A Reasonable Service

"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."
—Romans 12:1

THE INTRODUCTION TO this epistle states that it was written to those "that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints." (Rom. 1:7) These primarily would be the 'brethren' mentioned in our text; those whom the apostle is exhorting to present their bodies 'a living sacrifice.'

It is evident, in many congregations, that there were some in Rome connected with the church who had not yet made a full consecration to the LORD. They had come to a certain knowledge of the LORD, and had counted the cost of self-sacrifice, but had not given themselves fully to the LORD. These would consider the exhortation of our text as encouraging them to yield their all to the LORD in sacrifice, with the assurance that, if they did, the merit of Christ would be applied to make their sacrifice acceptable.

Paul's expression, 'I beseech you,' is significant. The Heavenly Father does not coerce his people to sacrifice, but he invites them to do so, with the assurance

that now is the "accepted time." (II Cor. 6:2) God does not command one to make a consecration. To do so would be to change the matter from willing sacrifice to obligation. Paul writes, I beseech you. Enter into a covenant with God, to follow Jesus. Give up your human will, and remember that this includes your mortal body. Continue the work of presenting your body, of dying daily. Remember that the mere promise to fulfill a covenant is not fulfilling it.

The Heavenly Father begets us by the Holy Spirit through the Word of Truth, and gives us many privileges that belong to those who have become New Creatures in Christ Jesus. It is for us to go forward day by day laying down our lives in his service. How appropriate it was for the apostle to encourage us to lay down our lives daily. It is our mortal bodies that are being sacrificed in his service. Ours is a living sacrifice. This body, reckonedly freed from condemnation, is being continually sacrificed. It is our covenant, and privilege, to accomplish the sacrifice of our flesh in accordance with our Father's will.

To the unconsecrated, but prospective brethren, the principle of Paul's exhortation would be, You are desirous of serving God. This is indicated by your attending the meetings of the church. The fact that you assemble with the saints signifies that you love holy things, and desire to know the will of God. The will of God is that you present yourselves in full consecration, and consider that your body is to be a living sacrifice, day by day using your strength and your life in the LORD's service.

CONSECRATION REASONABLE

Everyone who recognizes God's mercies and blessings finds it a 'reasonable service' to sacrifice earthly

things. It is a precious privilege thus to serve the LORD. If it was a reasonable service for Jesus to leave the heavenly glory, become a man, and as a man to sacrifice himself unto death, then surely our little sacrifice is indeed most reasonable. We have very little to give, and when there is an opportunity for showing our appreciation to the Heavenly Father for his great love toward us, we should make haste to use it.

The Heavenly Father set before the Redeemer a great joy as a recompense for his obedience. The LORD does not invite us to sacrifice ourselves without any reward from him. He has promised that if we do this he will make us joint-heirs with his beloved Son and partakers of the Divine nature—participators with Jesus in all the joys of the kingdom.

With all the true brethren there is a continual—a daily—presentation for sacrifice. Every morning we present ourselves before the LORD and ask his blessing on our efforts to serve him during the day. Ours is a constant surrender of self-will, a daily waving of our offering before the LORD. So it was with our Lord Jesus. He not only made a full consecration of himself at the beginning of his ministry, but day by day he laid down his life until his sacrifice was completely consumed. Only those who are thus faithful will gain the prize.

GOD'S MERCIES

The reason Paul gives for presenting our bodies a living sacrifice is the 'mercies of God'—I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. As many as hear and understand the true Gospel of the kingdom should indeed be impelled by the mercies of God, not only to make a full consecration, but to present

their bodies in sacrifice. It would be very unreasonable to accept God's marvelous favors and then neglect to live up to the conditions attached to them.

The Heavenly Father has offered his fully consecrated children the opportunity of being joint-heirs with Jesus Christ in an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." (I Pet. 1:4, *Marginal Translation*) If we believe this, we will earnestly seek to know just what all the conditions are. We will find that the conditions are, in reality, easy when compared with the great reward to which they lead.

If we fail to put forth our greatest effort to win this glorious prize it will demonstrate that we have not fully believed God's message. If we recognize the value of that offer, and believe it fully, we will surely be eager to lay aside every weight and every encumbrance and run patiently to the end of the way in order to obtain the crown.—Heb. 12:1,2

UNTIL DEATH

Our beloved and resurrected Master made a wonderful promise to us—"Be thou faithful till death, and I will give to thee the crown of life." (Rev. 2:10, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) It is a very great opportunity that we have seized, far greater than anything the world can offer. If we have presented our bodies in sacrifice, and are keeping them on the altar of sacrifice, they will be accepted by God as slain with Christ, and we are now walking in newness of life.

Reckonedly we are dead. "You died, and your life has been hidden with the Anointed one by God." (Col. 3:3, *WED*) Our will has been immersed into the will of his Father. We are baptized into Christ,

into his sacrificial death, and throughout our 'living sacrifice' experience we are to walk as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

Throughout our Lord's earthly ministry, his heartfelt sentiments were, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:9) With him it was more than a desire to know his Father's will. Jesus came to do the Father's will, and in the doing of it he was completely faithful. We are to endeavor also to be faithful—even unto death. Thus we will obtain the "crown of life," and live and reign with him.—Rev. 2:10; II Tim. 2:11,12

To present our body a living sacrifice and to continue offering it day by day, until it is wholly consumed, is not only a reasonable service, but an offering far too small. To refuse to accept this opportunity would be an indication of a pitiful lack of appreciation of God's infinite goodness. It would also reveal a serious lack of judgment, our inability to weigh and compare the trifling transitory pleasures of self-will in this brief human life with our present peace and joy in Christ Jesus, and the eternity of joy and glory to follow.

The hope set before us is truly a glorious one. It is to be with Jesus—"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." (Eph. 1:21) It is to be next to our glorious Lord and Head, who is "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev. 19:16) It is to be associated with him in the work of establishing the Divine will throughout the earth, and in blessing all nations. What a powerful incentive to faithfulness! And only the faithful will attain to it, for "they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."—Rev. 17:14 ■