

TITLE: SACRIFICIAL COMMITMENT

TEXT: ROMANS 12:1-2; NUM 8:5-22

INTRO: In this text, Paul commands Christians to be “living sacrifices.” This seems to be an oxymoron, considering that an animal sacrifice (which is surely what the reader would’ve pictured) was killed! But animals weren’t the only things “sacrificed!” In Num 8, we find out that there were “living sacrifices” in the old law, and that we can learn much from that example.

I. THE TYPE – LEVITES (NUMBERS 8:5-22):

A. The selection of the Levites (v. 5-6)

Out of all the people, God chose the tribe of Levi. This idea to select one tribe from Israel was not out of the blue. They were taken instead of the firstborn of all Israelites. The firstborn has an important place in God’s redemptive plan.

1. God tells Abraham to offer his firstborn (firstborn according to the promise – Isaac) (**Gen 22**).
2. God sanctified all the firstborn for himself when he killed the firstborn of Egypt (**v. 17**).
3. “*And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel*” (**v. 18; 3:12-13, 40f**).
4. One day he would take the Messiah as the final firstborn, as the source for man’s redemption.

B. The sanctification of the Levites (v. 7-8)

1. They were cleansed (made pure) w/physical cleansing – sprinkled w/the water of purification, shaving, & clothes washed.
2. They also had to offer an animal sacrifice. Prior to the sacrificing of themselves, they had to learn the meaning of sacrifice.

C. The sacrifice of the Levites (v. 9-14)

1. (v. 9) The Levites were taken before the nation (a public event, to be seen by all Israelites).
2. (v. 10-11) It was before the Lord (a form of worship), as the Israelites (probably the tribal leaders) put their hands on them.
 - a. (v. 11) This is what was done when an animal was sacrificed – hands on its head, making it a very personal offering.
 - b. This must’ve been an emotional moment, knowing that in a sense, these Levites were being “offered” on their behalf.
 - c. But they weren’t killed; they were sacrificed “*for an offering...that they may execute the service of the Lord.*” This shows the seriousness of doing God’s service. Couldn’t He have just said, “Do this service”? Why have everyone to lay their hands on them and treat this like an animal sacrifice? The Levites were giving up their own lives (land, etc.).
3. (v. 14) “*The Levites shall be mine!*” So a sacrifice wasn’t always killing the body; it was killing the self-will.

D. The service of the Levites (v. 15-22)

Their purpose was to do the service of the tabernacle (v. 15,19). They were cleansed and offered to God (v. 21), and then they went in “*to do their service in the tabernacle...(v. 22).*” They couldn’t serve God until they had been sanctified & sacrificed.

II. THE ANTITYPE – CHRISTIANS (ROMANS 12:1-2):

A. Christians are a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9 – “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...*”)

1. All Christians are “priests,” not just some of us (there has never been a clergy/laity system in the Lord’s church).
2. But this “priesthood” is an analogy, since Hebrews 7-10 makes it clear that there is no more OT priesthood.
3. This means we can make some comparisons & contrasts between the Levitical priesthood and the church. One such contrast is in this verse – a “royal” (kingly) priesthood. The Levitical priesthood wasn’t “royal,” since royalty was only in Judah. We are “royal” because our High Priest is Jesus, who is of Judah and is our King also.

A. The selection of Christians

1. Since *all* Christians are priests, then all Christians are to be living sacrifices. God “selects” (elects, predestines) not individuals, but the group of people who will be obedient to Him, answering His call (a call to all by the gospel).
2. The call in **Rom 12:1** – “*I beseech you...by the mercies of God*” – this call is an urgent one!
3. “*...that ye present your bodies...*” Notice God doesn’t do this for you – **YOU** must present your own body. Christianity is a decision *you* must make. And it’s a decision of dedication – 100% commitment.

B. The sanctification of Christians

“*Present your bodies...holy* (adj. pure/clean; n. saint), *acceptable unto God.*” We don’t go through a *physical* cleansing process like the Levites did. Rather, our cleansing is a spiritual one. We should stand out in the world as being different.

C. The sacrifice of Christians

1. “*A living sacrifice*” – a sacrifice that doesn’t actually die (physically), but metaphorically. We die to ourselves. The non-Christian lives life for himself. Every decision is based on himself (his own life, family, friends, etc. – looking out for #1). But then he learns the truth (he’s dead in sin, but Christ died for him). Now he *chooses* to live obediently for Christ.
2. **Gal 2:20** – Paul was an excellent example of this life change (sacrifice). Most ‘believers’ today are unwilling to change.

D. The service of Christians (Rom 12:2)

How has your life changed? How have you sacrificed yourself to let Jesus live in you?

1. The What: “*Be not conformed to* (follow the pattern of) *this world*” – Following God will guarantee this won’t happen! Even most of the religious world has conformed to the world around us.
2. The How: “*be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind* (intellect, understanding, will)” – All this sacrifice/commitment starts in your mind. You don’t just start saying & doing the right things as Christians; you must **decide** to do this, and it’s a daily decision.
3. The Why: “*that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*” Renewing the mind (changing your focus to Christ instead of yourself) will cause you to study His word, know His will, apply it, and live it.

CONCLUSION: Just as the Levites were separated unto service for God as priests, so we, as a royal priesthood, are separated from the world to be living sacrifices for God. This is an example of how we learn from the OT (**Rom 15:4**). When we read the OT and learn about the Levites and their role as God’s servants, and how their inheritance wasn’t land, but God, we can make the appropriate applications to ourselves as Christians. We were bought with a price, to serve God, to glorify God in your body (**1 Cor 6:20**). Make sure you’re doing this!