



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 12:1-2

"God's Mercies and Living Sacrifices"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] This evening we have the privilege of having with us, for a few moments after the breaking of bread service, Dr. Cleon Rogers, who is the rector of the Freie Theologische Akademie of Zeihm, Germany. And Dr. Rogers will speak for a few minutes after the evening meeting. They are in the process of moving their theological seminary to Zeihm in Germany to Giessen in Germany. Both of those places are fairly close to Frankfurt in Germany, although different directions. But with Dr. Rogers tonight, Dr. Rogers has been here before, is Pastor Heinrich Jocheims, and a word is written concerning him in our calendar of concern.

But I'd like to lay a little bit of stress upon this. We have decided to give them thirty minutes after the evening meeting tonight. And Pastor Jocheims has had a most unusual experience. He was a pastor in Germany during the Hitler years. He was one of the pastors in Germany who opposed the Nazi regime. They were very anxious to get rid of Pastor Yoakums, called him up before them a bunch of times. In fact, when the Allies came in and took over the records of the Nazis, they found Pastor Yoakem's file, it was about six inches thick. I asked him yesterday afternoon how he managed to remain out of custody in Germany during those years. He said, "The only reason I did was that I was pastor of a large church, and my church was almost one hundred percent behind me. There were," he said, "about three or four Nazis in our congregation, and they were very wicked men." That's the way he put it, very evil men, but fortunately he was able to survive. One time, he

mentioned to me, he was before the authorities and they were giving him an extremely bad time. It appeared as if he was certain to go to prison. Finally the Nazi banged his hand on the table on the Bible itself, and said something about that damned book, the Bible, but then let him go. And Pastor Yoakums said that "The only thing that I could gather from that experience is that perhaps he had a grandmother who loved the Bible or some other member of his family that caused him at the last moment to let him go rather than put him in prison."

Now, Pastor Jocheims is an elderly man now, but he has spent time in Scotland, spent a year in the Theological College of the Free Church in Scotland. He has spent time in the United States, and also in Britain, and other times. And he speaks English very plainly and very clearly. And I know that you will enjoy hearing him this evening. He is one of those rare individuals who has really put his life on the line for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Dr. Rogers is also conducting an important work in Germany, and I think that tonight is one meeting that I would not want to miss if I was able to be here. So we urge you, if you can find the time, to come hear the two men.

Let's turn now to Romans chapter 12, verse 1 and verse 2 for the Scripture reading. I should have mentioned also that Pastor Jocheims is one of the founders of a movement in Germany which was designed to resist the Nazi movement. And in that movement were such well-known people who were known to him, some of them very intimately known, such as Pastor Martin Niemoller, whom many of you have seen his name in the papers over the last twenty or thirty years; and also, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was also associated with the movement. Incidentally, Pastor Jocheims' family knew quite well, Karl Barth, probably one of the most famous of the theologians of the twentieth century. Barth was one run out of Germany, forced to go back to Switzerland, because of his opposition of the Nazi regime. And so Pastor Jocheims has had a close relationship with, although their theologies, he says, have diverged. And he has held to the conservative biblical doctrine to this day. Romans chapter 12, verse 1 and verse 2 is our Scripture reading for this morning, and the apostle writes,

"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."

Before we go to prayer, speaking on behalf of the members of Believers Chapel, and I'm sure of the officers who would like to express our deep sympathy for Richard and Mary Vincent and the two daughters, for the loss of their son Rick Vincent, who went home to be with the Lord yesterday after an accident of a couple of weeks ago. He was a young man, a vital young man, a very healthy young man, and a Christian young man, and it certainly is a tragedy for us looking at it from a human standpoint that at age 20 his life should be cut short in an accident like that. We extend to them our deepest sympathy, and we would encourage you, of course, to pray for them in this time. Let's look to the Lord in a word of prayer.

