

God's will and commands for our conduct (Quality: Very good)

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[0 : 00] I'll have my mind to ask your attention to the chapter that we read. That is the 12th chapter in the epistle of Paul to the Romans. We will look particularly at the first two verses.

Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 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.

Most of you, I think, were present on the last Lord's Day, when the burden of my heart, and I hope to some degree I was able to convey the impression to your hearts in response, was that essential to our eternal good is an interest in nothing else and nothing less than the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

He said himself, and it narrows things down, but not too much, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

[1 : 55] My friends, if we're not in that way, the Lord Jesus Christ, my precious faith, hope, and love, we shall never end in the right place.

Therefore, the burden of my heart last Sunday was to shut you into Christ. And I trust that I said enough, though feebly expressed, to convey to you that there is that precious blood, the only efficacious gift that is given of God, whereby we may be cleansed from all our sins and presented faultless before the throne of God.

Now in the evening, I turned to the tenth chapter in this epistle and read the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

And there is no other dress with which we can be clothed to find acceptance in the presence of God and those holy beings, the spirits of just men made perfect, and holy angels that dwell in heaven and the very presence of a triune God himself.

My friends, we need the righteousness of the Saviour, His blood, His righteousness, alone will equip us and qualify us to come into the presence of glory forevermore.

[3 : 42] Now that is a tremendous truth. And surely, when we think of the fact that we're dying mortals and that we have nothing in and of ourselves to present any hope of acceptance with God, how wonderful it is if God has set our affections toward the Lord Jesus and we can say from our hearts from time to time, Jesus is the one thing needful.

I, without him, perish must. Well, now with those opening remarks, I want now to turn more particularly toward the latter part of this wonderful epistle, the epistle of Paul to the Romans.

Romans. And I don't want to take any part of scripture away from the whole book as though that has, as it were, a preeminent place in the wonderful inspiration and gift of God in his holy word.

But there is much in this epistle to the Romans that is so constructive to the glory of God and to our soul's eternal good.

Well, I laid in my humble way the foundation of Jesus Christ and him crucified last Lord's Day and I want to come to the more practical part of what I might term the preceptive aspect of divine truth wherein God has given to us his mind relative to our spirit and practice in this present life.

[5 : 42] And my friends, he's given us his word, he's given his will, he's given us his commandments and by his grace alone we can walk uprightly and securely and profitably through this present time to the glory of God and to our good now in this time state and forever in the hereafter.

There's no hope of us being right in the end if we're not right in the way to the end. salvation doesn't commence when souls get into the position and condition of death.

That's too late. That's too late. The preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue are a present requirement in the unfolding of God's grace to salvation.

My friends there are various aspects that are brought home to us in scripture. One is that great word of the Lord to Nicodemus when he said ye must be born again.

Yes eternal life begins here. It doesn't wait to the hereafter. An eternal life is the work of God within us.

[7 : 25] God takes away the stony heart out of our flesh and gives us a heart of flesh. That is our hearts by nature are like a stone and the hymn writer some way puts it an unconcerned can look upon those eternal things.

we have little feeling about the hereafter while we're in the flesh. Death may be a mountainous prospect but we soon dismiss it from our thoughts and indulge our flesh in those things which suit the flesh.

But my friends how good if God by his spirit and grace comes into our hearts makes us new creatures makes us feeling in our innermost being to the realities and solemnities of the ultimate for which we are created and that is to glorify God forevermore.

Now that is a miracle of birth in a twofold sense we're born in the image of God. God's given us natural abilities but sin has spoiled it.

But God revives and renews his work in the hearts of his people they become new creatures in Christ Jesus born again of the spirit and they have spiritual appetites they have spiritual desires they have spiritual longings and they have spiritual responsibilities to God in that he has left instruction how we should walk in the life of faith here below and how we should seek to know God and serve God and love God and follow God in the example the pure example of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and now it is the preceptive aspect of truth to which the apostle applies his mind and we seeking the will of God and the help of

[9 : 59] God would just make a few observations on this great truth Paul says I beseech you therefore brethren if a minister is not sincere in the points he wishes and desires under God to establish is not worthy of his place in a pulpit why does the apostle append this exclamation to the Roman believers I beseech you my friends this is not just of trivial importance this is of great importance this is an exhortation which has far reaching consequences and if you take knowledge of the teaching and seek

