

The Christian and A Life of Total Dedication to God

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[0:00] Romans 12, verse number 1. Perfect.

And so on. So from this passage, we want to continue to look at what the Bible has to say to us about being healthy people, a healthy Christian, and being a healthy church.

And we have looked at various passages from 2 Timothy to John 15 and 1 Peter. And the last time we took up the study, we looked at Ephesians chapter number 3, and we saw Paul's prayer for personal development.

And focusing on that chapter, we focused especially on God giving us an increased capacity in our hearts for the presence of the Spirit of Christ and for Christ himself.

It was focused very much on our hearts. I want us to think this evening as something that focuses more upon our minds and our intellect rather than our hearts.

[1:26] And having said that, I know the Bible, when it speaks about the heart, it includes all of the faculties of the soul. That is, our minds, our will, and our affections.

But before we begin, I do want to say something about the faculties of the soul. And I want us to think about them in this way as we look at this passage. That we do have the mind and the will and the affections.

And the mind is the faculty that receives information and makes a judgment on the information received. That the will makes a choice based on the judgment of the mind.

And that once the will makes a choice, our affections are fixed on the choice that the will makes.

And that may sound a bit mechanical, but if we actually take that on board, that is simply and profoundly the way we work in our souls.

We receive information. We make judgment on that information. We make then a choice based on that judgment. And then our affections and our hearts go after whatever the will has chosen.

[2:36] And we look into the beginning of this chapter. And we see that it begins with an appeal from Paul that is based on what has gone before. So when we read, I appeal to you, therefore, brother, he is referring to everything that has gone before.

In other words, all the great things that he has said about their salvation, about redemption in Christ, about them being indwelt by the spirit of God, about them having the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father, the great privileges that are now theirs.

They are in possession of the grace of salvation. And having possession of it, they now have a responsibility to be the people of God.

And we ourselves are here this evening because we trust in the grace of God. God has made us what we are. And therefore, God requires us to follow a certain path and to a particular kind of lifestyle.

And so tonight I want us to think of the Christian and a life of total dedication to God. I want us to think, first of all, of the duty of consistency, to have a life that's consistent with the word of God.

[3:53] And that's what Paul requires of them. By the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. They are to present themselves or place themselves at the disposal of God.

And when he wants to draw attention to their need to be consistent with the word of God, he is drawing on an image from the Old Testament where the priest would come with a sacrifice to the temple.

And of course, the sacrifice was killed, the blood was shed and was presented to the Lord. He is using that process and giving it a new sense of direction and a new meaning by applying it to the experience of the disciple, of the Christian.

And I think the process is this, that he is thinking of sacrifice and the temple and the tabernacle. And now he's thinking of the Christian and Christ as the temple and them coming to him.

So that as the priests come with a sacrifice to the temple of Solomon, that they now come to the temple which is, who is Jesus Christ himself.

[5:06] And that's the way in which Jesus himself sets himself up in John chapter 2, when he says to the Jews around him, destroy this temple and I will raise it up at the last day.

Jesus is the temple. We take a sacrifice to the temple of Solomon, dedicating that to God at the temple. But when I take our own lives and we dedicate them to the service, to following the Lord Jesus, we place our hearts, our lives at the disposal of the Lord Jesus.

And of course, that kind of sacrifice is living, it's holy and it's acceptable. We are alive because of a union with Christ.

We are alive because we are brought from the dead by the Spirit of God. And as living people who have the life of God in our soul, we come to present ourselves as holy and acceptable.

And both of these things, of course, go together, but it sets before us the need for consistency with the Word of God, that we are holy as those who are set apart by God, and that we are also walking and living the kind of life that is acceptable to God.

[6:27] That God looks down upon us and sees the direction of our lives, the life that we are living, sees us set apart for himself, and he takes delight in us.

He is pleased with what he sees. He says to the Lord Jesus at the time of baptism, you are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

And when God looks down at his children, living the life that's consistent with the Word of God, set apart by himself, then God is well pleased.

And instead of thinking of placing our lives on an altar in commitment to God, we are placing our lives at the disposal of God.

We are God's possession, and we are giving our lives to him daily. And Paul goes on to say that this is your spiritual worship.

[7:27] In other words, he is making the whole of life an act of worship. So that wherever we go in life, we come from the worship of God, as we are called together to the public worship of God with the people of God.

