

# Set apart for service acceptable to God (Quality: Average)

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- [ 0 : 00 ] The epistle to the Romans, chapter 12. With the Lord's help, we will speak from the first two verses. Lord's epistle to the Romans, chapter 12.
- The first two verses. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that we present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and may not conform to this world.
- But may he transform by the renewing of your mind, that he may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- We read the eleventh chapter in order that we might see the ground upon which the apostle makes this appeal and beseeches the brethren by the mercies of God to present their bodies a living sacrifice.
- And you would have noticed in reading that chapter that the apostle comes to this place where words say, I am heaven to express the majesty and unholding of God's purposes to his people Israel.
- [ 1 : 40 ] For he says, Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out.
- And this is where he had to come. As he was proved in this particular instance, and there is no instance comparable with it, to bring together the purposes of God in the Jew and Gentiles, where both are made one in Christ, and where they are passed in the early verses of the left chapter as a remnant according to the election of Christ.
- And as he sees this unfolding purpose, which we must remember practically new to him, for he was not brought up in this truth, but you cannot but marvel at the way he is given such a clear view of the amalgamation, through grace, of the Jew and the Gentile in the person and the work of Christ.
- And how he speaks of the unbelief of both. How God has determined that in both cases, his goodness shall overflow the unbelief of the remnant.
- It is the remnant that he has in mind, and both of them are, or both parts of the remnant are shown to be brought together by divine grace in this most remarkable way.
- [ 3 : 54 ] And he himself was like Moses very much. He stood in the breach. He was a Jew. And he boasted of it.
- And yet, God called him to be the minister to the Gentiles. He had to go against his own people.
- And this remarkable fact must never be overlooked by us that God did not send a Gentile to the Gentiles, but he sent a Jew to the Gentiles, even as he sent a Jew to redeem the Church of God, Jesus Christ.
- So that these remarkable people, the Jews, revealed in their purpose through the history which most of the Bible contains, and yet issues in such a remarkable way, and an unheard of way.

And this is all, as he tells them, grace. The title of David became a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block.

[ 5 : 24 ] And so it did. All the beauties of the ancient temple, and the ancient worship, were passed away. They're all fulfilled in the person of Christ.

And there arose out of this a glorious new covenant, which was ordered in all things and sure, and the covenant that David himself speaks of.

O my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, though he make it not to grove.

And this is where poor David had to stop. Though he make it not to grove. Because in his day, the poacher of Israel after the death of Solomon was very dull.

But that covenant did grow in later years, and now we see it in its fullness. So that the word of Jacob and Israel are words that apply to the true church of God.

[ 6 : 49 ] and thus all marvels at God's great wisdom, the death of this remarkable work whereby they are called to work together.

And where the old feelings of animosity, prejudice, or the Jews even had no dealings with the Samaritans who were of the ten Christ, let alone the Gentiles.

And Peter, full of prejudice, said he never touched anything that was common or unclean. Oh, when God breaks down prejudice, you know, it's a wonderful thing.

one of those terrors left behind in the fall, prejudice. And you can't get rid of it.

We have it in a natural streak, in a natural makeup, a prejudice against particular things, nothing to do with religion, particular people, but when it comes into the things of God, which it does, prejudice is a very deadly thing.

[ 8 : 26 ] So that the reason Paul beseeches the bread really is somewhat apparent to us when we realize just what he is beseeching them to do and how this method of approach is so applicable.

It's not a command in the sense that you've got to do it, but I beseech you. He is fond of this word and it is indeed a gospel word.

It breathes the spirit of the gospel. It is beseeching. It is no lowering of God's power, but rather an evidence of his tenderness.

I beseech you therefore on this ground, brethren, by the mercies of God. I do not beseech you in my name or for my sake, but I beseech you for the mercies and by the mercies of God that I have just been speaking about, writing about, of this remarkable work where you and Gentiles blow into one strength.

The purposes of God according to election shall stand and where there shall be no distinction from ever and where the wolf shall lie down with the lamb.

[ 10 : 10 ] This gospel, this experience, I must take you therefore on these grounds the mercies of God.

And this request, no doubt, was heard. And we must not forget, it went to the church at Rome where there would be many Gentiles, and Gentiles of considerable ability and standing.

men of inability, uneducated, unlearned, but gracious.

laborers, laborers, laborers, laborers, laboring in God's cause.

What hard work this is, evidenced here, in setting the gospel and the truth before them. no easy matter, what ability it requires, what wisdom, diplomacy, if you like, that he could and should approach these in such a gentle way, and that he should use such choice language, not to frighten or drive, but to control them, which is fully in keeping with the spirit of the gospel that he was sent free.

