

LIVING FOR THE LORD

ROMANS 12:1-2

INTRODUCTION: A pastor told of reading a news article about a man who was receiving a lot of attention for his unusual sacrifice. He says, “In fact, his selfless act was creating quite a bit of notoriety. He was being called, by local media, “a hero”. The reason Rob Smitty was at the receiving end of so much congratulation and attention was that he willingly donated one of his kidneys to a perfect stranger. According to news reports, Rob said that his motivation for doing something like this was that it would make his children proud. The trouble was, his ten year old daughter was not impressed by his sacrifice. Amber said her father never came to see her and her mother, Rob’s former wife; he never called, not even on her birthday. Amber said, “I don’t think my father’s much of a hero.” The case took an interesting turn as public documents showed that Rob had not made child support payments to Amber’s mother in nearly a year. Can you imagine? Giving one of your kidneys to a perfect stranger in need, while failing to provide for the needs of your own child? It is really not all that remarkable. In fact, it is classic human nature. We like to define where we will act right, how we will look good, and what we will look like to whom and at what time, while at the same time, avoiding the hard truth about ourselves. Making a good impression can be accomplished from a distance, but authenticity is proven up close.”¹

We sing a song, *Living for Jesus* (481 in your hymnal) that has some pertinent words. Look at them with me:

Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

Verse 4

Living for Jesus thru earth’s little while,
My dearest treasure, the light of His smile;
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,
Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

Chorus:

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee;
For Thou, in Thy atonement, Didst give Thyself for me;
I own no other Master, My heart shall be Thy throne;
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

We don’t consciously think about living for Jesus. We usually take the road that most take and that is “Living for Myself.” The question to be asked here is “Who are you living for?”

¹ Stephen Davey, “More than Skin and bones” sermon:

<http://media.colonial.org/files/PDFs/CBC/Becoming%20a%20Non-Conformist%20Part%20I.pdf>

Sacrifice [which is a part of this passage, see **verse 2**] to some is what they want to do to make themselves look good. That is not the purpose of sacrifice. Living for Jesus is not designed to make someone look good. To live for Jesus, means we want Him to look good.

The things Jesus has done for us is outlined in the previous chapters of **Romans**. If we survey the things that have been said before **Romans 12** we find that there is a normal pattern to Paul's writing which has a greater influence that directed his writing, the Holy Spirit. John Phillips points out that the "typical teaching of the epistles that belief is followed by behavior; doctrine, by deeds."² This is clearly the pattern found in the book of Romans. The apostle lays out the doctrinal teaching which deals with the condition of man and the way of dealing with that condition called "sinner" to the practice of the new life found when one enters into a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Donald Grey Barnhouse points out the prolific use of the word "therefore" by the apostle to make emphasis in this epistle of Romans. The word is found 27 times in Romans. Look at a few of these with me:

- **Romans 2:1**. The previous section deals with the sinful condition of man and what is said following describes how many overcomes this by Justification.
- **Romans 5:1**. The section on Justification by Faith has some important applications and the epistle embarks on those benefits.
- **Romans 6:4**. The application of living in light of the resurrected life is addressed in the next three chapters. Living in light of the Lord's provisions and how to apply the doctrine of the previous chapters.
- **Romans 9:18**. The book gives an illustration of the way God has shown his mercy on the people of Israel and the prospect of their return to a place of prominence in God's plan for the future.
- **Romans 12:1**. Barnhouse says concerning this section: "The 'therefore' of chapter twelve must look back over all the epistle and divide its revelation under two heads: (1) man's complete ruin in sin, and, (2) God's perfect remedy in Christ. Sin and salvation — this is the burden and the joy of the gospel, and this is the foundation for the practical, day by day Christian life."³

LIVING IN LIGHT OF THE MERCIES OF GOD

Another writer gives the following "Mercies of God" (**Romans 12:1a**) found in the previous chapters. They are:

1. JUSTIFICATION, — including pardon, removal of sins from us, trespasses never to be reckoned, a standing in Christ — being made the righteousness of God in Him.
2. IDENTIFICATION — taken out of Adam by death with Christ, — dead to sin and to law, and now IN CHRIST.

