

The Secret to Holy Living¹
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
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June 4, 2023

Text: Romans 12:1-2

Purpose: Paul has placed before us the challenge that we are all sinners and that we are only saved by the grace of God. This grace is extended to all who would call upon the name of the Lord. Once that grace has been received, we find that we often fail to live a Holy life. We may even slip back into old patterns of sin. Paul admonishes us to become a “living sacrifice” and surrender our lives to God. Therein lies the key to Holy living – worshipping God, applying the wisdom of God, and surrendering to the will of God.

With all the new technology regarding fertility, a 65-year-old woman was able to give birth to a baby recently.



When she was discharged from the hospital and went home, her relatives came to visit. "May we see the new baby?" one asked.

"Not yet," said the mother. "I'll make coffee and we can visit for awhile first."

Thirty minutes had passed, and another relative asked, "May we see the new baby now?" "No, not yet," said the mother.

After another few minutes had elapsed, they asked again, "May we see the baby now?" "No, not yet," replied the mother sternly.

Growing very impatient, they asked, "Well, when CAN we see the baby?"

"WHEN HE CRIES!" she told them.

"WHEN HE CRIES??" they demanded. "Why do we have to wait until he CRIES??"

"BECAUSE...I forgot where I put him!"²

This thing called life is sometimes the most difficult thing to do. There are so many details to remember - places we are supposed to go, people we are supposed to see, appointments we are to keep, birthdays and anniversaries to remember – and the older I get the more difficult it becomes. I need all those reminder phone calls to keep me straight.



We come to today's passage in Romans 12 where Paul reminds us to present our bodies as a "living sacrifice" unto God. These first two verses give us some insight into an area of our walk with God that we must not overlook. These actually give us the secret to Holy living.

Paul tells us what God expects from us and how we are to achieve His goals for our lives. Holy living, first, revolves around our worship of God, secondly, patterning our lives

around the wisdom of God, and lastly, surrendering of our lives to the will of God.

First, the Worship of God

As we examine the words in the first verse of Romans 12, we see that Paul is telling us that yielding our bodies to the Lord is our "reasonable service." This word "reasonable" comes from the word "logic." The word "service" comes from the word which means "to perform a sacred service." It has a connection to the function that the Levites performed in the Tabernacle and Temple. It is connected to the idea of worship.

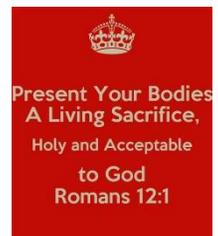


Therefore, the phrase means that yielding our bodies to the Lord is our "logical service of worship before the Lord." It actually becomes a "living sacrifice" unto God.

In John 14:15, Jesus told his disciples that "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Keeping the commandments of Christ, and living a holy life, should be our goal as a Christian.

A. The Challenge

Paul's challenge to us is to "present your bodies." When you present something, it means to place it at the disposal of someone else. God is calling on us to present all that we have and are and ever will be to Him for His glory and for His use. It means we no longer hold anything back from God, but have placed our all on the altar and we are at His disposal!



The idea of totally surrendering to God is so difficult for people to grasp. They want to be saved, but they are not willing to lay it ALL down on the altar. They are guilty of holding back certain areas of their lives that are precious to them. God wants it all! When we “present” our bodies to God, we need that decision to be a forever decision. Not one that says, “Yes” today and then says “No” tomorrow.

Our challenge is to present our bodies unto God.

B. The Cause

The reason behind our willingness to do this is found in the phrase, “*therefore by the mercies of God.*” This phrase carries us back to the prior chapters that remind us that we are saved only because of the grace of God.



We may protest and ask “why” would God want to control every aspect of our lives. I Corinthians 6:20 says, “*For you were bought at a price, therefore glorify God in you body and in your spirit which are God’s.*” It is true, we are no longer our own, we belong to God.

Without Him, I would be nothing. I have heard several people over the years say that they still want to “live it up” before they give their life to God. That kind of lifestyle is not living. It is only a selfish indulgence that leads to death and separation from the only source of life. Life begins when we surrender our lives over to God. Our lives actually take on meaning when we say, “**Yes, Lord. Here am I, send me!**”

C. The Consecration

Paul tells us that we are to be a “*living sacrifice.*” This may sound painful and awful, but we need to remember the purpose of a sacrifice in the Old Testament. When a sacrifice was brought to the temple and offered to God, it was put to death, its blood was shed and its flesh was burned on the altar. Their sacrifice was for sin.



Paul is calling us to sacrifice our lives – not to the point of death – but rather, as it is living. We live unto Christ, and die unto the fleshly desires. What God is calling us to do is to lay our entire self on the altar of sacrifice.

