

# Horton Haven Labor Day Retreat-13 a Squirming Sacrifice

by William MacDonald

---

*The sermon emphasizes the struggle of surrendering to God's will and the transformative power of living as a 'squirming sacrifice' for His purpose.*

**Duration:** 34:10

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:11, Exodus 4:10, Jeremiah 1:6, Luke 19:14, John 9:22, Acts 9:5, Romans 10:9

**Topics:** "Sacrifice"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a radio program for young people that was supported by listener donations. One night, a lady called from the downtown railroad station and expressed her desire to visit the program. Despite the late hour and lack of transportation, she insisted on coming and eventually arrived at the preacher's house. She expressed her gratitude for the radio program and gave a generous donation. The preacher uses this story as a parable to illustrate how God patiently waits at our door, wanting to bless us.

---

## Transcript

When God commissioned Moses to demand deliverance from his people, what did Moses say? He said, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? And later he added another excuse. He said, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since you have spoken to your servants, but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. And Jeremiah was just like that.

God commissioned Jeremiah to go and preach the message, and he said, Our Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth. And in a New Testament parable, you remember the nobleman, he entrusted ten servants with money to invest. They hated him, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us.

Saul of Tarsus, he was stubbornly refusing the voice of the Holy Spirit in his life, and you hear those words, it's hard for you to kick against the ghost, isn't it? It's hard to kick against the ghost. I like what C.S. Lewis said. He said that the Lord brought him in kicking and screaming, the most reluctant convert in all of England.

I can identify with that. Many of us can understand exactly what he meant, because that too was our experience. For years we had gone astray, wanting nothing but our own way.

We did not want any cosmic deity to tell us what to do. We wanted to be free lancers, stomping our foot. We shouted defiantly, we will not have this man to reign over us.

We were determined that no one would direct our lives or interfere with our plans and ambitions. We wanted pleasure, and we were convinced that God didn't want us to have it. Isn't that right? It's a big mistake.

God does want us to have pleasure, but the trouble is he knows we're not looking for it in the right hand. At thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore. That's the right way to get pleasure.

We wanted the approval of our companions. We valued their approval more than the approval of God. We wanted self to be on the throne, and we looked upon God as being a meddling surfer.

And then gradually our peace was shattered. Looking back, it must be that someone was praying for us. But a very strange thing happened.

Without any desire on our part, we kept meeting people who wouldn't mind their own business. They kept talking to us about the Lord. That wasn't exactly what we wanted.

They insisted on bringing before us God and Jesus, sin and salvation, heaven and hell. It didn't make any difference whether we were walking down a shopping mall or driving along in a car. We'd see Jesus saved on the side of a rock.

We'd turn on the TV and turn on the radio. It was always the same thing. You could hear some mention of God or of heaven or of hell.

It seemed that religion was everywhere. It was just as common as a home brew for us. A Coca-Cola sign, wasn't it? And then, of course, open warfare erupted.

We just got sick and tired of it, and we asked him to leave us alone. Like solid parcels, we were kicking against the goads, and it was hard. In one sense, we were at war with the Omnipotent One.

But it also seemed that we were running away from him. In our insanity, we were trying to flee from the One who is Omnipresent. I like the way Francis Thompson said it in his poem, The Hound of Heaven.

He said, I fled him down the night and down the day. I fled him down the arches of the years. I fled him down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind.

And in the midst of tears, I hid from him. And under running laughter, up-visited hopes, I sped and shot, precipitated. Panic blooms of chasmed tears from those strong feet that followed after.

But with unhurrying pace, an unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instances, they beat. And a voice beats, more instant than the beat, saying, All things we pray to you. We pray it to you.

A very vivid description of Francis Thompson, trying to run away from the Lord. The Lord's following without fear of all his following. Say it once again.

All things we pray to you. We pray it to you. It was all so irrational.

We were fighting against our own best interest. That's true of every unsaved person. Fighting against his own best interest.

We thought the Savior wanted to rob us of pleasure when he wanted us to enjoy it. We thought that his will was bad, undesirable, horrible. Actually, it was the very opposite.

He wanted to save us from the sins that were dragging us down to hell. That's what he did. He wanted to give us eternal life as a free gift.

