

Reasonable Service

Romans 12:1-2

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Focal Text – Read Together Romans 12:1-2 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. {2} 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 have seen America in recent years fall into a terrible state of affairs. Children are aborted from their mother's wombs for the sake of convenience. The Supreme Court recently voted in favor of upholding the ban on *partial birth abortion*. This is the abortive technique where the baby is actually delivered feet first from it's mother then – before the head is delivered – a specialized tool is used to destroy and remove the child's brains. In *a five to four decision* the United States Supreme Court upheld a *nationwide ban* on this barbaric murder of children. Yet *why five to four?* Why did the other four Justices consider that such a terrible procedure should be protected by law? ¹ Doesn't law exist to *protect citizens?* When has a baby not been a citizen.

¹ The procedure is described at <http://www.abortioninfo.net/facts/pba.shtml> . Here's a quote from that page: “I stood at the doctor's side and watched him perform a partial-birth abortion on a woman who was six months pregnant. The baby's heartbeat was clearly visible on the ultrasound screen. The doctor delivered the baby's body and arms, everything but his little head. The baby's body was moving. His little fingers were clapping together. He was kicking his feet. The doctor took a pair of scissors and inserted them into the back of the baby's head, and the baby's arms jerked out in a flinch, a startle reaction, like a baby does when he thinks that he might fall. Then the doctor opened the scissors up. Then he stuck the high-powered suction tube into the hole and sucked the baby's brains out. Now the baby was completely limp. I never went back to the clinic. But I am still haunted by the face of that little boy. It was the most perfect, angelic face I have ever seen.”

Just this past week a twenty-three year old English major took two pistols with him and, entering Virginia Tech's campus, he shot and killed thirty two people – then took his own life. Following this horrible incident the news reporters were quick to blame “faulty gun control laws” as the reason that this young man was able to do what he did. Is this the reason that this young man did what he did? If he had used a baseball bat to kill a number of people, would we now be rallying for “bat control”?

The problems of America will not be resolved by further legislation, by more policemen, by greater jails. The problems of America are *spiritual* problems. When a mother can look at her child by a sonogram and decide that she would rather *that child die than herself* – then we have a *spiritual problem*. When the Highest Court in our land can look at a little baby – and nearly *half of that court* can say “you can deliver all but the head of that baby, then kill it” - we *have a spiritual problem*. When a young man can go onto a college or high school campus and kill humans as easily as one would kill flies – we *have a spiritual problem*. When reporters and pundits can look at the travesty of the thirty-two people killed in Virginia and *blame the tool used rather than the fool who used it* – we *have a spiritual problem*.

America has divorced herself from God. This has dire consequences for each and every one of us – whether you believe in God or not! **“In God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5)**. Divorce yourselves from God and you divorce yourselves from Light. Divorce yourselves from Light and all that is left is darkness.

This is why the Church *must* be the Church. This is why the Apostle in the earlier parts of Romans wrote of sin and its consequences, and wrote of Christ and His solution. The Church must be the Light of the world. The Church alone stands **against the very forces of hell:**

Matthew 16:18 ... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

If the Church compromises with the world, the conscience of the Nation is gone. Jesus said of His Church:

Matthew 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

It is vital to this nation that the Church – this Church – be a bright and shining light for Jesus. We must be that beacon of truth that all can see. The Light of God's Church must never be hidden by foolishness and fighting. Jesus gave us authority to *enact judgment on members who break the unity of His Spirit* while bringing g trouble in the assembly.

