

HOLY LIVING

Key Verse: Romans 12:1-2

Key Thought: God wants us to live a Holy Life that is pleasing to Him.

A true and faithful Christian does not make holy living an accidental thing. It is the greatest concern. As the business of the soldier is to fight, so the business of the Christian is to be like Christ.

Jonathan Edwards said, *“We stink more of the world than we stink of sack cloth and ashes. A lot of contemporary churches today would feel more at home in a movie house rather than in a house of prayer, more afraid of holy living than of sinning, know more about money than magnifying Christ in our bodies. It is so compromised that holiness and living a sin-free life is heresy to the modern church. The modern church is, quite simply, just the world with a Christian T-shirt on!”*

Nicky Cruz said, *“Holy living consists in doing God's work with a smile.”*

Mother Teresa said, *“I am thankful that I have a home waiting on me in Heaven. I am glad that I will live in a perfect mansion some day in the very presence of the Lord God. However, right now, I am a pilgrim and a stranger living on foreign soil. Heaven is a blessing, but I need practical help for my day to day walk with God.”*

These first two verses of **Chapter 12**, give us some insight into an area of our walk with God that we must never overlook. These two verses tell us the secret of holy living. Paul tells us what God expects from us and how we are to achieve His goals for our lives. He tells us that holy living revolves around our surrender to three powerful concerns. Let's see just what they are and what they demand as we consider the thought of ***Holy Living***.

I. THE WORSHIP OF GOD

The wording of verse one, Paul tells us that yielding of our bodies to the Lord is our "reasonable service." The word "*reasonable*" comes from the same word from which we get our word "*logic*". So, first we see that yielding our bodies to the Lord is logical. Then, the word "*service*" comes from a word which means "*to perform sacred service.*" It has reference to the function the Levites performed in the Tabernacle and Temple. It is connected to the idea of worship. Therefore, that phrase means that yielding our bodies to the Lord is our "logical service of worship before the Lord." In other words, when we are totally yielded to Him, it is the highest form of worship that we can render! Nothing says "I love you" to the Lord like a consecrated, dedicated, holy life.

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

John 14:15 - 21

With that in mind, let's look at this first verse and see what Paul means when he calls on us to yield up our bodies.

1) **The Cause** - Notice the phrase "*therefore by the mercies of God.*" That phrase carries our minds back to what the Apostle has been talking about. He has been talking about the fact that we are redeemed only because of the pure grace of God. We may ask why God would think that He can control every aspect of our lives. The reason is simply because He bought us at Calvary, and we belong to Him! Since that is true, we have no rights! We are supposed to be subject to His commands, regardless of what they are! May we never forget that we were headed to Hell when He found us. We didn't care a thing about God, but He loved us. He died to save us. He convicted us and called us. He gave us the faith to believe, and He saved us by His grace. It seems to me that we owe Him everything! May we, like Paul, ever know,

"But by the grace of God I am what I am",

1 Corinthians 15:10

May that teach us why God has the right to issue any command to us that He may wish to. And, may it also teach us that we do not have the right to say anything but "*Yes, Lord. Here am I, send me!*"

2) **The Consecration** - We are told that these bodies are to be presented as "*a living sacrifice*". This sounds dreadfully painful to us because we know that a sacrifice, in Bible times, was an animal that belonged to the person offering it and that the animal was put to death, its blood was shed, and its flesh was burned on an altar. That does not sound like something I want to be involved in. The difference between what the Lord is calling us to do and what He called those people in the Old Testament to do is this: Their sacrifice was to die; our sacrifice is to live! While that is true, there are also some similarities between our sacrifice and theirs. Now, just as then, the sacrifice the Lord is commanding each of us to make is *costly, painful, difficult, personal, and necessary.*

Basically, God is commanding every one of His people to lay the totality of their persons on the altar of sacrifice. But, at the same time, this sacrifice must continue to function in the world around it. This is confusing, but I think that four ideas are in view right here. Hopefully, this will bring clarity.

***A living sacrifice means that we are to be on the altar wherever we are.** Regardless of the geographical surroundings, we are to remember that this body and all it is belongs to God. There is never an instant in life when we are out of His view or free to live as we please.

***A living sacrifice means a constant, continuous sacrifice.** This is not something we do from time to time. But we are to offer this body up to the Lord and never ask for it back again!

***A living sacrifice means that the body sacrifices its own desires for those of God.** To be a living sacrifice will require that the body does not live for the world, the flesh, or the devil, but that everything the body does is held to the guidelines of the Word of God.

***A living sacrifice means that the body is devoted to the task of serving God.** This means that we are to lay down the ambitions and desires of the body and commit ourselves to doing nothing, but that which God bids us to do! We are to be His vessels through which He can live and work in this world.

