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# THE LOOKOUT

MARCH 2022

## Unit: ROMANS (Part 3)

### Theme: HOLY

**Overview:** The pace of our lives does not lend itself to taking “time to be holy.” God is righteous (Part 1) and has justified us in Christ (Part 2). God expects those who have been justified to live in holiness (Part 3). In these lessons, which close out our study of Romans, students will learn how baptism puts one on a path to holiness, how God’s law exposes unholiness, how the root of that holiness goes back to our spiritual ancestors, and how God’s people live out holiness in the context of sacrifice.

## HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

VIEW OF WEEK 6: 2022

LESSON AIM: Pursue holiness as part of your new life in Christ.

TEXTS: Romans Part 3

LESSON TEXT: Romans 6:14, 11-23

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Acts 22:16, 18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:11-17; Ephesians 5:1-10

STUDY

RAISED TO A HOLY LIFE  
BY MARK SCOTT

DISCOVERY

Tab indicates the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

APPLICATION

DON'T FORGET YOUR BAPTISM  
BY DAVID HART

DISCOVERY

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

**WEEK OF MARCH 27, 2022**

**LESSON AIM:** **Commit to living as a  
pure and holy sacrifice  
to the Lord.**

**UNIT:** Romans (Part 3)

**THEME:** Holy

**LESSON TEXT:** Romans 12:1-21

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Philippians 2:1-8, 14-18; Galatians 2:20

## STUDY

# LIVING AND HOLY SACRIFICE

BY MARK SCOTT

In *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart called the Epistles “task theology.” Raymond Bailey called the Epistles “performance literature” in his book, *Paul the Preacher*. In other words, the Epistles were written to cause something to happen. Information was not enough. Transformation was needed. Salvation was to show up in tangible and measurable ways. After 11 chapters of doctrine, Paul shifted his focus to duty in this chapter.

### Offering One’s Body

Romans 12:1-2

Paul made his appeal to the church *in view of God’s mercy*. This is not the normal word for mercy. This word means “pity shown to others that have been through suffering.” That would be true for both Jews and Gentiles. Paul called these believers who had been “through it” to *offer* (cause to stand up) their *bodies as a living sacrifice*. The phrase “living sacrifice” is odd. A person who offers their body as a sacrifice typically dies. A living sacrifice, by contrast, would be someone who reckoned themselves dead but went on living for Christ. Paul said three things about this: it was *holy, pleasing* (acceptable), and *true and proper worship*. It is the most and least that a Christian can do in light of *God’s mercy*.

This living sacrifice was offered via transformation. The world will try to “squeeze you into its . . . mould” (*J.B. Phillips* translation) to match the *world* (age). God’s way is transformation (a total change in form) by the *renewing of your mind*. In living this way, a believer affirms the will of God, which is *good, pleasing and perfect* (complete).

### Serving the Body

Romans 12:3-8

Individual bodies fold into the larger body of Christ (i.e., church). We will “really feel good about ourselves” (as Bob Russell said in a sermon series on Romans 12) if we offer our bodies to the Lord, but also if we use our spiritual gifts to serve in the church. God’s grace (*charis*) and the gifts coming from that grace (*charisma*) are to be used to serve others. In humility (thinking with *sober judgment*, and not thinking *more highly* of ourselves than we ought), we should recognize the gifts from God and employ those gifts, as *distributed* by the Holy Spirit, in faith for others.

Verses 4-5 give the analogy of a human body with its varied parts. Verses 6-8 give a list of seven spiritual gifts.

The church functions like a human body. These are not all the gifts of the Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, 28-31; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11); the list also includes prophecy (inspired speech), generic serving (deaconing), teaching (formal instruction), and encouraging (lifting others up). It also includes giving, which can take many forms: giving money, providing leadership (which should be done with great energy or diligence), and acts of mercy (which should be done “hilariously”).

### Love Inside and Outside the Body

Romans 12:9-21

The greatest gift of the Holy Spirit is love (1 Corinthians 12:31ff.), and the gifts of the Holy Spirit should always be employed with love. So, in this closing section, Paul used imperatives and cryptic and proverbial sayings to teach the church what love looks like when applied to those inside and outside the church.

Seth Wilson said, “To love the things God loves means that we must hate the things that God hates.” When believers really love as they should, everything else in the text follows. Goodness is embraced. Devotion for others is so strong that honoring them beyond ourselves becomes natural. Our zeal for God and for doing his work becomes second nature. Maintaining joy in hardship, enduring affliction, being faithful in prayer, giving generously, and practicing hospitality in the church body become like breathing.