And we were running. He did not come to steal, kill, or destroy. To live, to give life, more abundantly.

It reminds me of a preacher friend of mine. He had a radio program for young people. And it was supported just by the gifts of people who heard the broadcast.

One night as they were settling down for the night, the phone rang. And a lady called from the downtown railroad station. And she wanted to come out and say hello.

They didn't know her. She was just a listener to the program. But she just wanted to come out for a visit.

They said, well, look, it's a long way from the railroad station. Oh, she said, no problem at all. She said, I'll just take a bus out there.

And they said, sorry, the buses have stopped running for the night. And she said, well, that's all right. I'll take a taxi out there.

And they said, well, it's really quite late, isn't it? Well, they ran out of excuses. And finally the dear woman came out, probably in a taxi, rang the doorbell, and they let her in. And she just said, I just wanted to come and tell you what a blessing the radio program is.

And she went into her person, brought out a large sum of money, and handed it. And then he told me the story after. He said, I'm so glad I let her in.

And, you know, that's a parable of us and the Lord, isn't it? She's there standing at our door in sunshine and rain and patiently waiting an entrance to gate. All he wants to do is bless us. Dear friends, when the Lord is speaking to us, when the Lord is calling us, and we're afraid.

We're only afraid. It reminds me of years ago back at Emmaus Bible School. George Burr was in town, and he came, and he was staying up in the men's dormitory there.

And there were a couple of fellows on their knees in one of the rooms. The door was just slightly ajar, and there was a couple of fellows on their knees praying. One of these fellows said, Lord, I can't do it.

You know I can't do it. He was just pleading with the Lord about his inability to do it. And George happened to be passing by at that moment.

And he just hit the door a little and stuck his head in and said, what's the matter? Are you afraid of a blessing? The guy thought it was a voice from heaven, you know, speaking to him. What's the matter? Are you afraid of a blessing? He said, that's exactly it. That's exactly it.

The Lord speaks to us, and we hold back. We're just afraid. We control the knob, don't we, that keeps the door locked, keeps him outside.

It's amazing to me. We don't speak our friends and neighbors that way. It's amazing that we would ever speak the Lord of Glory that way.

We raced around trying to find pleasure. We were drinking at broken cisterns. Christ was offering us water which we drank of it.

We would never thirst again. And yet we wanted our sins more than we wanted the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there were moments when we seemed to weaken.

But we knew what the right thing to do was. Maybe we should accept the Savior. After all, the preacher said we had everything to gain and nothing to lose.

But then the picture of our companions came up before us. To go back and tell them that we were saved. And to hear their ridicule and their sneers.

We were ashamed. We were ashamed of Jesus. Ashamed to be identified with him.

The thought of confessing him before others just sent chills down our spines. Now, we can never tell people we've been saved, that we've been born again. We could already hear their belittling remarks to us.

We could see their snide. But by this time, conviction of sin was deepening in our lives. Day and night, God's hand was heavy upon us.

Like David, our moisture was turned into the drought of summer. And if we tried to feed our basic goodness, the Spirit of God would remind us of what was inside those parts of ours. It was obvious that no one with a polluted mind like ours could ever go to heaven without being cleansed.

When we should be sleeping, we were wide awake. Conscious of a load of sin on our shoulders. Fearful of the just punishment that awaited us.

Hell now was a terrible reality. Not just a curse word. It was a terrible reality that we all knew.

With hypocritical skill, we tried to hide our inner feelings from those around us, from our relatives and our friends. But good actors we were. And yet we were consumed by fear and confusion.

A tangled mass of contradictions. To put it bluntly, our life was falling apart. If I could quote C.S. Lewis again, he said, We felt the steady, unrelenting approach of him whom we so earnestly desired not to meet.

We felt the steady, unrelenting approach of him whom we desired so earnestly not to meet. And then at last came the day that we had dreaded. When we were stripped of our strength and our pride, and we dejectedly breathed out our surrender.

He said, Nay, but I yield, I yield. I can hold out no more. I sink by dying love himself.

It actually happened when we were in a meeting and they were singing, Just as I am without one face, But that thy blood was shed for me, And that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come. Just as I am and willing not. Bid my soul of one dark blood.