We will go and live our lives in our workplace, in our home, in our school, wherever we spend our lives. Because the whole of life is worship, it is the service of God.

And we all have our individual callings. And God expects us and calls us to serve him wherever he has sent us in our daily lives. And that is your spiritual worship.

And here is one place where the King James Version is a much better translation. Because it should read, I think, that this is your reasonable service.

The word that's translated spiritual, it's not a word in the original that is connected to the Holy Spirit at all. It's a word that's connected to the Logos or to the mind or to a reason.

[8:38] So what he is saying to them, this is your reasonable worship. You're coming to present yourselves at the disposal of God, to serve God.

And you've done that in a reasonable way. It's not something you do blindly. Your intellect, your mind is working. And you're going through this act of worship, every step that you take, because there's a process in your mind that arises from the word of God, by the spirit of God, which leads you to direct your life in a particular way.

That's the consistency. And as the children of God, as those who, like them, by the mercies of God, who are saved by the grace of God, there is that intellectual process, as well as the movement of their affections after the Lord Jesus.

There is that intellectual process which leads us more and more to give ourselves to the Lord Jesus in the service of his name.

The need, the duty for consistency. It's a challenge for us all to see how we measure up with the standard that Paul is calling them to reach here in the church in Rome.

[9:58] But when we analyse what he is saying in the light of the way in which the grace of God works, then it's a kind of thing that should be natural for the children of God.

Natural to give ourselves, to place ourselves at the disposal of the Lord in his service and to do so because his word and his spirit working in our minds, persuading us daily that this is what we must surely do.

It's the renewal of the mind. It's something that's ongoing once more. It's something that God does. He renews our minds. But this is how it takes place.

If Paul was praying in Ephesians 3 for them to have an increased capacity for God in their hearts, here Paul is looking at them having an increased capacity for the understanding of God and of Christ, having the mind of Christ in the sense of knowing and of learning and of understanding. And it places upon us that responsibility to use our minds, our intellect, to use it in the study of the word of God and learning about the work of grace and the work of salvation as we have that in Christ Jesus.

And as we do so, that's the mechanism. That's the way in which God brings his work forward. It's through our minds. We may feel a lot of things and a lot of good things as we hear the gospel and learn about God's love.

[23 : 29] But what leaves us the greatest sanctifying mark in our lives is when we understand and when we learn more, when our minds are opened.

We saw in 2 Corinthians 3 the way in which the veil is taken away as we turn to the Lord. The veil is on the Jews when they read the book of Moses still.

But we have an enlightened mind. And it's that enlightened mind that we bring to the word of God to learn more and more of what God is saying to us.

With the outcome that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. It's not testing in the sense of proving if it's right or wrong.

But it's testing and proving the genuineness of the word of God. The riches of the word of God. It's coming to the word of God and discovering intellectually more and more of what the word of God means.

[24 : 38] And that then has its own impact upon our lives, upon our relationship with God and upon our relationships with each other. What are you doing through the rest of the chapter and we see the way in which Paul expands on this whole, on all these principles that he's setting out here by applying them to our relationships with each other, to our humility, to our Christ-likeness, to our relationships with one another, that we are to love one another.

God, it all flows out from this process of transformation by the renewal of our minds. And tonight, God wants us to reflect on that.

Our health as the children of God, as the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. To reflect on how consistent our lives is, that we have a duty to be consistent with the word of God.

To reflect on the danger of compromising with the world and to reflect upon the demand of God himself on our concentration on what his word says, so that we may learn and grow.

As one of the commentaries said as we close, dedication leads to discernment and discernment leads to delight in God's will. That sums up the Christian life.

[26 : 05] If we're walking the way that God wants us to do in his paths, that's what we will find.

Dedication leads to discernment. Our minds are working, understanding, and discernment leads to delight in God's will.

And ultimately, as the children of God, we come to the place where we delight in God. We delight in God's salvation. We delight in God's salvation in Christ. And we are more and more drawn by him, captivated, motivated by all that he has done for us as we present our lives, give ourselves into his possession, at his disposal, as he calls us, to serve him wherever he has done so in our lives.

May God bless these thoughts to us. So we're now going to conclude by singing in Psalm 143 in the Scottish Psalter, in the second version of the Psalm, and a version of the Psalm.