

Living Sacrifice

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, June 14, 2026
PASSAGES	Romans 12; Romans 5; Romans 15; Ephesians 4; Ephesians 5; Galatians 6; John 15; 2 Corinthians 3; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Timothy 4; 2 Corinthians 5; 1 Peter 2
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:06:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Romans 12 opens with *therefore*, and everything depends on it. The living sacrifice Paul asks for is a gift offering — the kind Israel brought to pay respects, not the kind brought to cover sin. Christ already covered the sin. What is left is a life spent on him because you want to.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Chapter 12 is a conclusion, not a premise. Paul spends eleven chapters establishing that we are free before he asks for anything.
- ◆ In Hebrew and in Greek, sin offerings and gift offerings are different words. Paul reaches for the gift word — *thusia* — not the sin word.
- ◆ The message of radical freedom does not produce laziness. Paul was the most convinced man alive about grace, and nobody worked harder.
- ◆ “Spiritual worship” is *logikē* — word-related, reasonable. Call it Christ logic: given who he is to you, this is the sensible way to live.
- ◆ Fruit is what a branch does when it is attached to a vine. You do not have to understand the mechanism for it to happen.
- ◆ Holiness is not an achievement. A sheep on a hillside is ordinary; the same sheep given to God is holy, because it belongs to him.

- ◆ Union with Christ makes you new. It does not make you mature. That part takes deliberate, premeditated effort — inside the household of grace, never as payment for it.

► 1:06:01

Matt started with a book he has loved since middle school — a short verse-by-verse commentary on Romans 12 called *How to Overcome Evil*, small enough that a boy who did not much like reading could finish it. The chapter has stayed with him since, and so has the worry that comes with it: everything in Romans 12 can be misread if you forget where it sits.

The *therefore* carries the whole chapter

► 1:17:02

Discipline is real in the household of God — training for godliness, radical generosity, costly honesty, saying no to temptation when it hurts. All of it belongs, and all of it has to be kept in its proper place. Paul put chapter 12 after eleven chapters of arguing that we are free in Christ, and that order is not accidental.

“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. 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 12:1–2 ↗

The eleven chapters underneath it run like this: as we sinned in Adam, we are made righteous in Christ (Romans 5:12–19). Matt kept the analogy he has used here before — Levi paying tithes through Abraham because he was still in his ancestor’s loins (Hebrews 7:9–10). People resist that logic until they notice it cuts the other way too. “You’re hidden in Christ,” he said, “the great Trojan horse of heaven, letting all of us pirates in to the paradise.” Manger to tomb, a whole life of perfect obedience, credited to you.

The thought exercise

► 1:11:07

Suppose Christ appeared in your living room, believably, and told you the outcome was settled: you will be with him, regardless of tomorrow or next month. The anxiety about whether you make it is simply gone. How would you spend the rest of your life?

Matt pressed the point in the other direction too. We are not headed for a heavenly work detail. “When we’re in heaven in the kingdom of God, we’re not going to be making license plates for him or weaving baskets to pay it back.” He wants us — that was the whole transaction.

► 1:16:34

The standing objection is that too much grace-talk makes people lazy. Matt’s answer was Paul himself — shipwrecked, stoned and left for dead, hungry, ridiculed, planting churches for the love of the game. Ask Stephen about his death and he probably would not lead with the pain; he would tell you about the Lamb on the throne. A child obeys to avoid a spanking, and then grows up and keeps the family culture because they have bought in. That change of motive is the whole subject.

Not every sacrifice was for sin

► 1:19:29

If your picture of the Old Testament is wall-to-wall guilt, the word *sacrifice* will mislead you here. A large share of Israel’s offerings had nothing to do with sin. They were honor offerings, peace offerings — gifts brought because the worshiper wanted to bring one. Hebrew uses different words for the two, and the sin offering shares its word with sin itself, which may be what Paul is playing with when he writes that Christ “knew no sin” and was made “to be sin”. The Greek-speaking Jews kept the distinction: *hamartia* for sin, *thusia* for a gift.

Romans 12:1 uses the gift word. And of course it does — Paul has just spent the letter proving Christ is our sin offering. “Why would we then live our lives as a sin sacrifice? That doesn’t make any sense.” A living sacrifice is the rest of your life, spent on him on purpose. Not virtue that shows up on a good day after coffee, but planned ahead — “in like a premeditated cold-blooded way,” saying no to temptation with a wink and a nod toward the Lord, training yourself for godliness in the sense of 1 Timothy 4:7–8.

Christ logic

► 1:25:04

Where the ESV has “spiritual worship,” the King James has “reasonable.” Paul’s word is *logikē* — word-related. Greek had a perfectly good word for *spiritual* and he declined to use it, which is a decision, not an accident. So it points either to Christ the Word or to what is reasonable, and Matt cheerfully merged

them: Christ logic. Its only other appearance is the “pure spiritual milk” of [1 Peter 2:1–3](#) — word milk, and Peter had just been talking about being born again through the enduring word.