To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot. This is just the right word we needed. Just as I am, though talked about with many a conflict, Many a doubt.

Fighting within and fears without. O Lamb of God, I come. Just as I am poor, wretched, blind, Psych, witches, healing of the mind.

Yes, all I need is thee to come. O Lamb of God, I come. Just as I am thou wilt receive, Will welcome, pardon, stand to lead.

Because I promise, I believe. O Lamb of God, I come. Just as I am thy love unknown, Has broken every barrier down.

Now to thee thine, thine alone, I come. The chase was over. The hound of heaven had caught up with us.

We lay panting at the foot of the cross, Weeping helplessly. It no longer mattered what our friends thought of us. It was no longer a concern of our hearts, Only what he thought.

Now we realized that the one whom we thought was our enemy Was our very best friend. Our fear had been groundless. Running away from the Lord, We were running away from our own death.

The war was over. We now had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We were now on the victory side.

And those irritating Christians who used to buttonhole us, Now we looked upon them completely differently. They were the excellence of the earth In whom was all our delight. They were our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And we looked upon them with deepest gratitude. Once again, Lewis said, Who can duly adore that love Which will open the high gates To a prodigal who is brought in kicking, Struggling, resentful, And darting his eyes in every direction For a chance to escape. That's wonderful grace, isn't it? To bring in a person like that.

Struggling, screaming, Looking in every direction for a way to escape. And the Lord brings him. Worming Sacrament.

Now another war begins. Oh, I thought when I trusted Christ the war would be over. Well, there was a war that was over.

But another battle has begun. Yes, we had trusted the Lord Jesus as our Savior. But now we faced another question.

Would we surrender our lives to him for service? Could we trust him, as we said last night, To manage our lives down here on earth? And once more, our stubborn will shifted into high gear. We know what we should do, but we weren't prepared to do it. We know that divine logic pointed to full surrender, To the one who died for us on Calvary's cross.

But that might interfere with what we had planned for our lives. We had looked forward to an idyllic marriage. To a luxurious home in the suburbs of hot and cold folding doors.

With two cars in the garage, at least. With a profession or occupation that would yield a good income for us. And a reputation for success in the community.

Comfort, security, pleasure. Oh yes, sometimes to serve the Lord. To all outward appearances, the world was our oyster.

Everything was going our way. But there was something our friends couldn't see, Because underneath, there was a deep disquiet. In some ways, it seemed that we were spinning our wheels.

It seemed that we were chasing shadows. Under the surface, we were struggling with the issue of full surrender. We were afraid.

We were afraid of what His will for us might be. Certainly, it couldn't be as glamorous as the life that we had planned for ourselves, but it was. We dueled with God.

And we listened to our hesitations too much. It never dawned on us that the Lord had options that we didn't know anything about. And that His will was far superior to anything we could ever think.

God had options that could make us deliriously happy. It just never dawned on us. Finally, we realized our foolishness.

The Holy Spirit removed the blinders from our eyes. We saw that the God of infinite love wanted nothing but the very best for us. And that really is true.

We tumbled to the fact that His will is the best. God's way is the best way. And so we did something we had never done before.

For the first time in our lives, we bowed our knees and turned ourselves over to the Lord Jesus as a living sacrifice. We said in effect, anywhere, Lord, anything, anytime, whatever you want me to do. It was so logical.

It made such good sense. How could we do less than give Him our best? Live for Him completely after all He did. We had already turned our lives over to Him for salvation.

Now we turned them over to Him for service. We said, Jesus, Lord and Master, love divine has conquered. I will henceforth answer, yes, to all your will.

Free from Satan's bondage, I am thine forever. Henceforth, all thy service. But as time went on, we learned a painful lesson.

We learned that it isn't enough just to put your life on the altar at once. Because you go back the next day and the wretched thing is falling off the altar. And we found out that we had to renew this every day of our lives.

It was a squirming sacrifice. We realized that the crisis of surrender was not enough. There had to be a process following it.

The once for all commitment had to be followed by continuity. We learned that wonderful lesson that Anne Grannis tells us of in the little poem that she wrote. She said, I want my life so cleared of self that my dear Lord may come and set up His own furnishings and make my heart His own.

