

## Chapter Twenty-two

## A Living Sacrifice

*“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”*

(Philippians 2:12-13).

The greatest deception that Satan, the enemy of our souls, has ever foisted upon humanity is the false but appealing doctrine that men can do something to earn his own salvation, by keeping the Law of God. The second greatest error is the teaching that we don't have to do anything after we are saved. The first error says it makes no difference what you believe, just so you live right, and the second error teaches that it makes no difference how you live, just so you believe right. Both are a delusion and a snare of the enemy.

It is ever faith, followed by works. Faith is the root of salvation, but works are the fruit of our salvation. God sees our faith, without works, and justifies us on the basis of our faith in His promise. Men, however, will never recognize our faith until they can see it evidenced in our works. God looks at our faith. People can only see our works. Justification is the work of God; our works are the proof to our fellow men of God's work in us. Therefore Paul says,

*“Work out your own salvation.”*

He does not say work for your salvation, but we are to work out what God has ready worked in. But while believers are not saved or kept by works, God does expect and claim our complete devotion. Paul makes an impassioned plea to the Christians in Rome that they make a full surrender of their lives on the basis of their great salvation.

*“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” (Romans 12:1).*

Note the form of Paul's appeal. It is the language of the grace of God. He says, *“I beseech you.”* It is not *“I command you.”* This is not on legal ground, but in the realm of grace. It must be a voluntary service, motivated by gratitude and not by constraint or fear of punishment. This is implied by the word, *“therefore.”* Paul says, *“I beseech you therefore.”* Whenever you come across the word, *“therefore,”* in the Bible, you should stop and ask, *“What is it there for?”* It always refers us back to a *“wherefore.”* It points us back to the reason for the plea, *“I beseech you therefore.”* This verse in Romans 12:1 should logically follow Romans 8:35-39.

## The Parenthesis

To adequately understand the book of Romans one must understand the chapter 9, 10 and 11 are a parenthesis between chapters 8 and 12. They are inserted between the

closing verse of chapter 8 and the opening verse of chapter 12, as an illustration of the free grace of God. After Paul had shown that we are not only saved by grace, but kept by grace, he turns to call attention to the history of the nation of Israel as an illustration of this truth. The nation had been chosen of God by grace in the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then the children of Israel were placed under the Law with its condemnation; however, they failed to keep this Law and fell into idolatry, bringing upon them the chastening of the Lord, and were scattered over the face of the whole earth – and have been scattered for 2,500 years. However, God has not cast them away, or permanently forsaken them, but remembers His covenant and will restore them again and fulfill every covenant promise made to them. The three chapters – (Romans 9, 10, and 11) – are inserted to illustrate that even when God’s people forsake Him, He does not cast them off, but keeps His covenant promise of grace. This is the teaching of the “parenthesis” (Romans 9-11) between chapter 8 and 12.

In Romans 9 we have Israel’s past; her beginning, and her calling in sovereign grace. It is all gathered up in that verse of sovereign choice:

*“As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”*  
(Romans 9:13).

It was grace and grace alone. But Israel failed and so God comes to chasten them. The 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans reveals a picture of Israel during this dispensation of their dispersion. It does indeed seem as if God had forsaken them. Today God is not dealing with Israel as a nation. They are set aside. Today the individual Jew can be saved just like the Gentile and by it become a member of the Body of Christ, but the “nation” is rejected and set aside. This brings us to Romans 11. The question is, “*Is this setting aside of Israel permanent?*” “*Has God, who chose the nation in grace, now disowned them and cast them away because they failed?*” Paul answers this question in unmistakable words:

*“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, ... God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew”* (Romans 11:1-2).

Just because Israel failed completely to keep God’s Law, and ended up by the rejection of the Messiah, this did not affect God’s ***faithfulness***. To be sure, they sinned indescribably for their sin, but God did not disown them or repudiate His covenant of grace. And so after asking, “Hath God cast away his people (Israel) Paul clinches the answer in Romans 11:25,

*“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins”* (Romans 11:25-27).

This is the message of Romans 9, 10, and 11. God’s people, called in grace, proved themselves unworthy, were chastened of the Lord, but it did not affect their covenant

relationship with God, for His is faithful to His word, and will never cast them off, because He is a God of grace. Now remember this section – (Romans 9, 10, and 11) – is a parenthesis. God’s dealing with Israel is an illustration of God’s dealing with us in grace. We were saved by grace apart from the works of the Law. What if we fail after we are saved, and fall into sin and disobedience? Does God cast us off? Paul had answered this in Romans 8 when he says,

*“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”*  
(Romans 8:38-39).

It is because of this security, this faithfulness of God, that Paul opens the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans with the impassioned plea,

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God”*  
(Romans 12:1).

