

"I Beseech You ..."

Paul's thankfulness for God's mercies, his awe of the depth of riches of God's wisdom are his conclusion from his discussion of Israel; her present state and future expectation. Three chapters have been devoted to this thorough exploration of these two things and now it is concluded. Eight chapters have been spent in establishing and developing the theme of the letter *"the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16). Then, three chapters deal with how that theme applied to fleshly Israel, God's once chosen nation. That ended, practical advice was needed and thus given to all Christians for fitting behavior required of them to illustrate how Christians were to live in various aspects of life and constitutes the remaining chapters in this letter. Thus he wrote: *"I beseech ye, therefore brethren by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God"* (Rom. 12:1f).

Paul's appeal to these brethren follows a common form of his. He had right to command Philemon of that which was fitting but he would not so command. He rather would appeal (beseech) him on the basis of his age, *"Paul the aged"* (Phile. 8f). He could have commanded Ephesians to walk worthily of their calling but he chose rather to *"beseech"* them by the fact he was a prisoner of the Lord on their behalf and of the behalf of all other Gentile Christians (Eph. 4:1; 3:1). So, to the Romans, those upon whom God had shed abundant mercy, he besought them by those mercies given so freely by God. *"God hath shut up all unto disobedience."* He had judged all to be sinners and to have come short of the glory of God (Rom. 11:32; 3:23). God had, without respect, shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. And that mercy had been tasted by the Roman Christians. Therefore, because of the riches of God's mercy and love, grateful forgiven sinners should gladly yield themselves to God's overtures, counting nothing they were called upon to do, too great a price to pay in view of what God had done for them.

Thus, *"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God."* It is not the gift of some dead animal or gold or silver that God desires as our gift to Him: it is our own bodies for which He asks. To be useful in His service our bodies must be holy, set apart from worldly things. Only on the basis our body is holy is it acceptable to him. The function of a priest is here implied, which function is taught by other writers as well, including Peter who wrote, *"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood."* The Lord used many figures to

portray Christians. We are priests; our body the sacrifice we offer. On the other hand, Paul describes our body as a temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 6:19f). Each figure emphasizes the holiness of life which Christians must manifest which holiness is further emphasized as Paul said: *"And be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed."*

A change of life is necessary if our body is the kind of sacrifice God will accept. God's clarion call is *"Come out from among and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing ..."* (2 Cor. 6:17). This transformation from worldliness to godliness is accomplished through the *"renewing"* of our minds. We must have a *"make-over"* in our heart. Out of gratitude for God's mercies, we no longer love the world and the things therein: we rather hate the world and the garments spotted by the flesh. A question appropriate for each of us is: Are we truly striving to do what the apostle has besought us to do?

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