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] The subject for today is "The Mercies of God and Living Sacrifices." I must confess, last night I decided to redo my notes on Romans chapter 12, verse 1 and verse 2. I had given Emily the title during the earlier part of the week on Monday or Tuesday, and I could not remember the title that I had given her. So this morning in the 8:30 service, I opened up the bulletin in order to discover what I was going to speak on this morning as a topic. [Laughter] I had finally, last night, decided, I've got to do these notes, so I may as well put a title there, and so I thought up a title again, and this morning when I began to speak, I took the bulletin out and said, "The subject for this morning is," and it was identical with the title that I arrived at yesterday. So that, of course, is sure and certain evidence of the inspiration of the title. [Laughter] I know what you are going to say

when you finish, "Well, the title may have been inspired, but the title was not very inspired this morning." Well, that's all right. I'm sure it will not be.

Let's turn, however, to the subject, "The Mercies of God and Living Sacrifices." One of the authors of one of the most recent of the commentaries to the Epistle to the Romans is a man by the name of Dr. Roy Harrisville. Dr. Harrisville teaches in a Lutheran theological seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. And in his book, when he comes to the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he says, "Now to what is vulgarly and erroneously called the 'practical' portion of the Romans letter." Well, Dr. Harrisville is right. We can, when we come to a section such as this, to say, "Now we are going to come to the practical part of the letter." Because the apostle does not have as his primary thrust from chapter 12 on through the end of this book the great doctrines of the Christian faith. Theology is here, of course. Doctrines are here, of course. But the tendency of the apostle's teaching is toward the application of that teaching to our daily life. We're in the habit of saying, "Therefore we are now turning to the practical side of the epistle." But such language is very false, very false theologically, and it's just false all the way around. Nothing is more practical than theology. It is the theology that makes Romans 12 through 16 significant and important. Theology is important. The ethical side of the Christian faith is also practical.

This is the section in which the apostle deals with the development of the life that he has been setting forth in the doctrinal section of the epistle. So we are talking now about the ethical side of the Christian faith, the application side of those great truths. But both doctrine and application are practical. In fact, we cannot have good application if we do not have it structured around good theology. The theme of the Epistle to the Romans, we've said many times, is "The Gospel of God." And Paul goes on to say that the gospel is good news, because a righteousness of God is revealed in it from faith to faith, as the Scriptures say, "The just shall live by faith." So the theme of the epistle is the explanation of how we may, through faith, come to the possession of the righteousness of God in the gospel. Well, that theme is still before us here. Paul is still talking about the righteousness of God. He's still talking about how it develops in the lives of Christians from this point on. It's true,

he does move from principle to practices, but both are practical. So he does move from principle to practices, from doctrine to duties, from revelation to responsibility, and from, as someone has put it, from the credenda to the agenda, or the things that are to be believed to the things that are to be done. "What God has joined together let no man put asunder," we say at the conclusion of a marriage ceremony. Well God has put good doctrine and then human duties together. The duties are the outgrowth of the doctrine. Both are practical. "What God has joined together let no man put asunder."

Do not preach only doctrine, preach application of doctrine. Do not preach application of doctrine only, preach doctrine as well. We have always tendencies in human life, moods and dispositions play across the Christian culture as others. Today we are living in a time in which there is a great deal of stress upon the practices of the Christian faith, upon human responsibilities, upon our duties, and not sufficient emphasis, though those emphases are important, not sufficient emphasis upon the great doctrines of the faith. Let us not put asunder these two sides of the faith. When we come to Romans 12 and through the remainder of the epistle, the apostle will talk primarily of the issues of the great doctrines he's been speaking about beforehand.