Loving those outside the body (vv. 14-21) has its challenges, but it also gives evidence of living and holy sacrifices. Blessing persecutors is upside-down behavior to the people of the world. Identifying with the joys and the tears may gain us a hearing with others. A commitment to live in harmony and “work the back of the room” demonstrates humility.

A commitment to peace and living by the golden rule (Matthew 5:44; 7:12) is the best approach in a fallen world. While we cannot demand peace from others, we can do our best to live at peace with everyone. It is wise to leave vengeance to God (Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30) since he does that better than we do. In verse 20, Paul quoted Proverbs 25:21-22 to show how proactive we should be toward the truly needy and those who desire to harm us. Most of these commands are countercultural, but they bring a smile to the face of God. ■

## APPLICATION

### WHAT HAVE WE SACRIFICED?

BY DAVID FAUST

“In view of God’s mercy”—when you consider how kind the Lord has been to you—“offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1). In biblical times, sacrifice usually meant death—animals slaughtered at the altar. What does it mean to be a *living sacrifice*?

Romans 12:1 makes me ask myself, *Am I unreservedly devoted to the Lord? What does it cost me to follow Jesus? Am I willing to push my ego aside, put God’s kingdom first, reject “the pattern of this world,” and “be transformed” by the renewing of my mind (Romans 12:2)?*

#### You Call This a Sacrifice?

I don’t live in a mansion, but my refrigerator is full of food and my closet contains plenty of clothes. I don’t drive a fancy car, but my six-year-old Toyota Corolla gets me where I need to go. I don’t dine like royalty, but I enjoy tasty, nourishing meals every day, and whenever I turn on the faucet, pure water comes out—at the temperature I desire. If I get sick or injured, modern medicine helps me recover. With my cellphone I can communicate conveniently with friends all over the world.

In centuries past, kings and queens would have envied the blessings I take for granted. Sure, I face times of discouragement, but in the big picture, serving the Lord has brought me more blessings than burdens.

Simon Peter once blurted out to Jesus, “We have left everything to follow you!” (Mark 10:28). Moments before, the rich young ruler walked away sad because he couldn’t let go of his possessions. Peter couldn’t help but point out the contrast. In truth, the apostles had given up a lot to follow Jesus—some walked away from their fishing businesses and one left a lucrative tax collecting career. Instead of enjoying comfortable (though unremarkable) lives,

they stepped out and joined Jesus on a mission that made them targets for controversy, rejection, hardship, and martyrdom.

Remember Jesus’ response to Peter? “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” (Mark 10:29-30). Notice: eternal life comes “with persecutions.” Hard times come when we follow Jesus, but the Lord offsets the burdens with blessings, including a spiritual family so vast it’s beyond comprehension.

#### Gospel Paradoxes

I know missionaries who have traded the comforts of American life for the challenges of cross-cultural ministry, yet they express no regrets. I know Christians who live in tense, dangerous environments in other nations, yet they seldom complain. Is it possible that being a living sacrifice doesn’t always “feel” sacrificial, “in view of God’s mercy”?

The way of the cross is filled with paradoxes. Lose your life, and you will save it. Deny yourself, and you will find your higher purpose. Volunteer, and you will find joy when you “use whatever gift you have received to serve others” (1 Peter 4:10). Tithe, and you will discover why Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

What do you think it means to offer yourself as a living sacrifice?

**Personal Challenge:** Write down two lists with the following titles: “What I have sacrificed for the Lord” and “Blessings I have received from the Lord.” Which list is longer? What do you learn from comparing these two lists? ■

## DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How has God fulfilled his promises to you or those you love over the past week?
2. With whom did you share the gospel message last week?

Ask two people to read aloud **Romans 12:1-21** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly restate the passage in about a minute or less.

3. Look at each of the three sections of this passage (vv. 1-2, vv. 3-8, vv. 9-21). How does each section work together to present the overall message?
4. Let's dig deeper:
  - How does verse 1 impact how we carry out the rest of this passage?
  - How does your choice—to conform or be transformed—affect how you follow Christ?
  - How does that same choice affect how you interact in community as a member of Christ's body?
  - How can many Christ followers (from different backgrounds and with different personalities, experiences, and gifts) become "one body"?
  - What main points was Paul making about the gifts we've been given?
  - How can you understand and live out what God wants you to do?
  - How would you characterize the "Christ followers' code of ethics" in verses 9-21?
  - Which of those directives in the "code of ethics" seem to be focused on church insiders? Outsiders?
5. What do you learn about God from this passage?
6. What do you learn about people?
7. What directive in verses 9-13 do you most need to obey?
8. Look again at the list of directives in verses 14-21. Which one(s) could most help you in sharing the gospel with people in your circle of influence?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. How can we as a group serve you and share with you this week?

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **Luke 7:11-23** as we begin a new study on the Gospel of Luke. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■