

OUR PRIMARY SACRIFICE
Romans 12:1, 2

Intro: There is an obsession on the part of many people today with the human body. It would not be wrong to say that many people worship physical attractiveness, and this applies to both men and women.

We see this in our beauty contests, in the emphasis on body-building (for women as well as for men), diets, jogging, and occupation in various sports.

There is nothing wrong with this as long as it is kept within the limits of maintaining good health so that one can do his or her work more faithfully. But it becomes wrong when that becomes the goal in life, an end in itself.

Paul told Timothy that "bodily exercise profiteth little," i.e., for a little while. See 1 Tim. 4:8, 9. And we need to remember that Paul was one who seemed to like sports.

But a Christian needs to know that the Bible has a lot to say about the body, that the body is important to God, and that, as we learned this morning, the body is to be glorified. The body is therefore included in the redemptive plan of God. In fact, the body belongs to God:

- 1) By creation.
- 2) By redemption. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

It can really be said, As our bodies go, so we go. Therefore, the teaching of Romans 12:1, 2 stands at the head of Paul's practical instructions to the Romans because it was the primary thing that they needed to be concerned about. All obedience is a mere sham if this has not been attended to first. We as Christians are to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. Every Christian must take care of this, and it needs to come first.

A sacrifice in Scripture is really an offering that is made to God.

The verse tells us that there are three things to do if this sacrifice is to be according to the Word of God:

- 1) "Present your bodies . . ."
- 2) "And be not conformed . . ."
- 3) "But be ye transformed . . ."

The tenses which Paul used here are very important.

The first is an aorist; the second and third are present tense verbs.

The meaning is this. The presentation is something that is done

once-for-all. We can see this from the fact that the same sacrifice cannot be offered over and over. BUT the carrying out of the sacrifice is something that never ends as far as this life is concerned. And so we can actually say that the sacrifice never ends.

But let us consider each part in turn according to the order that Paul has given us in this verse.

I. "PRESENT YOUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE."

This is unique among sacrifices because a sacrifice usually involved a death. In a sense it does for us because we are putting ourselves at the disposal of God to do with us as He sees fit.

There is a very precious verse in Luke 2:22 concerning what Joseph and Mary did with the Lord Jesus when He was still a baby. (Read.) They were putting their Son at the disposal of the Father--and think of what that meant!

So, recognizing that the Lord has purchased us, that we belong to Him, we place ourselves at His disposal, to do with us and through us what He wills to do. Our wills are being brought into subjection to His will. And you will remember how the Lord struggled with this in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Note the use of this same word in Rom. 6:13, 16, 19.

Now in order to carry out that presentation of ourselves to the Lord, we continually need to be concerned about two other things, one negative, and the other positive.

First of all, the negative:

II. "AND BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD."

Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.

If this sounds distasteful to you, perhaps it means that you have not been born from above; perhaps you have not experienced the new birth. There was a time in our lives when the world set the pace for us. Cf. Eph. 2:2a. But now that is all changed. Cf. 1 John 2:15-17.

And so that old pattern of being like the world has to be changed--and it is not easy.

To be conformed to the world means to be assimilated into the ways of the world--its conduct, its interests, its

speech, its dress--and to want the approval of the world and its people. It is to let your life be judged by the world's standards when now your life is to take an entirely different course.

This is a battle because the world is always putting us under pressure to conform. But we must not. We will often find that people in the church will think that a devoted Christian is going to far in His love for the Lord.

But remember that this cannot stand by itself. If you and I are just concerned about the negative aspect of our sacrifice to the Lord, we will fail. We also need to . . .

III. "BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND."

To be transformed means to undergo an inward change by which the outward appearance becomes altogether different from what it was. God has made you a new creature within; now that change is to show on the outside!

And this, like the non-conformity, is going on throughout our lives.

Our sacrifice in verse 1 is to be "living . . . holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Here we are to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is all an act of worshipping the Lord, but it means a change that is according to the mind and purpose of God. And so here we find that God's will is:

- 1) Good, in that it brings happiness.
 - 2) Acceptable--that which pleases God, pleases us.
 - 3) Perfect--complete; nothing needs to be added, nothing can be taken away. We would not have it any other way.
- So, what pleases God in verse 1 is what pleases us in v. 2.

But this transformation comes about through the renewing of our minds. What does that mean, and how does it come about?

Two things need to be said:

- 1) We have to learn to think altogether differently from the way we have thought about things before. Earth is still important because we are living here, but it becomes less important than it was. Heaven and God now have the supreme place in our hearts.
- 2) To do this, we need the Word of God.

To prove this let me take you back to one passage that I used this morning, and add another one to it.

- 1) 2 Cor. 4:16-18.
- 2) 2 Cor. 3:18.
What is the mirror? What does it mean to behold the

glory of the Lord?

It means to see Christ in the Word.

Here is where we fail.

Often our Bible reading is confined to one particular time during the day, but even that may be very hasty, and without much thought. One word that has gone out of the vocabulary of modern Christians is the word, meditation--and yet much is said about it in the Word.

Let me give you some advice from one of the Puritans: Thomas Brooks. In his introduction to his work called, Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices, he has this to say about reading:

Remember, it is not hasty reading, but serious meditating upon holy and heavenly truths, that makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul. It is not the bee's touching of the flower that gathers honey, but her abiding for a time upon the flower that draws out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most, that will prove the choicest, sweetest, wisest, and strongest Christian (Vol. 1, p. 8).

Concl: I am persuaded that if you and I were acting upon the commandments of this verse, we would find that the blessing of the Lord would abound in our lives. As far as our living is concerned, it is easy to be parttime Christians. But if we have given ourselves to the Lord, then we need daily to watch our lives to make sure that the world does not have the controlling effect upon our lives, but that it is the Lord working through His Word which causes us to relish the will of God and to delight in the things of the Lord.