Now, it's important when we come to this section to notice how he addresses his readers in the very first line or two. He says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren." In other words, this section is a passage for believers. They are brethren, they are brethren in Christ. It is important to point this out, because we might think from looking at this that what Paul is telling us is that we might be saved by the dedication of our bodies. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." It's not inconceivable that people might think what Paul is saying is that the way of salvation is by the sacrifice of our bodies to the will of God. It's amazing how people misunderstand the Bible when they don't really study it very closely. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, Paul says." Some have thought that the apostle therefore means that we might by works attain salvation, forgetting that he addressed those words to believers. He addressed those words to those who were already saved. What he means when he says, "work

out your salvation" is to work out in application in the affairs of your daily life the great doctrine of salvation which the Holy Spirit has worked into you in wonderful grace.

Likewise here, when the apostle says to present our bodies a living sacrifice, he is not suggesting a way of salvation. There are people who think that the Golden Rule is all the religion I need. Harry Truman used to make statements similar to that. Now, he was a good Baptist, but I know the Baptists didn't like his theology too well, because ordinarily they wouldn't like that kind of theology. The Golden Rule is all I need. Mr. Truman said that all we needed to know was that we should do unto others as we would have others do unto us. God, however, in the Bible, says that the first commandment is to love him. And then when men fail there, what hope can there be of loving their neighbor, which is the second part of the commandment. Those who so easily disregard the claims of God that they forget him, but insist that they will try to love their neighbors, are not to be trusted, because if a person is such as to neglect the claims of God, there is little hope that he will ever measure up to the claims that his neighbor might have upon him.

Paul is not talking about a way of salvation by the sacrifice of our bodies. He's talking about dedication or the presentation of the body of the Christian in order that the will of God may be accomplished in his life. Now, this is an important passage, also, on the will of God. We are often concerned about the question of the will of God, and there is a lot more that could be said about it that I'm going to say this morning. But let me just try to put out a few things so that we will be able to understand something of what I would like to say in the remainder of the message. We can think of the will of God in at least two ways. We can think of it as the predetermined will of God, or as our theology books put it, "the decretive will of God," the will of his decree. That is his will that touches all of the events of this universe even down to the raindrops, individually. There was not a single individual raindrop that fell over the past two or three weeks in Dallas, that was not personally known to the Lord God in heaven. His control over the affairs of our human existence is that minute. He knows when a sparrow falls to a ground. He knows how many hairs are on your head. All of those things are within his infinite omniscience. He controls all of human events.

Now, if you are not subject to the teaching of the word of God that is an astounding thing to think about. And our tendency as a human being is to doubt that that is true, to raise all kinds of human objections to it, which rise out of the application of our human reason, our human reason touched by the fall, because the fall has touched our ability to think. But if we are subject to the teaching of the word of God, we only have to listen to the statements; such as the Apostle Paul makes to realize that what I said is true. Paul says, concerning God in heaven, that he works all things according to the counsel of his will. Notice the universalism of it. He works all things according to the counsel of his will. So every little raindrop that fell over the last week, that one that managed to find its way into your house too, and those that might fall tonight, for which you are not very happy. They, too, are not beyond the will of God. That is his decretive will of God.

Now, of course, we can never know what the decretive will of God is until events have transpired. IF you were to come to me and say, "What is the decretive will of God for you?" I would not know. I hope that his decretive will is that when I get on the airplane this afternoon to go to Winona Lake, Indiana I will arrive there tonight at 9:49, that is in Fort Wayne. And I particularly hope that it is within his will that when I get on Air Wisconsin, I'm sorry Air Wisconsin, but when I get on Air Wisconsin and that little plane with one seat on each side, and you have to bend over to find your own seat, I particularly am hoping that it is his decretive will that that plane from Chicago to Fort Wayne gets to Fort Wayne, and when it returns. But I don't know. It may be that I shall spend tonight in the presence of the Lord. I wouldn't want to complain about that. I would not be able to tell you what the decretive will of God was for me, but you would know. That's something that we can only know after the fact.

