LIVING SACRIFICE:
The Difference Between the Chicken and the Pig

Main Text: Romans 12:1

WE—Have you ever had someone help you or do something really great for you? (Ask a few people for their stories and what they did in return for the person).

A few years ago at Christmas time we had a youth get together at the Mitchell’s house. Raynetta and I ended up in separate vehicles out there. When it was over she loaded up Josiah and took him home and I left a few minutes after her. As I pass Wal-Mart heading toward the church I see a line of cars and an ambulance. As I get closer I realize she was in a wreck; someone had turned in front of them and they collided. I got in the middle lane and went up to check on them. She was fine but was freaking out. It was not a fun situation: my truck was totaled out, it was cold (it’s the middle of Dec), it was raining on top of the cold, Raynetta is shaking like crazy, the ambulance are there, still trying to figure out what all had happened. Tow truck finally shows up. We start transferring stuff from the truck to the van, it starts raining harder, no umbrella, Raynetta still shaken up, I’m shivering like crazy, and all the sudden I turn around and the Davis’ are standing there, asking what they can do to help—and they had an umbrella. They were so helpful to us that night. How do you repay that? A thank you note, but what else?

Another time someone did something really great for me was when I was in school at OBU. We lived in Arkadelphia, but I worked part time at a church in HS, about 40 miles away. In the middle of winter the heat quit working in my car. I was freezing on the trips back and forth from Arkadelphia to HS. I drove with big gloves on to keep my hands warm, wore a huge winter coat, and by the time my trip was done, my toes felt like ice. Somedays, I could see my breath the whole trip. I didn’t have the money to have it looked at, much less fixed, so I just dealt with it. We had an older gentlemen in the church who found out about it and he just happened he was a mechanic. He told me to bring it down. I told him no at first (stupid pride!), but ultimately he got his way and I took my car to his shop that afternoon. He fixed it at no charge and I went home that afternoon with heat! You talk about thankful! For him it was a simple act, but for me it was huge; how do you repay that? I wrote a thank you note, but to this day I am so grateful, no way to express in words what he did for me.

One more story: there was a time a while back when things weren’t looking so bright for my future. I was headed down a bad road and if something didn’t change, well, the end results wouldn’t be so good for me. Fortunately, something really great had already been done. The road I was on was the road to hell. Thankfully, God had provided a way to get off that road to eternal hell, an eternity of torment and separation from God. I trusted in Jesus for salvation, became a follower of God. Jesus suffered, bled, and died, and I get the benefit of that. If you are here and you are Follower of Christ, you have a similar story. How do you say you are thankful for that? Express thanks? Do you just write a thank you card; say a thank you prayer to God?

I really didn’t know how to properly thank the Davis’ or this mechanic for what they did for me. A thank you card and a word of thanks seemed in inadequate, but what else to do? Same with what God has done through Jesus in providing salvation and forgiveness of sin. What do you
do? How do you express thanks to God to rescuing you and me from an eternity in hell? Thankfully, the Bible gives an answer to that...

**GOD**-Turn with me to Romans 12. In this passage, Paul answers the question about how to respond to this great thing God has done for us...

In Rom. 1-11, Paul has laid out some pretty heavy stuff, some of the heaviest theology we have in the Bible. Then in Ch. 12, where we're picking up he begins a shift. He takes all the theology and begins talking about how to apply it to the Christian life. READ 12:1...

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers..." refers back to everything Paul has just said in Chs. 1-11. He's saying 'B/c of everything I've just told you (in Chs. 1-11), as a Christian this is what you should do...

But what has Paul just talked about? He has talked about the 'mercies of God'. In some translations it's translated 'mercy' but in the GRK, the original language of the NT, mercy is actually plural, not singular, so it should read 'in view of God's mercies...'. But what are the mercies of God that Paul has talked about in Chs. 1-11? He's talked about how we are created by God, but that sin has distorted that. He's recounted that we all have a sin problem—that our bodies will someday die due to sin, disobedience to God, and our soul will either go to heaven or hell, based on whether we have accepted or rejected Jesus in this life. God could have left us to rot in hell b/c of our sin, but He didn't. God has shown us great love, unconditional love; He has shown great patience with us; He has shown us compassion; He has proved Himself faithful over and over again. These mercies are not something we deserve, not something we earn; they are a free gift.

I shared w/a few moments ago some stories about things people have done for me or me and my family that we are thankful for. What the Davis' did for us when the wreck happened and what the mechanic did for me, those may have been little things for them, but they were huge to me! A thank you note felt inadequate, but I didn't know what else to do or say. God has taken this to a whole other level for us. Everyone is on the road to hell—a place of eternal torment, fire, pain, anguish, FOREVER! God has offered us a way, a PERMANENT way out of that through Jesus. What an incredible gift! How in the world do you say thanks to God for such a thing? The Davis' got a little wet and cold helping us out; Jesus got the mess beat out of him; He was literally shredded to pieces and stuck up on the cross for 6 hrs—how do you say thank you for something like that? A thank you card just doesn't seem to cut it!!! What is the right kind of response to such a gift, such mercy??? Paul tells us the right way to respond. Look at the rest of the verse...

