

A Living Sacrifice

Romans, Part XLIV

Romans 12:1-2

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I. From Glory to Glory (2 Cor 3:18)

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding 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” (2 Cor 3:18).

II. A Living Sacrifice

Romans 12:1–2

¹I 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*. ²And 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.

A. By the mercies of God (1a cf. Rom 8:15-17, 29-30)

Paul grounds his exhortations in all that he has written thus far. We are to live righteously because God in Christ promises to glorify all those whom He has justified and adopted as joint heirs of all creation with Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

B. Present your bodies a living sacrifice (1b)

Paul urges every one of us to consecrate ourselves to God in worship. We are to *present our bodies a living sacrifice*, remembering that such a *sacrifice* must be *holy and acceptable to Him* (cf. Lev 10:1-7; Acts 5:1-11). This is our *reasonable service* – it is *service*, the word is *latreia* and refers to the proper way to approach God in _____ (cf. 9:4; Phil 3:3); it is also *reasonable*, the *rational* way to respond to the promises of God in Christ (cp. 6:1; Mt 13:44-46). The man who hears God’s promises and trusts in Christ to save him, will respond to God’s grace in Christ by devoting Himself wholly to God.

C. Do not be conformed but be transformed (2)

What does it look like to present ourselves to God as a holy and acceptable sacrifice? It is both *negative* and *positive*. On the *negative* side, we are not to *be conformed to this world*. Notice that we are not *“to be conformed”* – this is the *passive voice*. We are not to let *the world* press us into its mold, shape us into the kind of people that reflect its values (cf. 1 Cor 15:33). *“This world”* is any collective way of thinking and acting that does not arise from love of God and love of neighbor. *“Worldliness is anything that makes righteousness look strange and _____ look normal”* (David Wells). On the *positive* side, we are to *“be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”* Again, note that this is the *passive voice* – we are to *be transformed*. By whom? By _____. So how does God *transform* us from one degree of glory to another? Through the *renewal of our minds*. We are to study the word of God and His commandments, to meditate on the character and deeds of God in Christ, and to worship God in Spirit and Truth. As we do this, the Spirit will *transform* us into the image of Christ.

An Outline of Romans

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
- II. Credenda: “The Righteous by Faith” Shall Live (1:18-11:36)
- III. Agenda: The Righteous “Shall Live by Faith” (12-15:13)
 - A. A Living Sacrifice, Transformed not Conformed (12:1-2)
 - B. Transformed Communities (12:3-15:13)
 - 1. Think soberly about yourselves (12:3-8)
 - 2. Love without hypocrisy (12:9-13:10)
 - 3. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ (13:11-14)
 - 4. Bear with one another in love (14:1-15:13)
- IV. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

III. Your Reasonable Service

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding 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” (2 Cor 3:18).

A. Reveling in the mercies of God (cf. Rom 8:4)

First, the Spirit transforms us from one degree of glory to another as we revel in God’s mercy. The Heidelberg Catechism asks, *“What is your only comfort in life and in death?”*

“That I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

The foundation for our obedience to God’s commandments is the _____ of God in Christ. We do not obey God by mere will power or self-determination. Calvin writes, *“we display our enthusiasm for [righteousness] in vain, if we have not first shown that the origin of all righteousness for men is to be found in God and Christ...”* (262). He explains further:

This is the main difference between the Gospel and philosophy. Although the philosophers speak on the subject of morals splendidly and with praiseworthy ability, yet all the embellishment which shines forth in their precepts is nothing more than a beautiful superstructure without a foundation, for by omitting principles, they propound a mutilated doctrine, like a body without a head. (262)

B. Consecrating ourselves to God’s service (6:12-14; 1 Pet 2:4-5)

Second, the Spirit transforms us from one degree of glory to another as we consecrate ourselves to God’s service. As a *kingdom of priests*, each one of us is to daily *“offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet 2:5 cf. Phil 2:17; 4:18; Heb 13:15-16). This is our *reasonable service*. We are to present every member of our bodies to the service of God (cf. Ro 6:13).

¹³... *Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?... ¹⁸Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. (1 Cor 6:13-15, 18-20)*

C. Renewing our minds (cf. Ps 19, 119; Eph 4:20-24; Phil 4:8)

Finally, the Spirit transforms us from one degree of glory to another as we renew our minds. We must be a people of God’s _____ not of the world:

- ¹⁵*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 Jn 2:15-17)*
- ⁸*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Phil 4:8)*

IV. Conclusion