But now, there is another term with which we should be acquainted. And that is his preceptive will. Now, his preceptive will is his will by precepts, or his will by commandment. Or his moral will. That is the will of God expressed in the things that please him. Now, his moral will or his preceptive will is for all of us personal beings. His decretive will is for everyone and everything, even the sparrows would like to know the decretive will of God. Squirrels would like to know it too,

because if it was the decretive will of God that they be stung from an acorn from my slingshot, they would not want to go into my yard. [Laughter] But we don't know that, we do know his moral will though. His moral will is expressed in the Bible, and it's the same for every person. We read in the Bible, God commands all men every where to repent. It is the moral will of God for everyone that we repent. In other words, that's something that pleases him, that we repent.

Now, the moral will of God is not always fulfilled. We say in our churches frequently, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We are expressing there a desire that things may take place that will be pleasing to the moral or preceptive will of God. But often things about which we pray, "Thy will be done," are not done. In other words, the preceptive will of God is something that is the same for every one of us, it's what pleases God, but it is not always done. Columbus did not know the decretive will of God. He left his place of departure to go out for a place concerning which he was ignorant. He didn't know where he was going. When got there, he didn't know whence he had come. And when he got back, he didn't know where he had been. [Laughter] It was the decretive will of God, however, that that trip take place and some unusual consequences transpire from it. The moral will, however, is the thing that pleases God.

Now the apostle has a technique, perhaps there are other techniques too, in the word of God, but Paul has a technique for finding his preceptive will in this text, which has to do with the basis of life. So let's look at it, and we notice first of all, the apostle's great request in the first line or two. He says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." That's a striking thing isn't. We should present our bodies a living sacrifice. You can see that what Paul is doing is reaching back to the Old Testament, the language that was known to his readers, and is known by all people who read the Bible; he's taking the rite of sacrifice and he's pressing that into symbolic service to Christianity. He's saying, in the Old Testament men brought dead sacrifices to the Lord God expressing certain spiritual truths, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. So thinking about the Old Testament sacrifices and how animals were devoted to the will of God to express certain truths

about the Lord Jesus who was to come, Paul argues, or beseeches; that his word beseech, he pleads, that we present our bodies a living sacrifice.

What's the motivation for this? Why should we do this? Why should we present our bodies a living sacrifice to the Lord God? Why, Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." What are the mercies of God? Well, the best explanation of the mercies of God are those mercies that have been expressed in the preceding chapters of this epistle. You think about the Romans, they were reading the epistle, just as I'm reading it to you, in their meetings, individuals stood up and read the word. We know that from certain indications in the New Testament in the Book of Revelation. The Lord Jesus says, "Blessed is the one who reads and they who hear the words of this prophecy." Not everybody could have a Bible in those days, and so when they gathered in the meeting, in order to observe the Lord's Supper, for that was regularly observed in their meetings. Time would come for the reading of the word of God, and someone would read. They would have scrolls, and they would unfold the scrolls, and one would read and the others would listen.

Well now, the apostle here, if his letter were read in the congregation of the Romans and they were to read, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." Someone might say, "What does Paul mean by the mercies of God?" They couldn't run off to a concordance like Strong's or Young's and look up the term mercies, and see what mercies might refer to. What they had usually before them was the letter that they were reading. So they would think, what are the mercies of God. Well, what had Paul been saying, and then their minds would go back to the first part of this epistle, and they would remember how the apostle talked about how we were sinners, Gentiles and Jews, and then launched into a lengthy discussion of how sinners, Gentiles or Jews, might be declared righteous by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. How with the burden and guilt and condemnation of their sin, might have it lifted by virtue of the fact that a substitute has come and had borne the judgment of sinners. And we now are able to stand before the Lord God with a righteousness that is acceptable to him.