God's grace to walk in that way it will be to your profit in time and to eternity because it is obvious that the apostle Paul here is casting up that narrow way that leads to everlasting life it is the way of the Lord with his people it is the way of the saints established in scripture and still the saints in this present day and generation of which we form a part I beseech you therefore brethren you see he was addressing particularly the brotherhood in the church at Rome he was conscious that they needed instruction and that they would by God's help heed the instruction that he was graciously enabled to set before them the truth of scripture is constructive to shut your

Bible and make your own way is destructive my friends hold up my goings in thy paths that my footsteps slip not is a relevant prayer of a godly soul what a mercy if you and I desire to be instructed counseled taught those things of God that appertain to our spiritual well-being in time and our comfort to a never-ending eternity now I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God you know do you ever feel indebted to your parents for what your parents have done for you look if they had not ministered to you in the earlier days of your life you would have perished you would have perished the responsibilities of parenthood are tremendous and how wonderful it is when we've had conscientious and especially

God-fearing parents that have comprehensively sought our well-being they've sought to minister to us those things that are necessary to feed us they've sought to provide those things that are necessary to clothe us they've considered our environment that we needed warmth and comfort especially in those tender days of the beginning of life and as we've grown up they've applied themselves to their responsibilities with a loving concern for our welfare they realize laying a foundation for a building is exceedingly important and parents are laying a foundation in the lives of their children for the future and there will be a building built on the foundation and my friends how sad if the foundation has no strength in it how good if it is made strong by the gracious sanctifying influence of parenthood that those who love us have sought our spiritual as well as our temporal welfare and they've done everything within their power to instruct us in those ways that they have proved are the ways of well-being here upon the earth

I beseech you brethren therefore brethren by the mercies of God our heavenly father is a merciful God and my friends there's not a single development in the life of a child of God that passes without the knowledge of God himself the well-being of his children can be traced in the promises and declarations of Holy Scripture sometimes we may feel forsaken of God but that's not according to the word of God I will never leave thee nor forsake thee is the testimony of our merciful God and my friends some of us can say we can set our seal to that that he's never left us he's never forsaken us we've felt that sometimes and we feared that and we've justified him if he washed his hands of us to use a familiar expression we felt so wretchedly unworthy but he hasn't because his grace prevails his purpose to salvation is paramount he looks upon his people for Jesus sake and favors them with the fullness of his grace to their preservation and salvation well now

[17:20] I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God by the mercies of God his mercies are new every morning his mercies are constant he has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquity our very breath is a testimony of the mercy of God toward us and when we think of those things that are necessary to our lives what an abundance of mercy is constituted personally and individually in preserving us and maintaining us in this wilderness of earth I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God and you know the favors we receive create indebtedness indebtedness don't you ever feel indebted to your father don't you ever feel indebted to your mother don't you ever feel indebted to those that really love you and seek your well-being aren't you thankful for them they constitute a wonderful part of life don't they those of us that have been favored to enter into the union of marriage what we owe to our wives what wives owe to their husbands mercies they're not doing it in a sense for what they get out of it they're doing it because they've got an eye to our welfare they're pleased when we're pleased they're happy when we're prospered and they do their best to please and attain as it were to the end and commitment of the

Lord's ordinance in this respect I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God look we're greatly indebted to God every man jack on the face of the earth is a debtor to God he provides for them he maintains their health and strength he furnishes them with many many blessings too many to be told too many even to contemplate we're the subjects of mercy profound and sufficient you know I think sometimes of that good word godliness with contentment is great gain oh it's a wonderful thing to realize how good God is and good God has been and the way he has developed as it were his dealings with us here upon earth that while the world is indifferent and ripening for an eternal woe God in his mercy has given us an influence and a directive toward spiritual and eternal things we're looking for a better country that is in heaven the Lord has used means to instruct us and guide us into that narrow way that the Lord Jesus Christ becomes to us the one thing needful the great and blessed second person of the trinity who brought salvation down from heaven to this sin stricken world God I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God oh my friends let us dwell upon the mercies of God and they make us feel greatly indebted to God in praise and in thanksgiving praise waiteth for thee oh God in Zion and unto thee shall the vow be performed my friends if the church doesn't praise his holy name in the sensitivity of divine teaching where do God's praises come from from the human race sin sick and determined to gain everything they can possibly acquire in this world without any thought or any desire for the things to come in the eternal world I hope and I speak very collectively yet personally I hope you're not living for this world only because you're in a sad sad state think of the mercies of God think of the fact that you're still on praying ground think of the fact that God manifests salvation to his people in various ways and in various stages of life not all are born again while they're young blessed be God many are and it's a wonderful thing to see the influence to salvation in the lives of young people one has to hesitate to say how young I had a dear friend in swaves

