

“A Living Sacrifice”
(Romans 12:1-2)

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Several years ago I was somewhat impressed while watching a college promotional video. I had seen many of them over the years, but this one grabbed my attention. The man who was promoting the video was standing behind an ocean and it was a beautiful picture with sky and water. I thought to myself this was another one of those promotional videos that was intended to only sell the school. However, the man suddenly exclaimed: “Have you ever given your entire life to God? Have you ever surrendered to God’s plan and purpose for your life?” These questions caught my attention and I began to realize once again the importance of surrendering to God’s plan for my life.

Our text today for this study is Romans 12:1-2:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

This text is talking about Christians surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ. Surrender is when a person places themselves on God’s altar of sacrifice without reservation. It’s a time when a person turns over their life to God, not only in regard to their present-day living, but also relation to their future.

This surrender to God is called “a living sacrifice” to God (Rom. 12:1). A living sacrifice is when we totally and unreservedly surrender our bodies and entire life for God’s purpose. A living sacrifice extends to our daily practice in our Christian lives which involves yielding to God and following His will for our lives. A “living sacrifice” is how we are to live the Christian life. We are to live in the surrender mode instead of the self-mode. We give to God our days and ways! May I ask you a very important question: Have you ever surrendered your entire life to God? Have you ever come to the end of yourself and say to God, “Take me, I’m yours?”

We are going to examine the importance of laying ourselves on God's altar, becoming a living sacrifice for God, and surrendering to God's plan and purpose for our lives in this message.

God wants us to surrender our lives to Him.

There are five life changing truths about surrender.

I. God's request to surrender (vs. 1) – "I beseech"

This is the fourth "therefore" in the letter. Romans 3:20 is the therefore of condemnation, declaring that the whole world is guilty before God. Romans 5:1 is the therefore of justification (all believers have a legal standing before God), and Romans 8:1 the therefore of assurance. In Romans 12:1, we have the therefore of dedication. "Therefore" shows a transition and looks back to the doctrinal content that Paul had just presented in the previous chapters. In light of what God has done for us (saving us, declaring us righteous in God's presence) we ought to give our lives to Him. We should lay ourselves on God's altar of sacrifice and surrender ourselves absolutely and unreservedly to God's will and purpose for our lives. Paul is dealing with our responsibility to God since we have received the righteousness of God.

The "I beseech you" means God urges or pleads with us to sacrifice our lives for Him. As God speaks through Paul, one cannot help but see that God is stooping down to our level and is urging or begging us to surrender our lives to Him. Deity is asking dust to surrender to Him! God does not bridle us like a horse and force us to obey! This is the wonder of the ages! This is the Super Bowl of God's Word. To think that God would beg us to serve Him and do His will after all He has done for us!! This is utterly amazing! It shows us that God wants our love, devotion, and commitment to His cause.

The law says, "I command you," but grace says, "I beseech you." Legal obedience for salvation is based on fear (the person obeys because he is afraid of the penalty he will have to suffer if he does not obey); Gospel obedience is based on love (2 Corinthians 5:14 - "the love of Christ constraineth us").

II. The motivation for surrender (vs. 1b) - "the mercies of God"

The wording "by" suggest that we are to surrender in view of the mercies of God! The phrase "the mercies of God" refers to all that Paul has previously revealed in the epistle of Romans about God's "mercies" or what He has done for the believer because of His mercies. Mercy speaks of the quality in God that led Him to deliver us from our sin and misery. God has given to us many soul-saving mercies which are outlined in the epistle of Romans – salvation (Rom. 1:18), propitiation (Rom. 3:25), justification (Rom. 3:28), eternal life (Rom. 6:23), no condemnation (Rom. 8:1), etc.

We are beseeched by God and then besieged (overtaken) by the mercies of God! The mercies of God motivate me to surrender! The mercies of God melt my heart so that I give my whole life to God! The mercies of God refer to all the spiritual blessings we have because we are in Christ Jesus (see Romans 8:29 is a good summary - our predestination, calling, justification, and glorification). In view of these tremendous saving transactions, in view of the display of God's mercies, we ought to become a living sacrifice to God by presenting our bodies to Him completely and without reservation.