The bottom line of all this is that the sacrificing of the body is not something one does in church only. But it implies that every action and activity that the body engages in is an activity to glorify and honor God. The sacrificed body sees itself as the Temple of God. It realizes that God must be in absolute control of the will, the emotions, the passions, the deeds, and the thoughts of the body. All rights are released, and the body is delivered to God to do with it as it pleases Him!

3) The Conditions - Paul challenges us to "present your bodies." This is reference to the flesh that you and I wear around. I personally believe that we are being commanded to yield up to God our bodies, along with our sinful natures. God is calling on us to present all that we have, are and ever will be to Him for His glory and for His use. The word "*present*" means to "*place at one's disposal.*" It means that we are no longer holding anything back from God, but we have placed our all on His altar and we are at His disposal!

The idea here is of total surrender to God. Far too many people want to be saved, but they are not willing to lay everything on the altar. They are guilty of holding back areas of their lives that are precious to them. God wants it all! Another thing to notice is that the word "present" is in a tense that suggests a one time for all time action. We should not present our bodies to God, then take it back and use it for ourselves again. When we have given it to Him, it is His forever!

a) *An Awful Sacrifice* - The word "**holy**" means "***something consecrated and set apart***". It has reference to that which inspires religious awe in the sight of an observer. Imagine how awe inspiring it would have been to have stood with Elijah on Mount Carmel as God sent the fire down from Heaven on that altar. What would it have been like to have stood beside Moses as he spoke with that burning bush? Imagine how it would have felt to have been with Solomon at the dedication of the Temple when the fire of God fell. Those were holy times. They inspire awe in those who witnessed them.

The idea here is that when a life is totally sold out, separated, and sacrificed to God the Father, it will be an awe-inspiring thing! It will demonstrate the power of God like nothing else!

b) *An Acceptable Sacrifice* - The word "**acceptable**" means "**well-pleasing, satisfying**". God is pleased when a life is sacrificed on the altar of His service for His glory. It honors Him like nothing else can. It proves His power. It shows His glory. It tells a lost world that God makes a difference in the lives He touches by His power.

The sad truth of the matter is this: we are either pleasing God or hurting Him by the way we use our bodies. If we want to be pleasing to the Lord, then our bodies must be placed on His altar, without reservation or hesitation.

II. THE WISDOM OF GOD

Paul moves from dealing with the body to dealing with the mind. Here is the root of all our problems anyway. When we can get the mind to think as it should, then the body will obediently follow along. In this matter of conquering the mind, there are two steps that must be taken.)

1. Shunning the Mold - We are commanded "***be not conformed to this world.***" The word "***conformed***" means "***to fashion, or to shape.***" It literally means "***to 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! You see the world, and those who are controlled by its influence, are vastly different from that which God intends men to be. This is made clear by a list of some of the works of the flesh as listed in **Galatians 5:19-21**. There are many other concepts that could be added to that list, but those are sufficient to see that the world is diametrically opposed to God. We are to avoid being squeezed into the world's mold! We must be different and remain different!

2. Shaping the Mind - Then we are commanded to be "*transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" The word "*transformed*" gives us our English word "*metamorphosis*". It describes the transformation a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly. Did you know that the caterpillar and the butterfly are the same creature? What happens when the caterpillar enters the cocoon and later emerges is that the part of the insect that resides on the inside is allowed to be manifested on the outside.

That is the change God wants to see in each of His children! He moved into our hearts when He saved us. He transformed our spirit and changed us into His child. Now, He wants to transform the mind (the soulish part of man) so that the flesh might be changed. What we must remember is that this flesh will do what the mind tells it to do. It is only when the mind is changed and brought under the power of God that the flesh can be brought under control.

How is this accomplished? By surrendering the will to God. By filling the mind with the Word of God. By ordering one's life after the teachings and commands of God. By cutting oneself off from the influences of the world and by allowing the Spirit of God to control the mind.

There are basically three types of people in the church, each distinguished by how their minds operate. Let's see which category you fall into.

Type 1: The Sensual - This kind of individual is ruled by the physical world around them. They live by their senses. Everything comes down to how they feel, what they see, how they are affected, what they want, what they hear, etc. They may be saved, but they are living far below their potential!

Type 2: The Soulsh - These people are those who are ruled by their intellect, their will, and their emotions. These folks are harder to spot than the sensual. In fact, there is a very fine line between the soulsh person and the truly spiritual person. To be intellectual, emotional or to possess a strong will is not necessary to be spiritual! Let me illustrate:

***The Intellect** - A person may know the Bible forward and backwards and be a walking concordance, but that does not mean that they are a spiritual person. Knowing the letter of the Word is far different from living out the spirit of the Word.