a years ago and he's in heaven now it's my privilege to bury him but he had a little brother and that little brother was four when he died but that little brother so witnessed to the power of God's grace to salvation in his young heart that this Mr Parish that was the witness to me he said I held that child in my arms he was his older brother when he died he said and I knew he'd gone to heaven and that was a means of God's grace in Mr Parish's own heart if it had been me instead of him where would I have gone the Lord overruled it to his spiritual good and ultimate glory when he came to the end of his long life well now I beseech you by the mercies of God by the mercies of God and my friends our reaction to the mercies of God should not constitute just coming into the house of God thinking upon these things and as it were going back into the world and living as the world the mercies of God sanctify if we are truly in realization of our utter dependence for material things for time things as well as eternal things if you trace anything back to its source that's good and profitable you'll find God in the beginning and it can be so written over our lives as it's written in the beginning of God's holy word in the beginning God in the beginning God and my friends it's a great mercy that God is in the beginning of the temporal provisions of his people and he also is in the crowning benefit the spiritual benefits of his people too and there's reason to be thankful oh let us give honour and glory by the great name of this copious benefactor that has looked toward us has cared for us provided for us and I'm going to use an expression

I've used before maybe here if you could gather together all the food that you've consumed since your early days till now what type of heap would you expect to find look look at it the meals that you've consumed the constant attention to this necessity that your body must be nourished and fed but if you brought all that God has provided in the way of nourishment together some of us feel we should have a mountain a mountain of temporal provision surely it's no hard thing for us before we eat our meal to bow our head and say thank you to God for his goodness in meeting the constant requirement of temporal benefit now the mercies of God you present your bodies a living sacrifice a living sacrifice and my friends our bodies need give place to this exhortation a living sacrifice

God made us for himself man's rebelled man's chosen to withstand God and deny God at every turn by nature we're natural part at enmity to God is not subject to the law of God neither can indeed can be we're wretched distorted perverted sinners what a mercy what a mercy if a disposition is so wrought in our hearts that we're willing to acknowledge God that we're ready in temporal things to believe that it is God basically that provides and gives us these things to enjoy but let us go to the higher plane what a wonderful thing it is if

[29 : 09] God has brought us into the secret of salvation and written in our hearts the truth that we need a saviour that we need the cleansing blood and the garment of righteousness of this one who left heaven the son of God anointed and sent into the world by his father to bring salvation salvation of our souls and ultimately of our bodies too of our bodies too the salvation of the Lord's people is entire it's all of them my friends their soul goes to God when they die the spirit returns to God who gave it but ultimately there'll be a triumphant resurrection in that first day of God's power when he calls forth from the tombs his people a body sown in corruption but raised in incorruption a body as it were souls buried in disgrace and dishonor in that sense but raised in all the glory and power of heaven itself for now that you present your bodies a living sacrifice now look

I want you to come for a few moments in your thoughts to the point of sacrifice under the law beasts were brought they were types of the Lord Jesus Christ we don't want to minimize their signification and usefulness but they were laid upon the altar they were slain the priests had the job of killing them and they were laid on the altar now they were dead sacrifices weren't they dead sacrifices and the apostle here says living sacrifices living sacrifices yes the right term is sacrifice sacrifice you're not going to as it were spend all your thought and energy in the life of this world no there's a sacrifice but it's a living sacrifice the children of God are not expired until they die as far as this world is concerned but given to them is an opportunity of thanksgiving to God for his mercies as they live with a desire to honor him and praise him and recognize his rights to the obedience of the spirit in those words and ways that he's given to us to receive in his holy word a living sacrifice a living sacrifice the reaction of

Christianity to the word of God is not just a dead submission it's a living response a living response sacrifice yes we're as it were dead in that sense to all hope in ourselves we're dead to any possibility of attaining God's favor by who we are and what we are and what we do I like that and I mentioned it last week concerning the righteousness of Christ my best is stained and died with sin my all is nothing worth I'm dead to all hope in myself but I'm alive

I'm alive in the spirit because God has quickened me by his mercy to realize how he is my God he is my rightful Lord he has every qualification to require certain things of me and therefore I desire to know and to do his will a living sacrifice oh my friends those beasts that died on Jewish altars they were rendered incapable of any response but we are capable of response we we realize that yes we're dead in trespasses and sins by nature we're we're despoiled by the wretched introduction of sin in our first parents that's contaminated us all but we want to live to God's praise for his mercy excels all our just desserts

