



Daily Verse and Comment

Romans 12:1-2

(1) I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service. (2) Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind in order that you may prove what is well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God.

A Faithful Version

Paul makes a strong, urgent appeal to Christians to devote their lives to sacrifice. Sacrifice suggests the giving up or forfeiture of something or oneself for something or someone considered to be of greater value. In this context, the "Someone" is [Jesus Christ](#) and the "something" is God's way of life. The apostle is urging those of us who have had the revelation of [God](#) given to us to devote ourselves entirely to living it.

He urges us to sacrifice our bodies. He does not mean to imply giving up merely our skin and bones but the totality of what we are—our entire beings including our minds with all of their character, energy, knowledge, experiences, skills, perspectives, and attitudes—with nothing held back, since we are likely to hold a portion of our life in reserve just for ourselves. In other words, he is asking us to consecrate our entire lives to God. Note that Paul does not call this "extreme," but "reasonable."

Why would one even consider taking on the potential for such costly pain? No one really grasps the fullness of what God asks of those who make the New Covenant with Him at [baptism](#). This witness in [Romans 12:1-2](#) is nonetheless part of His Word to testify against us. There is a good reason, succinctly given in [Romans 5:5](#): "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." We do it because [God's love](#) for His Son has been given to us and is growing. His investment in us, His grace, is beginning to be returned.

The love of God, the biblical love, is not a mere affection but an outgoing concern equal to or greater than self-concern. This love, which we do not have by nature but is given by God as a gift, will sacrifice itself for the well-being of others. It will pay the costs of forfeiture of self-interest for the well-being even of enemies. It will choose to lay down its life following the pattern shown in Jesus' life.

The love of God is an unearned, dynamic gift from God that influences one who has it toward oneness with God and fellow man. It must be deliberately chosen, though, in order to be put to use.

At this juncture, its costs come to the fore because, despite conversion, human nature remains. Though considerably weakened, it still exerts its influences toward the self ([Romans 7:14-23](#); [Galatians 5:16-17](#)). We must overcome human nature's influences, but in virtually every case, we must make a sacrifice to fulfill the influences of the love of God. Sacrificing almost always involves the potential for loss, at times a considerable loss.

A number of verses reveal that, in one sense, choosing whether to sacrifice oneself in obedience to Jesus Christ is not a realistic option to anyone who claims to love Him. In [John 14:15](#), Jesus says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." He adds in [John 14:21](#), "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me." Verse 15 is a direct command and challenge to anyone claiming to love Him, and verse 21 says that one's following through in submissive obedience is the proof that the claimant loves Him. [1 John 5:3](#) adds a resounding confirmation to verse 21 by providing the Bible's definition of love: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

Love comes at a high price, but it is also rewarding because, as we make the sometimes costly choices to please God by following Jesus Christ, we transform more fully into His image due to following the pathway our Savior blazed before us. Becoming a living sacrifice is one of the costs that observing [Passover](#) should recall to our memories, giving us substance for sober reflection aimed toward revitalizing our understanding of the significance of this important day.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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