To accomplish this “*living sacrifice*” we need to realize that we are to be on the altar no matter where we are. Regardless of where we are in this world, we need to remember that our bodies and all that we are, belong to God. There is never an instant in life when we are free from God’s view or free to live as we please.



We also need to realize that this sacrifice is a ***continual*** sacrifice. This is not something we do from time to time. Once we offer our bodies up to the Lord, we should not ask for it back.

A living sacrifice also means that we subordinate our fleshly, bodily desires, to the will and purposes of God. It means that we do not live for the world, the flesh or for the



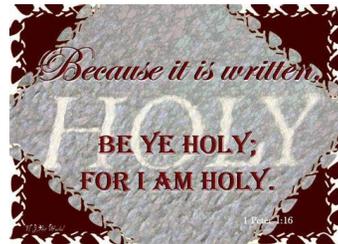
devil, but that everything the body does is held to the guidelines of the Word of God.

As we live out our lives, we need to realize our body is to be devoted to the task of serving God. We need to lay down our ambitions and desires and commit ourselves to do nothing but that which God would have us to do. We are to be the clay, and He is to be the potter. Not the other way around.

The bottom line is this, sacrificing our bodies as a living sacrifice is not something that can only be done on Sunday in a church service. We need to take our faith into our world, and live it out before the world. It implies that every action and activity, day in and day out, should glorify and honor God.

D. The Conditions

Paul sets forth the process, or conditions, by which this is to be accomplished.



We are to offer ourselves to God as “*holy*.” This is a word that means “something that is consecrated and set apart.” There have been times in the Bible that have highlighted the “awe” in worship and holiness.

- When Moses stood at the burning bush that was a “holy” moment.
- When Elijah stood on Mt. Carmel and fire fell from heaven that was a holy moment.
- When Solomon dedicated the temple and fire fell from heaven that was a holy moment.

When we are totally set apart to do the work and will of God, our lives become Holy unto God. It was in 1873 when the great evangelist D. L. Moody heard the British Evangelist, Henry Varley say in Dublin, “*The world has yet to see what can be accomplished when one person is wholly dedicated unto God.*” Its still true today. God can and will work through you if you dedicate yourself to Him.



Another word used in this section is the word, “acceptable.” It means “well-pleasing, satisfying.” God is pleased when a life is sacrificed on the altar for His service and for His glory. It is a testimony to the world that God makes a difference in the lives of those He touches.

This call to surrender is not only for the “super saints.” All Christians are called to a renewal of commitment of surrender to God.

II. THE WISDOM OF GOD (v. 2b)

These two verses not only deal with our worship of God, but secondly, they also deal with the wisdom of God. Paul moves from the way in which we offer our bodies as a sacrifice, and begins to deal with the mind.



In many ways this is actually the root of all of our problems anyway. Our bodies will only go in the direction that our mind takes us. In order to conquer our minds and bring our bodies into submission, we need to get rid of the old way of thinking, and begin to think in a new way.

A. Shunning the Mold

We are commanded “*be not conformed to this world.*” The word “conformed” means to be shaped or fashioned into a mold.

We are not to allow this world to squeeze us into its mold. We are not to allow the world to make us like it is! Those that are influenced and molded by the world are vastly different than what God intends for men to be. The way of the world is vastly different from the plans of God. We must intentionally put off the mold of the world and put on the things of God.



B. Shaping the Mind

To do that, Paul tells us to be “*transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” The word transformed implies the English word, “Metamorphosis.” It describes the transformation that a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly. It is hard to imagine that that fuzzy worm crawling on the ground can become a butterfly.



That is the same transformation that God wants to make in each of our lives. When we ask Jesus to come into our hearts, He is the one that makes the transformation in our life. He changes our inward spirit into a child of God. Once the inward mind is transformed, then the outward actions of our body can change.

Many people attempt through their own determination and self will to change certain habits in their life. Some may



attempt to stop using drugs, stop drinking, or attempt to make other changes in their life on their own. But they find out that once they accept Jesus and He transforms their minds, then they are able to change their habits and offer their bodies as a living sacrifice. They were not able to do it on their own – they needed a transformation on the inside.

We can allow our lives to be ruled by the sensual or we can walk in the spirit and no longer let the desires of the flesh to rule and reign in our bodies. When we allow the sensual to rule our lives, we are not walking in the spirit.

It is God’s desire that we give total control of our lives to Christ and allow Him to control our thoughts, actions, and speech. This is God’s desire for every believer.