Matthew 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

We are God's Army, His Kingdom Ambassadors – and

the world watches how we do our business. When **Ananias and Sapphira blasphemed God in the midst of His Church the Lord took their lives.** We read:

Acts 5:11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

You are Christ's Church, and are left on this earth to promote the Gospel of salvation. Each member in Christ's Church is a recipient of **Divine Mercy**. God loves you and gave Himself for you. God **shed His own Blood for your salvation**:

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

The Church – not this building, but *you who are believers* – were bled for and died for. You were purchased with His own Blood. You must not be conformed to the ways of this world, but you must continue to *walk in love toward one another and toward God*. The world's message is “life is cheap”, and as a result a young man takes life on a whim. The message we have been given is “life is precious, so precious that God gave His life for you”. You have received mercy. Tell others of this mercy. Tell others about Jesus. Let them see Jesus in your actions, in your unity, in your walk. They will mock your Lord if they see you walk in

rudeness toward one another. Just today I walked into a store and watched a *so called Christian* attack one of God's children for no good reason. The man was rude, abrupt, and ugly. Though the attacks were not directed at me I guarantee you I will not go back to that store. Listen, dear ones. If I – who loves every one of God's children – feels turned away from a local Church because of the unrelenting offenses of a professing Christian, what of the unbeliever amongst us? We who are His are to **present our bodies as living sacrifices because He – our Lord – became a dying sacrifice for us**. Do you not yet understand? If the world sees no light from you, then they will never come to Christ as Savior *because of you*. And you will be judged by Eternal God. Remember Ananias and Sapphira. Walk in love toward God and toward one another.

**God's Mercy In Our Lives Compels Us:
Consider How Merciful He Is To You And I**

FOCAL Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God ...

The Apostle literally says “**I beg you, my brothers, because of God's mercy ...**”. The Church is a body of believers who are **recipients of God's mercy**. You were called to and received by God to salvation because **He is merciful**. None of us have earned or deserved our salvation. None of us ever *will!* Ever! When God instituted the Tabernacle for ancient Israel He ordered that a **mercy seat (Exodus 25:17)** be made of gold. The mercy seat sat on top of the **Ark of the Covenant** and reminded Israel that all they had and all they hoped to be

was because *God is merciful*. God did not choose to call Israel to salvation because they were great people, because they were a *wonderful nation*. No, dear ones. God called Israel *because He wanted to show forth His mercy*.

God called you to salvation because He wanted to show you mercy.

God told The high priest that he could not approach the mercy seat unless he first offered a sacrifice of blood (**Leviticus 16**). God could not be merciful unless blood was first shed for Aaron's sin. **God cannot be merciful to the sinner unless payment for sin is made. God cannot tolerate sin in fallen man unless justice first be satisfied.** Thus the High Priest was warned. God said “You may enter the place of the Mercy Seat, but you must first shed the Blood of the innocent. Your sins, O Priest, must first be paid for in the Way that I have decreed. No title nor lineage nor ritual will satisfy Me but the shedding of Blood!”

Mercy cannot come apart from the shedding of Blood.

We read in another place:

Hebrews 9:11-12 Now the Messiah has appeared, high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation), (12) **He entered the holy of holies once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by**

His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.^{HCSB}

God had determined that He would save us one day through the shedding of the Blood of Jesus. The Old Testament mercy seat represented the Throne of God, and the sacrifice represented the shedding of our Lord's Blood for each and every one who would receive Him. The Bible tells us that we who are saved are saved by His mercy.

Titus 3:5-7 **He saved us--not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. (6) This Spirit He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that having been justified by His grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.**^{HCSB}

Your heirship with Christ was not given to you because you were better than others. **All have sinned, and have come short of the righteousness of God (Romans 3:23).** You – each and every one of you, myself included, *deserve eternal damnation!*

Look at the prostitute, the homosexual, the fornicator, the drug abuser, the alcoholic, the wife beater, the Pharisee, the murderer, the abortionist, the rapist, the kidnapper. They deserve hell – but you and I deserve hell, too!

The flames will not kiss us because of Christ, not because we are “good”. Oh, how God despises the smell of self righteousness!