Fruit is what a branch does

► [1:28:28](#)

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

[JOHN 15:4–5](#) ↗

The grafted branch does not have to work out why it is fruiting; the farmer sleeps and repairs equipment while the seed grows. What does not grow is the fake ficus from IKEA — glued together, permanently convincing, and getting dustier.

► [1:30:21](#)

Paul says the same thing in other vocabulary all over the letters. [Galatians 6:15](#) — neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts, but a new creation, and the word for new means novel, not refurbished. Stars, mountains, oceans and beetles each glorify God according to what they are; a beetle does it differently than an orca and both are doing it by nature. Ours is the image of God, so our reasonable worship is willing cooperation and affection — natural, and still voluntary.

► [1:32:52](#)

And again in [2 Corinthians 3:17–18](#): beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, we are transformed from one degree of glory to another. Cause and effect. The veil in question is the veil of unbelief, and Christ removes it.

Holy means belonging, not impressive

► [1:34:14](#)

“At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”

[EPHESIANS 5:8–10](#) ↗

Not just a transfer of citizenship — a transfer of nature. Matt took a detour through the Val Kilmer film *The Saint* and its idea that sainthood is earned by a well-attested miracle, which is not how the New Testament uses the word at all.

► 1:35:53

Picture a flawless sheep on a hillside — perfect wool, gorgeous hooves. Still not holy. Bring it to the house of the Lord and give it to him, and now it is, because it belongs to him. Or the tongs at the temple: they look like the tongs at your house, but they are marked by God's presence, and you do not take them home. Both senses land on us. We are holy because we belong to him and are marked by his presence — “that's why Paul says Jesus is our sanctification.” Which is also why the word *therefore* shows up in verse 8. Identity first, then the ramifications.

Put off, put on

► 1:39:52

In [Ephesians 4:17–24](#) Paul calls life outside Christ a *manner of living* — which means a new creation can still fall back into an old pattern. Matt put himself on that list without hesitation. Since the old life was a lifestyle, the new one has to be cultivated and fertilized on purpose, and that is still entirely within the household of grace. Effort does not move anyone from slave to free; God alone does that. Free people train.

He was honest about the cost: none of this makes saying no to ungodliness easy. “There's going to be sacrifice. But in hindsight, in glory, you're going to be so grateful that you had the opportunity to say yes to him and to say no to alternatives even when it was painful. Maybe even especially so.”

Obligation without forfeit

► 1:45:48

In [Romans 15:1–4](#) Paul says the strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and holds up Christ, who did not please himself. Matt guarded the word *obligation* with the pay-it-forward line at a fast food drive-through: you are customer 699, the person ahead paid for your seventy dollars of food, the mayor is there with cameras, and the person behind you ordered a coffee. You would feel something. But nothing is taken back from you if you decline — your meal is already paid for. That is the shape of the obligation.

He also drew the line between this and a vaguely Jesus-flavored ethics. What would Jesus do is not the gospel; when Paul defines the gospel in [1 Corinthians 15:3–8](#) it is a list of things Jesus did. We are after union with the actual Messiah, and in that union we are free to be living sacrifices.

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

ROMANS 15:5-7 ↗

Back to Romans 12

► 1:49:41

Motivation by survival makes sense. So does motivation by reputation, or comfort, or wealth — Matt granted every one of them. The mark of maturity is being moved by the glory of God for the sake of the glory of God. He read Romans 12 once more, on into [verse 3](#) and its sober judgment, and admitted he does not know exactly what the measure of faith assigned to each of us means. What he does know is the direction: the pattern of this world is self-aggrandizement, and the renewed mind seeks out the will of God “with sober premeditated affection.”

Then he handed the room back the question he had opened with, and gave it time before the closing prayer. Knowing your gifts, knowing the inheritance is already yours, knowing there is no prison factory in heaven — what would it look like to live as a free-will offering, given purely as respect, affection, a gesture of goodwill toward someone you want to please?

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Romans 12:1–2
- Romans 5:12–19
- Hebrews 7:9–10
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 1 Timothy 4:7–8
- 1 Peter 2:1–3
- John 15:4–5
- Galatians 6:15
- 2 Corinthians 3:17–18
- Ephesians 5:8–10
- Ephesians 4:17–24
- Romans 15:1–4
- 1 Corinthians 15:3–8
- Romans 15:5–7
- Romans 12:3

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Take Matt's thought exercise seriously for a minute. If the outcome were audibly, unmistakably settled, what would you stop doing, and what would you start?
2. Where does your own service still function like a sin offering — payment against a debt — rather than a gift?
3. Matt argued that grace does not make people lazy, and pointed at Paul's workload as proof. Does that match what you have seen in yourself?
4. Holiness was defined as belonging and being marked by God's presence, not as an achievement. What changes in how you think about yourself if that is true?
5. What is one premeditated act of obedience — planned ahead, not waited for — you can put on the calendar this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VI1MejXN0o&t=3960s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.