

## Discipleship: The Sacrificial Aspect

Romans 12: 1-2

For the past few weeks we have discussed this powerful passage of Scripture concerning the discipleship of believers. Clearly all who belong to Christ are called to be disciples. We are called to follow the Lord and live our lives surrendered to Him.

We have considered the physical aspect of discipleship. Good intentions are great, but they accomplish little without personal effort. Simply being aware of our responsibilities is never enough; we must act on those responsibilities. Discipleship requires our active service.

We also discussed the spiritual aspect of discipleship. Knowing what to do and how to do it is great, but mere knowledge and desire are never enough either. We must embrace the spiritual aspect of discipleship, being led of the Spirit, according to the will of God. If our efforts are not in accordance to God's will, we may be extremely busy, but we will not achieve lasting results.

Today we come to the final aspect of discipleship, the sacrificial aspect. Being a true disciple of Christ, serving the Lord, reaching the lost, and encouraging others requires sacrifice. If we are waiting for the opportune time or an area of service within our comfort zone, we will accomplish very little for the Lord.

This is likely the most difficult aspect of discipleship. When service requires sacrifice, few are willing to continue. Take a moment to consider the great sacrifice Christ made for us. Surely He is worthy of our service, which includes sacrifice. When we consider the sacrifice of Christ, the areas we consider sacrificial pale in comparison. Take a moment to consider the words of David Livingstone, missionary to Africa.

*"People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter?*

*Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us."*<sup>i</sup>

Again let's consider the fundamental [truths](#) of this passage as we think on: [Discipleship – The Sacrificial Aspect](#).

**I. The Cost Involved** (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 is very personal in this passage. Certainly we are to encourage others in the faith with a desire for them to be productive, but we cannot overlook our obligations. He is not speaking of the responsibility of another; he speaks of our responsibility! We are expected to present our bodies, literally our person, our will, and our desire unto the Lord.

- I told you this aspect is the most difficult. We don't mind putting some money in the plate to help finance others who are active in service. We don't even mind getting involved once in a while ourselves as long as it is convenient and meets our expectations, but that is not the point Paul is seeking to drive home. We are to present our bodies unto the Lord to be used as He sees fit.
- We tend to make excuse as to why we don't accomplish more than we do many times, but the reality for most is they haven't presented themselves unto the Lord. We are very protective of self and our desires and wishes. We have a problem denying the flesh. We must be willing to forsake ourselves for the work of Christ. Anything less doesn't constitute discipleship.
- Just in case you need a bit more convincing, consider the words of Christ. **Luke 9:23 – And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.** Paul's teaching is consistent with that of Christ. We are to deny ourselves for Him. Discipleship doesn't come cheap; in fact, it will cost us to serve the Lord. It requires bringing the whole of our being in submission to the Lord.

**II. The Crucifixion Involved** (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.** We are called to present our bodies a living sacrifice unto the Lord. That sounds difficult to achieve and impossible to do, and it is within ourselves. We must understand though, this isn't a misprint. Paul wasn't mistaken or confused. That is literally expected of us. We must be willing to die out to the desires of the flesh, offering ourselves sacrificially unto the Lord.

- This goes further than denying ourselves; we must also die to the sinful desires and tendencies we have. We must crucify the pride, fear, self-confidence or doubt, anything that hinders us becoming all that Christ desires of us. Again Jesus spoke of this as well. **Luke 9:23 – And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.** Jesus speaks of much more than bearing a burden in this life when He refers to taking up our cross. There is application for that, but if that is all we see, we miss the very essence of what Jesus is teaching. He fully expects us to die to self in order to serve Him.