God’s faithfulness becomes the incentive and motive of our surrender to Him, and this faithfulness is illustrated for us in His dealing with the nation of Israel; therefore the reason for the parenthesis between chapter 8 and 12.

### By The Mercies of God

So, looking at Romans 12:1, we see that Paul pleads on the basis of the faithfulness of God, that we yield ourselves to Him. Notice that it is a *plea*, not a *command*. Paul says, *“I beseech you.”* It is the language of *grace*, and not *Law*. Notice next, Paul is speaking to *believers*. He says, *“brethren.”* They were born-again believers but living selfish lives. They were not fully yielded to God. Paul is not speaking – or writing – to people who had attained sinless perfection. Now notice what Paul asks these believers to do, not by *threat*, but by the *mercies* of God:

*“... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”* (Romans 12:1).

This might be paraphrased by God saying, *“Make Me a present of your body, to be used by Me as an expression of your gratitude for the mercies I have shown you.”* God wants us to yield our bodies to Him. So many have presented their souls in service to God, and have been faithful in worship and devotion and prayer, but have withheld their bodies. And notice, God asks us to *“present those bodies a living sacrifice,”* or *“a sacrifice while we are still alive.”* Paul means we are to sacrifice our body when it is full of life; not wait until it is worn out and broken. There are thousands of believers who would die for Christ rather than renounce their faith – but these same Christians are *not “living”* for Him. God is not asking us to *“die”* for Him, as others have, but He asks us to *“live”* for Him. He died for us, and because He died for us, we live for Him. What could be more reasonable that that we should dedicate these lives fully to His service?

The Body Has Members

So many of God's people, who do not yet realize the power of complete yielding of their members to Christ, are still seeking for victory in the strength of the flesh, under the fear of the Law. What we need to do is to stop our vain struggling and confess that we do fail and then turn to the only One who alone can give victory. Here is the answer to our defeat:

*"I beseech you therefore [because of His mercy to you], that ye present your bodied [wholly to Him]."*

Have you ever said to the Lord since you were saved, *"Here is my body, Lord; from now on it will be wholly Yours?"* Remember that body is made of "members." We need to say, *"Lord, here are my eyes, that have been so enamored by the scenes of this world; take them and open them to the need of seeking out the lost, in reading and studying Your Word, instead of looking at the silly trash of this age."*

*"Lord, take my ears, that have been so given to listening to the jargon and clamor of a sinful world, so eager to listen to gossip and slander – take these ears and open them to the cry of lost humanity, to listen Your voice, and close them to the things that defile and pollute my mind and soul."*

*"Take these lips of mine, and this tongue that has so often been used to cut and wound and hurt, and which has been spent in idle gossip and foolish jesting, and cleanse it by my confession, that henceforth this tongue will speak and repeat only the things that are pure and holy, instead of inflicting injury. Take these hands that have been so grasping for filthy lucre. Take my feet that have so often walked in self-chosen ways and lead them to some soul for You. Take my heart, my mind, my will, yea, my every thought and imagination, and make it subject to Your will. Take my stubborn will, my unwillingness to forgive, and teach me true humility." What is it that you have held back from Him who gave His all for you?*

### Reasonable Service

Paul calls this our "reasonable service." Notice the words: *"present your bodied, holy, acceptable to God, **which is your reasonable service.**"* Is it unreasonable of the Lord to ask us for our body to live for Him, when He gave His body on the cross for us? The Lord asks each one, *"In the light of what I have done for you, in saving you from Hell, delivering you from the curse and condemnation of the Law, and setting you free in the liberty of grace, is it an unreasonable request to ask you to live for Me?"*

Remember that this service is not on the basis of Law, but grace. We are not to service the Lord in order to escape punishment, but instead we are to serve Him because we *are* saved. We are not to "behave ourselves" because of the fear of God's judgment. Paul said, *"the love of Christ constrains me,"* not, *"the Law of God threatens me."*

The Christian's life should not be a life of bondage, abstaining from this or that thing, and observing this and that commandment – because they fear they will lost if they don't live a perfect life. My heart goes out to those who hold themselves in bondage and restraint because they fear losing their salvation if they do certain things – or don't certain things – should fail. What a low, mean, unworthy motive for serving the

Lord. God wants us to service Him through love, not fear; from a heart of gratitude that rejoices in doing the things that please Him, who please not Himself but gave His all to redeem us.

I would not want my children to obey and respect me just because they feared me if they didn't - no, I want their love and gratitude for that which I have tried to do for them. How much more we should seek those things that are pleasing to God and being forth . . .

*“... the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: **against such there is no law**” (Galatians 5:22-23).*