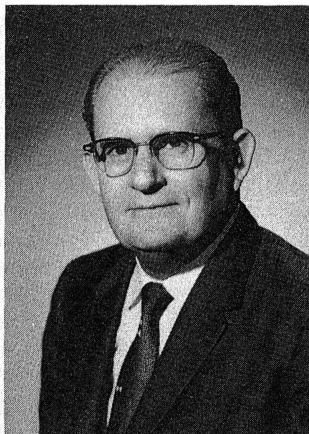


BAPTIST HOUR SERMONS



for March

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THE CHRISTIAN AND SANCTIFICATION

March 6, 1960

"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"—Romans 12:1-2

Paul has finished the doctrinal portion of Romans. Now he turns to a practical application of the truths which he has declared. In the remainder of the epistle, his message is to the effect that you, as a Christian, should live in an outward expression which is in keeping with your inward nature. The major doctrines set forth have been condemnation, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The first two are related to redemption. The last will be realized in heaven. Therefore, this leaves the doctrine of sanctification which relates to the Christian's life on this earth, and which will be fully realized in heaven.

Therefore, today we would deal with the Christian and sanctification as it relates to this life. In so doing let us note,

first, the failure; second, the plea; third, the result.

THE FAILURE

First, note the failure. That these Roman Christians had failed to comprehend the doctrine of sanctification is evident in Paul's words, "And be not conformed to this world . . ." (v.2). The Greek language is most revealing here. The verb is a present passive imperative. It means to be "schemed-together-with." The present tense suggests a customary attitude. The passive voice indicates that they were being conformed by another. The word "world" really means "age" or the current thoughts, attitudes, and practices of a given age in history.

Now the import of this is that these early Christians were being conformed to the standards of their day, rather than living a life in keeping with their redeemed natures.

When you became a Christian, Satan lost your soul to Christ. However, he still endeavors to control your manner of life, that in so doing he might destroy both its joy and its usefulness. He is ever scheming to this end. When you allow

him to do so you are, as Paul says, schemed-together-with, or conformed to the sinful pattern of the age.

Looking again at the language we discover that Paul used a command preceded by a negative particle. Thus it reads, "Stop being conformed to the thoughts, attitudes, and practices of this age." And that is his word to you. Perhaps the greatest single tragedy of Christianity is at this point. Millions of you have received Christ as your Saviour, but are losing your Christian usefulness because you allow Satan to dwarf your Christian life. You were born again, but you have never grown in grace, knowledge, and service for Christ. For that reason Christianity is held in contempt by the world, our churches are weak, your own witness for Christ is ineffective, and in your soul you are miserable. As a Christian you belong to Christ, but you are trying to live in two different worlds. No wonder, then, that Paul says to you, "Stop being schemed-together-with this age."

THE PLEA

Second, consider the plea. Because of the above, Paul makes an earnest plea. "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 . . . be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ." (vv.1-2).

Once again the language is revealing. Although Paul, as an apostle, might have commanded, instead he begs. Literally he says, "I beg of you, please." And he bases his plea upon all that he has said thus far. "Therefore . . . by the mercies of God." On the basis of all that God has done to redeem you, Paul appeals to your inward nature. The thing which he is about to ask cannot be accomplished through an outward command. It must arise out of the inward conviction of your soul.

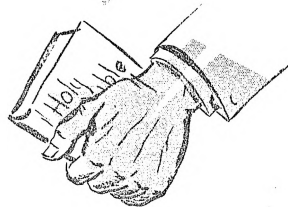
We have noted that Paul is dealing with sanctification. In so doing, he refers to it as both an instantaneous act and a process.

When he begs you to "present your

bodies," he uses an aorist infinitive, expressing the idea of an instantaneous act. And note that he does not ask you to present your soul. As a Christian you have already done that. Instead he urges you to present your body. Your body, then, is to be the outward expression of your inward nature. It is to be a "living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." This entire sentence pictures the Jewish worshipper presenting an animal to be offered as a dead sacrifice to God. No such act is required of the Christian. Rather you are to present your own body as a living sacrifice.

A HOLY BODY

It is to be a holy body. Basically, as here, the word "holy" does not carry the idea of moral purity. Anything dedicated to the service of a god was called holy. So your living body is to be laid on God's altar and dedicated to His service. And since God is Himself morally clean, so the goal of your living body should be to become the same. No blemished animal could be offered to God as an acceptable sacrifice. So if your body is to be acceptable for God's service, it also must be clean.



Paul adds that this is "your reasonable service." The word "service" refers to the service of the worship of God in keeping with the Levitical law. But Paul qualifies it as a "reasonable" service of worship. It is not to be a merely mechanical sacrifice as was true in Judaism. Instead, it is to be a service which involves the reason or the soul.

Thus, while your body may be far from holy in the moral sense of the word, I

beg that you will in an instantaneous act of worship in your soul dedicate it to God's service. Then it will be sanctified to God.

But Paul does not stop here. He proceeds to refer to sanctification as a process. Having dedicated your body to God's service, you are to grow more and more into His likeness. Thus you will gradually take on the moral likeness of God's holy nature.