And since I know what this requires, each morning while it's still, I slip into that secret place and leave with Him. He always takes it graciously, presenting me with His. I'm ready then to start the day on any task there is.

And this is how my Lord controls my interest, my will. Because we meet at break of day for an exchange of wills. Dear friends, if I could give you one secret of the Christian life, more than any other, that would be this.

Start the day down on your knees and have that exchange of wills with the Lord Jesus. Just say, Lord Jesus, I give you my will for the next 24 hours. And I accept your will for my life.

Work out your will in my life. There's nothing that gives peace and poise and satisfaction and fulfillment in life. Say, what will happen? Will the lights go on? Will you feel nervous shivers? And you make that commitment to the Lord every morning and then you go about your daily work.

Believing, believing that by the Spirit of God He is leading, He is guiding, He's working in and through you. Does it make you proud? No, it doesn't make you proud at all. It doesn't make you proud at all.

But there is a sense, you realize, that God is working in you. And as time goes on, you will feel, realize, that your service begins to spackle with His supernatural power. And when you touch other lives, something happens from God.

Isn't that something worth looking for? When you touch other lives, something happens from God. And so every morning we have to exchange our will for His. So we begin on a daily basis to kneel before Him and say, Lord Jesus, I rededicate myself to you for the next 24 hours.

You say, why not the next week? Why not? As thy day so shall thy strength be. Sufficient under the day is the evil, or just a day at a time. That's God's way for us to do it.

After turning our lives over to the Lord, we went through the day believing that He was guiding us, controlling us. And looking back, we realize how Theodore Monod, in his poem, captured the story of our squirming sacrifice in these lines. He said, O the bitter shame and sorrow that a time could ever be when I let the Savior's pity bleed in vain and proudly answered all of self.

Yet He found me, I beheld Him bleeding on the cursed tree, heard Him pray, forgive them, O Father. And my wistful heart said faintly, some of self and some of thee. Day by day His tender mercy, healing, helping, full and free, sweet and strong and ah, so pleasant, brought me lower.

While I whispered, less of self, higher than the highest mountain, deeper than the deepest sea, Lord, thy love at last has come. That should be the graduated story of our life. First of all, we come to the Savior.

We come to the Savior. We're fighting against Him. The Spirit of God continues to work in us, convicting us of sin.

Finally, we surrender to Him. Then the Spirit of God begins to plead with us for that life. He read the other night in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 that He died for all that they which live does not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose.

Why do we have to be squirming back and forth? When are we going to learn that God's way for us is the very best way that divine wisdom can conceive of? If I give my life to the Lord Jesus, do whatever He wants with me, I have to believe that it's the very best thing that divine wisdom could ever conceive of. Why should I ever hold back? This is the challenge of what we've been speaking about in these meetings. If I were to give a title to all of the meetings, it would be, My Heart, My Life, My Own Love, So Amazing, So

Divine, It Demands My Life.

It does seem to be such a contradiction that I, insignificant, frail as I am, that I should ever hold back my life. You have to remember that, isn't it, that I don't belong to myself. The Lord Jesus purchased me on the cross Himself.

And if I take my life and do what I want with it, I'm a thief, because I'm taking something that doesn't belong to me. I don't want to be a thief. It belongs to Him.

I want to give it to Him. His love constrains me, Paul says. His love constrains me.

I think of the love that He has for me. I think, how can I do less than give of my best to live such a life? The mercies of God call for myself as a living sacrifice to Him. Romans 12, 1-3.

I seek you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. I just refer to the mercies of God in chapters 1-11 of Romans. I beseech you by the mercies of God to present your body as a living sacrifice, not a dead sacrifice like the word offering in the Old Testament.

A living sacrifice. If it's holy, it's acceptable unto God. If it's holy, it will be acceptable unto God.

Which is your reasonable service. It's the most reasonable, sane, rational thing you can do in the light of salvation. That can also be translated, which is your spiritual worship.

Both of them make very good sense. It's a act of worship to present your body to Christ as a living sacrifice. Do not conform to the world.

Don't let the world around you pour you into its mold. Be transformed. What does that mean, be transformed? It means to start thinking the way God thinks.

