where facing toward China in prayer, Thomas was martyred for Christ.

That's sacrificial living. We must measure our life by our sacrifice to be transformed from the old into the new.

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Conclusion

In closing, it's absolutely vital to know the difference between what to sacrifice and what not to sacrifice. Let's look first at some things God wants us to sacrifice.

First, one of the big things God wants us to sacrifice is our earthly treasures that stand between us and God.

Matthew 6:21, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

The big question for us is, where are the treasures of our hearts? Are we pursuing earthly treasures or heavenly treasures?

God desires for us to surrender and sacrifice our earthly treasures, for His eternal treasures that will endure forever.

One of the best ways we can sacrifice our earthly treasures for the awesome eternal treasures of heaven is by the giving of our tithe to God.

Second, to be a living sacrifice we must obey God and His Word. I can't stress enough the importance of obeying God.

No matter how great a sacrifice is, no matter how far reaching that sacrifice may be, without obedience to God, it's worthless.

1 Samuel 15:22, *"But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."*

The greatness of our sacrifice is equaled only by our obedience to God. Many times, our obedience to God will require us to sacrifice. For example:

- Our obedience to faithfully attend church may require us to sacrifice.
- Our obedience to read God's Word may require us to sacrifice.
- Our obedience to pray may require us to sacrifice.
- Our obedience to tithe may require us to sacrifice.

Remember, no matter how great a sacrifice may seem, it's worthless without obedience to God. God's looking for those who're obedient to Him even if they must sacrifice to do it.

But another important truth to consider about our sacrifice is to know there are things we must never sacrifice.

First, as believers in Christ, we must never sacrifice our allegiance to Jesus Christ. He's our Savior, our Lord, our God and King, and the master of our souls.

Second, we must never sacrifice God's Word of truth, for false truths of the world. Third, we must never sacrifice our commitment to live a godly life in an ungodly society.

I fully believe we're very near the rapture of the church, and it's imperative that we live for Christ. It's my sincere prayer that you'll fulfill your God given purpose and live a sacrificial life that honors God.

And for the times we live in, I believe Paul's word from 2 Timothy is a picture of how we should live a sacrificial life in these final days.

2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

To finish the race and to keep the faith requires that we live a sacrificial life for Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

In Jesus name, I encourage you to be a living sacrifice. If you haven't done so, I pray you will start today to live a sacrificial life that honors God.