

Romans 12:1

From Faith to Faithfulness

- The Gospel message challenges a person to (first) repent of a hope for reconciliation with God that is based on human merit and replace it with faith in the finished work of Christ.
- The Gospel also challenges us to obedience.
- Paul's epistle to the Romans is summarized in 12:1-2.
- While it is clear that Christ's sacrifice for our sins is a once for all (never to be repeated) offering, this does not mean that the sacrificial altar is removed from the stage of the Christian drama.

“¹ I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

There are a number of observations that can be made from this passage that mark a healthy church.

1. A healthy church does more than “get people saved.”

- The great commission of Matt.28 does not stop with evangelism. There is more to the Christian life than being saved by grace. Vs.20 “teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;”
- God does not intend to leave us in the condition described in Romans 1.
 - 1. Foolish worship** - “For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Vs.25)
 - 2. Depraved minds** - “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,” (Vs.28)

Eph.2:8-10 “⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

- Paul's version of the Great Commission spells out the proper emphasis on building the church to spiritual maturity.

Eph.4:10-16 “¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. ¹¹ And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed

here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him, who is the head, {even} Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

- Paul's letter can be divided into two parts.

Rom.1:1-11:36 “the mercies of God”	Rom.12:1-2	Rom.12:3-15:13 “the transformed life”
What Christ has done for us.	What Christ must do in us.	What Christ will do through us.
Faith	Renewal	Faithfulness

- Notice what he does **not** say about the path to obedience.
 1. He does not call for a special charismatic encounter as the key to faithfulness.
 2. He does not advocate an emphasis on the Law as necessary for obedience.
 3. He does not suggest that there are different plans for different temperaments.
 4. He does not have a 12 step or behavior modification therapy strategy.
 5. He does mention prayer or Bible study as a key to Christian service.

2. A healthy church is able to understand and help carnal Christians.

- The church cannot pretend that all true believers are walking as living sacrifices with renewed minds.
- Paul is urging the “brethren” to offer themselves to God.
- Rom.12-15 underscores the forensic nature of salvation by faith apart from faithfulness to the Law. It clearly implies that faithfulness is distinct from faith but at the same time a rational result of true faith.
- The church should be a place where sinners can be honest about their failures. Too often we dress up, put on a happy face, and cover our disappointments, pain, and failures with the hope that we will be respected, accepted, and treated as someone we are not.

3. A healthy church challenges believers to a worshipful life of selfless service.

- Christian worship includes a life of selfless service.
- Paul's ministry challenges believers to live out their identity in Christ.
- The term “urge” falls somewhere between “request” and “command.”

- Paul's ministry is not one of manipulation but exhortation and encouragement from a life of positive example.
- We are not to be passive. Faithfulness will not come apart from decisions on our part.
- The idea of a living sacrifice suggests that the offering is not dead or without an ongoing call to commitment and action.
 1. We are to be dead to the old self but alive to the new self in Christ.
 2. We are called to action not passivity.
 3. As long as we are alive, we can crawl off the altar.

4. A healthy church addresses the inner life.

- Christian obedience does not focus on outward conformity to the moral law but on the inner posture of the heart and mind.
- The term "present" is in a Greek tense that suggests a strategic decision. We may have to renew this decision often.
- "Spiritual" worship draws attention to the inner life.
- The idea behind Paul's exhortation is that the inner life must be committed in a decisive act so that the outer body becomes a slave to the Spirit.
- The church should not settle for "looking good" outwardly but rather on walking in the light (reality) inwardly.

5. A healthy church motivates with grace.

- There are two types of evangelical churches - "Grace churches" and "Holiness churches." You can feel the emphasis in the meetings, among the members, and from the pulpit.
- Fear and guilt are powerful motivators but they do not glorify the nature of God as does grace.
- II Cor.5:14 "The love of Christ constrains us."
- The altar of sacrifice for the Christian has nothing to do with atonement for sin.
 1. This sacrifice is a worship response to atonement.
 2. This sacrifice is on the far side of reconciliation with God.
 3. We add nothing to our righteousness in Christ by faith with this sacrifice.

6. A healthy church equips Christians for spiritual conflict.

- Putting to death the old self will involve a struggle.
- We cannot avoid hypocrisy. We will be hypocritical to one of our two natures - the Spirit or the flesh.

- If we die to self, self will be starved of the attention and feeding that it demands. We will have withdrawal pains.

Rom.6 “¹³ Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God, ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”

How to present your body as a living sacrifice

by Avery Willis

Adapted from [Master Life: Developing a Rich Personal Relationship with the Master](#) (Broadman & Holman, 1998, pp. 97-103) by Avery T. Willis

I once heard Bill Tisdale, a missionary to the Philippines, give an illustration about surrendering his physical body to the Lord. He described presenting the parts of his body one by one for Christ's use through a prayer like this:

"Lord, here are my eyes. I give them to you. I want them to see only the things you want them to see. Help me to always look at the things you want to look at and avoid the things you do not want to look at. Here are my hands. Work through my hands to do what you want to do. Here are my feet. Guide them to go where you want them to go. I give you the lordship of my body."

