

## 8/27/23 SERMON NOTES

**MESSAGE:** Dare to Deviate!

**SCRIPTURE:** Rom 12:1-8

In the OT, we have the book of Leviticus, which scholars say was written by Moses, outlining the duties of priests and Levites regarding their responsibilities in worship and holy living for the Hebrews. There, we find God speaking to Moses and sending him to teach the Israelites how to worship God with sacrifices from their herd or the flock (**Leviticus 1**). We see that God designed sacrifices as an active symbol of repentance and obedience. It was also a way to seek forgiveness and restore a relationship with him. When a person offered an animal to God, a priest would kill it, cut it in pieces, and place it on the altar.

In today's scripture reading in **Romans 12:1-12**, Paul, who happens to be very well-schooled in Judaism and hence as a Pharisee, understood issues of OT sacrifices. He brings up a very interesting twist on sacrifices by removing the animal from the altar and in its place, placing us there. *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."* Immediately, we see a major deviation. Instead of offering an animal as it were, he urges them to offer their bodies, and in place of a dead and cut-up sacrifice, it should be a living sacrifice. What was he thinking? Imagine you standing in front of an altar. On the altar, you have untied living animals. This means that God wants us to offer ourselves, not animals, as living sacrifices daily, laying aside our desires, our worries, and inclinations. It means putting all our minds, strength, hopes, and resources at his disposal by trusting His guidance and direction daily as our true and pleasing worship.

Friends, Christianity is a faith of daring to deviate by consciously choosing something different from what many consider obvious. To better grasp this concept, you must hear what Paul says in verse two: *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, (1. International children's Bible - shaped by this world; 2. The living Bible – Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think, 3. The message - well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking).*

In this case, to dare deviate is to choose not to copy some behaviors that have been normalized, to decide not to be shaped by worldly standards and to refuse to be adjusted to the common culture, and instead to seek to be transformed by renewing of one's mind through help from the word of God in the scriptures. However, our refusal to conform to this world's values must go even deeper than the level of behavior and customs. It must be firmly planted in our minds..." *be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

### **Lesson from this metaphor of a sacrifice:**

1. A renewed mind leads to meaningful worship – You see, God deserves our meaningful worship in a world where we altogether abandon ourselves to God's leading and guidance. But this is not easy, as said because we want to be in control. That is why we need the Spirit of God to transform who we are inside out. We need God to do surgery on us so that the old mind is removed, and we are given a new mind obedient to God. A mind that is ready to surrender completely to the will of God like a sacrificial animal in the O.T. Instead of a slain lamb, a renewed heart is broken and molded for God's purposes.  
A renewed mind is totally given to the service of God, and even though one will still be hearing and seeing, yet remains silent on the altar. That is deep, my friends. Note that when you have surrendered to the altar, you offer yourself with all your faculties and resources. Your talents, career, friends, family, property, desires, hopes, and all lay on the altar of God.
2. A renewed mind calls for a life with a difference – In a world where the crowd mentality greatly influences people, Paul challenges Christians to a higher standard of faith and counter the norms of this age. A renewed mind changes one's talk, time use, interests, relationships, behaviors, and view of life. When your friends spend Sundays sleeping, you rise up early to go and worship. When everybody is going for the fanciest this or that, you commit to supporting the poor and missions. Like Joseph of the bible you will choose to run away from enticing sinful situations. It is choosing not to revenge even when your enemy is at the weakest point.

So, brothers and sisters, to offer meaningful worship in our generation, we have to Dare to Deviate. To dare not conform or be shaped by the world and instead allow the Spirit of God to transform us inside out.

Will you dare deviate? May the Lord give us the courage to choose to offer a worthy worship through a renewed mind. **Amen!**