[ 11 : 51 ] It's brethren to whom the besiegel is addressed, I besiegel therefore brethren. So that we might take this word brethren to me, not particularly brethren after the flesh, by any means.

that would be a total misconstruction of the previous chapter, and indeed of what he knew, seeing that he was the apostle of the Gentiles.

But the brethren were that number, whether they were Jew or Gentile, Bond or Scythian, out of every name, I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God upon this ground and what God has done.

Now here is the juncture, you see, of the new channel of blessing flowing out into the world, going into all the world. Here is that place where the river divides.

Here is the point that God has brought his church to, where the remarkable fullness of gospel blessing was to be poured out and was being poured out in such a place as Rome.

[ 13 : 17 ] Why, who would ever go to Rome from Jerusalem to preach the gospel? And who would ever think of joining the two cities together?

Why, they were miles apart from them. But now here is the seat of grace, the brethren.

They are to be sought, feed it with. They are to be approached in love. They've worked for the apostle to do.

Point out, the things that are yet cut to pass. And those things are set out in this twelfth chapter. The practical side of gospel, the doing side of it, what the old Puritans used to call the practical part, without which there is no effect or fruit.

What's the use? A religion without fruit. Or conduct. What is the use of it? And quite apart from that, what is it in the sight of God?

[ 14 : 42 ] Oh, indeed, a solemn thing to have a name, and yet to be dead, to deny the power of it, so that he had hard labor in his own soul, deep affection, but it was founded upon the rock of the covenant.

And that he has spoken of. And we can almost see his feet standing firmly upon this beautiful rock, as he exclaims of the unsearchable judgment from God, and his way, passed by the end.

death. Now, this is a gracious place, isn't it? Look at these rocks that we have all around us.

We don't know what they're composed of, do we? we know that they stand firm, we know, as we see them in the sea and elsewhere, that they withstand storm and tempest.

But of what wonderful composition, different from a sandy cliff that is gradually eroded, isn't it, by wind and wave, that here upon the solid rock of the covenant, the unsearchable riches and judgments of God, which are past finding out how true it is, isn't it?

[ 16 : 28 ] No man can stand up and give a full, complete explanation of these judgments and unsearchable ways of God, can't it?

They cannot be expressed in time and will never be. But they are sufficiently revealed for the church of God to see that they are very, very firm, everlasting, yes, the rock of ages, as is spoken of in the 26th of Isaiah, this eternal rock, immovable and unchangeable and unalterable, respecting the remnant according to the election of grace.

Therefore, this is the ground of his plea. plea is very particular. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that he presents your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable out of God, which is your reasonable service.

Now, I'm very struck during the week, as I opened quite without reference, to see how the sons of Levi were purified and washed under the law in the eighth of numbers.

The Levites were purified and they washed their clothes, and Aaron offered them as an offering before the Lord, and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse.

[ 18 : 34 ] And after that, went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron and before his sons, as the Lord had commanded.

And I felt quite comforted when I read that. I looked at no concordance really, in the eighth of numbers and verses twenty-one onwards.

There is the figure which I believe that Paul had in mind of those men that were taken literally, and if you go on to read it, they had to be twenty-five years of age when they were allowed into the work, the service of the sanctuary, and when they reached the age of fifty, they had to leave it.

So that there was a period of service that was of limited duration, twenty-five years. But be that a figure as it is, this is undoubtedly what the apostle had in mind, that he presents your bodies a living sacrifice, holy.

Not intrinsic holiness, not holiness within you, not a holiness whereby, supposing it fell to my lot to pick out of our little company here, any of you who were holy.

[ 20 : 15 ] Now how could I dare? Not that holiness at all, because none of us by nature could ever be said to contain a grain of holiness.

But, as for the old figure which Paul was undoubtedly familiar with, he saw the service of the sanctuary as set out by the purifying and cleansing of the device, at the age of twenty-five, where they were reckoned by virtue of age and choice and birth, oh yes, birth as well, to be fit for the service of the sanctuary.

and they were allocated to their touch. Now he sees in this great gospel scheme, the church of God, the necessity for those who shall do likewise, but not in the same way that they should be brought up and chosen on an age limit, or that they should be purified with washing of water, or anything else, literally.

But they should present themselves, not be presented as they were then. They should present themselves, your body, as a living sacrifice, an active, capable sacrifice.

Well, now, is not this exactly what divine grace has ordained? this is the whole matter of the furtherance of the church of God.

[ 22 : 29 ] His ways are past finding earth, his judgments are these, but we are plainly told that this is the way that he has revealed for his people to walk his chosen seed of Jacob.

And it has been accomplished. And he has done it himself. He has called them, and they are to be his servants.

Read the prophecies. Isaiah's greatest prophecy concerning the work of God's hands. They shall come to the north, south, east, and the west.

