

Our bodies, a living sacrifice (Quality - Good)

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Preacher: Broome, Leonard Robert James (1905-1986)

[0 : 00] The Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 12, with the Lord's help, we will speak from the first two verses.

Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 12, the first two verses. 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.

We read the 11th 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, as 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 failed him to express the majesty and unfolding of God's purposes to his people Israel.

[1 : 44] For he says, O 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. And this is where he was brought.

According to the election of grace. And as he sees this unfolding purpose, which we must remember practically new to him, for he was not brought up in this truth, We cannot but marvel at the way he is given such a clear view of the amount of grace through grace of the Jew and the Gentile in the person and the work of Christ.

And how he speaks of the unbelief of the unbelief of the unbelief of the unbelief of the remnant. And how God has determined that in both cases his goodness shall overflow the unbelief of the remnant.

It is 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 : 57] And he himself is like Moses very much. He stood in the breeze. 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 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.

He said 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 that he tells them grace. The table of David became a snare and a trap and a stumbling block, and so it did.

[5 : 31] 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.

Though 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 grow.

And this is where poor David had to stop. Though he make it not to grow. Because in his day, the culture 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 : 55] And thus, Paul marvels at God's great wisdom, the depths of this remarkable work, whereby they are called to work together.

And the old feelings of animosity, prejudice, for the Jews even had no feelings when the Samaritans, who were of the dead crime.

Let alone the Gentiles. And Peter, full of prejudice there, and 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 of prejudice. And you can't get rid of it. We have it in a natural streak, in a natural matter.

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 : 27] So that the reason Paul beseeches the brethren 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 Jew and Gentile flow into one street.

[9 : 54] And the purposes of God according to elects and shall stand. And where there shall be no distinction from heaven.

And where the wall shall lie down with the land. This gospel, this experience. I beseech 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 of Rome.

Where there would be many Gentiles. And Gentiles of considerable ability and standing. Not men of inability, uneducated, unlearned, but gracious.

And the people of God. We were speaking last Sabbath of laborers. Laboring in God's cause.

[11 : 05] What hard work this is, evidence here, in setting the gospel and the truth before them. No easy matter.

No easy matter. What ability it required. 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 withdraw them.

Which is fully in keeping with the spirit of the gospel that he was sent free. Now, it's brethren to whom the, you see, figures of grace are received to, therefore, brethren.

So that we may take this word brethren to mean, not particularly brethren after the flesh, by any means. But that would be a total misconstruction of the previous chapter and indeed of what he knew.

[12 : 17] 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.

Why, who would ever go to Rome from Jerusalem to preach the gospel? Who would ever think of joining the two cities together?

[13 : 29] Why, they were miles apart. But no, here is the seat of grace.

The brethren. They are to be sought. They are to be sought. They are to be approached in love.

They work for the apostle to do. Point out to and of them. Things that are yet to come 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 Practic part.

Without which there is no effect or fruit. What is the use of religion without fruit? Or conduct. What is the use of it?

[14 : 33] And quite apart from that, what is it in the sight of God? 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 pounded 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 the unsearchable judgment of God. And his way past by the end.

Now this is a gracious blaze. Look at these rocks that we have all around. We don't know what they are composed of.

[15 : 39] 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 er judgments of God. Er, which are past finding out.

How true it is, isn't it? No man can stand up and give a full and complete explanation of these er judgments.

And unsearchable ways of God, can 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.

[16 : 51] The everlasting, yes, the rock of ages as is spoken of in the 26th of Isaiah.

The eternal rock. The eternal rock. Immovable and unchangeable and unalterable. Respecting the remnant according to the election of grace.

The eternal rock. The eternal rock. Therefore, this is the ground of his living. But his plea is very particular.

I deceive you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.

Holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable servant. Now I am 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 8th of Numbers.

[18 : 13] 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. And after that went to 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 comfortable when I read that. I looked at no concordance for anything. In the 8th of Numbers and verses 21 onwards.

There is a 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 25 years of age when they were allowed into the service of the sanctuary.

[19 : 22] And when they reached the age of 50, they had to leave it. So that theirs was a period of service that was a limited duration, 25 years.

But be that a figure as it is. This is undoubtedly what the Apostle had in mind. That he presents your body to a living sacrifice.

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

Now how could I do that? 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 Levites, the church of the church at the age of 25, where they were reckoned by virtue of age and choice and birth, oh yes, birth as well, to be picked for the service of the sanctuary.

[21 : 06] 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 a washing of water, or anything else, literally.

But they should present themselves, not be presented as they were then.

They should present themselves, your bodies, as a living sacrifice, an active, capable sacrifice.

Well now, is not this exactly what Divine Grace has ordained?

[22 : 18] This is the whole matter of the furtherance of the church of God. His ways are past finding out. His judgments are being.

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 He has done it Himself. And He has done it Himself. And He has done it Himself. He has called them.

And they are to be His servants. Read the prophecies. Isaiah's gracious prophecy concerning the work of God's hands.

God's hands. So, the Bible says, God, He has come from the north and south, the east and the west. But this is intensely personal.

[23 : 23] 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 called by Christ.

Now, you put these two things together, you can see the perfection of God's Word. And how did he do it? 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.

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 scale, and weigh this against the persecutor and the perjurer, with those letters still in his pocket, ready to apprehend all who acknowledge Jesus Christ, you will see that there was another background to him.

