

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

1 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.

2 And do not be conformed to this 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.

1

- Paul has finally completed the heavy doctrinal sections of his epistle
- Keep in mind that he writes to believers – both Jewish and Gentile – in the church at Rome, which is characterized by division and disunity
- He shares with them the *gospel* (good news) of kingdom inheritance and the *salvation* of the soul, which sanctifies and unifies believers, ultimately leading to reward
- He emphasizes that God justifies those who are living righteously

2

- Ch. 1 – Paul condemns licentious living, warning that continuing in sinfulness leads to a downward spiral of self-destruction, which is the revealing of God’s wrath
- Ch. 2-5 – he condemns legalistic living, warning that keeping the Mosaic rituals (works of the law) does not please God, but rather living righteously, by continued faith in Jesus
- Ch. 6-8 – he teaches how to live the Christ-life of victory, which leads to becoming a son to glory

3

- Ch. 9-11 – he announces that Israel has been cast aside for a time, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (i.e., until the Holy Spirit has called out a bride for Jesus), after which Israel will be saved and will lead all the families of the earth to be saved as well
- After laying this important doctrinal foundation, Paul begins to make practical applications to the Christian life, starting in ch. 12, which will continue to the end of the epistle

4

Rom 12:1 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.

- *therefore* = “accordingly” – that is, based on all Paul has said in the preceding 11 chapters, and especially in ch. 11
- Paul addresses a challenge to the *brethren* – he is not writing to *unbelievers*, urging them to be saved initially (i.e., regenerated) – but to *believers*, urging them to be saved in an ongoing sense (i.e., sanctified)

5

- *beseech* = the idea of urging someone to do something
- Paraphrase: “I urge you, children of God, in light of all I have just written ...”
- Before getting to what he wants them to do, he inserts another important phrase: *by the mercies of God*
- If we do not keep Rom. 12 in its proper context, this little phrase may seem out of place
- It is important to recall what Paul has just talked about in ch. 11

6

Why does Paul mention the mercies of God?

Rom 11:30-31 For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.

32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

7

- Paul is speaking to the Gentiles as this point, and he reminds them that while they had previously been disobedient, they have obtained God's mercy because of Israel's disobedience
- In other words, Israel's temporary being cast aside by God, has resulted in Gentiles receiving not only the gospel of grace, but also the gospel of kingdom inheritance
- So Israel's disobedience to God will one day lead to His mercy being bestowed upon them when they repent

8

- Then Paul makes this remarkable statement in 11:32:
- Paraphrase: God has allowed all men to be caught in the net of their own disobedience – both Jews and Gentiles – so He might show His mercy to all mankind – including all those who have died! He is going to resurrect all men and lead “them back to obedience and to be merciful to them.”
- “Knowing this” – Paul says in 12:1 – “I urge you to present your bodies a living sacrifice”

9

- He stresses the importance of living righteously – in light of God's goal of mercifully leading all men to obedience – and in making his point, Paul uses a metaphor:
- *present your body a living sacrifice*
- The KJV sometimes translates *present* as *yield*, as in:
Rom 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.

10

- Thus, to present your body is to yield yourself to God's control
Arlen Chitwood, Salvation of the Soul:
The word “present” has to do with a one-time act to be performed at the beginning of the pilgrim walk, never to be repeated. As the Old Testament priest placed the sacrifice upon the altar and left it there, the New Testament priest (a Christian) is called upon to do the same with his body. The body is to be placed upon the altar through a one-time act, and the body is then to remain upon the altar in a continuous state of sacrifice, never to be removed.

11

- Vincent says the word *present*: “is the technical term for presenting the Levitical victims and offerings ... In the Levitical sacrifices the offerer placed his offering so as to face the Most Holy Place, thus bringing it before the Lord.”
- Under the OT sacrificial system, animals were offered on the altar to God as the atonement for man's sins
- It was a bloody mess, resulting in the death of a living creature, signifying the horrible price of sin

12

- But since Jesus died as the Lamb of God, once for all, we are not to offer ourselves in death
- Paul adds an adjective before the word sacrifice – ours is to be a *living* sacrifice
- Vincent: “Living, in contrast with the slain Levitical offerings.”
- We are to offer ourselves back to Him
- This beautiful metaphor pictures obedience to God

13

- Just as the little lamb went obediently to the slaughter, so you as a child of God must willingly and obediently place your own life on the altar – in a living sense ...
- Not to die physically, but to die to self – and to live in righteousness!
- Jesus essentially said the same thing when He challenged His disciples to deny self, take up their cross, and follow Him
- • Paul said, “I die daily.”

14

Zane Hodges, Commentary:

When believers present their bodies as a sacrifice, it is in fact the deeds of the body that are put to death, but the body itself is living because it is alive with the very life of God. From that perspective, this is truly the sacrifice of a living body—not merely “alive” in the physical sense—but above all “alive” in a spiritual sense. The entire life of Christian obedience to God, as empowered by the indwelling Spirit, is therefore a superlative act of sacrifice.