But this is intensely personal. Now, if we look at Paul, we can see another background in it.

Not only that of his Jewish upbringing, and his knowledge of the law, and of the way the Levites were set apart, or made holy, but his own experience personally, of his call by Christ.

[ 23 : 56 ] Now, you put these two things together, you can see the perfection of God's work. undoubtedly, Paul knew about the way the Levites were appointed in his knowledge of the Old Testament, but not until Divine Grace opened his eyes, and he was himself brought to present himself.

Paul. And how did he do it? Was it in a spectacular way? Did he leave his old company and friends and part with them by making some bowl decorations?

No, he didn't. What he did do was this, he said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Now, if you put that into the skull, then why this against the persecutor and the perjurer with those letters still in his pocket, ready to apprehend all who acknowledge Jesus Christ, you'll see that there was another background to him.

And now, therefore, he is fully in a position to speak of presenting your body. And this remarkable presentation, this giving of himself was in the utmost simplicity, Lord, what wilt thou have much of do?

Well, this doing, it's unfolding to assist it, it was a tremendous work. But there was the change, there was the devoting of himself and presenting of himself.

[ 26 : 11 ] himself. Now, is this exceptional? I know in many things there's only one call, there never will be only one, and the mercy, there never will be the equal in this sense.

but as regards the presenting of one's body, of one's life, one's will, one's service, through grace, there are untold numbers who are brought to this place.

But they've got to be brought them, present as means of willingness. You can't try them there, you could miss it, sir.

God beseeches, Paul beseeches, in writing of the Corinthians. He says, I beseech you, regard us as ambassadors of Christ.

This beautiful word fits in so well to those who stand upon the folder line. man. Oh, yes.

[ 27 : 29 ] Look at the sweet freedom of gospel service. Look at the loving way God presents his truth to his dear people.

The loving way he overcomes their objections and the barriers they raise. the sweet godlike manner in which he deals with sinful doubts.

Not to say it of you masks, not to drive them with whips like Egyptian past masters, but to sweetly draw.

This is his own word. draw. Why? We can't understand this drawing, can we?

You give the boy his compass and you tell him to turn it round until that needle stands still. And his mind will ponder the way that needle stands pointing to the north.

[ 28 : 47 ] Can't understand it. And you tell him to fix it there, tighten up the screw, leave it there, and you've got your true north. It's drawn there by what?

You say, well, daddy, how does this happen? How can this be? What draws this needle of my compass this particular way? What is it?

daddy can't tell him? Now, can the sinner tell what draws it to Christ? Can he?

Can you explain what draws you to Christ? Now, you're not asked to, you're not asked to explain it.

And what you are asked is this, what is it doing for you? What is this sweet attraction? attraction? Her irresistible attraction?

[ 30 : 03 ] And what is more, an alterable attraction? this is something recently found out in the 20th century, is it?

Something that has been hidden for years and never been understood or used by this has been proven through the century, hasn't it?

so is great. Draw me, there's a bride in the Song of Solomon, and we will run after this so that this drawing must be felt.

And if you feel it, you cannot be unaware of it. This present place and therefore of your bodies as a living sacrifice does not mean to be laid upon an altar like Isafail.

There's no such comparison as it is, but it's an active, but it's a sacrifice. Yes.

[ 31 : 21 ] It's a sacrifice. Shall I say it again? It's a sacrifice. Yes. sacrifice.

Sacrifice what? Ah, a thousand day. Give them up. Leave them. Part with them. Lost. Cross.

Trial. Temptation. Nails in the flesh. Wounds. Grief.

Sorrows. What? What? Yes. What a sacrifice? Yes. It can't mean anything else other than this.

It's a sacrifice. It could be said a surrender, but that isn't the word at all, and it doesn't appear in the scripture in this sense.

[ 32 : 20 ] It's a sacrifice. sacrifice. And what is the sacrifice? Self. Self. You. Me.

Yes. And you'll have to come to it if God has dealt with you and is dealing with you. Make no mistake about it, as far off as it may seem at the moment, you'll have to come to it because God will draw you.

and he will deal with you with this word or word like it. He will so soften your heart, melt your spirit, and make you tender that you will be willing in the day of his power.

In this way, Paul puts to them the right matter of service, holy, holiness. Now, this word is not to be credited in any way, whatever.

It doesn't mean, as I have said, an intrinsic holiness. It merely means holy as in the Old Testament meaning of the word, the furniture and fittings of the tabernacle were holy.

[ 33 : 43 ] they were not used for any other purpose. The mercy seat and the humblest vessel used in connection with it, the ultra burnt offering and all mention what you will.

the badger skins and the outer covering of the tabernacle as rough as they were brought home. They were not used for any particular purpose, any other purpose.

