



**“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” (Romans 12:1).**

## **The Stewardship of Self**

**Central Truth:** Stewardship includes giving yourself wholly to God.

**L225. Date:** December 1993. **Text:** Romans 12:1, 2; I Corinthians 6:15-20; I Thessalonians 5:22, 23. **Topic:** Stewardship; Sanctification.

*“I seek not your's, but you”* (II Corinthians 12:14). There is the heart of all Christian stewardship.

God does not seek what you have. That already belongs to Him. He seeks you! Stewardship is much more than what you do with your money. It is what you do with yourself in all of life.

Never think, “God has saved my soul and it belongs to Him, but my body is mine.” No! You are a threefold person: spirit, soul, and body. Your spirit is your immortal self. Your soul is your mind, emotion, and will. Your will is the planning and executing power within you. Your body is the house in which your real self lives. The physical is the expression of the spiritual parts of yourself.

A lad heard that we are to love the Lord with all of the heart, mind, soul, and strength. In amazement he responded, “Gee, He didn't leave out anything, did He?” And He did not. That is why we have a study entitled “The Stewardship of Self.” Stewardship includes much more than what we have and do. It includes who we are.

## **Present Yourself**

Meditate on Romans 12:1, 2. Look at the words of that text singly and by phrases. Here is the finest statement in the New Testament on what it means to commit yourself to God.

The appeal is “*I beseech you . . . , brethren.*” “*Beseech*” means to exhort, entreat, plead, appeal, or beg. Paul had apostolic authority by which he could command obedience (as in I Corinthians 4:21). But spiritual commitment cannot be commanded. It must be voluntary, the act of your own will.

The assurance is based on “*the mercies of God.*” Mercy means God's goodness toward you in view of your weakness. When you commit yourself to God, He receives you in mercy, being fully aware of your limitations.

The act is to “*present.*” That is a powerful word. It means to make a decisive dedication from which you will not withdraw. The word was used to describe the worshiper giving an animal over to be sacrificed to God. The call is to commit yourself to God forever, with no intent of drawing back from that commitment.

The gift is “*your bodies.*” That stands in contrast to your saying you give your “heart” to Jesus. Note how tangible and physical that gift is. To present your body is to present all your members and faculties, withholding nothing. Such a commitment places the whole person at God's command, for the body will do only what the spirit and soul commands it to do. That is what Jesus did in His incarnation.

The demand is that you become “*a living sacrifice.*” The sacrifice of animals in ancient Judaism was a deliverance to death. Christian sacrifice is a commitment to live. God does not want to take your life from the earth. He wants you to live your life here on earth in service to people in His name. Your sacrifice will not be a once-for-all-time sacrifice. It must be made over and over, day by day, and even repeatedly in a single day. That is what God demands of you as a steward of yourself.

The call is logical; it is “*your reasonable service.*” Consider who you are and who God is. To commit yourself to Him is reasonable indeed. It is your act of intelligent worship, the worship due to Him as a rational person. God demands nothing unreasonable of you. You are safe following His will for your life.

The evidence of your commitment is both negative and positive. Negatively, it means you are not “*conformed to this world.*” Notice the spelling of *conform*. It means to be formed with, to be fashioned after or designed by being pressed into a mold. The meaning is, “Do not live according to the fashion of the times; do not adopt the customs or imitate the way of the world.” Phillips translates it, “Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mold.” Do not yield.

The positive evidence of your commitment is that you are continually “*transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” “*Transformed*” is from a

Greek word which describes the change of the caterpillar into a butterfly. It means your conduct is changed as your mind understands and accepts the ideals and attitudes which God approves. The result is a clean heart and a right spirit (Psalm 51:10).

The discovery you will make by your commitment to Christ is that the will of God is “*good, and acceptable, and perfect.*” It is good in that it is suited to meet your needs. It is acceptable in that it is pleasant in its experience. It is perfect in that you lose nothing when you live by it. What a discovery!

Jesus said, “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it*” (Luke 9:23, 24). The appeal is to deny self. Do not say, “I will deny myself of . . .” and begin to list things. Rather say, “I will deny myself of self.” Self-will dies when there is real commitment to Jesus.

## **Sanctify Yourself**

To be sanctified means to be set apart. A Christian who is sanctified has made a commitment by which he is set apart for Jesus alone. First Corinthians 6:15-20 sets out four reasons why each Christian should sanctify himself.