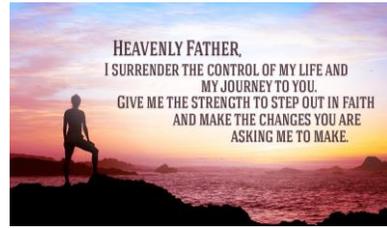
We need to be careful that we are not deceived into believing we are spiritual when we may only be fooling ourselves. We may know the Bible backwards and forwards but not live out our faith. We may shout and praise the Lord with our lips, but our words may not match up at our place of work through the week. We may have a determined will to do right, but it may not be a spiritual victory.



We need to walk in the spirit of God, and not lean on our own understanding.

III. THE WILL OF GOD (v. 2b)

These two verses tell us that our lives need to be centered on the worship of God, around the wisdom of God, and lastly, we need to surrender to the will of God.



As we yield our bodies and mind to God, the will of God for our lives becomes more apparent. It actually becomes clearer and more important to us.

Paul describes the will of God in three different ways.

1. It is Precious

Regardless of what the Lord may ask you to do, we will find in the end that the will of God is good and precious. It is the devil that continues to tell us that the Lord's ideas will bring hurt and problems into our lives. But we need to hold on to God's promise in Romans 8:28 that "*all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*" Don't be afraid of God's will for your life because it is for your good and His good pleasure.



2. It is Pleasant

The will of God is also acceptable and pleasant. What I mean by that is that as God reveals something for us to do; it is something that we actually would desire to do. As we move through life, God is maturing us and shaping us to be

what He desires. Through the experiences of life, God grows us and matures us so that when His call comes and His will is revealed, we are equipped and ready for whatever He calls us to do.

He will not lead us to a place we are not ready to go! God led the children of Israel to the border of the Promised Land. He had prepared them and given them the law and instructed them concerning the tabernacle. But when it came time to move forward, only two individuals trusted God enough to say "yes." All the people were equipped, but they failed to move forward and follow. When God reveals His will for your life, it is because He knows you are ready to move into what He promised. When He calls, we need to be ready to move forward without reservations.



3. It is Perfect

When God's will is followed, it actually is perfect. We can do nothing to it to make it any better. When He reveals His will to us, we need to realize that God sees the end of the matter before the matter begins. He knows the path we will take and the obstacles and valleys we will pass through as we go. He knows the provisions we will need and has already placed them along the path for us. His plan cannot be improved upon. If we are to experience victory, we need to trust God and walk in the path He has prepared for us. The safest place in life is to be in the center of God's will.



Let me say that again. ***The safest place to be in life is in the center of God's will.***

There have been many changes in my life over the years. God has always provided a pull and push at each transition in life – marriage, job changes, serving as a Pastor in Fremont, and teaching fourth grade. Coming to Spilman five years ago to fill in for Dan Cromer, was also God’s push and pull in my life. Looking back, God had been preparing me and my family through the years, to come to Spilman and serve. For our family, God’s will is good, acceptable, and perfect.

B. A Demonstration of God’s Will

When we yield our bodies, minds, and will to God, we will begin to “prove” or “live out” God’s will before a world that is watching. When the world sees you and me living lives that are radically different from others, they are actually seeing a life that is transformed by the grace and gospel of God.

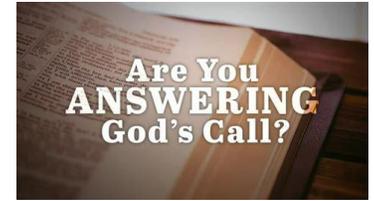
As we yield our lives to Him, our lives will make a difference in this world, our souls will be saved, and God will be honored. As we surrender to God, we demonstrate God’s power to the world that needs to know and hear of the transforming love of God. In doing so, we will be the salt and light to our world as God has commanded us to be.

Conclusion

Maybe you are sitting here this morning and have realized that maybe you have not surrendered your life to God. Maybe you are a good person, but know in your heart that you are not saved. If you were to die today, you are unsure as to your eternal destination. The invitation is to come

unto God and surrender your life to Him. He has a plan for your life and the only way to experience it is if you yield your life to Him.

Maybe you made the commitment to God years ago but in some way, you have not allowed Him to have full control over your life. Maybe during our closing hymn, you would like to rededicate your life to Him and attempt to become a “living sacrifice” once again.



Maybe you feel God is calling you into some kind of ministry and you have been dragging your feet to respond to the call. Maybe today could be the day you finally surrender it all on the altar.

God desires that we live a holy life, pleasing and acceptable unto Him. He also desires that we abide with Him daily in fellowship with Him and one another. As we do that, we find that we are at the center of God’s will.

When our last days are over and we stand before God, the words I want to hear are, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*” This can only be done as we surrender, trust, and obey. May we be able to say to God, “*Take my life, and let it be Consecrated unto Thee.*”

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Outline from Sermon Notebook – Romans 12_1-2 – The Secret of Holy Living

²Mike’s Funnies, Oct. 4, 2005 – Forwarded by Marialyce