15

- When we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, our obedience is considered by God to be holy (consecrated, set apart), and it is acceptable to Him
- That means God is in full agreement with our obedience; it is well-pleasing to Him
- What does this imply about a believer who does NOT offer him or herself as a sacrifice?
- Their life is not holy or acceptable to God
- They are not justified in His sight

16

- Remember: Justification – according to the Scriptures – is NOT *positional*, based on some supposed legal transaction that occurs at initial salvation
- It is *conditional*, based on one’s behavior
- To live in this manner – as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God – is your *reasonable* service
- *reasonable* – from the Gr. word *logikos*, from which we get our English word *logic* – thus, to live obediently, righteously, is only *logical*, considering God’s mercy upon your life

17

Think about it:

- He has redeemed you by paying your sin penalty
- He has given you eternal life
- He has given you the Provision for living righteously, and His name is Holy Spirit
- If you do not live obediently, as a living sacrifice, then you are spurning His grace and mercy – and that way of living doesn’t make any sense at all

18

- One of the problems with a living sacrifice is that it has the tendency to keep getting off the altar
- God wants us to remain there, continually yielded to Him, holy and acceptable in His sight
- But many repeatedly make the mistake of refusing to yield, which will have serious ramifications at the Judgment Seat of Christ!

19

- In v. 2 Paul gives some practical help for remaining on the altar
- Rom 12:2a Do not be conformed to this world.
- *world* is a mistranslation – it is the Gr. word *aion*, and should have been translated *age*
 - In this particular context, the idea is *the philosophy of the age*
 - The Germans have a word that sums it up well: *zeitgeist* = the defining spirit or mood of a particular period of history as shown by the ideas and beliefs of the time (Webster)

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world is *aion*, which Trench defines (for this context) as: “All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world ... which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale,—all this is included in the aiōn (age), which is, as Bengel has expressed it, the subtle informing spirit of the Kosmos or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God.”

21

- Every age has its own spirit, which is Satanic humanism repackaged for the particular era
- In our times it is *new age* philosophy, which is merely ancient philosophy dressed in modern garments
- Paul tells us NOT to be *conformed to* – i.e., *fashioned by or patterned after* – the spirit of the age – don’t let it shape you
- Paul gives this warning because he knows it is the very thing the soul gravitates toward, keeping believers from being living sacrifices

22

Seeing that we have a natural bent toward the *zeitgeist*, then how can we avoid it?

Rom. 2:2b Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- *transformed* = the Gr. word *metamorphoo* = “to be transfigured, changed into something completely different”
- It is the word used for the *transfiguration* of Jesus

23

- Our English word *metamorphosis* comes from this Greek word – which describes the process of an ugly caterpillar spinning a cocoon and emerging a beautiful butterfly or moth a few weeks later
- God wants His children NOT to be shaped by the spirit of the age, but rather, to experience a complete spiritual metamorphosis or transformation
- Incidentally, the command to *be transformed* is in the present tense, which implies that it needs to be continual (*keep being transformed*)

24

- Continual transformation occurs through *renewing the mind*, which is also in the present tense –
- *keep being transformed by continually renewing your mind*
- Mind renewal = “renovation” of one’s thoughts, for example:
 - Replacing impure thoughts with pure
 - Replacing incorrect doctrine with correct
 - Replacing wrong philosophies with right

25

- In Phil. 4:8, Paul commands that we think on these things – *true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, of good reputation, virtuous, and praiseworthy*
- Choices must be made to replace the *spirit of the age* in the soul with the Spirit of Christ
- To that end, you must fill your mind with God’s Word, as you submit to the Holy Spirit, for they are the agents of renewal and metamorphosis

26

Jas 1:21 Lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

- The implanted Word is the Holy Spirit of God who takes the written Word and breathes life upon it in your innermost being
- You must saturate yourself in God’s Word – by reading it, studying it, memorizing it, and meditating upon it – then God will do the renewing and transforming work in your life, for you are incapable of doing that

27

Arlen Chitwood, *Run to Win*:

The reception of the Word of God is able to bring about the salvation of one’s soul because it is this Word which the Spirit of God uses as He effects the metamorphosis of Rom. 12:2.

- What will be the result when your mind is being renewed and you are thereby experiencing an inward metamorphosis?
- You will *prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

28

- Paul is writing to believers who are characterized by division and disunity
- He emphasizes the salvation of the soul, which is what they desperately need
- In that context, what is the *will of God*?
1 Thess 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification.
- *Sanctification* requires obedience in the Christian life, living uprightly
- Furthermore, Paul says they need to *prove (approve) God’s will* – What does that mean?

