

The Consecrated Life

“I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service,” Rom. 12:1.

Romans 12 contains only 21 verses, but if every person in the world were to mentally absorb the principles set forth in this chapter and then make the proper personal applications thereof, it would completely change the world! If you doubt this conclusion, then please take time out, read and meditate on the contents of this chapter, and you will surely agree — this chapter, learned and applied, could change the world! And the opening verse sets the tone for what follows. In this article, entitled “**The Consecrated Life**,” with the view in mind of our living “the consecrated life,” we shall seek to ferret out some of the great truths contained in this thought-provoking text.

“Therefore.” Paul began by saying *“I beseech you therefore...”* “Therefore” is a word which stands between what has been said, and the admonition which follows. Throughout the first eleven chapters of Romans the apostle dealt with some very fundamental issues — issues arising from its basic theme that *“the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes,”* Rom. 1:16. He concluded these lofty thoughts by referring to *“the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God”* and then exclaimed, saying *“How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out,”* Rom. 11:33. “Therefore,” in view of what a God of such infinite wisdom and knowledge has in store for us, the apostle herein beseeches his brethren to present their *“bodies a living sacrifice.”*

“I beseech you.” Paul was an apostle (I Cor. 9:1). The things he wrote were *“the commandments of God,”* I Cor. 14:37. He could have ordered his brethren to so act, but he chose the form of a tender appeal — an appeal calculated to obtain a loving response instead of a spiteful reaction.

“Brethren.” This apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Gal. 2:8) said, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren.”* As used here “brethren” denoted brotherly relations — people who constituted a part of that great “brotherhood” of believers (I Pet. 2:17), members of the same spiritual family, namely the church which is *“the house of God,”* I Tim. 3:15. “Brethren” in the spiritual sense are able to present their bodies *“a living sacrifice...to God”* (Rom. 12:1) because they are *“dead to sin...but alive to God,”* Romans 6:11.

“By the mercies of God.” In this great epistle the apostle mentioned *“the wrath of God”* (Rom. 1:18), the *“severity of God”* (Rom. 11:22), and other attributes of God which He possesses in the infinite degree. But in Romans 12:1, as he stressed the manner of life which must characterize the Christian, Paul prefaced his appeal by alluding to *“the mercies of God.”* No doubt he fully concurred with the “sweet singer of Israel” (David), who exclaimed, saying, *“Great are your tender mercies, O Lord!”* (Psalm 119:156). We, too, can be thankful that *“God...is rich in mercy”* (Eph. 2:4), for apart from His *“tender mercies,”* not one of us could possibly be saved!

“That you present your bodies..” “Present,” according to Vincent, “is the technical term

for presenting the Levitical victims and offerings.” It is used in this text to denote the presenting of one’s body as a “*living sacrifice*.” That which is to be offered in a priestly fashion as a sacrifice to God is one’s own body. And this should be expected — especially in view of the fact that no command of God can be fully discharged without the use of the body. With this in mind, referring to the “*members*” of the body, Paul had earlier admonished his brethren to “*present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God*” (Rom. 6:13). Many people think their bodies belong to themselves, and that they can do with their bodies as they please. But they are wrong! The body of a Christian belongs to God! With this in mind, to the saints at Corinth, Paul asked: “*Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*” (2 Cor. 6:19). And he then concluded, saying “*You are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (I Cor. 6:20). The eyes, tongue, ears, mind, feet, hands, etc., of a Christian must be hallowed and used to the glory of God.

“*A Living Sacrifice.*” Under the Law of Moses the victims for sacrifice were taken from the flock and, by others, were laid on the altar of the Lord. The animal was alive when selected, and as a sacrifice reached its highest point in its death. Under the Gospel of Christ, one offers his own body to God as “*a living sacrifice*.” In the process of becoming a Christian one dies “*to sin*,” is “*buried*” in baptism, and is raised from the waters of baptism to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:2-4). Yes, he “*died to sin*,” and became “*alive to God*,” and “*the life he lives, he lives to God*” (Rom. 8:10,11). It is a “*living sacrifice*” because the person is now “*alive to God*.” It is a “*sacrifice*” because one is now continually and completely at God’s disposal. He lives — not to do his own thing — but to serve and glorify God!

“*Holy.*” Among the Greeks, “*holy*” (from *hagios*) signified being “*dedicated to the gods*.” In the New Testament it signifies “*separated from sins and therefore consecrated to God, saved*” (W.E. Vine). As Christians, we are part of a “*holy temple*” (I Cor. 3:17), a “*holy priesthood*” (I Pet. 2:5), a “*holy nation*” (I Pet. 2:9).

“*Acceptable to God.*” The underlying question for all conduct must be, “*Is this acceptable to God?*” When all is said and done, God’s approval is the only approval that really counts. He is privy to our every thought, to every word we utter, and everything we do (Eccl. 12:14; Heb. 4:13), and to him “*each of us shall give account*” (Romans 14:11).

“*Which is your reasonable service.*” This “*service*” is “*reasonable*” in that it involves the mind deliberately submitting to the will of God. But it is not service based on human reason; instead it is based on divine revelation by which the mind of God is made known to the mind of man. In the NIV it is translated “*spiritual acts of worship*.” “*Service*,” as used here is from *latreia* (Greek), and is defined by W.E. Vine as “*intelligent service of believers in presenting their bodies to God, a living sacrifice.*”

The Consequences of Living “The Consecrated Life”

They are briefly summed up in the next verse, Romans 12:2: “*And do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*” From this verse, it is evident that the consequences of “*the consecrated life*” are at least three-fold.

1. It involves a non-conforming to the world. Paul plainly said “*do not be conformed*

to the world.” The plain truth is this: Christ “*gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world*” (Gal. 1:4). That being the case, we simply must “*not be conformed to the world!*” The speech, dress, thoughts, and actions of a Christian must reflect the fact that he is “marching to the beat of a different drummer!”

2. It results in a transformation of character, as one is “*transformed by the renewing of the mind.*” “*Transformed*” is translated from *metamorphoo* (Greek),” which denotes “a change of form, structure, or substance” (**World Book Dictionary**). Metamorphosis is what happens when a crawling caterpillar is changed into a beautiful butterfly which longs for sunshine and fresh air, and is drawn to beautiful flowers. And transformation is what happens when a worldly minded, dead-in-sin child of the devil submits in obedience to the gospel, thereby becoming a child of god, and begins living “the consecrated life.”

3. At this point, one is able to “*prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*” “*Prove*” is from a word which means to try or to test. The consequences of such conduct is that the individual learns by experience what he ought to have known by faith — namely this, God’s way is best. It is “*good;*” it is “*acceptable;*” it is “*perfect*” — it makes for happiness, both here and hereafter! Try it; you will like it!

**** --Bobby Witherington

Sentence Sermons:

“Do not shift your tongue into high gear before you get your brain running.”

“God does not need you to serve Him in an advisory capacity.

“A clear conscience is a good tranquilizer.”