

## Discipleship: The Spiritual Aspect

Romans 12: 1-2

Last week we discussed the physical aspect of discipleship, actually living out our faith before others and actively engaging those around us. The dynamics of discipleship and bearing witness of Christ before others involves much more than our physical activity and presence, but we cannot ignore the need to actively engage others for the cause of Christ. We will accomplish very little in the Kingdom work if we refuse to be involved physically.

The need for those who will seek to follow Christ and impact others through their faith is great in our modern society, but it requires much more than a warm body. If all we possess is a willingness to talk with others and the desire to be involved in discipleship without any other criteria being considered, we have missed it and will not be very effective. Being a genuine disciple of Christ and engaging others requires much more than a mere, physical presence. We must also consider and prepare for the spiritual element as well. I have experienced encounters with others, under the banner of visitation or discipleship that turned out to be nothing more than a casual visit with no spiritual significance. Simply going or talking does not constitute discipleship. In order to be effective, we must be prepared spiritually as well.

I want to consider the fundamental [truths](#) in this familiar passage again as we think on: [Discipleship – The Spiritual Aspect](#). First we discover:

**I. The Compassion** (1) – [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.](#) As Paul challenges the Roman believers in their walk with the Lord, he uses an interesting term: [I beseech you...](#) This is a term that is little used in our day, but it bears great significance. It has the idea of “*imploring, greatly urging, or begging to respond.*” Paul well understood the significance of a life lived for Christ. He knew the benefits it afforded and the great need for others to experience it as well. Paul was genuinely concerned for fellow believers and showed great compassion for them.

- No doubt you would agree that we need compassion for others. The church in large part has grown complacent and lethargic. There seems to be little concern for the needs of others or the well being of the church itself. Many are content with things just as they are. We need the compassion Paul shared for others. We need a genuine desire and concern to reach the lost and disciple young believers. This compassion and concern for others will never be achieved through mere physical activity or general busyness. It will require a spiritual awakening among God’s people. We know what we have received in Christ. We know the blessing and benefits associated with a right relationship with Him. We need to develop the sense of urgency Paul had for the needs of our day. That type of compassion will only be achieved through closeness with Christ.

**II. The Confirmation** (1) – 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.** Paul confirms the help we enjoy as we seek to serve the Lord. We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, but we are not expected to do that alone. This is achieved through the **mercies of God.**

- God has not asked us to achieve some great feat in and of ourselves. We are not expected to go it alone, working within our own wisdom and abilities. We enjoy the great blessing and benefits of His abundant mercies. Take just a moment to reflect on His mercies. God knew we would sin and need a Savior. He knew in our sin we could never have fellowship with Him. He would have been just to have left us in our sin and condemned us to eternal death. He chose, in His great mercy, to provide our Redeemer. He sent His only begotten Son to bear our sin and endure the judgment we deserved. Through Christ we are reconciled to God and made part of the family. We enjoy the guidance and peace of the Holy Spirit.

- We enjoy confidence through our relationship with Christ. We enjoy the mercies of God to equip and carry us as we seek to serve Him. What could we possibly face or need that our God would withhold from us. As we follow the Lord and strive to labor for Him, we do so knowing that God is there to provide our every need. **Psalm 84:11 – For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.** Rom.8:31-32 – **What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? <sup>[32]</sup> He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**

**III. The Consecration** (1) – 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.** Paul urges believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice, one that is holy and acceptable unto God. That is a pretty tall order. How is it possible to offer our bodies a holy, acceptable sacrifice unto the Lord? It is impossible in and of ourselves. We will never achieve such an endeavor apart from the Spirit working in us. Our lives are filled with failures and shortcomings. We all sin and miss the mark. We desperately need the Spirit working in our lives, enabling us to live in a way that pleases the Lord.