God deserves everything! As Isaac Watts wrote: "Love so amazing, so divine, DEMANDS MY SOUL, MY LIFE, MY ALL!" His mercies should motivate us to move out for Him and be all that we should be and can be for Him! We don't need a motivational seminar. We need to remember the mercies of God! We need to remember what God did to keep us out of hell!

God's mercies are reason enough for us to surrender our entire lives to Him. They should motive us to surrender our lives on His altar, to lay ourselves before God, without imposing our will on Him.

"The mercies of God!
What a theme for my song,
Oh! I never could number them o'er
They're more than the stars I the heavenly dome,
Or the sands of the wave-beaten shore.

For mercies to great,
What return can I make?
For mercies so constant and sure?
I'll love Him, I'll serve Him

With all that I have
As long as my life shall endure.”

What return have you been making to the mercies of God which have been showered upon your life? How much are you willing to give of your life, your money, your will, and your soul?

III. The vehicle of surrender (vs. 1c) – “your body”

This explains how we surrender. We regulate our bodies to do and follow God’s will. We give our bodies to God without reservation. Our bodies are no longer our own to do with as we please. God has redeemed us and therefore owns our bodies and we should use them for His purposes and glory. In the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) the word “present” was often used as a technical term for a priest placing an offering on the altar. It carried the general idea of surrendering or yielding up one’s life.

When a person decides to “present” their body to God, they are placing it before God in surrender so they can be used as His servant. They are saying, “Take me, I’m Yours!” The word “present” (aorist imperative) speaks of a purposeful and deliberate action on one’s part to give their body to the Lord. The same verb, in both the present and aorist imperative, occurs in Romans 6:13 where we are told to “yield” our bodies to God. In other words, Paul is simply saying, “Do it!” This is something that you need to do. You can’t neglect it or avoid it without losing your way in life and missing out on God’s true blessing.

Romans 12:1 is speaking about our initial surrender to God (aorist tense – a past action with continuing results). This is referring to a specific time when we throw our stick in the fire and say “Yes” to God and place our body at His disposal and for His purposes. It’s a lifetime commitment to God. It’s similar to when a bride and groom commit themselves to one another for life at the marriage altar.

Have you ever knelt down before God in prayer and said that you will give Him your body? Have you ever dedicated your body to God completely and unreservedly for His cause and use? You need to tell Him this if you have never done so and build your Christian life from this point forward. This is termed as making Jesus Lord of your Life!

Certainly there is an INITIAL COMMITMENT that we should make to the Lord within our Christian life. Paul is likely speaking of this; however, it's equally true that we must daily present our bodies to the Lord throughout our Christian lives. In other words, we also REAFFIRM our initial decision or commitment to surrender our lives many times by yielding to God.

There is also a daily yielding and surrender and Paul may also have this in mind as he did earlier.

Romans 6:13

“Neither yield (“present” – same word) 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.” Have you ever really said to God:

“Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee!”

The word “bodies” (Rom. 12:1) is reminiscent of the Old Testament sacrifices and represents the totality of one’s life and activities, through which the body is the vehicle of expression. In other words, when we give God our bodies, it means that we will allow God to control our ambitions, decisions, and personal lives. When you give God your body you are giving Him all that you are and all that you have.

Before we trusted Christ, we used our body for sinful pleasures and purposes, but now that we belong to Him, we should want to use our body for His holy purposes and glory. The Christian’s body is God’s temple (1 Cor. 3:16) because the Spirit of God dwells within him (Rom. 8:9).

1 Corinthians 6:19 asks this soul-stirring question:

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

God owns you lock, stock, and barrel! He has redemptive rights over your body! He redeemed you from the penalty of sin (hell) and the power of sin to a new way of life. He has redeemed you from hell’s judgment and sin’s slavery. Therefore, God is to have full sway and control over your life, as you present or offer your body to Him. t’s a despicable and deplorable

(wretched) thing when a Christian does not present his body to God, so the Lord can use it in the way that He chooses or desires.

Who do you think you are? Do you really think that being in charge of your own life will bring you true happiness and God's blessing? Let God take the reins of your life and body. Paul states very clearly that we must yield the members of our body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet) as "instruments of righteousness" (Rom. 6:13) for the Holy Spirit to use. This will keep us out of the dance halls, bars, keep us from gossiping, listening to Rock Music, making excuses for our sins, lack of commitment to God, and living in rebellion against God. There should be no reservation. We must be willing to lay everything on the altar and give ourselves without reservation to God as Caleb and Joshua did who "wholly followed the LORD" (Numb. 32:11; Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:8-9).