I've often cited William Cunningham, "The righteousness of God is that righteousness which the righteousness requires him to require." Well, that's the kind of righteousness we have, one that satisfies a holy God. And Paul labors that for almost three chapters in the word of God, telling us how we can be justified before God, through faith, apart from any works that we do. Having done that, he speaks of the principles of sanctification. How we, who have been declared righteous by God may grow in righteousness or in likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. And then in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he speaks about our glorification, when we shall be ultimately conformed to the image of the Son of God. These are some of his mercies; the mercy of justification, the mercy of sanctification, the mercy of glorification. And then in Romans 9, 10, and 11, the chapters we've just been recently discussing, he launched into a discussion of the relationship of the nation and the nations and how God is in the present day bringing that vast number of Gentiles into the olive tree so that they partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree. The Abrahamic promises, inclusive of justification, the possession of the Holy Spirit, as Paul says in Galatians chapter 3, and other blessing. He talks about how Israel shall be saved, in a magnificent display of the grace of God. And a result of that the whole earth shall be blessed.

The mercies of God, well let's be individual about them. What re the mercies of God to me. Well, first of all, his divine eternal election. In ages past, out of his grace, unconditionally, unconditionally, not conditioned upon my good works, not conditioned upon my foreseen faith, but simply arising out of his divine eternal love, set upon me, he chose me. "Chosen in him before the foundation of the world," you may find that difficult. There are things about it that I don't understand yet. But it's plain and clear as a fact of divine revelation. Not only that, but in that choice of me, there was a choice unto salvation. And so it was necessary for God to make a decision concerning some means to that end. He elected me, as a means to my salvation. In time, when I came into existence, then the Holy Spirit began his work of efficacious grace, and ultimately brought my rebellious will into submission to the divine will. Dr. Barnhouse said he jiggled my willer. My will, which was in opposition to God naturally, because of the fall of man, for our wills are naturally

in opposition to the Lord God, he in wonderful grace transformed into a will responsive to the message of the gospel. That is what is meant by efficacious grace.

He also gave me repentance and faith, gifts of God. Brought me new life, regenerated me, gave me the possession of the Holy Spirit as a permanent possession, and has marked out for me a particular path. For every believer a particular path, we shall be like Christ; and a glorious future, in which in all the ages to come we shall display the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, what mercy. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." Who can fail to be moved by these things? What is there within us that after hearing these things we say, "Well, so what?" Why, everything in this whole universe pales into insignificance by the side of the mercies of God. So Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," because of all the he's done present your bodies a living sacrifice.

A man has to be awfully dull and indifferent and cold not to be moved by the mercies of God. And if a person is not moved by the mercies of God that's probably the outstanding evidence that he doesn't have divine life within him. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." That's the first step in knowing the will of God. One must know God Savior, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." No one can know his moral will, his preceptive will for me, except through the Scriptures. We cannot know God's will for us in the affairs of life until we know him as our Savior. And isn't it amazing, the apostle has waited 11 chapters to say, "I beseech you," like this.

Walter Luthi has been, I don't know whether Mr. Luthi is still living or not. But for many years he was a very effective pastor in Bahrain in Switzerland. And he has written a number of commentaries, which are essentially the messages that he gave to his congregation. One of them is on the Epistle to the Romans. At this point in Mr. Luthi's exposition he says, "I am reminded of a pretty little church that was recently built and consecrated in the Bernese Oberland, inside it you can see one single Bible text: on the front of the pulpit is written: 'Be doers of the word'" Now he said, "I can picture the members of that mountain community weary from their six days toil, visiting their

House of God on Sunday only to find that even here they are exhorted to work! The words, ‘Be ye doers of the word.’” Now, Mr. Luthi, nor would I, want to discount the significance of a text from Holy Scripture, but after a person has worked for six days, as they worked in the Bernese Oberland, and comes into church on Sunday morning and looks up and sees, “Be ye doers of the word,” that might be a little discouraging.