- This is a topic that is little dealt with in our modern day. Many fear they might offend someone and go to great lengths to avoid any offense. The simple truth is we will never be effective in discipleship or Christian service apart from seeking genuine holiness. If our lives are lived solely to please ourselves, with never any thought given to holiness, we will accomplish little of lasting value. I fear our churches are lacking power and conviction due to the sin in our lives. We are called to be a separated people, those who desire the ways of God above the ways of the world. We must die to self daily if we are to please the Lord. This is only possible with the Holy Spirit working in our lives!

- There is also a sense of finality and great seriousness here. Sacrifices were given entirely to the Lord once deemed acceptable to offer. They were given to the Lord and consumed of Him, never to be used in a common or ordinary way again. So it should be with lives that are offered to the Lord as a living sacrifice. We should be so changed that there is no desire to return to the old life of sin. Our lives will never please the Lord apart from His holiness. If we are to reach the unsaved and encourage the weak, our lives must be set apart, consecrated of God, and pleasing to Him! [Rom.6:13 – Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.](#)

**IV. The Concentration** (2a) – [And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.](#) Paul knew the distractions and difficulties of his day were numerous. There was a great temptation to conform to the ideals of the world and fit in with society. Believers were viewed as strange and the world around them sought to pollute their minds and steal their hearts. They were surrounded by a society that offered indulgence to the physical senses and an abundance of spiritual and philosophical teachings. The pressures would've been enormous.

- Rather than conforming to the dictates of the world, Paul urged them to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. They were expected to literally take on the image of Christ, setting their thoughts, actions, and desires upon Him. The church was not called to operate according to modern philosophy or the through the direction of Caesar. They were the church of the living God, the body of Christ.
- There is great pressure on the church today to conform to the ways of modern society. We are expected to operate in a way that satisfies folks where they are without confronting sin or seeking profitable change. Sadly there is little difference in the average church member and anyone else in society. We are not here to please men and satisfy their desires. We are here to exalt the Lord and proclaim the truth of His Word. We are here as salt and light in a world that desperately needs it.
- Rather than becoming like the world, we are to become like Christ, renewing our minds in Him, in honest worship and service. If our lives and services offer nothing different than the world, in essence void of truth and dead spiritually, we will accomplish nothing of eternal value. We need to live as Christ lived; presenting Him to a world that desperately needs Him!

**V. The Comprehension** (2b) – [that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.](#) Paul well understood the need for spiritual discernment. The believer would never prosper and the lost would never come to know Christ apart from committed lives. In order to live pleasing

to the Lord, fulfilling His desires, one must know His will. It was essential the church possessed the wisdom necessary to discern the will of God.

- This carries the idea of discovering the will of God for one's life and then obediently following His will. Surely you would agree this is essential if we are to be disciples of Christ. There is a great need for spiritual discernment in our day.
- Let's take just a moment to consider the will of God mentioned here. Paul describes it as:
  - **Good** – This speaks of its benefit; being profitable, useful, rich, and beneficial.
  - **Acceptable** – This refers to the well pleasing and suitable nature of God's will; being satisfactory and welcomed.
  - **Perfect** – This carries the idea of being complete, full, lacking nothing; being flawless, without error or mistake.
- We certainly need discernment to enjoy and obey the will of God in our lives. Shouldn't we all desire to follow His direction and live according to His will? We will never be all that He desires of us, enjoying victory and producing fruit, apart from following His will. I desire to live for Him, being fully submitted to His will for my life. I pray you do as well.

**Conclusion:** Common sense teaches us that we must be physically engaged if we are to be disciples of Christ, reaching others and bringing encouragement. There is also the spiritual aspect we cannot deny. Warm bodies are not all that is required. We need those who are walking with the Lord, leaning upon Him daily to provide the wisdom and strength we need.

Are you where you need to be spiritually? Are you walking in a way that pleases the Lord? Do you desire to be used of Him in order to reach others? Do you know what God's will is for your life? Do you have clear direction for your spiritual journey? If not, seek the Lord today. He desires each of us to follow Him, living lives that honor Him and make an impact in this world.

Maybe you are here and you cannot honestly say you are following Christ because you have never been saved. If the Lord has spoken to you concerning your need for salvation, I urge you to respond to Him today by faith. He will save you if you will come to Him!