"Consecrate me now to Thy service Lord,
By the power of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a stead-fast hope,
And my will be lost in Thine."

IV. The description of surrender (1d)

There are four descriptions of a surrendered body.

1. It's sacrificial ("living sacrifice")

God wants us to be a living sacrifice that is totally yielded or surrendered to Him. The believer is to give Himself and body to God without reservation. He is not to hold back and follow his own plans, desires, ambitions, ways, and sins. Have you been holding something back? What is it? Maybe it's your money, music, missionary outreach (evangelism) or your minutes (time). Whatever it is, turn it over to God, surrender to His way for your life and family. Don't remain in "no man's" land and stubbornly refuse to turn your life over to God. Give them all to Jesus!

A living sacrifice means a constant, continuous sacrifice, not just an occasional dedication of one's body. A person does not sacrifice his body to God today, and then take his body back into his own hands and do his own thing tomorrow. A living sacrifice means that a person dedicates his body *to* live for God and to keep on living for God, serving God, and being

consecrated to God through holy living. In essence, the believer is to dedicate his body to God as a living sacrifice in the home, church, school, office, on the job, in an airplane, car, or bus. No matter where the believer's body is it be sacrificed for God. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). In other words, keep doing it!

- a. There is a practical truth about our sacrifice.

The Old Testament sacrifices all died upon the brazen altar. They were sacrificed upon the altar but they never lived again. The sacrificial analogy of the New Testament is different in that we are to place ourselves on God's altar, die to our own selfish ambitions, wants, and desires, and then get up and live out a life of devotion and dedication to God. We must really die to live! We must give of ourselves to God in order to experience true blessing and fulfillment in life.

There are two examples of "living sacrifices" in the Bible that help us to understand what a "living sacrifice" really means.

- a. Isaac

Genesis 22:6-8

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

Genesis 22:10-14 goes on to reveal:

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And

Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.”

Isaac willingly put himself on the altar and would have died in obedience to God’s will, but the Lord sent a ram to take his place. But Isaac “died” just the same - he died to self and willingly yielded himself to the will of God. When he got off that altar, Isaac was a “living sacrifice” to the glory of God! How about you? Are you willing to place your life on God’s altar? Are you ready to give everything to God? Are you ready in a practical way to die to self, sin, and stubbornness?

b. Jesus

Of course, Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect illustration of a “living sacrifice,” because He actually died as a sacrifice, in obedience to His Father’s will. But He arose again as an example of a living sacrifice. Today He is in heaven as a “living sacrifice,” bearing in His body the wounds of Calvary. So, in a practical sense, we must yield our bodies to God and allow Him to use them for His glory and purpose. Isaac and Christ are wonderful examples of two people who were living sacrifice unto God.

David Livingstone, the renowned and noble missionary to Africa, wrote in his journal: “People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter?”

... Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father’s throne on high to give Himself for us.” (*Livingstone’s Private Journal: 1851–53*, ed.. I. Schapera [London: Chatto & Windus, 1960], pp. 108, 132)

Like David Livingstone, Christians who offer a living sacrifice of themselves to God, usually do not consider it to be a sacrifice! Even though they do sacrifice their lives, they view their dedication to God as a privilege and not a sacrifice, and the only sensible response to God's mercies and blessings, which He has showered upon their lives.

b. There is a positional truth about our sacrifice.

There is another sense, a positional sense, in which we are a living sacrifice to God.

We've already discussed Romans 6:13 which states:

"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."

Another way to describe "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1) is to describe God's saints as those who "are alive from the dead." Romans chapter six teaches we have already died with Jesus Christ in a positional sense and have also been raised with Christ unto a new way of life (Rom. 6:4-6).

In Philippians 3:10 Paul said, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection." Positional truth speaks of how every believer shares the same experience with Jesus Christ. Yes, we even share in the power of His resurrection which points to how Christ lives within us to provide us with the same type of power that caused Him to be raised from the dead! When a person has a position in Christ, it means that God sees them passing through the same experience that Jesus went through, when He died and rose again from the dead. This is sometimes called "identification" with Christ. Christ's experience becomes our experience! Our position, union, or identification with Christ places us on victory ground!