The Apostle goes at it a little bit differently. For eleven chapters he has, in a sense, told us of the magnificent work of God. And now finally, he confronts us with an appeal. “I appeal to you, present your bodies a living sacrifice.” I like the apostle's methodology. It's very similar to that expressed in the hymn that we often sing, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Now, the second step in finding the will of God is the presentation of the body. This is sacrificial language. Strikingly it is never used in the Old Testament of the actual offering of a sacrifice. But the language is used of priestly activity. One of the reasons that this specific word is not used, present, perhaps is because what we are talking about here is not a bloody sacrifice, like the primary sacrifices of the Old Testament, but an unbloody offering. But Paul says, “Present.” He uses a tense of the verb that refers to something that is definite. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice.” I think it suggests something so definite that it marks a transition in the life, such as when a man stands before a minister with another young lady, and the minister says, “Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?” He says, “I will.” And turns to her and he says, “Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?” And she says, “I will.” Well those two little words, “I will, I will.” Are once and for all expressions of one's determination, but oh what continuing significance they have.

Or it's like a person enrolling in the United States Army. When he says, “I do,” then everything in his life thereafter comes under the jurisdiction of the President of the United States and others associated in our armed serviced. That's the kind of things that Paul is saying, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice.” By the way, he says, “present.” I have a good friend; I look forward to

seeing him in heaven, for he's already there. He was the first president of the theological seminary that I will be lecturing in this next week when I go to Winona Lake to teach the Greek text of the Epistle to the Galatians over the next two weeks. I'm going to give thirty hours of lectures, fifteen this coming week, Monday through Friday, and I'll be back here on Sunday. And then fifteen the next week, teaching a whole two-hour semester course in two weeks, exegeting the Greek text of the Epistle to the Galatians, and I'm looking forward to it with a great deal of anticipation.

Dr. Alvin McClain was the President of Grace Theological Seminary and a godly man. When I was a young man, and there was a time when I was a young man [Laughter]. When I was young man, I was in a Bible conference on more than one occasion with Dr. McClain. He was a very gifted teacher and theologian. I always enjoyed listening to him. I heard him one time make some comments on this particular text. And he was illustrating the word "present." "Present your bodies." He said, "Now notice it says present, because this Greek word has been translated both yield, and others have thought to translate it by surrender." He said, "Now, let me illustrate." He said, "Now, just suppose by some good fortune that I should remember our wedding anniversary when it came around." And then he interjected these words, which I put in my notes many years ago, "My highest ambition is to be Mrs. McClain's second husband!"

Well then he went on to say, "Well suppose that I decide that since by good fortune I've remembered the date of our wedding, I'm going to get her some jewelry. And I go and buy the jewelry and I have it wrapped up, and I bring it to her. And then I say to her, 'I would yield this to you on this day,' she would look at me strangely. Or if I would say, 'I would like to surrender this to you,' she would still look at me strangely." I know if we were to say anything like that, our wives would probably say, "What's the matter with you?" Because you see, if you say "yield" or "surrender" there is a note of reluctance there. But this word doesn't have a note of reluctance. It's "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." It's our privilege and a great privilege it is to be able to give our bodies to the Lord. It's amazing that he wants our bodies. Our bodies, some of them are old, some of them snore, some of them have bad

hearts, some of them have had trials that have left marks upon them, some are painted, on some we pour all kinds of lotion, others we take out into the sun to give a particular hue to them that we think make them look better; it's amazing that God would want a body glistening with lotions, snoring, old, bad hearts, *et cetera*.

What does the text of Scripture mean when it says, "present your bodies?" Well, our body is our being in relation to the world. Our being in relation with the world, he's not so much interested in our body, as the fact it is by our body that we have a relationship to the world. And he would like for us to present our bodies in the sense that he would like the keys to our life. To our house, in which we live, so that he may have control over us. If we were to think of our body as a kind of house, and our life as a kind of house, and giving God the keys to it; does he have the key to the dining room? Do you eat under the direction of the Holy Spirit? Does he have the key so far as what you eat is concerned? Have you given him the recreation room so that the things that you do in recreation are things that are pleasing to him? What about the library? Are the things that you read the things that are pleasing to him? And so on, he wants our bodies. He would like to have that, which is used in relationship to the world so that he may use us for his glory. It's a very unreasonably thing that we often do, to give him our spirits, but to give our bodies to the service of that which opposes him. But many of us find that that's often the case. We've given our spirits and our souls to the Lord God. We've given our bodies to others.

