**Living Sacrifices**

Based on [Romans 12](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Ro12) and Article 3 of the Creed

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The one who has been redeemed in Christ through faith is a spiritual man. The spiritual man is a saint. He is sanctified, “made holy” by the Holy Spirit. And, he is called by God and set apart to be a living sacrifice. Romans 12 teaches that you who believe in Christ and love his commandments are to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. And it teaches you offer yourselves as living sacrifices (1) by discerning the will of God. You offer yourselves as living sacrifices (2) by using your spiritual gifts for the building up of one another. And you offer yourselves as living sacrifices (3) by letting your love be genuine—that is, without hypocrisy.

(1) First, Romans 12 instructs that you offer yourselves as living sacrifices by discerning the will of God. **“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”** Romans says it is by “testing you may discern what is the will of God.”

The “litmus test” for the will of God is His commands in Holy Scripture. This means that in Christ, you are not just supposed to do what you *feel* is the right thing. Your boat is motored by love, but you need a rudder, and that rudder is the commands of God.

You are to do all things out of love, that is out of sacrificing what you have for the good of your neighbor. But that love needs to be tested, because there’s still an evil part of you that resists God’s will and can confuse you as to what is really the loving thing. Your loving nature says “**Yes my son is 30 years old, no job living rent free in my basement playing video games all day, and does absolutely nothing around the house. I tell him to get a job but he doesn’t listen. But I can’t tell him to stay out of the fridge until he contributes a bit, because it would break my heart to see him hungry, and he’ll think I don’t love him**.”

Love doesn’t want to see others suffer, and love wants to be shown and known, but a love that doesn’t use the Scriptures to carefully discern the will of God--*that* is unbridled love, reed in the wind love, emotion driven love. Genuine love is rather Spirit driven, moving the saint towards sacrifice, duty, to be soberly guided by God’s will, not the guilt or fear of the human heart. And so the Scriptures give the saints guidance, “**If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat**” (2 Thess. 3:10). This is a clear command from the Holy Spirit that teaches us *it is actually more loving to refuse a lazy person, than it is to indulge their sloth and enable it.* It is God’s good and gracious Will to refuse help to the lazy. Even a mother who is redeemed in Christ by faith, and who has genuine Spirit-driven love may need to test her emotion of love against the Scriptures to discern God’s Will in such a matter. “**That by testing [she] may discern the will of God.**”

(2) Second, you offer yourselves as living sacrifices by using your spiritual gifts for the building up of the church. Romans says, “**For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think , but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned**.” There will be people with different abilities and with different callings within the body of Christ. Saints must consider both.

For example, The Spirit may have given somebody a great gift for communication, but if the Church did not call him to the Office of the Holy Ministry, he should not publically preach in the church. It’s the same for a woman who has such ability, but cannot have a Divine Call to the Ministry. Such a man or woman has ability from the Spirit, but no calling. There are other callings that can utilize such a gift; and such lay men and women, then, are to offer their ability to the church, who may authorize them some other duty of service.

Paul lists sundry gifts that all come from the same grace and the same Spirit. The first listed is prophecy. Prophecy, “*propheteia”,* is not necessarily meant here to mean simply predicting the future. Rather Prophecy is the interpretation and communication of God’s Will. Prophecy is discerning the will of God through testing matters against the Word of God.

An example: nowhere in Scripture does it say that Physician assisted suicide is against God’s will. The Scriptures don’t ever even mention the practice. But those who know the Scriptures know that God’s Word teaches numerous other doctrines that are incompatible with the idea that it is God-pleasing for someone to seek refuge from suffering in seeking death. Therefore, through such prophesying, we can confidently say “Thus sayeth the Lord, Physician assisted suicide is not the will of God.” That is the centre prophecy, interpreting God’s will in a matter, through faithful interpretation of Scripture. We call it Theology, and it is a gift of the Spirit.

Prophecy, or Theology, is the first gift listed here, and the sacrificial life of the church depends on it. There are other gifts listed as well: service, teaching, exhortation, contribution, leadership, and acts of mercy. There are aspects of all of these gifts that every Christian ought to engage in their personal life. **But Romans is here talking about the church as a body, and the body needs to delegate gifts in proportion. If 100% of the body is called to service and 0% is called to theology, or to contribution, or to exhortation the body cannot function, or at least is severely handicapped.** But the sacrificial life of the church as a body, is dependent on the body using the grace given it to exercise all these gifts, and all of the members of the body must use their gifts sacrificially for the building up of the church.

(3) And you offer yourselves as living sacrifices by letting your love be genuine—that is, without hypocrisy. First don’t love what is evil. Second, repay evil with good. Third discipline your life.

*Genuine love hates evil.* **Genuine love does not seek to have a homosexual relationship blessed.** Genuine love does not kill unborn babies in the name of sexual freedom and fornication. Genuine love doesn’t approve of what God disapproves. The world says hypocrisy happens when Christians sin. No! Hypocrisy happens when Christians embrace sin and evil.

*Genuine love repays evil with good.* God does not desire the death of the sinner, nor does anyone with genuine love. When someone strikes you, don’t walk away, instead turn the other cheek and speak the words of Christ at his trial, “**If I spoke wrong, testify to the wrong, If it is right…why do you strike me?**” (John 18:23). If someone asks for your cloak, give your tunic also. Do not reject evildoers, love them and endure them until either you turn them to Christ, or they reject you. “**Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**”

*Genuine love is disciplined.* “**Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit.” “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality**.” *Seek* to show hospitality. Try, strive, endeavor, sacrifice, suffer, that’s what Genuine love does. And one who has Genuine love still fails, and struggles, and is tempted, and needs to repent and be forgiven seventy-seven times a day. Genuine love is not absent on account of these things. But love is not Genuine in one who is complacent to live a life contrary to God’s will. Because one whose love is genuine hates his failure and repents, but he rejoices because he fixes his eyes on the perfect success and righteousness of Jesus, who is his Lord and Saviour by faith.

The spiritual man is a saint. He is sanctified, “made holy” by the Holy Spirit. And, he is called by God and set apart to be a living sacrifice. **Romans 12 teaches that you who believe in Christ and love his commandments are to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God.** And it teaches you offer yourselves as living sacrifices (1) by discerning the will of God. You offer yourselves as living sacrifices (2) by using your spiritual gifts for the building up of the church. And you offer yourselves as living sacrifices (3) by letting your love be genuine. Since you have been created by a loving God, since when you were lost in sin, that loving God sent his son to redeem you; therefore…therefore present your bodies as God has sanctified them to be living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God.