We were saved by His righteousness and His suffering and His pain on Calvary. We are – blessed be His Holy Name – saved because **He is merciful. I beg you, because of the mercy of God, the *mercies* – many mercies of God.** Like the Apostle Paul the Lord did not just save us – granting us *one mercy* – but He expands that mercy every day. The Apostle wrote:

1 Timothy 1:15-16 This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"--and I am the worst of them. (16) But I received mercy because of this, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate the utmost patience as an example to those who would believe in Him for eternal life. HCSB

Paul never looked at his life and said “I deserve this, what Jesus did for me. I am so good, so holy, so

righteous, so kind – that God just hunted me down and saved me”. No Beloved. He tells us later in our Romans text:

UNEARNED LOVE Romans 12:3 For **I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think [of himself] more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.**

Are you saved? Then you are saved **because of God's mercies.** Are you great in the faith? Then you are great **because of God's mercies.** Not because you are good – but **because of God's mercies.** God gave you faith. He saved you and I by faith in Christ. He opened our eyes to our sinful state. Praise Him, that He loved such as we are. Praise Him, that He loved such as I!

The Body Works When We Are Living Sacrifices

FOCAL Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice ...**

Understanding the **mercies of God**, we who are saved are *called into One Body*. We are to **present our bodies – PLURAL – a living sacrifice – SINGULAR.**

God not only expects but *demand*s that His Church work together in all things. I hear people talk about this organization and that organization. Hear me, my Beloved. I am not saying that groups like *Samaritans Purse* or *Promise Keepers* or the *Billy Graham Evangelistic Organization* or *the Salvation Army* are not good groups. I am sure that the Lord uses these groups for His good purpose. But dear friends, *God's method has always been the local Church.*

The local Church is only effective when it is **in one accord**. Each one of us are therefor commanded to **present our bodies** – many members – **a living sacrifice** – one Body. We work together for God.

This is the only way a Church will work.

CONSIDER THE SACRIFICE Think about the words **living sacrifice** for a minute. It's not easy nor even desirable to be a sacrifice – at least, not in the mind of this world. In ancient times a sacrifice was *first of all captive* – it was taken where it did not want to go. Secondly the sacrifice was *bound to the altar* – tied to the service of God. Third the sacrifice was *violently used, it's throat cut and drained* so that blood could be shed. And fourth the sacrifice *by being pliant became a blessing to those around it.*

You, dear Ones, saved **by the mercies of God** are called into One Body. The Body will not retain its

cohesion unless each member be willing to be a Living Sacrifice. Living sacrifices have no will of their own, but are **bound to the Lord Who is using them.**

You are His. When Cancer attacks the human body it is when a rogue cell multiplies and attacks other members in that body, destroying both itself and others. When Cancer touches the Body of Christ a member goes rogue, separating from the Body, doing that which he or she wills to do.

You have not so learned this of Christ! We are told in another place:

Colossians 3:12-15 Therefore, **God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, (13) accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive. (14) Above all, put on love--the perfect bond of unity. (15) And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body, control your hearts. Be thankful.** ^{HCSB}

His Body is called into Oneness, unity, Christian love –

knowing that *together we stand or together we fall*. This Body, **bound to the mercies of God by the Blood of the Lamb**, is born of love. Our power is in love. We read yet again:

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.^{HCSB}

God considered us greater than Himself – now He commands that we **consider others greater than ourselves**. It is not my will that matters, but His will. The sacrifice must be bound to the altar if God is to be honored.

Like Isaac of old, I must go with my Father to the mountain of God and willingly be bound – even unto the death – for my brothers and sisters.

The heart that wallows in Satan is the heart that says “My way, or the highway”. The heart that is most like God's is the heart that says “God's Way – because I love Him”. Furthermore it is *common sense* to work together for God because *we are designed to work together for God*. We read:

Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: (5) So we, [being] many, are one body in Christ, and

every one members one of another.

We are **every one members one of another**. Bound together as family, if you are not willingly **submitting yourself as a living sacrifice** then you are cheating yourselves of great blessing. The first question *ever asked in human history* is found in Genesis:

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Satan questioned God's marriage of Adam, Eve, and the Garden. Eve considered the question, Adam followed, and humanity fell into the terrible destructive power of sin.

We must not question God. **I must not question God. I must present my body a living sacrifice.** Yet there are conditions to this command.

The Body Works When We Are Holy Sacrifices

FOCAL Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy ...

The sacrifice placed on the altar of God **must be without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19)**. We do not substitute worldliness for unity. We do not bind together in error,

but bind together under the clear teachings of the Word of God. We do not compromise with the world nor the worldly. The sacrifice must be holy!

