



XII. A Second Decision

(1) *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”* Romans 12:1-2

Misunderstood and misapplied. These two verses are often misunderstood and misapplied. However, they are critically important in a believer’s decision to become a disciple and to live as a disciple. Verse one is a challenge to each believer to make a one-time second decision after salvation. Verse two gives direction for a disciple’s daily life. All Christians should submit to God every day as part of their taking up their cross daily, Luke 9:23. However, that is not the intent of Romans 12:1. Its command to *“present your bodies”* is a once-for-all-time dedication, surrender, and submission to Him. It is not salvation. Salvation is based solely on the sacrifice of Christ. This is different. This is your sacrifice. It is the one-time giving of your life unconditionally and permanently to God as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice. It is your voluntary life-long gift of yourself to Him for His glory and for His unrestricted use.

Why make this second decision? It is because of His mercies. This passage starts with the word *therefore*. Wherever you read a *therefore* in the Word, understand what it is there for. Read it again emphasizing the first word, *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God...”*. The Romans 12:1 *therefore* connects Romans 1-11 to this command. God’s great mercies in saving us and sanctifying us are detailed in the first eleven chapters. *Therefore*, present yourself to God! God will bless us in this life and in eternity. However, the proper motivation for this sacrifice is not in front of us ... it is behind us. Our proper motivation is based on what He has already done. Imagine Jesus holding up His nail-scarred hands to you as He says, *After all I have done for you ... do this for Me*. The Living Bible’s loose paraphrase of the end of 12:1 captures the pathos in this command, *“When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?”*

Why a one-time sacrifice? It is because that is the meaning of the words in the command. The verbs in *“do not be conformed”* and *“but be transformed”* in 12:2 are present tense. That means do these things now and keep on doing them hourly, daily, and throughout your life. That is part of taking up your cross daily. However, *“Present your bodies”* in 12:1 is not present tense. It is a Greek verb that does not have an ideal English equivalent. The Greek verb translated as *present* is in the aorist tense indicating a punctiliar action ... a once-for-all-time, timeless act. It does not mean keep on doing it ... but rather do it once for all time. Both the Williams New Testament and the Amplified New Testament render it more clearly as *“make a decisive dedication of your bodies.”* As a believer-priest, offer yourself once-for-all-time as a living sacrifice to Him on the altar. Romans 12:1 is about a sacrificed life ... a life permanently placed on the altar.

Three illustrations offer insight. There is an illustration of this in Deuteronomy 15:12-17. A freed Hebrew slave could decide to voluntarily and permanently re-enslave himself to his master. That choice was based on the past mercies of the master ... was prompted by the slave's love for his master ... and was permanent. An awl was used to pierce the slave's ear indicating that he was the master's servant for life. This re-enslavement was the slave's choice ... was not forced on him ... and was a once-for-all-time decision. Another illustration is in the Old Covenant's animal sacrifices. An animal had to be acceptable to be placed on the altar. A diseased or blemished animal was unacceptable. That illustrates the holy and acceptable part of a Romans 12:1 sacrifice. The animal that was sacrificed was dead ... but our sacrifice is living. The sacrificed animal being dead illustrates the permanence of the sacrifice. No sacrificed animal crawled off when the altar got hot. No priest took an animal back at the end of the day to possibly offer it on another day. It was a permanent sacrifice. If a Romans 12:1 living sacrifice crawls off when the altar gets hot or if it is withdrawn, it was never a Romans 12:1 sacrifice. Another illustration comes from life experience. It is seen in the difference between cohabitation and a life-long, until-death-do-we-part marriage. Co-habitation is a temporary *I'm totally and completely yours for another 24 hours unless I get a better offer* commitment. However, a Romans 12:1 sacrifice is a life-long commitment. It is not a 24-hour co-habitation commitment.

Re-offering it. Should your Romans 12:1 sacrifice ever be re-offered? The answer is that re-offering it might be appropriate if the sacrifice was unacceptable. A Romans 12:1 sacrifice needs to be living, holy, and acceptable. The living part is easy because upon believing in Christ we have "*passed out of death into life,*" John 5:24. It is the holy part that can be challenging. Old Testament sacrificed animals had to be acceptable ... or they were rejected. No animal could be perfect. But each one had to be without disease, generally healthy, and without blemish. This illustrates two things for a Romans 12:1 sacrifice. First, this sacrifice must be disease-free. The terminal disease of sin and separation from God must be cured by salvation. That is why Romans 12:1 is narrowly addressed to believers (indicated by the word *brethren* in that verse). This living sacrifice is exclusively for believers. A non-believer's sacrifice is unacceptable because it must be offered after salvation rather than before salvation. You must come to Him before you can follow Him. To be sure of your salvation visit www.911God.org. Second, the holy part indicates an acceptable level of spiritual cleanliness in a believer's life. Only then will a Romans 12:1 sacrifice be acceptable to God. "*Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work,*" 2 Timothy 2:21. You cannot be perfect ... but you can present yourself at an adequate and acceptable level of spiritual health and holiness. Once your living and holy sacrifice has been accepted by God, you never need to re-present yourself. But if your sacrifice was unacceptable because it was no more than temporary or because it was unholy, then repeating it is legitimate. Make this second decision to offer yourself as a once-for-all-time living and holy sacrifice ... voluntarily and permanently enslaving yourself to God. Do not do this lightly. It is a very serious second decision. And then, after your living and holy sacrifice is accepted, move on to your Romans 12:2 non-conforming and always transforming life as a true disciple of Jesus Christ. After all He's done for you ... do this for Him!

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