First, our sacrifice or death took place with Christ. This means that God views every believer as dying with Christ. This is the position (same spiritual experience) that we have shared with Christ. The truth being taught is this; when Christ died to defeat sin, we died with Him, and share in His victory over sin. The position (same spiritual experience) that we have shared with Christ in His death means that the "old man" (Rom. 6:6), or the person we used to be under sin's power, has been forever delivered.

Second, we have now become a “living sacrifice” in view of our resurrection with Jesus Christ. Our victory is experienced daily, as a result of our co-resurrection with Christ, which teaches that we are alive with Christ in a spiritual union, and can now rely upon His resurrection power to provide us with victory. Romans chapter six teaches that we are “living sacrifices” because we have died with Christ and have also been raised with Christ to a new way of living. As a result of this positional truth (our spiritual placement or location in Christ and sharing the same experience as Christ), we can now surrender our lives to God, as our new Master and Lord, or present ourselves to Him as a living, holy, and consecrated sacrifice (Rom. 6:13).

This reminds us that the yielding and presenting of our body can only come as a result of our victory with Christ. We must first claim our victory in Christ before we can effectively yield to God as our Master. Friend, we are a living sacrifice now linked to the resurrected life of Jesus Christ, so we can experience surrendered and victorious living on a daily basis. Our co-resurrection with the resurrected Christ allows us to yield and surrender our daily lives to Him in order to experience victory. We can present our bodies to God knowing that we are living on resurrection ground. We can surrender, yield, or present our bodies to God on a daily basis knowing that we have a spiritual link or union with the resurrected Lord and His own resurrection power, which will help us through each temptation and trial in life.

Are you living on resurrection ground? We share Christ’s victory over sin through His death and resurrection and can rely upon Christ’s resurrection power today for victory.

I remember visiting Pikes Peak in Colorado which is over 14,000 feet. The snack shop has special doughnuts that are made on the summit of Pikes Peak. They are special or unique because the regular dough does not rise because of the extreme thin air. So they use something special in their dough to make the doughnuts rise at 14,110 feet. When you can’t make regular doughnuts, you are pretty high!

This reminds me how God wants us to live our lives on a higher plain. When we live life on the lowest plain, it’s because we are not claiming and experiencing our position and victory in Christ. Let’s claim our victory, live life on the highest plain, and yield to our New Master today!

2. It's sanctified ("holy")

This means that our body must be "set apart" for God's use, will, service, and special purpose. It speaks of consecration to God's ways of purity and sacred purposes. Our bodies should manifest outward holiness in our actions, dress, conduct, and overall living.

2 Corinthians 7:1

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

We are to be set apart for the service of our Master! We are set apart to live a holy and consecrated life to God. Do you see yourself as a holy servant of the Most High God? Are you living a life that is set apart from wickedness, worldliness, and all of the weirdness found in this present world? Tattoos, rock music, pins sticking out of your eyelids, grotesque body piercings, fornication, pornography, alcohol (strong drink), anger, unforgiving heart, covetousness, materialism? God has called us to surrender. We are to surrender our bodies for His holy purposes.

Under the Old Covenant (Mosaic Law), a sacrificial animal was to be without spot or blemish (Numb. 19:2). The physical purity symbolized the spiritual and moral purity that God required for the sacrifice. This truth teaches us that the offering of a Christian's body should not only should be a living sacrifice but also a holy sacrifice. Psalm 24:4 speaks of the person "that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" which is the way God wants us to live our lives today.

Through Malachi, the Lord rebuked those who sacrificed animals that were blind and otherwise impaired.

Malachi 1:8

"And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts."

God wants a clean sacrifice. Our bodies should manifest dedication to God's holy purposes, service, and will. They should not be spiritually blind,

lame, and sick. Sadly, like those in Malachi's day, many people today are perfectly willing to give God second best, the leftovers that mean little to them, and mean even less to Him. Whatever happened to: "Give of your best to the Master!" When we give God our best we will present to Him a body that is fully set apart and dedicated to His holy will for our lives.

