

September 15, 2019

Title: Living Sacrifice

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Text: Romans 12:1-2

The Quest

The G.O.A.T.

Last Sunday night marked the return of a football player nicknamed The G.O.A.T. And who might that be? Tom Brady, of course – the Greatest Of All Time.

Brady has been a quarterback for 20 years now, in a league where the average career for a quarterback is 12 years. He has 6 Super Bowl rings. And he shows no signs of slowing down yet!

What's his secret? In a word: Sacrifice.

He works out all year long to maintain strength and flexibility. He spends time every day on brain exercises. He studies films of past games. And he is a fanatic about what he will and will not eat:

- Yes to eggs and avocados, salads, vegetables, nuts, fish, and roasted chicken.
- No to gluten or refined carbs, dairy, processed foods and added sugars. Not even potatoes and tomatoes make the cut.

You see, being the G.O.A.T. comes at a price. You have to be willing to sacrifice everything that will impair your ability to perform at the highest level.

What's your quest?

So what's your quest? God didn't create you to be mediocre. He created you for a special time and place. He wants to work through you to make you the G.O.A.T. in your unique assignment.

Your assignment may mean succeeding at being a mom or dad, a grandparent or mentor to a young person. Your assignment includes using

your God-given gifts to serve Him and others. Your assignment means being a light in a dark world.

But it won't happen unless you are willing to make the necessary sacrifice.

Our highest honor:

For Paul, success was measured by knowing and doing God's will. We will only become what we were meant to be when we are able

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Romans 12:2b NIV

...to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Think of it. God's will is God's perfect plan for lives. He only wants what is best for us and those around us. So, to discover and live out His will guarantees that we will be the best we can ever be. As Psalm 18 reminds us:

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Psalm 18:35 NIV

You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; your help has made me great.

Knowing and doing God's will is our highest honor.

The Cost

"All in"

To know and do God's will means first and foremost that we determine that when it comes to pleasing God, we're "all in." No compromise. Paul puts it this way:

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Romans 12:1 NIV

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.

He uses the language of temple and altar, with its rituals of the sacrificing of animals to gain God's favor. But Paul is talking about more than fulfilling the demands of a religious ritual. He is challenging us to make *ourselves* the sacrifice. This sacrifice is not the presenting of an animal that takes our place; we present ourselves *each and every day* in the totality of our being as an offering to God. And it's a "whole body" thing. We don't just give God a few thoughts or wishes. He gets the whole package.

Belonging to God alone:

Paul says that we are to belong to God and God alone:

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Romans 12:1b NIV

...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.

To be "holy" means first and foremost to be set apart to God alone. No divided loyalties. We are God's property.

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Psalms 100:3 NIV

Know that the LORD is God.

*It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

That means our greatest goal is to please Him. Anything that offends Him or causes us to disobey Him needs to go.

Spiritual worship:

Paul sums up what it means to be a "living sacrifice" by saying that:

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Romans 12:1c NIV

...this is your true and proper worship.

The word he uses for “true and proper” is *logikos*. Logikos means spiritual or thoughtful. We get our word “logic” from this Greek word. To be a living sacrifice means to offer the worship of thinking creatures.

In other words, to be a “living sacrifice” means to give ourselves to God in both body and mind. We don’t turn off our intelligence when we worship God. We please Him most when our worship is thoughtful and full of meaning.

When Tom Brady steps on the field, he brings both body and mind to the task. Yes, he relies on his shoulder and arm to make a pass. But before he throws the ball, he studies the defense and adjust the play. Mind and body working together.

That’s what God is looking for from you and me.

Living Sacrifice

Transforming our minds:

But in order for us to become a “living sacrifice” we need to be transformed from the inside out. Paul writes:

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Romans 12:2 NIV

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 culture around us works overtime to shape and conform us to its standards. It makes rules, written and unwritten. It rewards those who fit in and punishes those who do not. Leave yourself to its devices and you will be changed, *conformed*, to what Paul calls “this age.”

We have a higher calling: to be *transformed by the renewing of our minds*. The Holy Spirit has come to live inside us, making us a place of worship – God’s Temple. And His greatest work is the renewing of our thoughts and minds so that we *think like God* in each and every situation.

This is something that takes courage. The world around us will push back in a thousand ways. We live in this world, but we are to think and act as those

who are sharing Jesus' resurrection life. It's all part of being a "living sacrifice."

Discerning the will of God:

Only a mind renewed thought by thought and feeling by feeling can figure out what pleases God. Paul describes this as a testing process: we don't run our lives according to a strict set of rules that cover every possible life situation. Instead, we learn to allow the Holy Spirit to grow God's heavenly wisdom in our hearts and minds. We learn to *think and feel* the way Jesus thinks and feels. When we do that:

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Romans 12:2b NIV

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Remember, knowing and doing God's will is the ultimate quest for each one of us. He alone can lead us in the "paths of life."

Living Sacrifice:

So what does it mean for you to stop conforming and start being transformed by the renewing of your mind? What would you have to sacrifice to truly enter into God's perfect plan, God's will?

The culture around you will do everything in its power to keep you where you are right now. Our present culture promotes the "cult of Me." Your happiness, your wishes, your time, your money, your reputation are the most important things in your life. What would your life look like if God's will was the most important thing in your life? What would have to change?

In other words, what would have to happen for you to become a Living Sacrifice?

- How would you use your time?
- How would your life touch the lives of others?
- What ministry would you get involved in?

You'll never know, unless you're willing to make yourself a Living Sacrifice!