² John Phillips, *Exploring Romans: The Gospel According to Paul* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969) page 180.

³ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God's Discipline: Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983) eleven volumes in four page 2.

3. UNDER GRACE, NOT LAW — Fruit unto God, — unto sanctification, made possible.
4. THE SPIRIT INDWELLING — “No condemnation,” freedom from the law of sin; witness of Sonship and Heirship.
5. HELP IN INFIRMITY, and in any present suffering on our way to share Christ’s glory.
6. DIVINE ELECTION: Our final Conformity to Christ’s Image as His brethren; God’s settled Purpose, — in which, believers already glorified in God’s sight!
7. COMING GLORY— beyond any comparison with present sufferings!
8. NO SEPARATION POSSIBLE— God love us *in Christ*.
9. CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S FAITHFULNESS confirmed by His revealed plans for national Israel.⁴

The point being made is that it is time for the Christian to move beyond the doctrinal teaching and begin to live the Christian life. One writer said, “Paul is now after the reality of Christianity.”⁵ It is important that the Christian believer take the step of moving on from what we believe to how we behave. This passage is addressing the item that most Christians know little about, *True Christianity*. This moves beyond the “sinner’s prayer,” church membership, baptism and other things we deem important in a religious system.

The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* identifies this section as “God’s Righteousness Revealed in Transformed Living” ([Romans 12:1-15:13](#)). In light of the preceding chapters of Romans, which talks about the “Righteousness of God” and how we access it is a way to demonstrate what some call “Authentic Christianity.”⁶ The apostle Paul presents a matter that is to be a part of every believer’s life. It is something that cannot be swept under the rug. It is to be applied to the life of the Christian who is serious about LIVING FOR JESUS.

I. THE IMPERATIVE PLEA — “I beseech you therefore” (Romans 12:1a).

Beseech – believers. There is something very interesting in this word *beseech*. It is a word that literally means “to call near” or “to call alongside.” It is translated “beseech” 43 times in your KJV, “comfort” 23 times, “exhort” 21 times, “desire” 8 times, “pray” 6 times, and “intreat” 3 times. If you look at **John 14, 16** you find this is the same word used to designate the Holy Spirit who is the “Comforter” Jesus promised to the disciples when He told them He was going to go away. That Comforter was to come and be “with us” and “dwell in us.” **John 14:16 (KJV)** *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* Beseech is a word that is used in several ways, but one of the primary ways it is used is to “Urge” or “Implore” someone to engage in something. In this case, it is to enter into a level of commitment that many Christians never engage. Note what Paul told the Philippian

⁴ William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1938) page 448.

⁵ Davey.

⁶ Ibid.

believers in **Philippians 1:20 (KJV)** According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, **but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.** Paul's urgency is evident here that the believer engage in a new dimension of living for the Lord Jesus Christ.

ANOTHER THING TO NOT HERE. This is for those who are saved, who have trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. The word "brethren" is always talking about those in the faith in the Pauline epistles. The word "beseech" has the idea of "to exhort" or shows great desire for Christians to enter this level of commitment that is missing in so many believers. **He is saying that based on what you have learned about your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, here is the way you should want to live for God. OUR COMMITMENT TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST SHOULD BE BASED ON OUR GRATITUDE AND NOT GUILT.**

GENUINE CHRISTIANITY IS NOT GETTING THINGS FROM GOD BUT GIVING BACK TO GOD FOR HIS ABUNDANT MERCIES. We will address the matter of the "living sacrifice" a bit later. I just want you to know the principle this passage is built upon.