And therefore, when it came to moving them, there are any particular people allowed to do it. most interesting to read how the tabernacle was taken down by different ones who had their particular tasks.

And so it is, as we come on to read this chapter, so we being many of one body in Christ and every one member is one of another. But this later, that at the moment, holy, don't, don't regard this as being holiness as we understand it according to God's holy edict, being holy as I am holy.

Oh no. This holiness is only by imputation. And that righteousness is God in part. But here, it's the ancient word holy.

[ 35 : 28 ] separated for a particular youth. Now, is not this so? If the love of God warms your heart and constrains you to this sacrifice, will it not be a separation from other things?

will you be able by the second verse chosen? Be not conformed to this word.

This is the meaning of it. This is what God has ordained. His people shall walk separately, coming out from among them.

And be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Or, if you look at the 52nd of Isaiah, you will see this, be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.

It is therefore a holiness as regards a separation from the world. Holy. You cannot serve two masters, you cannot offer your life an active sacrifice, a living sacrifice, unto the Lord, and serve mammon as well.

[ 36 : 59 ] I know that we may try to do this. It seems a very delightful thing to flesh. It will save the nails and the crucifixion.

It will save the sacrifice. Oh, yes, if you can run between the two and be a liberal in your religion, neither one thing or the other, if you can serve God a manner, then you will be happy.

You won't mind having a Sunday religion. if you can do what you like on Mondays. You won't mind keeping your tongue quiet and sober on Sunday in the house of God and among God's people.

If you can only let it run riot tomorrow, oh no, you will have a religion just as the Pharisees had, that may broaden their philacteries and blound the uppermost seats in the synagogue, but this people draw in the near to me with their and honor of me with their mouths and their hearts so far from me.

Oh yes, this middle cause is eternal perdition, nothing less except God deliver us from.

[ 38 : 35 ] It is the cost, the cost that crucifies the flesh. And this is where the separation comes from, the holiness, the serving the Lord with all humility of mind, as the apostle said.

Again, we look at him and see that this is just what he had to do. He was hated. And after man has been where he had been, at the top of his profession, you know, and in company with all men of equal ability, this hatred of his fellow men must have been a hundredth fold more difficult.

Oh yes, his popularity as a learned man, when it began to lose its color and sink, and when he became less popular, and they hated him, and he had to be let down by a basket on the wall of Damascus on one occasion, when he began to be persecute, even Ananias said, Lord, I can't go to this man.

But the very first seemed that one would be touching a lion, to go anywhere near him. But when he received these solemn rebounds from his old friends, and was separated from those he was once popular with, I say, what a crucifix.

Oh, none of us like this sort of thing. we would rather dwell naturally upon the mountain of popularity. But when it comes to serving the Lord with all humility of mind, being brought out and made separate, then there comes the nail, the cross, the persecution, the hatred, the hatred, the hatred.

[ 41 : 05 ] It's inescapable. Indeed, it's a mark in your favor. If you be without care, what evidence is there that your walk in front of the world is not something which they can agree with?

Remember, therefore, the body is to be presented as active sacrifice. Now, what was God wanted for? Why, write to the Romans and say, I receive you, brethren, to present your bodies a living sacrifice.

What purpose has God done? Why, he has these men to serve him. And they did too, didn't they?

They all said that are of Caesar's household. Oh, how sweet blessing. And they came out of Caesar's household, called by Christ, from all those magnificent surroundings, and all the security too.

Oh, yes, there's no fear of crucifixion and sacrifice in Caesar's palace, naturally speaking. But let them once be identified with the gospel and the gospel grace and the apostle Paul, and let they go.

[ 42 : 46 ] They're ostracized, they're cut off, don't want them. Is not this so, therefore, with this word, God has need of these bodies.

His purpose is to be fulfilled. His work is to go on. Sinners are to be called, sinners are to be provided for.

The sanctuaries of God are to be maintained. the walls of the ministry are to be mounted by fresh men. And thus they are and ever will be.

But, his ways are part of finding out. They will never be paddled. I proceed to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy.

But then it's got to pass a further test. acceptable out of God. I must leave it here, must I? Just getting into the subject, aren't we?

[ 43 : 58 ] Acceptable out of God. Oh dear, who's going to stand this test? Acceptable out of God. A holy heart searching God.

Acceptable out of God, yes. God. How can it be? How can it be that guilty unworthy heathens, as these were in many cases, should be thus enabled to present their bodies living living sacrifice, holy, separate, acceptable unto God?

How? Why? Because this very work itself, this drawing, this being made willing, this readiness to count the cost, bear the unequal strife, and so on, was already his preparatory work.

This wasn't the individual doing it. It was God's work leading them on and up to, through various changing scenes, to say, Lord, take my all, this, worth this hour, and make it holy God.

Amen.