Being told to 'offer your bodies as a living sacrifice' may sound a little strange to us, but for the original readers, this would have been very clear. Sacrifice was a huge part of religion in ancient culture. If you look at the book of Leviticus in the OT, there's tons of stuff in on there how to do different sacrifices. Here's how it would basically work (some variations depending on the type of sacrifice):
- Take it to the place of sacrifice;
- Lay one hand on the head of the animal/slit it's throat;
-Priest would collect the blood/sprinkle on the altar;
-Person is to skin the animal and cut it into pieces;
-Priest would start the fire, arrange everything, and place the head, pieces and fat on the altar;
-Person would wash the insides/guts/organs and legs w/water;
-Priest would burn the insides and legs on the altar.

Now the animal to be brought was to a perfect animal, no defects, no spots, no imperfections. But this wasn’t always done. Before long people quit bringing the best of their flock or herd to God and started bringing God less than the best. The prophets speak out against this. For example, Malachi 1:8 says…

Back to Romans: animal sacrifices were practiced during this time still. But if you were a Believer, you didn't need to do animal sacrifices anymore; Jesus was the once and for all sacrifice. Animal sacrifices were no longer acceptable to God.

So here, believers are told that instead of offering animal sacrifices, they are to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice. The word for 'offer' here is the same word you find in the OT for the priest 'offering' or putting the sacrifice on the altar. So what Paul is saying is that all believers are priests, or ministers, and we are to place our bodies on the altar. But obviously he doesn't mean we are to literally lay down on the altar, so what does he mean? For Paul, the body means EVERY aspect of our lives. In the time this was written, there was this belief that what one did with the body didn't affect the soul. This lead people to do all kinds of things with their body and to their body, believing that it didn't affect their relationship with God. The problem with that is that it's not true. What we do with our body very much affects our soul. So Paul is combating this idea; he's saying a proper response to what God has done, a true act of worship, is that as a Christian we don't give part of ourselves to God, we give all of ourselves. We are to be people who are 'holy' and 'pleasing' to God. The term holy in this context means something that is set apart for special use.

So let's summarize: Paul is saying that for the Christian, for someone who was once destined for an eternity in hell, pain, torment, fire, and separated from God FOREVER but has been rescued from that b/c of the horrible beating and crucifixion of Jesus, and ultimately b/c of the resurrection, that we are to respond by offering ourselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God—that is the true way to respond.

**YOU**—So let’s tie this up. What does what Paul says to the Christians in Rome have to say to us today? I believe it answers the question we started with: how do we express gratitude to God for the gift of salvation? The answer: anyone who considers themselves a Christian should offer their entire being to God as a living sacrifice. That is the only proper response.

(Take the stuffed pig/chicken out & put on pulpit)

There’s a parable that illustrates a major problem among Christians today: A chicken and pig were walking down the road together when they pass a church having a breakfast fundraiser. The chicken says “That’s a neat idea. Let’s help them out. Let’s offer them ham and eggs to
help with their fundraiser.” “Not so fast,” said the pig. “For you that’s a contribution, but for me it’s a total commitment.”

It was easy for the chicken to want to take part and help out since it wasn’t going to cost him much. He could walk in, lay an egg, and walk out. But for the pig, it would cost him his life to give them ham for the breakfast fundraiser.

There are a lot of people who live that way. They will claim Christ, but they have the attitude of the chicken-they just want to give a little and walk back out the door. Just come to church when it’s convenient, only obey the commands in the Bible they want to obey-sure they won’t murder anyone, but they’ll gossip about somebody and kill somebody’s reputation all day long. That stuff about helping the poor, the fatherless, and the widows in the Bible, about sticking up and caring for those who can’t care for themselves, that’s too much work and sacrifice, I’m not going to do that. They want the benefits of salvation and not going to hell, but they are not willing to give God everything they have. They want to be like the chicken and contribute.

But Paul makes clear the proper response is what the pig realizes-his involvement in that meal would be a total commitment. The pig would walk in that door, never to walk back out. For the Christian, the only proper response to the mercies of God is total commitment. That looks different for different people, but what looks the same is commitment.

As we close, here’s what I’m going to ask you to give an honest answer to. If you say you are a Follower of Christ, are you the chicken or the pig? In other words, are you like the chicken in your relationship to Christ-you have only halfway committed to Him, or are you like the pig-fully committed. Before you answer, take a minute to reflect on your attitude-how much are you willing to give up in following God: if something keeps you from committing to faithful church attendance and service to Christ or from leading your own family well, are you willing to give that up? If you are in an ungodly relationship, are you willing to give that up? If you are addicted to something like drugs, alcohol, lying, gossip, stealing, cheating, or pornography are you willing to give that up? If you are openly rebelling and going against your parents and dishonoring them, are you willing to give that up? Whatever it is that as a Christian keeps you from fully committing to God, are you willing to give that up?

Here’s what I’m going to ask you to do tonight: if you are here and you would say, “I’m like the chicken. I’m willing to give a little, but I am not fully committed to Christ, I am not a living sacrifice, but I want to confess that to God and I want to be a living sacrifice,” here’s what I’m going to ask you to do during the invitation time: I’m going to ask you to get up from where you sit and come up here and place a hand on this altar as a sign to God that you want to be a living sacrifice-you are fully committed to Him. That you want Him to use you and that you are willing to do whatever it takes! You can just come, lay a hand on the altar, voice of prayer to become like the pig and go back to your seat or pray with one of the ministers.

If you are not a follower of Christ…(G.O.S.P.E.L.)
God created us to be with Him…
Our sins separate us…
Sins can’t be worked off by good deeds…
Paying the price for sin Jesus died and rose again
Everyone who puts their faith in Christ alone is forgiven/saved
Life with God begins now and lasts into eternity.