II. THE INEXCUSABLE PROPOSAL — ". . .that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" (**Romans 12:1b**). **Present.** The verb is an interesting one. It means to "present" and keep on presenting. In other words, the presenting is a continuous activity. It does not have an ending, it keeps going. Another idea behind this word is the meaning of "to place at the disposal of." That suggests we are to make ourselves available to God for the purpose of bringing glory to Him. Are you available for God to use for His purposes?

Now note with me the phrase "**present your bodies a living sacrifice.**" The first thing we would say, "Why does God want my body?" Who would want a body that has B.O.? This body snores, it has bad breath, it has a bad heart. Lord did you know this body has a "dirty mind?" I have trouble with this body and it is always getting me in trouble.⁷ You have said in **John 4:24 (KJV)** *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* I can worship you in my spirit and soul, but my body, that is what gets me down and always going the wrong way. Note what this verse says, "**PRESENT YOUR BODY!**" You see, the only way you have of expressing who you are and what you are all about is through your body. Now it may be a tall body, a short body, a skinny body, a little over weight body, but it is your body and all we can come to know about what is on the inside of you is what comes out of your body. I am talking primarily about the thoughts and actions we are able to observe.

⁷ Ray Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory, Expository Studies in Romans 9-16 Volume II* (Waco: Word Books, 1978) page 82.

You, see, I determine what is important to you by the way you act and the people you associate with and the places you go. If your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ is important to you, I will see you in church, reading your Bible, praying, witnessing, etc.

What God is saying here in this passage is that He wants us to come to him with warts and all. He is not saying you have to clean up your life and become perfect before you can come to Him. He is saying, come to me and I will do the cleaning and changing. **NOW HERE IS THE PRINCIPLE, DO NOT MISS IT.** God cannot (and will not) change you unless you are willing and have a deep desire to live for him and bring glory to Him. All of this is done without reservation or hesitation. God is not going to impose His will on you, He wants you to be a “willing” sacrifice. Listen to **1 Corinthians 6:20 (KJV) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. Romans 6:13 (KJV) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Romans 6:19 (KJV) I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.** In other words there needs to be a change of attitude about the way we live. The process is that God is the only one who can change us and we have to be willing to allow Him to work in our lives. **THAT IS WHY WE ARE TO PRESENT OUR BODIES.**

“Paul is thinking of more than skin and bones. He has in mind the fact that we live in our bodies and our bodies represent everything we have to offer. Inside the body is our mind, our intellect, our emotions, our plans, our will, our dreams, our thoughts, our desires, our hopes, our frustrations, our disappointments, our longings, everything.

“I lay on the altar and offer up to You my hopes, my longings, my disappointments, my will, my emotions, my intellect, my plans . . . everything, I sacrifice to You!”⁸

Have you ever considered the sacrifices in the Old Testament? The animal which were offered never chose the kind of altar that was used, the place they were offered, the fact that they could make some preparation and could ask for a little delay in the offering. They went to the altar without hesitation and without conditions. The major difference is that they were a *dead sacrifice* and God simply wants a *living sacrifice*. That is a major difference. Now next week we are going to look at the ramifications of **Romans 12:2.**

There is another hymn I want you to look at [#490]. The author, Francis R. Havergal. She wrote:

1. Take my life and let it be, Consecrated Lord, to Thee;

⁸ Stephen Davey, <http://media.colonial.org/files/PDFs/CBC/Becoming%20a%20Non-Conformist%20Part%20I.pdf>

Take my hands and let them move, At the impulse of thy love, At the impulse of Thy love.

