

A LIVING SACRIFICE

– *NOVEMBER 26. – ROMANS 12:1-8. –*

THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS – THE ADVANTAGE OF THE JEW OVER THE GENTILE – THE CAUSE OF ISRAEL'S FAILURE TO GET THE CHIEF BLESSING – THE CALL OF THE GENTILES TO COMPLETE THE ELECT NUMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST – ISRAEL'S RETURN TO FAVOR THE SIGNAL FOR BLESSINGS UPON THE WHOLE WORLD – THE CHURCH CALLED TO SACRIFICE – VARIOUS INSTRUCTIONS.

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." – Verse 1.

WHILE the Apostle Paul was a wonderful logician, and in his writings has set forth the elements of Christian faith along doctrinal lines more than has any other Apostle, yet we notice that he is in pursuit of a certain object. He is not beating the air, not discussing theological points for the sake of making an argument or of showing his own ability. His arguments along doctrinal lines lead the reader in every instance onward and upward, as a stairway, to a grand upper room of perfected Christian character.

Nowhere is this more manifest than in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Beginning with the distinctions between the Jew and the Gentile, he contrasts the former, informed respecting God and to some extent respecting the Divine Plan, with the latter, "without God and having no hope in the world." After calling attention to the general ignorance of God prevailing amongst all classes of Gentiles, the Apostle carries the mind forward, pointing out how the degradation had come, and how the knowledge of God had reached Israel first – not because the Israelites were better than the Gentiles, but because of the Divine favor, "grace," "election."

Then the Apostle demonstrates that nevertheless "the Law made nothing perfect," but was merely a pedagogue – a servant, whose business it was to take the children to school. Thus the Law was designed to bring Israel to Christ, the great Teacher, that they might learn of Him. He further demonstrates that, while Israel was seeking Divine favor, they failed to get the chief blessing because they were not thoroughly candid with themselves, and hence mistook the mission of the Mosaic Law. They hypocritically claimed that they kept the Law inviolate and were therefore entitled to its blessings of eternal life, etc.; whereas they should have admitted that the Law was so grand and so perfect, and they themselves so fallen from perfection, that they were unable to keep it. Then they should have looked to the Lord for help. In this attitude of mind they would have been ready to receive eternal life as a *gift*, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and would have given up the seeking of life by the perfection of their own works.

So the Apostle points out that Israel failed because they sought the blessing not by faith, but by works. Thus "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the Election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." (Romans 11:7.) He then points out that Israel's fall into blindness and the calling of a peculiar people from amongst the Gentiles to complete the elect company was foreknown of God and declared by Him through the Prophets of Israel. (Romans 9 and 10.) But he shows [**R5975 : page 317**] that Israel is not cast off forever; but that when the elect class shall have been completed, all Israel shall be saved from the blindness into which they stumbled in the rejection of Christ; and that their recovery then will be the signal for blessings upon the whole world of mankind. – Romans 11:15,25-32.

THE MAIN POINT OF THE ARGUMENT

After eleven chapters of argumentative, logical, beautiful, instructive, blessed reasoning the Apostle reaches the crown of his

argument, saying, "I beseech you *therefore*, brethren, by the mercies of God [presented in the previous eleven chapters], that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." He is addressing the Household of Faith, urging them to accept the Divine invitation to enter the elect Body of Christ, a part of which was being gathered from amongst the Jews, and the remainder of which was being made up from those called from amongst the Gentiles. These were already justified by faith in Christ Jesus as the Redeemer, and therefore were "brethren" of the Household of Faith.

St. Paul exhorts these brethren to appreciate fully the grace of God through Christ and to become faithful sons and heirs of God. The way to this exalted position is pointed out as a way of sacrifice. To "present your bodies a living sacrifice" is to do just what our Lord Jesus did. He said, "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." (John 6:38.) It is to ignore the will of the flesh, with all of its ambitions, hopes and aims, however proper they may be in themselves, henceforth to devote all our time, our energies, our talents, be they many or few, to the doing of the Master's work, so that with Christ Jesus we may say, "It is my meat to do His will and to finish His work." – John 4:34.