***The Emotions** - A man may shout and cry in the services. He may lift his hands to praise the Lord. These things are not wrong, but neither are they always spiritual in nature! Too often they are merely actions of emotions. The same person who shouts on Sunday may be in the valley on Wednesday. If he were genuinely spiritual, he could shout in either place!

***The Will** - A person may, when he gets saved, decide to stop smoking. He may be able to throw down the tobacco and walk away from it. That is a good thing, but it is not necessarily a spiritual victory. It may just be the exercise of a very strong will.

Type 3: The Spiritual - This kind of individual is very rare in the church. These people are under the control of the Holy Spirit. He controls their thinking, their actions, their speech. He rules their lives. They have given over total control to Him, and they have no life but that which He gives them! This is God's will for every believer - **Ephesians 5:18.**)

How can we know the difference? Well, the sensual person is not hard to spot. They stand out because they are so selfish and carnal in the way they live. However, the line between the soulsh and the spiritual person is so fine that there is just one indicator that can tell the difference.

That instrument is the Word of God **Hebrews 4:12** tells us that it is the only thing that can teach us the difference between the soulish and the spiritual. That verse says that it is the "*discerner*" of our thoughts and our motives. That word comes from the same word that gives us the word "*critic*." The Word of God can teach us the difference between that which is of us and that which is from God. The Word of God is the one thing that can tell us whether we are pleasing the Lord or living for ourselves! Therefore, it is Paul's statement that the mind must be renewed and the only way this is possible is by transforming it through the Word of God! You see, just as the body of the caterpillar hides the butterfly within, our flesh hides the glorious, new man living in every redeemed person this evening. The mind must be brought under the control of the Lord so that the flesh can be subdued and the new man, who is made in the image of God can be set free! Basically, what the Lord is attempting to do in each of our lives is to get us to think like He does, **Philippians 2:5**.

III. THE WILL OF GOD

Having told us that the secret to a holy life revolves around worshiping God through the sacrifice of our body and through developing the mind of Christ in each of us, Paul moves on to tell us that accomplishing these two things in our lives will enable us to carry out God's will for our lives in a way that honors Him. As we yield our bodies and our minds to Him, His will becomes clearer and more important to us.

1. A Description of God's Will - Paul uses three identifying adjectives to describe the will of God.

a) It Is Precious - Regardless of what the Lord may ask us to do, we will find in the end that it is good. It is the devil and the flesh who tell us that the Lord's ideas will bring hurt and problems. However, God will never ask us to do anything that is not for our eternal good!

b) It Is Pleasant - Pleasant in the sense that when His will is revealed to us, it is something that we are made willing to do. As we move through this life, God is in the business of maturing us. As we grow, His demands on our life change. 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. If His will seems unacceptable, then we are overlooking something that He is trying to show us! He will never lead us to a place we are not ready to go! Think of Abraham in **Genesis 22**, Israel and their wilderness experience. Only Caleb and Joshua seemed to have learned the lessons well. All the people were equipped, but only two were willing to follow. When the nation refused to honor God by doing His will, they faced judgment instead of blessing!) When God reveals His will, it is because He knows we are ready. When He shows us that it is time to march forward, we need to move without question or reservation!

c) It Is Perfect - Nothing we could add to God's plan would improve it. 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 He knows the obstacles and valleys we will pass through as we go. He knows where the provisions are that He has already placed along the way. His plan cannot be improved upon, but it must be followed for there to be victory and blessing! We can be in no better place than the perfect will of God for our lives!

2. A Demonstration of God's Will - By yielding our bodies and our minds to God, we will be able to "*prove*" or "*live out*" God's will before a world that is looking. When the world sees you and me living lives that are spiritual, they will know that we have been transformed by the power of the Gospel of grace. As a result of our getting where the Lord can bless and use our lives, souls will be saved, God will be honored, we will be an awe-inspiring weapon, mighty in the hand of our God. We will be proof positive to a doubting world that God can take the worst and make the best out of it. We will be the evidence of His power to a perishing world, and we will finally be salt and light as we have been commanded to be in **Matthew 5:13-16**.

In closing, I want to remind you that the secret of living a holy life boils down to God having control of our minds, our bodies, and our wills. Does that describe the life you are living? Is God in absolute control of all you have and are?

First, are you sure you are saved?

Second, is your mind being renewed by the transforming power of the Word of God so that the new person on the inside is being permitted to live on the outside?

Third, have you discovered and surrendered to the will of God for your life?

Will you allow the Lord to transform you and your life into an awesome thing in His hand? Let's obey Him!

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30am

Date: May 19, 2024

After Service Song: Take My Life (Take my Heart and Form it)