Traditions and opinions are not that which drive the Church of God, but the Word of God. Light and darkness cannot mix any more than can fire and ice.

Jesus warned of the Pharisees:

Matthew 15:8-9 These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. (9) **They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men."**

If it is not clearly taught in the Scripture we reject it as unworthy of Christ's Church. The living sacrifice must be without spot or blemish. We lost our opinions when we became His purchased possession. The Body is bound together in holiness. **His holy Word is our directive, His Holy Spirit our Heavenly Guide.** We will not profane the holy with our desires, our thoughts, our whims – but will cling to “what saith the Lord”? If the Scripture does not forbid it we will not forbid it unless the Body, united in love, forbids it. If the Scripture forbids or requires we will do as commanded – for

1 Corinthians 6:20 ... ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

The Body Works When We Are Acceptable Unto God

FOCAL Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that **ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God**

What is acceptable unto God?

The Bible tells us that God is love:

1 John 4:7-9 Beloved, **let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (8) He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (9) In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.**

We as living sacrifices are **holy** – apart from sin and the world and bound to God's Word – and are **acceptable to God** – always loving.

Love defines the Church. Not apathy, not judgmentalism, not negativism, but LOVE. God will

hold you and I accountable, dear ones, on how we loved one another!

FOCAL Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies** a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable **unto God** ... The question now arises “Why should I do this? Why not just get my own way or do it my own way?” The answer is *because you are doing it for God*. Look at our Romans text:

Romans 12:9-14 [Let] love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. (10) [Be] kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; (11) Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; (12) Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; (13) Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. (14) Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Don't be two-faced in your love. If you love God, love your brother in Christ as well. Be willing to go the extra mile. Bend over backwards for one another. **Hate that which is evil, and cling to that which God says is good.** Despise Satan, despise sin, hate worldliness – but love all people. **Be kindly affectioned to one another with brotherly love.** Cut one another some slack! Remember, the Church stands together or falls together. The **Laodicean Church** did not incur the anger of Jesus, saying:

Revelation 3:15-16 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

because one or two members refused to do their duty. Apathy spread through the Church and, in time, Laodicea gained a terrible reputation as being a *do nothing assembly*. My Brothers, I am persuaded much better of you!

The Church that Christ loves and prospers **is not slothful in business** – it maintains a good outward relationship with the world. The world watches the Christian to see if we are like Christ or not. Does your business life match the life you live in the Church? If not, you need to repent.

It is fervent in spirit, passionate about serving the Lord. If you are passionate about everything *but Jesus* then the world will never be interested in our God. Be passionate about the Master Who is passionate for you. **Rejoicing in hope. Patient in tribulation. Praying for one another, and for revival in our country.** The Church is a wondrous, blessed Body of Christ on this earth.

The Body Works When We Are Unacceptable To The World

Focal Romans 12:2 And **be not conformed² 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 who belong to Jesus are not to be patterned after the ways of this world. Listen, dear ones: what use does a drowning man have with a glass of water? What good is a cup of gasoline to a man that is on fire? And what good is a *worldly Church* to those who are in the world? It is no good at all.

If you are saved then **you have been delivered from the power of darkness, and have been translated into the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13)**. The world does not need you to be undercover agents for God! The unbeliever does not need you to commiserate with him, nor to justify his evil. Spurgeon said “**Man’s nature must be changed; a lion cannot plough as an ox, or carry a rider as a horse: a sinner is unsuitable for service till he be new-created.**” The unbeliever's sin must not be ignored nor condoned! The unbeliever must believe in Jesus. **You must be born again!** This is the message that we must carry out. We must not be **conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds**. We must do and say as God has presented in His Holy Word. God requires that we who

are His Light be the Light unto a lost and dying world. We are not called to be friends to the world, but are called to be Ambassadors for Christ.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

2 Present Middle Imperative of G4964, συσχηματίζω, *suschēmatizō*, *soos-khay-mat-id'-zo*, From G4862 and a derivative of G4976; to *fashion alike*, that is, *conform* to the same pattern (figuratively): - conform to, fashion self according to.