

Romans Lesson 16 Articles

Rom 12:1-2 The “therefore” in v. 1 refers back not simply to the previous argument about God’s mercy in bringing salvation to Jew and Gentile but to everything that Paul had been teaching from the beginning of the epistle. It marks the transition from the theology of God’s redemptive act in Christ Jesus to the ethical expectations that flow logically from that theological base. We come now to what is usually called the “practical” section of Romans.

The practical, however, must of necessity rest upon a solid theological foundation. Otherwise it is little more than advice about how to get along in a religious community. If God had not done what he did for us, there would be no compelling reason why we should now do what he says. The dynamic of God’s ethical instruction arises from its logical and necessary relationship to who he is and what he has done on our behalf. Many of the living religions have an ethical code that uplifts and inspires. Only the Christian faith, rooted as it is in a supernatural act that took place in history (the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ), has the ultimate moral authority as well as the effective power to transform human life according to the divine intention. So Christian ethics are practical specifically because they do not stand alone but emerge as unavoidable implications of an established theological base. Theology in isolation promotes a barren intellectualism. Ethics apart from a theological base is impotent to achieve its goals.¹

True Christian service and living must begin with personal dedication to the Lord. The Christian who fails in life is the one who has first failed at the altar, refusing to surrender completely to Christ. King Saul failed at the altar (1 Sam. 13:8ff and 15:10ff), and it cost him his kingdom.

The motive for dedication is love; Paul does not say, “I command you” but “I beseech you, because of what God has already done for you.” We do not serve Christ in order to receive His mercies, because we already have them (3:21–8:39). We serve Him out of love and appreciation.

True dedication is the presenting of body, mind, and will to God day by day. It is daily yielding the body to Him, having the mind renewed by the Word, and surrendering the will through prayer and obedience. Every Christian is either a conformer, living for and like the world, or a transformer, daily becoming more like Christ. (The Gk. word for “transform” is the same as the one for “transfigure” in Matt. 17:2.) Second Corinthians 3:18 tells us that we are transformed (transfigured) as we allow the Spirit to reveal Christ through the Word of God. It is only when the believer is thus dedicated to God that he can know God’s will for his life. God does not have three wills (good, acceptable, and perfect) for believers in the way that there are three choices for merchandise in the mail order catalogs (“good, better, best”). Rather, we grow in our appreciation of God’s will. Some Christians obey God because they know that obedience is good for them, and they fear chastening. Others obey because they find God’s will acceptable. But the deepest devotion is in those who love God’s will and find it perfect.

As priests, we are to present “spiritual sacrifices” to God (1 Peter 2:5), and the first sacrifice He wants each day is our body, mind, and will in total surrender to Him.²

Paul encourages us to imagine that we bring our bodies to God each day, lay them on the altar before His presence, and ask Him to use this “sacrifice” for His glory and the good of His people. It’s only “reasonable”!

God does not want us to try hard to sin less, but to depend upon His Spirit to be transformed into people who love to please God through willing obedience. That transformation begins with the mind.³

¹ Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, p. 230). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 399–400). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Ro 12:1–2). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.