You've been thinking the way the world thinks, now think the way God thinks. How does God think? Well, you have to go to the word of God and find that, don't you? You go to the word of God and you find out how God thinks. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and purposeful response.

You see, it's not bad and horrible and repulsive as you think it is. It's good and acceptable. It's funny, people conjure up thoughts of the will of God.

When most people think of the will of God, they think of snakes, scorpions, spiders, the place in swampland of the densest humidity. That's not what the will of God is like, good, acceptable. You have to come to the realization, as we said last night, that if God is able, if God is able to save our souls from an everlasting hell, and we believe in God too, we should believe that he's able to do a good job managing our lives.

Better than we could do, better than we could ever do. So if you're a squirming sacrifice today, the word is, make that surrender to the Lord. Every day of your life, make that fresh surrender.

It will be a change in your life. So we lift the Lord in prayer, and then our brother is going to lead us in a certain way. Appreciate your prayers as we fly back to California.

Father, we pray that you'll forgive us for being so irrational, to realize as we even think of these things how sin has perverted the human mind, how it has set us in enmity against the God who built the sky, how it's given us wrong concepts of you and of your will for our lives. Forgive us, Lord, we pray. Forgive us for bunking down all the verses of Scripture that fall to that fall-out commitment.

We pray that from this conference we'll go forth a different way. Lord, we just would dare to ask you today that from this conference, here at Mid-South, that lives will be changed and that blessings will flow out to the far corners of the earth. You know, this is not too much to ask of you.

You do ask it. It's a worthy and precious thing to do. So then, return home and retire, he chose to remain in Africa and die there.

Thank God for men. I'll never forget the day his life motto came to me in Paris, in Honolulu, Hawaii. Jesus Christ, who brought him, died for him.

It can be too great for me to mention him. That flew me. I couldn't answer it.

I couldn't wiggle around it. Amy Carmichael. Some of you have read Amy Carmichael's poems.

They're wonderful. Amy Carmichael was of Irish stock, and she was a woman's woman, I'll tell you. She was one of the best brothers we had.

And she devoted her life to working with boys and girls, mostly girls in India, who otherwise probably would have become temple prostitutes. That's the vision that she had. She had tremendous strength of character and leadership ability.

The measure of her devotion to Christ is seen in these words. The vows of God. I may not stay to play with shadows.

A puck's earthly flowers, while I my work have done, and rendered up in a dew. Isn't that good? The vows of God are upon me. I may not stay to play with shadows.

A puck's earthly flowers, while I my work have done, and rendered. Another place she wrote, from prayer that asked that I should be sheltered from winds that beat on thee, from fearing when I should aspire, from faltering when I should find fire, from silken stealth all captains see, thy soldiers visit, from subtle love of softening things, from easy choices deepening, not thus are spirits fortified, not this way went the crucified, from all that dims thy counsel, O Lamb of God, deliver us from evil. Give me the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay, the hope no disappointments hire, the passion that will burn in fire.

Let me not sink to the abode, make me thy shield, lady of God. William Borden. William Borden was the son of millionaire parents.

He attended Yale University. There was a revival. Unbelievable.

There was a revival in Yale in 1909. And William Borden was part of that revival. God called him to serve him overseas.

There was an Englishman that came to this country once and traveled among Christian circles and he said, somebody said to him when he was leaving to go back to England, what most impressed you in your visit to America? And he said, seeing that young son of millionaires. And the mission down in the valley

with his arms around him. That's what he did.

He used to go down in northern Washington. The mission's down in the valley. This impressed the Englishman more than anything he had seen in his trip to New York.

It was William Borden who said, in every man's heart there's a throne and a cross. The price is on the throne, self is on the cross. If self, even a little bit, is on the throne, Jesus is on the cross.

In that man's heart. If Jesus is on the throne, you will go where he wants you to go. Jesus on the throne glorifies any work of faith.

He got to Egypt and he traveled to the mission field. And he died there a spiteful man. More people have gone to the mission field as a result of the book that was written by Mrs. Howard Taylor, warden of Yale, and if you have news.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11848.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/horton-haven-labor-day-retreat-13-a-squirming-sacrifice/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**