

August 29

Scriptures: Read Romans 12

Key Verse: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1)

Overview

Chapter 11 concludes with a beautiful doxology praising God’s wisdom, knowledge, judgments, and paths. He is sovereign and does what He wants to do. And, in the context of chapters 9 through 11, we see He wants to have mercy on all children of disobedience—both Jew and Gentile. It’s “in view of God’s mercy” that Paul, in chapter 12:1, calls us to total commitment: a commitment that constitutes, in fact, our “spiritual worship” (NIV).

Paul bluntly calls for bodily sacrifice—not producing a dead body, but a living offering. It is significant that the emphasis is physical. We’d all be much happier if the call was for mental assent, but he says we’re to put our bodies where our profession of faith is. We’re to pay the price—choosing sacrifice rather than pleasure.

Someone has said that the trouble with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar. So true. Indeed, the very idea of sacrificial living in our self-absorbed western world seems painfully archaic. But if we’re to practice what we preach, and look to Jesus as our supreme example, then we’re certainly not to embrace a faith that costs us nothing.

It’s fascinating that Paul links bodily sacrifice with spiritual worship: You wouldn’t expect this, for our tendency would be to separate the physical from the spiritual—just as the heretical Gnostics of early church history did. But no, God sees us as a totality, body and soul, material and immaterial—complete individual personalities. And He has such a high view of our bodies that He intends to resurrect and glorify them one day. So don’t separate your “spiritual” life from your everyday physical life. They’re inextricably linked—and God expects total faith from the total man.

Prayer

Grant that now and always, O Lord, we may present our bodies as living sacrifices, living holy lives acceptable to You through the cleansing of the blood of Jesus our Savior. Grant also that we may not be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our minds. Thank You that then, by Your mighty working in us, we will prove what is Your good and acceptable and perfect will. In Jesus’ name, Amen.