29

Kenneth Wuest, *Romans*:

“Prove” is ... “to put to the test for the purpose of approving, and finding that the thing tested meets the specifications laid down, to put one’s approval upon it.” As a result of the Spirit’s control of the mental processes of the saint, the latter is enabled to put his life to the test for the purpose of approving it, the specifications being that it conform to the Word of God, and thus, experiencing what obedience is to the Word, and finding out what it feels like to have the Word saturate and control the life, he sees that it really is the Word of God and puts his approval upon it.

30

- The child of God then sees that God's will of sanctification in his/her life is *good and acceptable and perfect*, able to bring saints to maturity

Zane Hodges, Commentary:

Doing God's will results in an experiential demonstration of its excellence. This is akin to our colloquial phrase, "Try it, you'll like it!" ... Paul is saying that when we actually perform the will of God in our lives, we will discover for ourselves that His will is good and pleasing and perfect.

31

- It is only those Christians who are experiencing this *inward* metamorphosis on a consistent basis, who will be transformed *outwardly* when they meet Jesus
- Another passage of Scripture that is connected with this one ideologically

Phil 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

32

- Paul is warning the believers to walk (live) in a manner consistent with the apostles and others who were living similarly, for they were patterns or examples of Christlike behavior
- In contrast, many believers were not living righteously, and this broke Paul's heart, to the point that he shed tears over them
- He refers to them as *enemies of the cross of Christ*

33

- The writer to the Hebrews wrote of those who "trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29)
- Hebrews warns that believers who live in this manner will suffer "much worse punishment" than those who rejected the Mosaic law
- In Phil. 3:19 Paul describes their future verdict at the Judgment Seat of Christ:

34

Phil 3:19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

- Instead of experiencing God's righteous deliverance in this age, they are self-destructing, experiencing God's wrath
- When they meet Jesus, their glory will be *in their shame*
- In other words, they will not be glorified with garments of light – as Adam and Eve presumably had before they fell and became "naked and ashamed"

35

- These worldly Christians will, instead, be ashamed, for they will not have garments of light that are essential for co-rulership with Jesus in the Millennium
- They will not be rewarded, because they *set their mind on earthly things (v. 19)*
- Does this sound like a Christian who is not being conformed to the spirit of the age, but is rather being transformed internally by mind renewal?
- No, the Christians in Phil. 3:19 are those who have ignored Paul's command in Rom. 12:1-2

36

- What will happen at the Bema Seat to those who continue to submit to metamorphosis of the soul internally by having their mind renewed consistently by the Word of God?

Phil 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

- Those who are living obediently have citizenship in heaven – that is they will be rewarded with inclusion in New Jerusalem, the heavenly ruling realm of the Messianic kingdom

37

Phil 3:21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

- *our lowly body = the body of our humiliation*, referring to the post-Fall body that has been corrupted by sin
- For those who live righteously – who have chosen not to be shaped by the spirit of the age, but have instead experienced inner metamorphosis by renewing their mind in God's Word – their body of humiliation will be *transformed*

38

- The word *transformed* (Gr. *metaschematizo*) in Phil. 1:21 is not the same as *metamorphoo* in Rom. 12:2, but it is a similar word with a slightly different meaning

- It means "to change the form of" (BDAG)
- And what will *the body of humiliation* be changed into?
- A body like Christ's body of glory!

39

- Here's the point: those Christians who are presently undergoing metamorphosis in their spiritual lives will be given a body of glory like Christ's at His Judgment Seat
- They will shine with some degree of His brightness
- In light of this glorious promise of glorification for those who live righteously, Paul admonishes:

Phil 4:1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

40

Arlen Chitwood, *By Faith*:

The word "change" in Phil. 3:21 (referring to changing our body of humiliation) is a translation of the Greek word *metaschematizo*, which refers to *an outward change*. An outward change though would necessitate *a previous inward change*, described by the Greek word *metamorphoo* (Rom. 12:1, 2 [translated, "transformed"]). Christians who allow the Spirit to perform a present inward change in their lives will one day realize the corresponding outward change, finding themselves *enswathed in Glory*, with their bodies "fashioned like unto" *Christ's body of Glory* (Phil. 3:21).

41

- The Scriptures are clear that this must begin **NOW** if you want to be glorified **THEN**

2 Cor 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding [reflecting] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

- If you are presently living in such a manner that the glory of Christ is being reflected by your life, then you are being transformed (experiencing inward metamorphosis from glory to glory)

42

- **You are literally metamorphosing into the image of Jesus Christ – becoming more and more like Him**
- **This is describing an upward spiral, as you move on to greater and greater degrees of glory internally**
- **But it is not of you, for the Holy Spirit does this work of transforming as you submit to His leadership by faith**

43

- **Those who are being conformed in greater and greater measure to the image of Christ will one day be glorified in His presence (Rom. 8:29-30)**
- **Are you on the pathway of metamorphosis culminating in glory?**

44