

## Service – 26/06/2016

***“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”***  
***(Romans 12:1-2)***

Beloved in the Lord,

When you hear the word “service” what springs to mind? That which we are doing right now? We are gathered together in a worship service. Unfortunately, for many people, that is all that this word “service” means, and it is about the extent of their relationship with God. People come to “The Service” at 10:00am and about an hour and a half later they walk out of the Church building and return to their normal life.

Is this really what God wants from us? If the answer is yes, then the Christian life is fairly empty and pointless. An hour or so, a week with God; and then the rest of the time is ours. That of course is not what the Christian life is all about, but that is how many people view and live out their “Christianity”.

God is calling us not only to a service; but to a life of spiritual service. Our whole life - 24/7 should be one of service to God. The Christian life is a life that is wholly dedicated to God. It is a life lived in faith, whose aim is to please and honour God in all things, be it thoughts, words or deeds. The Christian person understands that his or her life belongs to God. First and foremost is the will of God.

Paul put it in words that should be our daily confession:

***“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. “ (Gal.2:20)***

The Christian understands that we must daily die to self and put on The Lord Jesus Christ, submitting ourselves to the will of Almighty God. Martin Luther said that we must daily return to our baptism, where the old self was drowned and we were clothed with The Lord Jesus Christ.

This teaching goes against the flow of modern thinking. We live in a very narcissistic age where a person’s three best friends are “Me, myself, and I!” People are living for themselves, chasing their dreams, fulfilling their own desires with little or no regard for God’s will in their life. Sacrifice and service are alien concepts to many.

Oh, but true fulfilment and blessing come in life when we sacrifice ourselves on God’s altar of service. A life that serves God, fully surrendered to Him, is a blessed and good life. It is a life that achieves its God designed purpose. We are created to serve Him. Paul writes:

***“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10).***

This text is so clear. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for good works, which God has prepared beforehand for us to do. It begins and ends with God. When we are aligned with His plan, then all is well.

I read about a couple in NZ who bought a sheep dog and kept it as a pet. The dog was kept inside. He became very restless and kept wrecking the place, and was very miserable. The neighbouring property was a small farm, and they had some sheep. Acting upon the advice of their vet, and with the neighbour's permission, they let the dog visit the farm every day and spend some time amongst the sheep. The dog was happy and no more destructive behaviour. The dog was happy because it was his instinct to be around sheep.

We are pre-programmed by God, to serve Him. If we do not, then we become impatient, restless, unhappy, and experience many problems in life, and we cannot really put a finger on the cause. We are created to serve and worship God and to do His will.

The first step we need to take is given to us by Paul in our text today. We are to fully surrender to God.

***“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” (Rom.12:1)***

This is the very foundation of a successful life. To knowingly and willingly hand everything over to The Lord, to give Him full control of our life. This is not a one off event, but something that we need to do on a daily basis. In the great Hymn “Take Thou my hand and lead me” there is a line in the Latvian version which translates “I do not want to take a single step without You; so take me along with You.”

We should never take a single step without God, yet we daily make decisions ignoring Him. Why? Because we do not fully trust Him. We are in a constant battle with our ego. Our ego is very powerful. We need to drown our ego and surrender to God all the time. It is far easier to say than to do. It is a constant and at times, fierce battle of the will. However, like so many other things, the more we do it, the stronger we become. If you do not exercise your faith, then you easily drift with the current of the world. To stay within God's will, you must keep swimming.

Serving God is extremely liberating, because if you trust your life to Him, then He takes responsibility for it. You need not worry or be concerned because you have His promise: ***“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Phil.4:19)***

This is such a clear and wonderful promise. God will supply all of our needs, if we trust Him. Not only does He provide for all of needs, He gives us so much more, because He loves us. He is a good Father, who likes to give good gifts to His children. He knows what we enjoy,

and it gives Him pleasure to bless us. God is good. God is love. He is our Father and He loves us with an everlasting love.

He gave us His Son, as our Saviour, to save us from sin and death and hell.

***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)***

So great is His love for us. How can we not respond? How can we not surrender all to Him? He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent; (all-knowing; all-powerful; ever present). All authority in Heaven and on Earth is in the hands of Jesus Christ. Nothing happens without His permission and knowledge. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Not only does He give us a place in His Father’s House, but He makes us one of the family. We are given an inheritance along with Him. How can we not fall on our faces and worship Him?

In addition to all of this – when we serve Him, we do not have to do it in our own strength. He has given us The Holy Spirit; His Spirit; who gives us the knowledge and the ability to serve. Paul writes: ***“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Phil.4:13)***

A better translation is “I can do all things through Him (Jesus) who empowers me from within.”

Paul is not saying “I can do all things, because I am so wonderful. No! he says I can do all things through the power of The Lord Jesus Christ, who abides in my heart through The Holy Spirit.

When our life is surrendered to God, dedicated to Jesus, then God The Holy Spirit works through us, and empowers us to serve according to God’s will and purpose for us.

Please understand that serving God is not only the “spiritual” things we do in Church. Serving God is to live your life using the gifts He has given, to fulfil His purpose and to bring Him glory. To serve God is to do all things thankfully.

Paul wrote:

***“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,<sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” (Col.3:23-24)***

And

***Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” (Col.3:17)***

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.***