

Romans 12:1

#0601

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 6, 1982

[Church service preliminaries]

I'm always glad when we can open the Bible and hear the dear Lord speak to us. Let us turn, please, to Romans the 12th chapter.

You know, if we were gathered together around a table and were about to partake of some food for our bodies, it would be important that everyone had a portion, wouldn't it? It would also be important that each person take his portion and eat it. The more we enjoy it, the more good it does us. The more we masticate it, the more we enjoy it and the more good it does us.

And so, this morning, the spiritual bread of which we are about to partake of, we want the Lord to help each one to have some portion. Now, I have seldom been at the table where I ate everything that was on the table, and nobody else got any. How about you? We enjoy it more when everybody has something. Do we have to get exactly the same thing? No, no.

People differ in their ability to appreciate and absorb and assimilate different foods. Somewhere in this morning's study, there will be the particular thing that God has earmarked for you, my friend.

Listen, watch, see the blessing that God has for you in a particular verse, a particular thought, a particular application; one that particularly that the speaker makes, but that the Spirit makes to your heart. For the Holy Spirit is here to help you and me to partake of the living bread.

Very well then, Romans the twelfth chapter and the first verse is our text:

"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.

Let us, as we would a piece of bread, first break it into small parts and begin to masticate. Who is the person speaking? Paul the aged apostle. He met Jesus on the Damascus road at the prime of his life, and God turned him around and put him on the highway to Heaven. He made Paul a minister of righteousness to turn many to the glad tidings of Jesus as the Messiah.

"I beseech you..." Romans 12:1.

What does "beseech" mean?

What does beseech mean? Beg, urge, plead with you. “Oh, I want you to do this!” he says.

“I beseech you...” Romans 12:1.

But before he tells us what he is beseeching, he tells us for what reason. What is it? By the mercies of God. What is mercy? Mercy is treating people better than they deserve. Did you ever get treated better than you deserved? Ah, the mercies of God!

The Pharisee, you remember, paraded his good deeds (as he thought of them) before the Lord, but got no blessing. The publican, poor fellow, with bowed head and humble heart, said, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Did he get a blessing? Yes. God loves to be merciful. It says that He delights in mercy. He just loves to take advantage of opportunities to treat us better than we deserve.

Many of us can think of many opportunities we have given God to treat us better than we deserve, and he enjoys it. But oh, these mercies put us under some obligations, do they not? Yes. Why, dear ones, if somebody here had been in debt hundreds and thousands of dollars, and some kind friend who had the funds to pay off the debt, and the next day ask that fellow to help him on the road with some problem, don’t you think we would feel not merely obligated but glad to do it? Yes. God is not seeking to buy our response, but He is seeking to inspire our response. There is a difference.

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Now, what is it we are being urged, begged to do? “That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” In the sanctuary service, animals were brought: perhaps a goat, perhaps a lamb, perhaps a bullock, perhaps a turtle dove. In that offering, the one who brought it saw himself. The animal was his proxy, we might say. Turn to Leviticus the first chapter. I want you to see that. Hold your finger in Romans; we’ll turn back to it. Romans is home base here for a little while but let’s venture now for a little background in Leviticus the first chapter. Notice that from the first verse on, he is speaking of the burnt offering—a voluntary offering:

“If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD” Leviticus 1:1–3.

Now please, all together on the fourth verse:

“And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” Leviticus 1:4.

The offering was to be accepted for him, that is, in his place. So I am to present my body, not as a sacrifice to die, but one to live. Thank God for the

privilege of living for Jesus! Fifty million martyrs died for Jesus at the stake, on the rack, on the guillotine and in the other ways that they were put to death. They became witnesses—martyrs for Jesus by giving up their lives. God wants our dedication and response to be just as wholehearted and complete as that. But instead of dying for Him, He wants us to do what? Live for Him a living sacrifice. Isn't that an interesting combination of words, "a living sacrifice"? We usually think of a sacrifice as something dying or dead. But thank God, friends, we have the joy of *living* for Jesus. As completely dedicated, as completely consecrated as though we had actually died.

All right, "present your bodies," what does it mean to present? Well, it means to be a present. It's spelled the same way, just as a verb instead of a noun. Give yourself to God. The man who brought his lamb or bullock was to be his own voluntary will. Jesus will never accept a forced offering. That's why it is improper for us to try to *make* a person religious by law, you understand. He can't do it in the first place. In the second place, if he were successful, God wouldn't accept it. You cannot make love respond. Only by love is love awakened. That's why Paul says, "I mercies of God," that you give yourselves to Him. And really, friends, when He's given us so much for us, don't we want to give ourselves to Him?

How much did Jesus give? He gave everything. How much does He want us to give? Everything. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable* service." I've been meditating on that word, "reasonable." Is it reasonable for me to give myself to God? Why, it's the most reasonable thing in the world, friends! Pick it up and turn it over and look at it from any angle you want. It is a reasonable thing. Just in the matter of common sense—a man's own interest, he had better link up with God. God is on the winning side in the controversy between Christ and Satan. Christ is the winner! We had better be on the winning side if we want to be winners, hadn't we?

Think of the rewards at the end of the way. My, my, a glorious home in the city of God! Music [inaudible]. Travel, my, my, most any place that people travel today, they run the risk of running into a riot or into a war before they get home. Do you know it? But there in the universe, we explore, we will be peaceful and happy. There will be a welcoming committee on every planet glad to see us. You know, I've thought about it, friends, the next thing I'm going to share with you I can't prove, and I very seldom say anything from the pulpit that I cannot prove. We are told to let our imagination picture the home of the saved. Remember that we are told that it will be brighter than our fondest imagination can picture.

I have imagined that on every planet we go to all through the universe, there will be a different kind of fruit there than we have ever had. Now, I will tell you why I think that—God is a God of variety, isn't He? You know that any part of the planet you go to in this little world there are different fruits and vegetables, aren't there? Yes. We don't grow any mangos around here. We don't even grow bananas. But we can import some of them. My point is that scattered over this little planet are many different kinds of flowers, fruits, birds and animals. And to me, that's a little introduction to the *vast*, unlimited variety of the universe.

So as we go with Jesus from star to star and world to world there will be something interesting that we have never seen before. There will be people to meet. Have you ever sit down with someone you have never met before, some new-found friend? You talk a little while, and you say, "it looks like we are on the same wave-length." Did you ever have that experience? I have. I have met men that it seems like we have known each other for years. That's the way it will be as we go out through the universe. We will meet kindred spirits, hearts that respond. Oh, I don't want to miss it, friends. But I could miss it, couldn't I? You know how I could miss it? Just by refusing to give myself to Jesus. Not that He is arbitrary. But the only way I can get ready for those trips is to yield myself to His working.

I need shaping up. I'm not ready for that trip yet. If I were, God would have everything ready for me. It isn't that my mansion is not ready that His coming is delayed. We are not ready, right? But thank God He is getting ready those who will let Him. So, "I beseech you," Paul says, "by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living service." It is a reasonable service.

There is another reason I think that we ought to consider. And that is the fearful consequences of the wrong way, the fearful consequences of the wrong way. Think of lung cancer. Is many a man and woman today dying of lung cancer who are saying in their hearts, "I wish I had known this before I took my first cigarette."? Do you think that there are? Ah Yes, ah yes! There is many a man who suffers a heart attack that wishes he had been aware of the need for exercise, carefulness in diet, and the need to abstain from smoking. And none of these are arbitrary acts on the part of God. The wages of sin is death, not through some decree of God but because that's the consequences. If I take a knife and cut my finger off, God does not work a miracle to cause it to die. He would have to work an unusual miracle to cause it to live, wouldn't He? So the penalty of sin—consequences of separation from God urges us to consider how important it is to link up with God.

He is the Life Giver. And only through contact, cooperation and union with Him can we receive and maintain that eternal life which will be ours to enjoy forever and forever.

These are some of the mercies of God by which Paul beseeches us to present our bodies to Him, which is a reasonable thing he says—it's reasonable. But there's something else that towers above all we have looked on as Mount Everest does on all the mountains of the earth. It's a wonderful thing to think of the rewards that await those who link up with Jesus. It's a stimulating thing to think of the consequences of wrong things we can get away from by walking with Him. But oh, what is this great mountain peak that so urges us. It is God's love, God's love.

You know, while the fear of punishment and the hope of reward can stimulate us to come near to God, somewhere along the line—don't miss this!—if we *yield* ourselves to Him and get acquainted with Him, we get a love for Him which is greater, far greater than any hope of reward or fear of punishment. This is what drove the martyrs. This is what impelled them to go to the stake and the rack and any other form of torture and death. They had a love for Jesus in their hearts that motivated them. They would rather have died with Jesus even if they had never had

eternal life. They would rather not disappoint the One who loved them and gave Himself for them.

Do you know that love? If you have been born again, you know something of it. And oh, you can know it if you give yourself to Him! It's a wonderful thing to know Jesus in such a way, as I say, that you would rather die with Him than live without Him. That's a reasonable service to yield to the One who gave everything for us. You see, He took the punishment that He didn't deserve, left the reward which was His by right, left all that glory, and took our pain and our suffering and our death so that we may have it all. So it becomes a very *reasonable* thing to yield everything to Jesus.

There is another reason why it is reasonable—He knows the way better than I do. Any of you who have lived very long have demonstrated, probably to your own satisfaction, that you don't always know what you really want. Did anybody here ever find that out? I wonder if you would be man enough or woman enough to confess it? You weren't sure just what you wanted, and you were surprised. Ah friends, the way of man is not in himself.

Did you ever find your hand doing something it shouldn't do, and you were surprised? I remember when my brother and I were growing up, we sometimes got into fights, as boys will. I found that hand hitting my brother. "Well," you say, "everybody does that." It's a sad thing when a human hand hits another human being, isn't it? Especially your brother. The fact that it's common doesn't make it nice. Does it? You know, I wish I could live life over again and never use that hand to hit my brother. What do you say?

But I have found by experience both on the giving and receiving hand that there is something that hurts worse than a hand slap. It's something that comes out of the mouth—that sword that speaks words of pain and hurt and injury and bruises. I have received them many times, and I have given them too often. I am sorry. Dear friends, what's the answer? There's only one answer. It is to present my body to Jesus, a reasonable thing. He can *control* that hand. I have demonstrated that I can't. He can control that tongue. I have demonstrated that I can't. Why not give God our tongue and let Him control it? Why not give Him our hands, and all the rest of our bodies? Isn't it a reasonable thing, friends? Yes, a reasonable thing. Let's read our verse again, all together:

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It's *reasonable* that it is a service. It is an unselfish response to a loving heart. Shall we do it? You know, I am so glad that God has made arrangements for us to respond to this appeal, not merely on Sabbath in the house of God, but every day of the week, and every hour of the day. You say, "How? How can I in the home? How can I in my business? How can I in my factory? How can I in the sanitarium or on the farm do this? Ah friends, the One who invites us came down

and showed us how to do it. Jesus, the Son of God, came and tabernacled in our humanity and lived the life that He wants us to live.

Would you like to be able to work miracles the way Jesus did? Do you know how long Jesus' miracle working was? About three years. Do you know how long He lived before He worked miracles? Thirty years. Ah, if we will learn the lesson of the thirty years, we may someday enter into the *glories* of the three years! Let's enter into God's program of life at Nazareth before we covet the power to work the mighty miracles of Christ.

What did Jesus do at Nazareth? Was He studying the Bible all the time? No. Was He going to church all the time? No. What was He doing? Jesus spent more of His time in the carpenter shop than He spent in either study or prayer, my dear friends. He did home missionary work while He was at Nazareth, but He spent more time in the home and the carpenter shop than He ever did in the community endeavor to help other people. Why? Because He knew that most of us would have the problems of living the life of God in, if we live it, in the common duties of life. In the common duties of life. So in the carpenter shop, Jesus gave an example of patient toil. As a boy, as a youth, and as a young man, He showed that it was possible to serve God in daily work, to do a good job, and to do cheerfully and joyously.

We're told that sometimes Jesus' companions began to complain. That's human, you know. Maybe the day is too hot. Maybe the wood we're working on in the carpenter's shop is knurled and knotty. Whatever, human relationships may not always be most pleasant. But do you know what Jesus did? Jesus would begin to sing., begin to sing. Sometimes His companions, hearing the song of praise, would join in the song and forget their complainings. Oh, what a sweet and precious example! I want to learn more and more how to take the circumstances of daily life and use them as the means by which to serve my Lord. What do you say? Instead of wishing that I could go halfway around the world to some mission field. Of course, some people need to go. But I'll tell you, if I were the dear Lord, I wouldn't send someone halfway around the world to a mission field who hadn't already learned how to do what we're studying this morning, where he is. What do you say? Missionaries are not made by steamships or airplanes. The light that shines the farthest, shines the brightest nearest home.

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We have it almost memorized now, don't we? Let's try it. If you need to look at the verse, look at it, but let's say it together:

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How many will? Put up both hands. God needs them both. Thank God for every hand! You know the side bonus to all this? If your hands are full, there is no place for the Devil to get you bothered or worried or diverted. You've people say, "I'm sorry I can't do that. I have my hands full." Let's keep our hands full for Jesus, what do you say?

Shall we bow our heads?

Precious Lord, we thank Thee with all our souls for Thy message from Thy book, by Thy good Spirit this morning. We give Thee the praise and glory. We've responded—our hands are in Thy hand. We go now to share with others. In Jesus' lovely name, amen.

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