

**Altar Life Part One**

**John Piper** says the most seductive idol in our life is the one we see in our own reflection...OUCH! That stings a bit doesn't it? I have found in my own life that the removal of idols in my life is messy, painful business... that they don't often go quietly.

Thankfully, there is one sure, effective way to remove idols from our lives and the Apostle Paul deals with that in Romans 12 (in fact all of Romans)

**Romans 12 is God's definition**, His plan, His design, His purpose for living in community with each other and living for Him outside that community. It is clear, it is concise but it is something we must give ourselves over to... for it to be effective in our life... it is a life we must be all in on.

**Romans 12:1-2**

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present** your bodies as a **living sacrifice, holy and acceptable** to God, which is your **spiritual worship**. (2) 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.*

**Appeal** = Urge, invite, beg

**Present** = Offer, place, surrender

**Holy** = Sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated)

**Acceptable** = Well pleasing, fully agreeable

Spiritual (in KJV, reasonable) = Divinely reasonable, able to think and speak reasonably

**Reminded of Isaiah 1:18**

*"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.*

**Worship** (in KJV, service) = To perform sacred services, worship

The first century Jews understood the role of sacrifice in their lives. Since Abraham, the children of Israel had been symbolically transferring their sin to an unblemished animal - and then sacrificing that animal. Altar sacrifice for the atonement of sin is huge for the Jewish people. But now Paul was kicking this up a notch.

Paul is saying... my brothers and sisters, because of God's mercy towards us, I'm urging you, and I'm passionately inviting you to offer yourself... to give yourself... to place yourself on the altar of God. Be dedicated, sold out, holy, blameless, pure and set apart living sacrifices. People with a renewed mind understand that we worship God this way... with our life!

Now... this is part of the sermon where it might become uncomfortable... because **Idols don't like altars... Idols don't like challenges**

So when we hear the words living sacrifice, I think we only focus in on the word SACRIFICE. The word 'sacrifice' carries a connotation of death and of surrender, so for Paul to tell us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice sounds crazy... doesn't it?

Paul is urging them (and us) to freely present and to place all that they are on the altar. An urgent call to present your life... your WHOLE life surrendered to God is powerfully foreign to the human heart.

Where do you think he got that concept? Paul learned from Jesus...

**Jesus teaches the idea of a living sacrifice on several occasions:**

**Mark 8:35**

*"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."*

**Matthew 16:24**

*"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*

**John 15:13**

*"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."*

**When we strive to become a living sacrifice, we echo the words of Paul in Galatians 2:20**

*"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

We become a living sacrifice when we offer all that we are to God's, serving Him no matter the cost. We become a living sacrifice when we place the needs of others above our own. We become a living sacrifice when we obey the will of the Father. That's altar life...

**But the truth is... Altar life messes with my schedule, my agenda, my pride, my comfort**

**My mind needs changing!** How I think about sacrifice, what I think about sacrifice... more importantly... what God's view about sacrifice looks like!

**So... Are you prepared to think differently?** To have transformed thoughts, opinions and values that line up with the way God thinks? Because if you are... idols will fall into the consuming fire of God's mercy, freedom will come and your mind will change.

**Verse 2**

*"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."*

**Conformed** = Fashion, pattern after

**Transform** = Change into another form

**Renewal** = renovation

**Will** = purpose

## **A new way of thinking that lines up with God's purposes!**

### **Verse 3**

*"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."*

**Think with sober judgment** = self control (fruit of the Holy Spirit)

This means to think with a renewed mind, one that's been transformed... self-controlled thinking... we have a realistic look about ourselves... not controlled by pride or shame. A transformed mind recognizes their limits while knowing God has none. He gives grace, mercy and faith.... Gifts for us to serve with... roles in the body to serve through. All with the understanding that He makes that possible for us... we are benefactors of that generosity.

So we have no reason to boast or think so high of ourselves or to feel shame by thinking too lowly of ourselves. Transformed minds think with the mind of Christ.

### **Philippians 2:5-8**

*"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

Having the mind of Christ means understanding His plan, purpose, and perspective ... this is the only healthy way to think... to think like Jesus. If you have the mind of Christ, worry will be offset by trust, hate by love, fear by faith and unforgiveness by mercy.

### **What fruit grows from a living sacrifice? (Verses 9-21)**

1. Love people without pretense 1 John 4:7 Love louder than words
2. Hate evil
3. Cling to good
4. Love with brotherly affection
5. Honor one another,
6. Passionately serve the Lord
7. Rejoice in hope
8. Be patient in trials
9. Pray with conviction
10. Be generous with one another
11. Bless those who persecute you
12. Be joyful with those who are joyful, help bear the sorrows of those who grieve
13. Be unified as a body—don't elevate your opinions or allow your knowledge to make you arrogant
14. Don't retaliate
15. Live at peace with all men
16. Overcome evil with good

### **2 Timothy 2:15**

*"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."*