▪ Now I know this goes against our very nature. We do not like to deny ourselves anything, much less seek to offer ourselves a sacrifice unto the Lord, but it proves very beneficial to the believer. [Rom.6:6 – Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with \*him\*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.](#) Dying to self is essential to overcoming the lusts and desires of the flesh. Without it, we will continue to serve sin and never reach our potential for Christ. [Gal.2:20 – I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.](#) Do you want to enjoy abundant life in Christ? Do you desire victory and peace in life? If so, crucify the flesh and live in Christ. When we refuse to live within our abilities and desires and seek to live in Christ, it is then we experience life abundantly. In order to really live, we must die to ourselves! We must be willing to make that sacrifice if we are to please the Lord.

**III. The Continuation Involved** (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.\*](#) Our sacrifice is to be a *living* sacrifice. That reveals great significance. As long as we live, we are to present ourselves sacrificially unto the Lord. That doesn't just apply to Sunday mornings or Wednesday nights. It isn't reserved for the days when we feel good spiritually or are within our comfort zone. If we wake in the morning, we are expected to present ourselves sacrificially before the Lord. We ought to face each day with the attitude Isaiah had: Here am I Lord, send me! What would you have me to do today Lord? How can I be of service to you and others? Take my life and use it for your glory!

▪ Let's consider what Jesus said once more. [Luke 9:23 – And he said to \*them\* all, \*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.\*](#) I don't think there is a translation in print that could get around the fact that we are expected to take up our cross each and every day we live in order to serve the Lord. This involves good days and bad days. It involves ordinary moments in life as well as those circumstances where we sense God is working mightily through us. Simply we are to follow Christ, seeking to please Him, which includes dying out to ourselves, everyday!

▪ Now you might argue that is overbearing. Preacher you are expecting way too much. I am only sharing the truth of God's Word. This is our reasonable service. It is simply what is expected and required if we are to be genuine disciples of the Lord.

**IV. The Confrontation Involved** (2a) – [And be not conformed to this world.](#) As we consider the sacrificial aspect of discipleship, we must realize we face a continual struggle. The flesh desires the things of the world. It is a daily battle. We are challenged concerning conformity to the world.

- The pressures of our day are enormous. Society is increasingly intolerant of the believer. We are challenged regarding the fundamentals of our faith. We are expected to abandon biblical convictions for the sake of cooperation. Sadly some do, but conformity to the world and its ideals are never pleasing to the Lord. We must remain a separated people, seeking to please the Lord instead of the world.
- This should not be surprising to us today. We are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price and don't have the liberty to live as we please! [1 Cor.6:20 – For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.](#)

**V. The Confidence Involved** (2b) – [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.](#) I will admit applying all we've discussed today is difficult. Our nature doesn't want to deny the body any pleasure. We are often tempted to think we've done enough for the Lord during a specific amount of time. "I read my Bible this morning and prayed. I invited someone at work to join us for worship on Sunday. Isn't that enough?" I would be happy if all our members were committed to doing those things consistently, but those activities alone do not constitute discipleship. We must be willing to live a sacrificial life of service unto the Lord.

- So, how do we know what the Lord desires of us? How do we discern His will for our lives? We can know and be confident in our walk and service to the Lord by the renewing of our minds. The more we walk with the Lord, denying our desires and crucifying the flesh, the closer to Him we become. Those who are being used mightily of the Lord, making a difference in the lives of others, are intentional in their relationship with Christ. It isn't a once in a while activity. They consistently seek the Lord and enjoy fellowship with Him. Walking with the Lord will generate confidence and boldness to accomplish His will for our lives. It will provide the guidance we all desire. Living sacrificially is much easier when we know we are pleasing the Lord and following His direction.

**Conclusion:** This passage is easier taught than lived, but it is essential to being true disciples of Christ. Our modern day needs those who want to please the Lord more than anything else. We need those who are totally surrendered to the will of God. Has the Lord spoken to you regarding your walk with Him? Are there areas you need to address and commit to Christ? If so, He stands ready to guide you as you seek Him. Maybe you've never been saved. You realize your need for Christ and want to come to Him in salvation. If so, I urge you to come today. Don't put it off another moment!

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<sup>i</sup> Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times.