

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## “A Living Sacrifice”

In 1 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul used the physical body and the order and cooperation of its members to illustrate the order and cooperation of the members of the spiritual body, the church. Even though the body consists of many members, each member has a specific function, but not the same function (Cf. Rom. 12:3-8). Paul also used the physical body illustration to teach that members of Christ’s body, the church, must exercise proper care for one another.

Paul went on to exhort the Corinthians to desire the best gifts. The gift, discussed in Chapter 13, that is above all gifts and that *“never fails”* is *“charity,”* or love. Jesus’ teaching on the subject of love set the standard. He said, *“...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”* (Matt. 22:37-40; Cf. Mk. 12:30, 31; Lk. 10:27) Therefore, we must love in the proper order—first God, and then our fellow man. Charity, or love, must be the underlying motive for all our actions.

## Righteousness By Faith

At the beginning of his Roman epistle, Paul referred to himself as *“...a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God”* (Rom. 1:1). This language illustrates Paul’s dedication to serving God. In Romans 6, Paul discussed the blessings of obedience, teaching that we must use our physical bodies to serve God; not in service to unrighteousness.

Paul also illustrated his sacrificial manner of life in his epistle to the Philippians where he wrote, *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead”* (Phil. 3:7-11). Righteousness by faith is the central theme throughout the first twelve chapters of the Roman epistle.

In Romans 12, Paul brought to a head the theme of righteousness by faith. He wrote, *“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. And be not conformed to this world: 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”* (Rom. 12:1, 2). Because of the points he had already discussed, Paul then beseeched (implored or urged) the Romans to do the things he mentioned in these two verses, but not to the exclusion of the other teaching in the epistle. Again, Paul used the physical body, describing it as *“a living sacrifice,”* to represent the entire sum of the life of God’s children.

Therefore, the works done in the body (deeds done while living), whether good or bad, are accomplished in the tabernacle of the flesh; and every man will be judged according to his works (2 Cor. 5:1-10). The bodily sacrifice is to be *“holy, and acceptable to God,”* which is our *“reasonable service”* (spiritual worship). Our service to God must be from our hearts (minds), for out of the heart *“are the issues of life”* (Prov. 4:23).

Next, Paul warned about being *“conformed”* (molded) to the world; by using the term *“transformed,”* he stressed nonconformity. People tend to *conform* to those things that involve habits, manners, dress, lifestyle, etc. *Transformation* is accomplished through a mind-renewal process, with the source of the renewal being the *“righteousness of God.”* Paul expressed the concept of renewal, or the *“new man,”* to the Colossians when he said, *“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him”* (Col. 3:10; cf. 2 Cor.

4:16; Eph. 4:23) Therefore, the Christian's life is to be new and different and patterned, as the name "Christian" implies, after Christ.

## The Nature of the Sacrifice

The nature of this sacrifice is of great importance, and we must not overlook it.

**It is a sacrifice.** As the word sacrifice implies, a Christian must be the victim, or the offering. We offer ourselves. We are not to be victims because of sin in our lives; rather, we are victims for the cause of Christ. We present our sacrifice.

When one person gives another person a gift, he buys the gift, wraps it, and presents it (usually in the presence of others) to the person for whom it is intended. A Christian prepares the gift he intends to present. Our lives must involve preparation for the life that is to come. (See Amos 4:12.) Under the old law, the Jews prepared the gifts and sacrifices (dead ones) offered to God. Gift givers surrender all rights to the gifts they buy, wrap, and give. They belong to the ones who receive them. Concerning our bodies, Paul taught this principle when he wrote, ***"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own"*** (1 Cor. 6:19).

**This sacrifice is a living sacrifice.** Our lives must be alive to God and dead to sin. Paul wrote, ***"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God"*** (Rom. 6:11-13). We must be involved in Godly works, which are good works. Jesus taught, ***"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"*** (Matt. 5:14-16). The light Jesus spoke of is the example of Godly works—not the light from a cigar or cigarette.

**This sacrifice must be holy.** The Greek word *hagios*, rendered ***"holy,"*** means, sacred, physically pure, morally blameless or religious, consecrated. This sacrifice must be undefiled. After all, we are offering it to God, and it must meet His terms.

Paul taught that we should use our bodies to glorify God and not to satisfy our own lusts. Hence, they must be holy (cf. Rom. 1:24; 6:12; 13:14; Gal. 5:24; 2 Tim. 2:22; Tit. 2:12).

**This sacrifice must be acceptable to God.** God will either accept or reject the sacrifices we offer. Consider the sacrifices Cain and Abel offered. In God's eyes, Cain's offering did not deserve respect; however, God had respect for Abel's offering (Gen. 4:1-4). The Hebrew writer stated that Abel's sacrifice was according to faith – ***"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh"*** (Heb. 11:4). Likewise, if we want God to accept our sacrifices, we must offer them according to His revealed will.

## Conclusion

Christians must present their lives as holy offerings, alive to God. Our bodies are ***"not our own"*** (1 Cor. 6:19). We cannot use them to satisfy our fleshly desires. They belong to God; hence we sacrifice them to Him. A Christian cannot sacrifice his body to things that entangle and defile. Such things include using tobacco, the social consumption of alcohol, gambling, immodest dress, sexual immorality, including adulterous marriage, religious error and compromise, and all things that defile. The body is to be the ***"temple of God"*** (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). The Christian must prepare his life according to the ***"righteousness of God"*** (Rom. 10:3). If we spend our lives in sacrificial service to Christ and His cause, we will be received into the ***"Father's house,"*** where ***"many mansions"*** are prepared for us by Christ who sacrificed Himself for us (Jn. 14:1-3). – *tgmc* ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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