3. It's satisfactory ("acceptable to God")

The word "acceptable" means "well pleasing" and indicates that God is pleased when we dedicate our bodies to Him and His cause. God is delighted when we sacrificially give Him our bodies and present them for His holy purposes. God is not pleased when believers refuse to give Him their all. May there be nothing between your soul and the Savior! When we set ourselves apart for God's holy will and purpose, and when we give God the very best, it's then that God is well pleased. This is what truly satisfies God. If I want to please God, then I should be dedicating my body for His sacred and holy purposes. I should give him my thoughts, emotions, will, and service.

There are a few questions of examination we can apply to our lives. Do I really want to please the Lord with my life? Is God pleased with where I attend church, what I am wearing (dress), where I am going with my life (direction), and with my choices (decisions) that I'm presently making for my life? Has God been satisfied with the way I am living and the things that I'm presently doing with my life? Am I really seeking God's favor and blessing upon my life? Or have I been going my own way? Have I been playing the "Burger King brand of Christianity – "Have it your Way?"

2 Timothy 2:4 reminds us of Who we are trying to please:

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Many today are trying to please the crowd instead of pleasing Christ! They are trying to please men instead of being a servant of the Lord (Ga. 1:10).

"But the question still remains as I think of Calvary
Is the Savior satisfied with me?"

4. It's sensible ("reasonable service")

It makes good sense to sacrifice our lives for God! We get our English word "logical" from the Greek word behind "reasonable." In light of what Christ has done for us, giving of ourselves wholly to Him, through an act of total consecration, is the only reasonable and logical thing to do.

"But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe.
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do!"

For the true believer, nothing else makes sense! Giving of ourselves to God is the only logical thing to do! As we give our bodies to God we are performing a priestly service to Him. The word "service" speaks of worship. This particular word was used in the Greek Old Testament to speak of worshiping God according to the prescribed Levitical ceremonies, and it became part of the priestly, sacrificial language. Of course, the priestly service was an integral part of Old Testament worship. The writer of Hebrews uses this same word to describe the service or worship of the priests as they gave God the sacrifices (Hebrews 9:6).

Dear friend, when we give God our bodies through sacrificial and holy living, it's then that we are expressing worship to God. Sometimes we think that we can only worship God when we come to church. This is not the case. A greater part of our worship involves laying our lives on the altar and living lives that are holy, dedicated, and set apart for Him. This reminds us that everything we do for the Lord in this life is to be an expression of worship rendered up to God! We are to be like priests, New Testament priests, offering to God sacrifices that He is pleased with and which honor Him.

1 Peter 2:5

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Every action that we take and service that we perform which is pleasing to God should be an expression of true worship. Our entire life is to be similar to a priest offering up service and worship to the Lord. The priesthood of believers is an important teaching of the Bible. We are all priests rendering up service and worship to the Lord. I'm reminded again that worship does not consist of elaborate and impressive prayers, prayer beads, intricate

liturgy, stained-glass windows, lighted candles, flowing robes, incense, and chanting words. It involves giving ourselves to God as holy sacrifices whose lives are pleasing to Him. Here are some important questions. Can my actions, decisions, and the places I attend, be viewed as priestly acts of worship, which can be rendered up to God? Am I living as a New Testament priest that is offering my body as a holy sacrifice to God?

A farmer once approached a chicken and a pig and asked a heart-searching question: "Will you contribute to a ham and egg breakfast?" For the chicken it was merely a contribution. For the pig it involved an absolute sacrifice! We have discovered that the believer is to place himself wholly into the hands of God, even as the believers in Macedonia did. "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor.8:5). We will give of ourselves and our all to the Lord when we remember how our Savior gave His all for us!

V. The result of surrender - vs. 2

God now moves to the result of a surrendered life. What does surrender really look like in real life? In other words, Paul is going to describe how to get it done! We are about to discover exactly how we surrender our bodies to God. The one bumper sticker I saw read: "Let's git'er done!" This is what God expects of our lives when we sacrifice our bodies for Him and dedicate ourselves to His holy way. We need to get it done!

A two-fold result is given:

a. We refuse to conform (2a) – We are CHALLENGED

The Bible goes on to say "and be not conformed to this world." This is not a suggestion but a command! The term "world" (aion) refers to the sinful age in which we live today that is dominated by Satan, the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). The term represents the human philosophy of life that is against God, godliness, truth, and what is right. The "world" (age in which we live) is basically human society without God (God left out).