This full consecration is even unto death, when, the course being finished, the reward is sure. Such a sacrifice on the part of justified believers is reckoned of God as holy, because the merit of our Redeemer's sacrificial death is imputed to them through faith. Therefore their sacrifice is acceptable to God, and is but their reasonable service, even though no exceeding great reward had been promised.

This class should know what are the terms and conditions upon which God has called them: **(1)** to suffer with Christ in the present time; and **(2)** to be glorified and to reign with Him during the coming Age, in order to bless the world. They should know the reason for

their sufferings. They should have a clear understanding of the character which God would develop in them, and without which they would not be fit for a place in the Kingdom. It is concerning some of these characteristics, necessary to those who would make their calling and election sure, that today's Study treats.

TRUE CHRISTIAN LIVING

Verse 2. "And be ye not conformed to [patterned after] this world [its ideas, its hopes, its aims]; but be ye transformed [remodeled, changed] by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." This we do by taking the mind of Christ – endeavoring to think as He thought and to do as He did, or as He would do if He were in our circumstances. Only by coming into such an attitude can we fully know the will of God. Any other attitude is more or less biased by prejudice, thus making our discernment of the will of God more or less indistinct.

Verse 3. Through the grace given unto the Apostle he foresaw that one of the greatest temptations amongst Christians would be the ambition to be great, to be highly esteemed – if not by the world, at least amongst those of the Household of Faith – and to do some great thing which would attract attention, rather than the common things which constitute the bulk of actual service. Therefore the Apostle counsels every man in the Church to take a sober estimate of his talents, neither overrating nor underestimating them, in order that he may make the best use of them as a wise, faithful steward.

This sober thinking of one's talents must be proportionate to the time we have been under the Lord's instruction and the degree of attention we have given to learning the lessons designed for the increase of our faith. This development is in the Scriptures spoken of as a gift, as a fruit of the Spirit of God in us, and again as God's workmanship; for by His Truth and by His providences He is working in His children, not only to will, but also to do His good

pleasure. He is working in us faith, hope, joy, peace, love and all the graces which He approves; and if we are obedient to His teachings and leadings, He will eventually complete the work. Then we shall be copies of His dear Son our Lord.

Verses 4 and 5 assure us of the important and honorable place occupied by every member of the Body of Christ, even though all have not the same office. All are useful; all are needful, one to another; and each should seek to know his place and to do his part in it for the edification of the Body. Clearly and distinctly the Apostle points out to us in this illustration the close relationship which the members of the Church of Christ bear to their Lord and Head. As the head controls the body, thinks for it, plans for it, uses one or another member of the body for the assistance of others, so the Lord supervises His Church and sets the various members as it pleases Him.

Verses 6-8 urge faithfulness in the use of our talents in accordance with a sober and just estimate of them. Thus, if we have no talent for public speaking or teaching, we should not waste our energies and misrepresent the Truth by poor attempts to use a talent not possessed. Rather, having found that capacity in which we can do most effectual service for the Truth, let us spend our energies along that line with diligence and carefulness. "Having, then, gifts differing," let us use them with diligence, patience, simplicity and cheerfulness, contented to be very humble in the estimation of others in order that our humble talents may increase the more to the Master's glory and in respect to our Heavenly interests.

RESURRECTION

Dear Lord, I pray for courage, strength and love,
For that pure wisdom, promised from above,
That I may faithful be and worthy found

To stand "that day" beside the grass-grown mound
Of my beloved dead, and say, "Arise!
Come forth to light and life, lift up thine eyes!
Awake, and burst the prison bands of death!
Stand up, the God of Heaven restores thy breath!
Return unto the land that gave thee birth –
No longer, as of old, a sin-cursed earth –
The desert places blossom as the rose,
With fragrance laden, every breeze that blows!

A Highway thou shalt find, a way of life,
No pride, nor selfishness, no envy, strife,
Shall prosper there; the ransomed of the Lord
Shall walk thereon, obedient to His Word;
No longer shall the '*lion*' or 'ravenous *beast*'
Upon the poor, the weak, the innocent feast;
There God shall wipe all tears from every eye.
No grief shall touch thine heart, not e'en a sigh,
And there shall be no death, nor any pain!
Awake! Rejoice and join the glad refrain,
'Hosanna, peace on earth, good will toward men,
All honour to the Lamb. Amen! Amen!''

GERTRUDE W. SEIBERT.

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