**Sanctify yourself because you are a member of Christ** (verse 15). That term “*member*” is otherwise translated “*limb.*” As your arm is a limb of your physical body, so you are a limb of the body of Christ. What you do with your physical body you are doing with a member of the body of Christ. It was on the basis of that relationship with Christ that Paul made an appeal to sexual purity. “*Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid*” (verse 15). Paul's word “*take*” is otherwise used to refer to sexual rape. For a Christian to use his/her body in sexual immorality is to rape a member of the body of Christ! Therefore, avoid sexual looseness like a plague!

**Sanctify yourself as a member of Christ.** Sanctify yourself because you are a temple of the Holy Spirit (verse 19). Your very physical body is a shrine, a sanctuary, a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God. What an awesome thought! The Holy Spirit entered your human spirit when you were saved. He has lived in your physical body since that moment. He makes His permanent home in you, and that makes your body a sacred shrine in which God dwells.

**Sanctify yourself because you are a purchase of God** (verse 20). A

great price was paid to ransom you. It was not a payment of silver and gold, or ceremonies and traditions of religion, but of *“the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (I Peter 1:19). He has bought us to himself. Whether we live or die, therefore, we are the Lord's (Romans 14:8). Would God purchase you if you would be useless to Him? You have been bought by the life-blood of Jesus Christ. You belong to God by His payment of a redemption price.

**Sanctify yourself because you are to reflect the glory of God** (verse 20). The purpose of your salvation is that you should be *“to the praise of the glory of his grace”* (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). There are two ways that you as a sanctified person can glorify God. (1) You can glorify God in your body. Diligent labor, honorable conduct, appropriate dress, uplifting speech, and kindred acts of the body can bless people and honor God. (2) You can glorify God in your spirit. Earnest prayer, spiritual hunger, worthy ambitions, a kindly spirit, and like attitudes will reflect the nature of Him who has called you. Discipline yourself to be sanctified in your body and in your spirit. You do not belong to yourself. You belong to God alone, totally and forever. Act like it. Value the love He showed and the price He paid to purchase you as His very own. Respond with a grateful heart by sanctifying yourself, setting yourself apart as holy to God.

## **Preserve Yourself**

Stop reading these comments at this point. Turn to your Bible and read I Thessalonians 5:22, 23. Mark the three elements in preserving yourself blameless.

**To be sanctified, you must abstain from evil** (verse 22). That means you must hold yourself apart from and shun every form of evil. Anything that has the look of evil about it must be rejected, even though your peers are practicing it without hesitation. Remember that you are a temple of God, a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, and the temple of God must be kept holy (I Corinthians 3:17). It is only as you are holy that you can enjoy His fellowship and reflect His glory to those who see you. It is only as you purge yourself from sin that you become an honorable vessel which is fit for the Master to use (II Timothy 2:21). Let Romans 6:12 and II Timothy 2:21 call you to preserve yourself from evil.

**To be sanctified to the Lord you must belong wholly to Him.** Your sanctification is by the presence of God himself. He will hallow you completely, consecrate you through and through. He imparts His holiness (righteousness) to you at conversion when you receive His divine nature. It

is your privilege to work out in practical living what He has implanted within. You must be willing to say and live the words, "I own no other Master,/My heart shall be Thy throne;/My life I give henceforth to live,/O Christ, for Thee alone" (Thomas Chisholm).

**To be sanctified to the Lord you must be blameless before God** (verse 23). You make yourself available to God and He works sanctifying grace in you. Then you will be "*blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15). Isn't that what Jesus said you were to do? Indeed, it is His very words in Matthew 5:14-16. It is His desire to have a "*glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*" (Ephesians 5:27). For the church to be that pure, the members must be pure. "*Wherefore, beloved, . . . be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless*" (II Peter 3:14). What a goal for Christian living!

Read I Thessalonians 4:3-7. The passage begins, "*This is the will of God, even your sanctification*" and ends, "*God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness.*" There is the great motive for Christian purity. Sanctification is God's will for you (verses 3,4). It makes you different from the unregenerate world (verse 5). It causes you to deal honestly and honorably with all other persons (verse 6). Be a sanctified Christian. Give your life to God; He can do more with it than you can. The gift of God which we remember at Christmas time challenges us to give ourselves to Him.

### **Questions for discussion**

1. What is your real "self"?
2. Why does God seek you rather than seeking what you have?
3. What are the three parts of your being?
4. Why does God call for your body to be sanctified?
5. How can you present yourself to God?
6. How can you be a living sacrifice to God?
7. In what sense are you a limb of Christ?
8. In what sense is your physical body a temple of the Holy Spirit?
9. How can you abstain from evil?
10. How can you follow the guidelines in I Thessalonians 4:3-7?