When a person "conforms" themselves to the age they are molding themselves to what is against God and righteousness. The verb means "to be molded by, to fashion or shape one thing like another." Paul is saying, "Don't be letting the world squeeze you into its mold!" Don't be molded by

the mannerisms, speech, philosophies, expressions, carnality, fleshly things, pride, and habits of this world!

Demas, who was considered to be a loyal believer in Colossians 4:14, was later described by Paul in these tragic words, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). Demas "conformed" himself to the world. We are not to masquerade ourselves as a worldly person by the way we talk, dress, look, live, what we listen to, how we react to people, by living a prideful life, a life filled with covetousness and carnal living. We must not become victims of the world! Have you been a victim? Have you been taken over by worldly patterns and practices which are controlling your mind, heart, and life?

Kenneth Wuest has paraphrased the verse as follows:

"Stop assuming an outward expression which is patterned after this world, an expression which does not come from, nor is it representative of what you are in your inner being as a regenerated child of God."

Many Christian's think that it's cool and the liberated way (lifestyle) when we try to look like the world, live like the world, and listen to the same types of music that the world listens to.

Don't be conformed to the world. Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold!

b. We determine to transform ("but be ye transformed") – we are
CHANGED!

We are first challenged and then we are changed! This word transform is the same word that was used in Matthew 17:2 when Christ was "transfigured" before the disciples. It has come into our English language as the word "metamorphosis" (the transformation from caterpillar to butterfly). This is speaking of changing the way that you live so God is pleased with your life. It's a change of form and character. Our life is to change from godlessness to godliness, fruitlessness to fruitfulness, and sinfulness to sacredness. This word describes a transformation that begins from within (the heart) that eventually reaches the outside (the body), as it is reflected in our everyday living and conduct.

Beloved, we must determine to change our lives and pattern them after God's will, instead of the world, in the midst of a very wicked and perverse

generation. The world is constantly trying to capture our minds and lead us astray from God's holy purpose and will for our lives.

Two observations are seen:

1. The way of transformation is explained ("renewing of the mind")

God wants to change us mentally. We are called upon to reprogram our mind! Transformation or true change begins and ends in the mind. The word "renewing" speaks of renovating the way we think. It's cleaning out the garbage and replacing it with good things. It's like cleaning out the garage. We must get rid of the old stuff and replace it with the new stuff. When we renovate or renew our minds we are changing the way we think.

The mind is a spiritual entity that can be deceived by demons and distracted from God's holy purpose for our lives. This is why we are called upon to "gird up the loins of your mind" (1 Pet. 1:13). How we think, what we reflect upon, and decide to do with our lives, spells the beginning of defeat or victory. The Bible says that our life can be transformed into godly and holy living when we are thinking God's thoughts and ways.

We must win the battle of the mind if we are going to live differently than the sinful age. Friend, the world wants to control your mind (thinking process), but God wants to transform your thinking and living by changing your thought patterns (Eph. 4:17–24; Col. 3:1–11).

Wiersbe states:

"If the world controls your thinking, you are a *conformer*; if God controls your thinking, you are a *transformer*."

A transformed mind produces a transformed will which in return produces a transformed lifestyle. When we change the way we think we will change the way we live! You are what you eat and you are what you think! The "renewing of the mind" speaks of a renewal or renovation process that occurs in our mind or thinking process. We change the way we think so we can change the way that we live. When we think and act upon God's thoughts and truth, it's then we can be transformed in our everyday living. This is the mental process, which is described by Vine, as: "The adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God, which is designed to have a transforming effect upon the life."

We know that God transforms our minds and makes us spiritually minded and discerning by using His Word. The Bible renews our minds by getting rid of the old thought patterns and replacing them with right thought patterns and belief systems.

Psalm 119:11

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

John 15:3

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

The Bible is God’s cleaning solution for the mind and life. When our mind is clean then our living is clean. Let us never forget this. The renewed mind is the mind saturated with and controlled by the Word of God. As you spend time meditating on God’s Word, memorizing it, and making it a part of your inner man, you will not only discover God’s will for your life but gradually make your mind and life more Christlike (2 Cor. 3:18).