[25 : 25] And now, therefore, he is fully in a position to speak of presenting your bodies.

And this remarkable presentation, this giving of himself was in the utmost simplicity, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Well, this doing, his own quality to assist it, it was a tremendous work. But there was the change. There was the devoting of himself and presenting of himself.

Now, is this exceptional? I know in many things there is only one Paul and there will be only one. And the mercy there never will be the equal in this heaven.

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

[26 : 40] But they've got to be brought there. Present means of willingness. You can't drive them there, you can miss it.

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

God beseech you to regard us as ambassadors of Christ. This beautiful word fits in so well to those who stand upon the borderline. Oh yes, 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 God-like manner in which he deals with sinful doubts. Not to say to them you must.

[27 : 54] Not to drive them with whip like Egyptian past months. Not to sweetly draw. Not to sweetly draw. This is his own word.

Draw. Why? We can't understand this drawing, can we?

You give the boy his comfort. 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. Can't understand. Can't understand.

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?

[28 : 54] You say, well daddy, how does this happen? How can this be? What draws this needle, my comfort, this particular way?

What is it? Daddy can't tell him. Can the sinner tell what draws it to Christ?

Can he? Can he? Can you explain what draws you to Christ? No. You are not asked to.

You are not asked to explain it. But what you are asked is this.

What is it doing for you? What is this sweet attraction? Her irresistible attraction.

[29 : 55] And what is more, an audible attraction. Well this isn't something recently found out in the twentieth century, is it?

Something that has not hidden for years and never been understood or used by this.

has been proven through the centuries, hasn't it? So is pride. Draw me, as the pride in the Somme of Solomon, and we will run after me.

Oh that this drawing must be found. And if you feel it, you cannot be unaware of it. This presentation therefore of your body is a living sacrifice.

Does not mean to be laid upon an altar like I should call it. There's no such comparison as this. But it's an active, but it's a sacrifice.

[31 : 10] It's a sacrifice. Shall I say it again? It's a sacrifice.

Yeah. Sacrifice what? Ah, a thousand things. Get them out.

Leave them. Part with them. Lost, cross, trial, temptation, nails in the flesh.

Wounds, grief, sorrow. What? Yes. What a sacrifice? Yes.

It can't mean anything else other than live. It's a sacrifice. It could be said a surrender, but that isn't the word at all.

[32 : 09] And it doesn't appear in the scripture in this sense. It's a 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 great matter of service, holy. Now this word is not to be dreaded in any way or whatever.

[33 : 17] 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. They were not used for any other purpose.

The mercy seat and the humblest vessel used in connection with it. The altar burnt offering and all mentioned what you will.

The badger skins of the outer covering of the tabernacle, as rough as they were, were all holy. And they were not used for any particular purpose, any other purpose.

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

[34 : 34] And so it is, as we come on to read this chapter, so we being many, have one body in Christ, and every one member's one of another.

But this latent, that at the moment, holy. Don't, don't regard this as being holiness as we understand it according to God's holy edict, thinking holy as I am holy.

Oh no. This holiness is only by imprecation. And that righteousness is God in part. But here, it's the ancient word holy separated for a particular use.

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, be not conformed to this word? This is the meaning of it.

[36 : 04] This is what God has ordained. His people shall walk separately, cut ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and perhaps 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.

I know that we might try to do this. It seems a very delightful thing to play. It will save the Niles 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 nor the other.

[37 : 22] If you can serve God and man, then you will be happy. You won't mind having a Sunday religion. If you can do what you like on Monday.

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, you will have a religion just as the fallacies had, that may broaden their phylacteries and allow the uppermost seats in the synagogue, that this people draweth me near to me with their lips, and honoureth me with their mouth, but their hearts are far from it.

Oh, yes. The middle cause is eternal perdition. Nothing less, except God delivers from it. It is the cost, the cost that crucifies the flesh.

And this is where the separation comes from. The holy death. So you're serving the Lord with all humility of mind, as the apostle says.

Again, we look at him and see that this is just what he had to do. He was hated. He was hated. And after a 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 hundredfold more difficult.

[39 : 19] Oh, yes. His popularity as a learned man, when it began to lose its colour 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 persecuted.

Even Ananias said, Lord, I can't go for this man. But the very first, seeing that one would be touching a lion, to go anywhere near him.

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 empathy.

[40 : 57] It's inescapable. Indeed it's a mark in your favour. If ye be without it. 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 an active sacrifice.

Now what does God want it for? Why write to the Romans, and how I perceive to you brethren, to present your bodies, a living sacrifice, what purpose has God done?

Why, he has been sent to serve you. And they did too, didn't they? They all serve that they 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.

[42 : 15] 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 of Grace, and the Apostle Paul, and let them go.

They're ostracized, they're cut off, no more. No more. 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 past finding out.

[43 : 28] They will never be paddled. I proceed to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy. And then he's got to pass a further test.

Acceptable unto God. I must leave it here, must I? Just getting into the subject, aren't we? Acceptable unto God.

Oh dear, who's going to stand this test? Acceptable unto God. A holy heart-searching God.

Acceptable unto God, yes. How can it be? How can it be? That guilty and worthy heathens, as these were in many cases, should be thus enabled to present their bodies, living sacrifice, holy, separated, acceptable unto God.

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

[45 : 01] 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, Lord, take my all, this worthless harm, and make it holy.

Like it holy. That. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.