This is seen in Paul's words, "Be ye transformed." The word "transformed" is a present passive imperative form. The present tense suggests the process of continuing to be transformed. The passive voice suggests the work of God's Holy Spirit in this process. The imperative mode reminds us of the will of God that this shall be done.

TRANSFORMED

Looking at the word "transformed", we discover a further truth. It translates a word meaning to change your outward appearance from what it is so that it corresponds to your inward nature. It is the word used to describe Jesus' transfiguration. To the disciples Jesus had had the outward appearance of a human being. Suddenly His deity shone forth from within, transforming His outward appearance to conform with His inner or true nature. So you are to allow your inner, redeemed nature to shine forth through your outward appearance.

Now due to the weakness of your sinful flesh, this will not be realized in a second of time. It will be accomplished through a process of yielding to the Holy Spirit. This is seen in Paul's phrase "by the renewing of your mind." The word "mind" includes not only mental processes but attitudes, imagination, feelings, desires—all that is involved in the word "soul." We repeat, you must present your body instantaneously. But your growth as a living soul into the likeness of God will be a continuing process. This is seen in the word "renewing." It translates a word meaning the making new again. It is used only twice in the New Testament

along with two uses of its verb form. In each instance it refers to the operation of the Holy Spirit upon one already born again. As one has said, it defines the gradual conforming of a Christian more and more to the spiritual world into which he has been introduced.

So we urge that you yield your body to God's service. As you submit yourself to the Holy Spirit who indwells you, He will day by day renew you. He will enable you to achieve victory over sin, and to yield your body more and more to God's service. Note again that "be conformed" and "be transformed" both are in the passive voice. Someone is doing something to you. Either Satan is conforming you to the age in which you live, or else the Holy Spirit is transforming you into one whose redeemed inner nature shines forth through the outward expression of your body. To which are you yielded in your life?

THE RESULT

Third, note the result. Paul continues, "That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The word "prove" is an infinitive of purpose. Carried to its final conclusion it amounts to result. Few of you are entirely ignorant of the Bible teachings as to the will of God. Our trouble is that we have found the will of God hard and have not tried it. As an exercise, read the entire twelfth chapter of Romans. You say that the things Paul tells you to do are too hard. In your present state of dedication, perhaps so. But try one of them. Try seeing yourself as a part of the body of Christ with certain talents to use in His service. You say that you cannot do it? Try and see! You say that you cannot return good for evil. Try it! You say that in honor you cannot prefer another. Try it! You say that you cannot bless those who persecute you. Try it! It may be hard at first. But with each successful attempt, the next will be easier. Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God . . ." (Jn. 7:17). The word "prove" in Romans

12:2 means to put to the test in order to discover that the thing tested meets the specification laid down for it. So Paul says for you to put God's will to the test. In so doing, you will find that it meets the test of the specifications laid down for a happy, rich, and useful life in Christ Jesus.

So to you, my Christian friend, I offer this challenge. Present your body as a living sacrifice to God. Stop being conformed to the pattern of this age. Let the

Holy Spirit transform you through His daily renewal into one who has proved the will of God to be good, acceptable, and perfect. The word "perfect" suggests a goal. You will discover that God's will can lead to the true goal of your life.

And to the unsaved who hear me I would say, "Present your soul to Christ in saving faith. Then present your body to God as a living sacrifice. In so doing you will not only find eternal life, but the abundant life here and now."

THE CHRISTIAN AND CITIZENSHIP

March 13, 1960

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."—Romans 13:1

Suddenly Paul shifts from considering the Christian in his personal and spiritual relationships to that of his citizenship. As a Christian you are a citizen of the kingdom of God, but you are also a citizen of some nation. As in the former so in the latter you bear certain responsibilities. Thus Paul felt it necessary to exhort this church with regard to the Christian and his citizenship. We also need such counsel. Let us consider this as we note, first, the mandate; second, the motive; third, the means.

THE MANDATE

First, note the mandate. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (v.1). "Every soul" is a Hebraism for "every man." Since Paul is writing to Christian people he actually means "every Christian." "Higher powers" refers to the institution of government. That he feels strongly about this may be seen in his use of the present imperative middle form. It is a command. The present tense suggests a habitual action. The verb translated "be subject" is a military term meaning to line up in orderly fashion under a general. And Paul's use of the middle voice implies that their lining up is to be done in voluntary submission rather than under duress. In short, Paul

says that every Christian is habitually to put himself in voluntary submission to the authorities which hold position over him.

Then the apostle states his reason for such a command. "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (v.1). The point here is not that God approves of each individual ruler and his actions. The Roman emperor at the time of this writing was Nero, everything but a godly man. Instead Paul is saying that God has ordained the institution of government. The word "ordained" means to appoint or assign a place. In the perfect tense it speaks of the permanency of such an institution. In other words, human government is a permanent institution brought about by God for bringing order into human relations. So Paul exhorts the Christian to submit to such.

Now this word is sorely needed at this hour. Our generation is in danger of losing all respect for law. How many of you take the attitude that if you do not like a law you are under no obligation to keep it? Or if you can get away with it, it is all right to break it? Someone has said that character is what you are in the dark. You reveal your true character in what you do when no one is looking at you. Your respect for law is gauged by how you regard it when there is no policeman about. As a general principle Paul is saying that since human government is an