2. The purpose of transformation is explained (“that ye may prove ... will of God”)

The purpose or result of possessing a transformed mind (the “renewing of the mind”), through our changed thought patterns, is so we can accurately know and do God’s will (both His general will to live a holy life or even His specific will for our lives). God guides our lives through a transformed mind!

The word “prove” means to test, examine, or scrutinize something in order to determine something’s worthiness and genuine character. The believer who is being transformed by the way he thinks is constantly proving (testing, assessing, and discovering) what the will of God is for his life. You can’t decide what God’s will is for your life in relationship to holy living, or anything else, unless you first allow your mind to be renewed by God’s absolute standard of truth. God uses the Bible to direct our thought patterns and lives as we mediate upon it.

Joshua 1:8 declares:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according

to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

You will remember that Jesus responded to Satan’s temptations by hurling Scripture back into the adversary’s face (“It is written” - Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). Only the mind that is constantly being renewed by God’s Word and Spirit is pleasing to the Lord. It’s this type of mind that will produce “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12:1).

The prerequisite to knowing God’s will is to be thinking God’s thoughts as they are outlined in God’s Word. If we want to know God’s will for our lives (His general will to live a holy life or even His specific will) we must possess a renewed mind or a mind that has been made clean by accurately reflecting upon the unchanging and absolute standard of God’s Word.

If your action or decision does not pass the “Bible test” then don’t do it! Renew your thinking with God’s Word and “take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17) so you can deliver your mind from demonic thoughts, evil thoughts, wrong thoughts, and deceptive thoughts. The heart-cry of the believer should be: "I want what God wants, no more and no less! I want nothing but God’s best! Not my will but thine be done!"

God’s will is summarized as:

- a. Something that benefits us (“good”)

God’s will is not something that is going to remove all the fun from our lives and make us miserable. It is good for us – it is beneficial, suitable, rich, and rewarding. God only wants for our lives what will benefit us. God is not holding out on us as Satan suggests (Gen. 3:1) but is giving something to us that is for our spiritual prosperity and blessing.

- b. Something that pleases us (“acceptable”)

The word “acceptable” means that a surrendered believer approves and is pleased with God’s will for his or her life. He finds complete fulfillment in the will of God. It is pleasing, welcome, and satisfactory to him. The will of God is something that satisfies our hearts and something that we are thrilled to do because of His mercy and grace showered upon our lives.

In Abraham's offering of his son Isaac, we find an example of how acceptable God's will is, even when it confronts us with the humanly impossible. God's will can be accepted even when it involves heartache and difficulty. God brings us along life's path, maturing us as we go, so that when we come face to face to Canaan and its giants (the will of God for our lives), we are ready for these giants (His will – even when it involves great testing and difficulty).

John Philipps observed:

“If for any reason God's will seems unacceptable to us, it must be because we are blindly overlooking something He is showing us, for God never asks us to take a step for which we are not ready.”

We can say “It is well with my soul” even when the will of God involves hard and difficult times.

c. Something that is best for us (“perfect”)

You can't get anything better than this! God's will is perfect for us. You can't top this! This word carries the idea of being complete, something being everything that it should be, something that contains no flaws. We should always want to do what God wants us to do, since His will contains no flaws (it is what is right and best for our lives). No plan of ours can improve on the plan of God. This reminds me that God controls all circumstances and His will is perfect. Therefore, our imperfect wills must always be subject to His perfect will.

Have you been surrendering your body to God? Have you been a living, daily sacrifice unto God? Have you been giving God what He deserves? How much does God deserve? Everything! When we come to the end of life, the question will not be "How much have you gotten?" but "How much have you given?" In the end, this is all that will matter.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

God wants us to surrender our lives to Him. He wants us to be a living sacrifice!

Charles Thomas Studd once said:

“If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.”

Have you surrendered every area of your life to God or have you been holding back in some specific areas? What part of your body, heart, and life have you not yielded to God? What room have you left bolted and locked? Why won't you surrender that area to the Lord and let Him have His way? Give Him all the keys of your heart, body, and life and you will be blessed beyond measure.

“All to Jesus I surrender;
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

All to Jesus I surrender;
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken;
Take me, Jesus, take me now.

I surrender all,
I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.”