That illustration helped me. Each time I was tempted to let a part of my body dominate me, I offered that part to Christ so he could master it and use it for his glory.

God's intentions for your body

God intends for the body to perform three essential functions:

- * Your body identifies you as a unique person. It provides you with individual features so that others can recognize you.
- * Your body allows you to participate in the world. You can experience the world through your senses, move about and interact in the physical dimension.
- * Your body helps you to communicate with others. Being able to touch, speak, and express yourself physically makes you able to relate to others.
- * Your body allows you to influence the created order. Because you have mobility, you can move from place to place to perform God's tasks. Because you have strength in your body, you can fulfill assignments for him.

But the first humans failed to do what God asked. Instead of partnering with God in ruling the world, Adam and Eve selfishly decided to do things their own way. The result was chaos. When they sinned, their good bodies were invaded by a sinful nature.

Your body can still be used for good. The fact that Jesus was incarnated in a human body testifies to the fact that God looks with favor on the physical body (see John 1:14).

The potential for your body to be used in positive, Christ-honoring ways is tremendous. However, in reality, your body is still subject to sin and death. Although the body is not evil in itself, it is weak and susceptible to the flesh. The body has the capacity to do good if the flesh is not in control.

Being self-disciplined is not in my nature. I have found that Spirit-control, not self-control, makes the difference. The Holy Spirit can control what I cannot. I must say again and again, "Lord, I can't control this; will you control it?" Then he takes over and controls the part of my life that my physical body might lead me to misuse or misapply.

Becoming an instrument of righteousness

How do you realize this potential for righteous living? It is through your identification with Christ in his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. His crucifixion frees you from sin's bondage, and his resurrection gives you life through the Spirit. *"We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."* (Romans 6:6, NIV)

Because your old self is crucified with Christ, you are no longer a slave to the body of sin. You can act as the new creation you are in Christ. You can consider your sinful nature, with its lusts and desires, dead; and so you can walk in the Spirit as he directs your thoughts and actions.

A living sacrifice

Christ wants a life fully given to him. This means you do more than give lip service to your faith. It means you commit your body to holy, righteous living.

Presenting your body to God can be the most freeing, gratifying, and joyful feeling in the world. You have a choice about how your body responds to situations. The decision to present your body as a living sacrifice means you close the door of the flesh. With the Holy Spirit's help, you can change harmful habits and yield all of your life, not just part of it, to the Master.

Stop a moment and think about the various parts of your body. Think about your eyes, hands, ears, stomach, sex organs, or tongue. In which of these do you feel you need the most help surrendering to God? Ask him to help you by making you aware of his presence when you are tempted to use that part of your body in wrong living. Then ask him to give you victory over that temptation.

Your victory is not automatic. As long as you live in your body, you continually fight the good fight of faith. But God promises you victory. Let me explain in practical terms how to let Christ master your total personality and enable you to live in the Spirit.

How to live victoriously

1. Ask God, through the Holy Spirit's guidance, to help you to will to do the right thing. *"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."* (Philippians 2:13, NIV) God helps you to want to do his will and then gives you the ability to do it.

2. Open the door of the spirit to the Spirit of God by asking him to fill you. *"Be filled with the Spirit."* (Ephesians 5:18, NIV) Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your personality and to keep on filling you so he can guide you, teach you, and give you power to be a spiritual person.

3. Close the door of the flesh to Satan by confessing your sins and claiming Christ's crucifixion of the flesh. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live; but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20, NIV)

4. Renew your mind by saturating it in the Word of God. *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will."* (Romans 12:2, NIV) As you listen to God and his Word and obey him, your mind is renewed. You experience the mind of Christ helping you know and understand the will of God.

5. Allow the Holy Spirit to master your emotions by producing the fruit of the Spirit in you. *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."* (Galatians 5:22, 23, NIV) The fruit of the Spirit helps produce the right emotions in you.

6. Present your body to Christ as an instrument of righteousness. *"Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather ... offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."* (Romans 6:12, 13, NIV) Your body is not evil in itself, only the flesh, or your sinful nature, is evil. Present your body and all of its members to God.

7. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. As you yield yourself to God fully, the Holy Spirit helps you to master your mind, will, emotions, body, and soul through the power of Christ. Now, take a moment to evaluate your own life.

- * Are you a natural person whose spirit is dead? Do your bodily senses and your natural desires control you?
- * Are you a worldly Christian who has allowed Christ to enter your life but is still being mastered by the desires of the flesh? Is the big "I" still in control?
- * Are you a spiritual Christian who has been crucified with Christ and is being controlled by the Holy Spirit?

Spiritual Christians are not perfect, but daily they crucify the flesh and consciously allow the Holy Spirit to fill them. When tempted, they invite Christ to fill their lives and they

close the door of the flesh. When they sin, they ask for God's forgiveness and strength to help them overcome the next temptation. They continually seek to offer themselves - mentally, emotionally, and physically -- to Christ to be used for his purposes.

Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can this occur, and only when he is invited to come in his awesome presence and power.