Now, Paul says "living sacrifice," of course, he's contrasting this sacrifice with the dead ones of the Old Testament. There never was a voluntary offering in the Old Testament. No animal came forward and said, "Let me be next, Aaron." Those were involuntary offerings. Paul says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." They were slain sacrifices. He wants a living sacrifice. It's a marvel of grace, incidentally, that those people described in Romans 3, "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that doeth good, no not one. They've all gone out of the way. Their throat's an open sepulcher." It's open that those described in Romans 3, have bodies that would please God when given to him. Paul says it's your spiritual service. We don't serve him in outward rites, we serve in

internally. We worship God in spirit and in truth, and he would like for us to give the key to our life to him for his use.

Now, the continuing process of the realization of the will of God is expressed in verse 2, "And be not conformed to this age." We're like people who are ready to take a long trip on a boat, someone has said, we've gotten on the boat, but we're still moored to the mainland. Those of us who believed in Jesus Christ, we have a new nature. We are now citizens of heaven, not of Dallas. We are now citizens of the New Jerusalem, not of this old place down here. We have a new life, we are not of this world, but we are still in this world. We are like people who've boarded the boat to take us to Europe, but as we look out, we have longings for the United States of America. And so having been born again, having been given a new life, having been given a new citizenship, we're still moored to the mainland, and there are many attractive things out there that appeal to our old nature. So the apostle says, "And be not conformed to this age."

What does that mean sell your TV? Well, not really, but if you can't do anything but look at your TV and some of the things that appear on TV, then yes, sell your TV, you'd be better off. But for those of us who have more than one, well then the use of your TV is very important. Well, this word is a word that has to do with the outward side of things. "And be not conformed to this age." The fashion of this age, we are too much conformed to the fashion of this age. We can see it in evangelicalism. Listen to evangelicals talk, "my happiness," "my needs being met," these are the things that people are thinking about in the local church. You will come across people who say, "I'm not going to go to this church any longer." Why? "My needs are not being met." Why do you go to church, to have your needs met? Ah, do you understand what it is when the saints of God gather. Do you know why you come together? We are characterized by rivalry, competition, materialism; the old life has its appeal for us. The new song that God put in our mouth when we were born again, set us upon the solid rock, gave us that brand new song of redemption, it's kind of lost the tune. It doesn't sound so good anymore. It's dying out. James says, "The man who is the friend of the world is an enemy of the Lord God." Don't you know that, he says?

Now, he's not saying get out of the world; sell your TV, sell your radio, too. Shut your doors; don't talk with any Christians, separate entirely. Put the Bible in your hands, sit down by the side of your table or bed or whatever it may be, and read the Bible for the rest of your life. No, that's not what he's talking about either. He's not talking about isolation. You'd lose contact; you could not be useful to the Lord God. He's saying; simply, don't be fashioned according to this world. Don't take as your model in life the fleeting superficial fashions of this age, whether it be in religion and salvation by works; or in philosophy; or in morals. Don't be conformed according to the fashion of this transitory age, because it's going to come to an end. What are your interests; the will of God, the service of God, the accomplishment of the will of God in my life, the usefulness that really counts, the treasures in heaven.

Now, he talks about the inward side too. He says, "And be ye transformed," that's a word that refers to the inner side. This is the fourth step, becoming a Christian, presenting your body as a living sacrifice, not being fashioned according to this world, being transformed by the renewing of your mind. Non-conformity to the world is not enough. You see, you need to be like Christ, he says. "How?" someone says. "How can I possibly be transformed?" Well, Paul tells you, "by the renewing of your mind." Dr. McClain said that he once got lost out in a wilderness part of the country. He finally managed to make his way down to a filling station, and he said, "Have you got a map?" And the man said, "Yes, I've got a map." And so he gave him a map. He had the map in his hand, he said, "By the way, do you know the way to such and such a town?" The fellow looked at him and said, "Look at the map." [Laughter] So, how is it possible for us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds? Look at the map. How are our minds renewed? They are renewed through feeding upon the word of God. The mind of Christ is expressed in the word of God. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds through the word of God. Look at the map. See how important the mind is? Do you see how important it is? Far more important than the emotions, they are important, but this is the important thing, the renewing of your mind through the word of God.