I hope I'm clear on this point or for sometimes it seems clear in my own mind and I find difficulty in conveying the meaning in words to my hearers but that is one of my constant limitations and humiliations as I try to preach I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice going about as witnesses showing the influence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your heart so did not I because of the fear of the Lord why do you spend Sunday as you spend the Lord's day so distinct so obviously separate from the world because God has said it is according to his word and pleasure remember the

[36 : 28] Sabbath day to keep it holy you don't you wouldn't offend God by doing those things that the world are doing it has a restraint on you it's it's a sacrifice but it's a it's a living sacrifice it's not something that you you regret doing it's something you're pleased to do because you know that the smile of God is worth more than anything to you I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercy of God you present your bodies a living sacrifice the things you don't do and the things that you do do the things that the world do you couldn't do them you wouldn't do them you don't want to do them you look upon them as evil you look upon them as soul destroying they displease

God and the frown of God is a terrible thing to be under but there are things which you do do and the world despise you for doing them you're meticulously honest in your dealings you don't go out to deceive people by telling untruths you've got as it were a practical restraint you think a thing through and you seek words to express as honestly as you can the state and need of the present oh the fear of the Lord is so comprehensive it makes a person different it makes them so distinct and the world recognize the distinction and let me say marvel not my brethren if the world hate you they'll hate the distinction they won't like you showing them up in a bad light by your honest word and your honest way of living but this is this great apostle beseeching them that they live in this attitude this approach godliness is a sanctified heart that where the spirit of god lives within a person where the spirit of god is living in it it'll affect your thinking it'll affect your doing and you're not doing because what is sanctification by the spirit it is making a new creature it is bringing into play influences that are not there naturally speaking but are very powerful and in some ways dominating because sometimes the grace of god enables you to forsake the influences of your nature and humbly and thankfully and prayerfully do what is right in his holy sight now that you present your body as a living sacrifice holy holy holiness is an element of godliness holiness you can't just throw up the reins and go into the world and consume as it were as much of it as you can possibly acquire oh no no no no god has given you the spirit of holiness holiness by his grace and holy living is your desire well now what a mercy it is to be different i beseech you brethren look here if anybody was seeking the well being of the romans though they may be gentiles and paul was a jew though there may be all sorts of distinctions and you might say the gentiles were living contrary to the knowledge and will of god in the great proportion at that particular juncture of the world's

history but paul still wanted them to take notice of what he was writing and in his ministry what he was saying because he knew the great benefit of it the great reward of it in that sense as god grants his blessing upon his gracious people for his name sake i must close mustn't i i beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of god you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable unto god do you ever say in your weighing up a situation what i intend to do is it acceptable to god god is it acceptable to god you may say oh no i can't say it is i must leave it alone i must leave it alone what pleases god pleases a gracious soul what is displeasing to god is displeasing to those who are tender in the filial fear of the most high is that your standard is that your standard the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom god comes into the reckoning god comes into the do's and don'ts of life in a very practical and intimate way you fear offending him you fear of grieving his holy spirit you fear that he will withdraw a sensible presence from your heart and from your life and my friends if you're that living sacrifice your sensitivities are so fine that all the last thing you choose to do is grieve god is grieve god because a grieved spirit leaves you dark and desolate and destitute in your better feelings now I didn't think of going on in this be not conformed to this world but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect with of god

I must close but my dear friends think on these things think on these things you know the happiest people under the sun are the people of god who have sensibly the lord to be with them they enjoy the reading of god's word it's oh it's so precious it's so promising it's so invaluable and they love the throne of grace oh it's a wonderful thing to have liberty before the lord and go as it were in the name of jesus christ to your heavenly father and tell him tell him your problems tell him your fears tell him your hopes tell him your needs and my friends when we're in the spirit oh it's such a wonderful thing to feel that the most high is accessible his ear is open to our cry and with all the resources of omnipotency he's ready to help he's ready to help to make crooked things straight to provide the barrel of meal shall not waste neither shall the cruise of oil fail and all you need in life my god shall supply all your need according to his riches to be in the spirit is to be wealthy wealthy beyond anything that this world can comprehend or make manifest to anyone what a wonderful thing that god against whom we've sinned is graciousness is grace enough to bring us into the experience and relationship of himself as our father of his son as our elder brother who was willing to make every crooked thing straight relative to our relationship with his holy father and to as it were qualify us to receive the constant influence of the holy spirit witnessing and teaching us what is right what is wrong what is to the glory of god what is to our personal welfare and the welfare of all those with whom we live and have contact i've lost myself in the sea of meditation i hope the lord will bring us more and more into the spirit of the text in practical religion amen