*2. Take my feet and let them be, Swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my voice and let me sing, Always only for my King, Always only for my King.*

*3. Take my lips and let them be, Tilled with messages for Thee;
Take my silver and my gold- Not a mite would I withhold, Not a mite would I withhold.*

*4. Take my love- my God I pour, At Thy feet is treasure store;
Take myself and I will be, Ever only, all for Thee, Ever, only, all for Thee.*

III. THE INDISPUTABLE PLAN — “. . .a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*” (**Romans 12:1c**).

- A. Service** – the word used here originally had to do with “reward or wages” and had the meaning of “to work for reward.”⁹ This has the idea of service to God. That would be included in the ministry. You have heard me say many times that every believer is to be involved in the ministry. Just as a review consider **Ephesians 2:11-12 (KJV)** ¹¹ *Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; ¹² That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* The work we do in the church is part of your service such as teaching Sunday school and other works involved in the ministry. It also includes witnessing and encouraging other believers. VBS would be in this category. The Christian should be looking for ways to minister to those in the fellowship. Even Nursing Home work would be in this same category. There are many things that can be done in the work of the church. Look at **Romans 12:7-8 (KJV)** ⁷ *Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; ⁸ Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*
- B. Reasonable** – This is an interesting word and the basic meaning is “logical” or reasonable. There is an interesting verse that uses the same word in **1 Peter 2:2 (KJV)** *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* “The word” is the same one translated “reasonable” in **Romans 12:1**.

⁹ TDNT Abridged, page 503.

Illustration: I read of the story of an incident in the life of Jerome Hines, the Metropolitan Opera singer. As a boy growing up in California, he became convinced that he had a good voice. Someone urged him to seek training for it, and so he did. He became possessed with a desire to become a star in the Metropolitan Opera Company. That was what he lived for. He gave up all other activities, all other pursuits, all other pleasures, to give himself to the necessary work of training to become an opera star. Perfecting the arts of intonation, of musical projection, he learned several languages so he could sing operatic roles. He gave himself totally to that tremendous desire within him to be a star in the Metropolitan Opera. Finally it came true. He became a star. And he said it was empty, hollow. One day he heard a man singing. The voice was as good as his, and the man could have done what he did. He heard Beverly Shae singing, 'I'd Rather Have Jesus.' The words he sang were,

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold,
I'd rather be His than have riches untold.
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land,
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hands
Than to be the king of a vast domain,
And beheld in sin's dread sway.
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.

That song got to Jerome Hines. He began to think about it and, out of that incident, he became a Christian. But he didn't quit the opera. Many people thought he should have. They thought the opera was 'worldly.' No, opera is not worldly — except to those who think like worldlings and live like worldlings in the opera. Jerome Hines stayed in opera, but everything was different. He was no longer singing for the advancement of Jerome Hines, he was singing for the glory of God. He dedicated his art, his work, his all to that purpose. God does not take us out of the world; he wants us to live in it, but to change our thinking.

A few years ago Hines had an opportunity to sing the role that he had always wanted to sing. He had trained for it through months and months of hard work, and he was given the role. His contract stated that he was to sing that role in the opera for ten years. When he went to the opera house to practice, he found some people performing a rather lewd dance. He asked, 'What is this?' He was told, 'This is the choreography that introduces the

opera.' He said, 'There's nothing in the opera like this!' 'No,' they said, 'we're changing it a bit, modernizing it, bringing it up to date.' Jerome Hines said, 'I won't sing if you are going to have this kind of dance in it.' He was told he had better go talk to Mr. Bing.

Jerome Hines went to Roudolph Bing, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, and said to him, 'Sir, if you have that dance in the opera I am not going to sing in it.' Bing told him, 'If you don't sing, you will be ostracized and blacklisted in opera. You are under contract to sing.' Hines said, 'Sir, I can't sing in that opera. I am not going to let my name be used to entice people to come in to see filth like this. You can break me, sir, and the union can break me. I've worked hard for months to train for this role, but I will not sing in your opera if that dance is in it.' Bing said, 'Jerome, you don't have to sing. If you really feel that way, you don't have to sing; we'll get someone else. But we can't change the contract.'

So Jerome Hines had to give up that role. It cost him, over the period of ten years, something like a hundred thousand dollars. How many of us are willing to give our bodies to God in such a way that we would be willing to give up a hundred thousand dollars rather than do something that would be offensive to the Lord?"¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid.