

"Your Reasonable Service"

"I beseech you therefore ... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Romans 12:1

Every so often, it is beneficial for us to look deeper into the text of the Bible. Although it is not necessary for one to be a student of the languages of the Bible in order to understand it, a cursory examination can instill within us a vividness and appreciation for the Holy Spirit-inspired words. In Romans 12:1, the words for "reasonable service" are *logiken* (adjective) *latreian* (noun).

The verb "present," or *parastesai*, is an aorist-active-infinitive. Concerning *parastesai*, Earle said, "The force of the aorist tense is brought out vividly in Williams' translation: 'to make a decisive dedication' ... Similarly Wuest has: 'by a once-for-all presentation to place your bodies at the disposal of God.' The language here clearly refers to the crisis of complete consecration" (p. 198).

Earle states that *logiken* means "rational" or "spiritual" (p. 198). He says the second term, *latreian*, means "service" or "worship" (p. 198). Rienecker gives the same definitions and adds, "The use of our bodies is characterized by conscience, intelligent, consecrated devotion to the service of God" (p. 375).

Concerning *logikos latreian*, Vine states that the "sacrifice is to be intelligent, in contrast to those offered by ritual and compulsion; the presentation is to be in accordance with the spiritual intelligence of those who are new creatures in Christ and are mindful of 'the mercies of God'" (p. 935).

Thayer treats *logiken latreian* as an idiomatic phrase which means, "the worship which is rendered by the reason or soul" (p. 379). *Logiken* has several related words in its family which include *logizomai*, which means to reckon, count, compute or calculate; *logion*, which means a little word or brief utterance; *logios*, which means learned or skilled; *logismos*, which means a reckoning or reasoning; *logomacheo*, which means to contend about words or wrangle about empty and trifling matters; and *logos* which means a word as it respects speech and reason in respect to the mind. *Logos* is the term used to refer to Jesus in John's writings ("Word," John 1:1). He represented the wisdom and power, or *logos*, of God. *Latreian* also has another word in its family which is *latreuo* which also means to serve or render religious service. *Logikos* occurs only in Romans 12:1 and 1 Peter 2:2

where it is translated "*of the word.*" *Latreian* occurs five times in the New Testament. Four of these times the word is translated "service" and one time as "*divine service.*" Concerning the significance of the term *latreian*, Earle said, "The point is that this word as used in the Bible refers to religious service, not secular" (p. 199).

This phrase has been translated in a number of ways. Some scholars see the interpretation of "*reasonable service*" (KJV, NKJV) as the rational response of someone who comes to realize the goodness of God, while other scholars interpret it simply as a spiritual act of worship. The ASV translates it as "*spiritual service,*" the NASB states, "*spiritual service of worship,*" and the NIV says, "*spiritual act of worship.*"

The International Critical Commentary says, "For Paul the true worship is rational not in the sense of being consistent with the natural rationality of man (a meaning that is suggested by the NEB margin), but in the sense of being consistent with a proper understanding of the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ ... The intelligent understanding worship, that is, the worship which is consonant with the truth of the gospel, is indeed nothing less than the offering of one's whole self in the course of one's concrete living, in one's inward thoughts, feelings and aspirations, but also in one's words and deeds" (p. 605).

Our "*living sacrifice*" is equated with "*spiritual service.*" The sacrifice we render to God is intelligent and deliberate, in contrast to the sacrifices of the Jewish worship in which the animals had no part in determining what was to be done with them. "*Worship*" in the newer versions is too narrow a translation, for in the strict sense worship is adoration of God, which does not fit well with the concept of "*bodies.*" The term "service" is better since it covers the entire range of a Christian's life and activity (cf. Deuteronomy 10:12).

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