

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

19 November 2023

Give Yourself in Service

Text: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" Or: act of worship. *Rom. 12:1*

God gives us everything, he asks us to give him everything.

Seems fair, right?

This passage of Scripture is the one I used when I had to translate a passage from the original language and then put it into words to show that I understood the meaning of the passage.

My full passage was *Romans 12* verses one and two.

So I know what Paul means by "The mercies of God" and what he meant by our reasonable act of worship.

I have preached on this text a few times.

I wonder how much of that you remember.

There are two main passages in the Bible that have set me on the straight path.

This one is about our response to God's great mercy and love and the passage about being before God in judgment and he says, "depart from me, I never knew you". In *Matthew 7:21*

Which says, in essence, if God is not in it or behind it or directing it, we do it for nothing.

Putting these two passages together you get, God must direct our committed efforts or it amounts to nothing.

It is said that *chapter 12* is a watershed of this letter of Paul's to the church in Rome.

If you stand on the great divide you can see where the water flows in opposite directions.

This text is like that.

With the word "therefore" he was looking back at the first eleven chapters of the letter, where he stressed a systematic theology that presents all the essential facts about man's relationship to God from a doctrinal standpoint.

Paul is beseeching us to give to God our very essence to be used for His Glory and our neighbors' good.

This is the practical side of religion, the true test of one's orthodoxy.

Not what we say we believe, but what we do that proves the genuineness of what we say we believe.

Unless we put into practice, in daily living, what we profess to believe, we do not truly believe it.

And we will never be able to do the good, acceptable will of God until and unless we are totally committed and willing to give God our very existence.

How is your doctrine?

Paul began the Roman letter by clearly outlining man's depraved condition before God.

After a few introductory words about himself, the Roman church's reputation, his thwarted plans to come to them, and the nature of the gospel he preached, he tackled the sin problem.

In the latter part of chapter one, he dealt with the gentile world.

Although they did not have the Mosaic law, they had a law within their own hearts, which they had violated, failing to live up to the truth they possessed.

For that reason, the Gentiles stood as sinners before God.

In chapter two Paul dealt with the Jewish people who had religious privileges but failed to realize their possibilities, violating God's law and refusing to live up to the light that had been revealed to them.

Paul tied all the strings together in chapter three, climaxing with the great statement that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”.

Chapter four deals with salvation by faith.

Man has always been saved by faith, even in Old Testament days, it was Abraham’s faith that God counted as righteousness.

In chapter five the glorious results of faith are outlined; and in chapter six Paul made clear the obligations of one who has been justified by faith, concluding with the timeless declaration that “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter seven pictures the struggle between the old man and the new man in the life of the believer.

Chapter eight shows the victory that comes to those who are in Christ and the security they enjoy because of his constant presence and unfailing power.

Paul concluded chapter eight with a glorious statement that nothing is able “to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

Chapters nine through eleven deal with the Jewish people and are, in a sense, a transition between the doctrinal section and the practical section of the letter.

We should note, however, that God loves Israel and stands ready to receive the Jewish people unto himself when they come to Jesus Christ for salvation.

How is your dedication?

Notice the expression, “A living sacrifice,” which Paul used to express his concept of dedication.

The people to whom he was writing, Jewish Christians who had accepted Christ on the day of Pentecost probably made up most of the group, were steeped in the Old Testament Scriptures.

They understood the sacrificial system whereby an animal was slain as an offering to God.

Paul suggested that Christians do not bring dead sacrifices to the altar but rather bring themselves as “living” sacrifices.

Most people despise the word sacrifice.

To them it suggests a negative, and narrow view.

Paul, however, put the word living in front of it and thus removed the stigma of Jewish law and set forth an innovation.

Someone translated it, “Put your bodies at God’s disposal as a living thank offering.”

Our bodies are to be made available for God’s service.

He alone knows best how to use them to his glory and to our growth.

In this context, the word body means the total person.

Our hearts, minds, and physical energies should be brought to God for him to use as he sees fit to accomplish his redemptive purpose in the world.

How is your devotion?

We will never be any more dedicated to God than the measure of our love for him.

Whether we wish it, seek it, or realize it, God loves us.

Even when we devote our minds, hearts and bodies to selfish ends, he still cares deeply for us and makes his sun shine on the just and unjust.

When we refuse to love God, we are cowardly and selfish.

No shame is equal to that of refusing to love the one who loves us so greatly.

Stewardship is more than the giving of money.

It involves a proper attitude toward our material resources and giving a proper share to God.

A person can give without loving; however, a person can never love without giving.

What a revolution would take place in Christian work if God’s people would, first of all, love him and then support God’s work in this world.

When Paul said that the presentation of ourselves to God is our “reasonable” service, he used a word that can best be translated “spiritual”.

Of course, supporting God is reasonable and rational, but Paul meant even more.

We serve God because our spirits are in tune with his Spirit.

Even as God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, so our spirit

testifies by our devotion and dedication that we have been transformed by the Holy Spirit of God.

The work of the Lord waits on two things, men and money, persons and purses.

Willingness and resources.

It takes both to do the Lord's work, someone to go and someone to "hold the ropes" while the other serves.

How we serve, however, goes back to what we believe about Christ, about sin, about salvation, and consequently about service.

Paul wrote later in this same chapter about the church being one body in Christ and everyone being a member of the others.

He pointed out that since we have gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, we should exercise those gifts in harmony with God's will.

How is your doctrine?

How is your dedication?

How is your devotion?

Each of the three is important.

Each one builds on the other, but the climax, the top rung of the ladder, is our devotion to God based on our love for him.

The more that I love him the more love he bestows.

The longer I serve him the sweeter he grows.

You had better believe it, and know it!

Then give it, all! God always gives more!