There is a story that a friend of mine tells about Jerome Hines, he said this happened not too many years ago. Mr. Hines, as a young person, was bent on becoming an opera star, and trained diligently to become a star, and did become that. But one day he heard Beverly Shea singing and singing a song, "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold." He recognized immediately that Mr. Shea's voice was an outstanding voice, but a voice devoted to the service of the Lord God. Well, as a result of that he became a Christian. Later on in his career, he decided he was going to stay in opera, because he didn't think that opera was sinful in itself. And then he might have a testimony there, which he has had. But there came a rather critical point in his career, not too many years ago, when there was a certain part that was up for disposal. He trained for months for this particular part. He had gone to the extreme of training before that. He had learned several languages in order that he could sing Italian and the various other languages that opera stars must know well in order to sing well. But this was a part that he had always wanted to sing.

And finally, he had managed to get that part, and sang a contract to sing it for ten years. And when he went in for the first rehearsal he walked in, and there were some dancers on the platform performing a dance, which he thought was a rather lewd dance. He said, "What's going on here?" He said, "That's not in the opera." They said, "We know, it's not in the opera, but it's been decided to put it in, because those responsible said that they needed something a little more modern in it." He said, "I'll not sing as long as that dance introduces this opera." They said, "Well you better see Mr. Bane about that." So he went to Mr. Rudolf Bane. He walked in, he said, "What's this about this dance? That's not in the opera." He said, "Of course, I know it's not in the opera, but it's going to be in it." He said, "Okay, I won't sing." He said, "All right. If you won't sing, we'll ostracize you. You won't be able to sing anywhere in the kind of opera to which you want to be associated." He said, "I'll not sing." And so it was necessary for them to get someone else to sing that part. And over the ten year period of time the money that he lost by that was up in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. It was a decision that he made, because he felt that to sing that part was to be fashioned according to this age, and not be transformed by the renewing of his mind.

The apostle, in the last words, and I must close now, says, the result of all of this is the great step of discerning and proving or testing "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." My dear Christian friend, there is no way for us to know the will of God, until by the renewing of our minds, we present our bodies a living sacrifice, by the grace of God stop being conformed to this world. Be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and in that activity, we shall discover what is the will of God for us. It is very much like a weaver weaving something. As you look at him you say, "My goodness what are you making?" He cannot tell you really, unless he has a model, until he finishes. Then you will see what he has been doing. The same is true in our Christian life. We cannot ever know the will of God for us, except so far we are responsive to the word of God, and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit seek to follow that map, which God has given us. And then in the process of the obedience we shall learn what is that magnificent plan that God has for us.

One of my friends, who has written a book on Romans, concludes at this point by saying, "Now, what are you going to do with your life? Are you going to wrap it up in a napkin of affluence and bury it in forty years of self-indulgence? That would be the dullest experience you could have." That would be. What would be duller, if you're a Christian, than to become the president of General Motors with a salary of eight hundred and ninety five thousand dollars and stock options for another million every year, and wind up with a wasted life? On the other hand, we'll have a pastor here, Heinrich Jocheims, I presume he doesn't have a whole of money in the world. He probably doesn't have a whole of the world at all. But my, what a rich experience, his life on the line for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, heaven is opening up for him with brightness and a glory that I must confess, I covet. Treasures in heaven, how significant that is. May God transform your life to that end.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the privilege of presenting our bodies a living sacrifice that we sinners should please Thee in that activity is astounding.