

Doxological Living

Romans 12:1-2

What do you say after such words as Romans 11:36? How about, how then shall I live? How shall I glorify this great God?

As high and majestic as Christianity is, of heaven come down to take us to heaven again; Christianity is practical, leading to and providing a new, obedient life.

One of the highest doxologies in all Scripture is closely connected to the highest devotion! The Higher Life flows from the Highest Glories.

Let me ask you this morning, do you recognize that as you are a Christian, how you are commanded and urged to a body and soul consecration, a self-sacrificing worshipful service, in fulfillment of God's will?

These are good lines for us to memorize as we begin to explore the riches that are here.

Let me begin with that first word "therefore". Clearly we are going from the doctrinal section of Romans to the practical.

And it is the theme of loving one another in 12-15, and all set in this opening verse – your worshipful service. In 15:16, Paul returns to the priestly offering of the Gentiles as sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

But look more closely at this connection with me.

Paul's gospel includes the facts of what God has done in His Son, and the implications that flow from this good news. Paul regularly sets out this double grace pattern. First, the gospel – salvation is in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone in his shed blood, his cross, and his resurrection. These are the facts – Jesus is the Messiah, the kingdom of God has come, there is life in him alone.

Then what? the command of the gospel; faith and repentance. Turn from your ways and turn to Him to receive eternal life.

So there is the fact followed by an imperative, a command to be converted!

Then comes a second fact. If you are converted, you are a new creature in Christ; you have died and risen with Him in a new life, a new identity. And again, then comes the command – live for the Lord!

This is what we have in Romans. Here is the fact of a righteousness of God in His Son. The response – we are saved by his grace and by faith, and not by our works.

The imperative is therefore believe!

Then if we have believed and are saved, as Romans 6 says, we have been raised with Christ, and the old man is crucified. Therefore, live as new servants not of the flesh but of the Spirit.

This is called the double grace – or in Latin, the *duplex gratia* – the gospel is the righteousness and the power of God for salvation.

What happens when we make only one or the other the gospel?

Well, trouble.

If the gospel is only justification by faith, the new life is downplayed. If the gospel is only be born again, become a new creature, the assurance of grace grows thin and we supposedly keep ourselves saved, which is wrong.

Paul now is coming to the imperative of being a new creature, and our new life in love by the Spirit.

The new life is lived only by the grace of God. None but a Christian can possibly offer himself to God acceptably. Only a Christian can be holy!

“There is an ill-taste in all of our spiritual services and duties, and a great deal of sin and self. But Jesus always stands between God and us, and He cleanses

them and makes them a sweet offering. So our prayers prevail because of Him.” Robert Asty

Now Paul *urges* us as brothers to do something. This is a familiar Greek word, para-kaleo, paraclete.

I urge you – I exhort you, I appeal to you.

Paul likes to couch his commands in humble, personal terms. “Therefore I the prisoner of the Lord urge you to walk worthy” he says to the Ephesians. But then he gives the strongest terms – “he who steals must steal no more!”

We are ordered to live this way in Romans 12:1. This is not an option but the will of God.

How we need encouragement to live the Christian life. We need faithful people around us, who love us. We need the urgings and appeals of believing parents, peers, and pastors.

Why? Because this new life does not just automatically pop out of us, does it? It takes nourishing, discipline and encouragement to have a holy acceptable service to God.

And all of it, as the next phrase says, is of grace: “I urge you to live in this way BY THE MERCIES OF GOD.”

Far more important than the encouragements of others, is the mercy or grace of God in your life! This has been a central theme in this greatest letter of Paul. The mercy of a free, full righteousness; the mercy of the only Mediator; the mercy that brought us from death to life through Christ’s resurrection in chapter 5; the mercy of God’s love in Romans 8; the mercy making us vessels of mercy in Romans 9; and the mercy mentioned in Romans 11:32!

Paul points to daily and multiple mercies – the mercies (plural) of God so as to live the Christian life.

This is God's daily love for us in our continued weakness, of needing his strength, kindness and longsuffering.

Wesley captured this:

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, you are all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art.
Visit us with thy salvation;
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

This brings us to the command – to what the Spirit would have us be – I urge you brethren by the mercies of God, daily **PRESENT YOUR BODIES A SACRIFICE**.

This is speaking about one facet of the obedient life – perhaps the most Godward, to be as holy priests unto God.

Paul could have said live as light in a dark world, or walk in all truth as children of light. He could have said live as sons of the King, royal and heavenly heirs of God, whose names are written where you one day will be crowned. He could have spoken of being servants, or soldiers, or athletes.

But he chose this priestly activity – probably because of the Godward doxology.

“Doxological Living” – there's the right title to our message. Let your life be a praise to the Lord; be a sacrifice, as priests, offering up your body and soul, as living, holy, acceptable to God fits right here.

With that in mind, let us wrap up with three critical matters.

First, all the Christian life is set in the holy place of Christ Himself.

Sacrifices were offered in a special place where God revealed his name, the tabernacle and temple. Every Christian is a royal priest by the blood of the Lamb.

In most Protestant Churches, ministers are not called priests. Why? Because God's people are priests, and not just the leaders. Christ fulfilled the OT priesthood, as Hebrews teaches.

The word 'finished' is hard for Roman Catholicism. Christ has to be re-sacrificed in the mass. Jesus seems still to be on the cross. But oh, we serve a risen Savior, who is truly alive. And since He lives, we shall live also! There is now "NO Condemnation" for us!

Now **second**, the God's NT sacrifices are the heart renewed and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. Even in the OT, in Psalm 51, David saw the difference between going through the motions of offering an animal like a bull or lamb, and the heart restored being alive to the love and mercy of God.

The doxological life is led by a merciful High Priest, Jesus; and our service is in, under and by Him.

He came to serve and not to be served. That has not changed in His Spirit who was sent into the world at Pentecost.

Obedient, sacrificial, God-centered living is the fruit of the gospel, and without it, there is something very wrong. Without holiness there is no salvation. You shall tell a good tree by good fruit.

Ours is a worshipful life – focused on the Lord above, according to his Word, living sacrifices and not dead ones. The whole life, body and mind, are engaged to the Lord's will. We are set apart from the world, and set apart to God our Father.

Thirdly, sacrifices to Him are made whole and burnt by fire to be acceptable.

The force of “living” sacrifices is often missed. Many say living verses dead animal sacrifice. I think it rather includes a constant dying to self, in order to live to God by grace. Paul could confess: “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; and the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Our faith returns the love of Christ in warmest devotion to Him! Our lives are burned up but not consumed? We see this in our baptism – by his cross we have died and he takes us as his own as we take his name on us.

The point is our devotion, our sacrifice to God, is made all of grace, is to be warm and on fire for Him and His glory, supremely! As one of our hymns has it:

May thy rich grace impart
strength to my fainting heart,
my zeal inspire;
as thou hast died for me,
O may my love to thee
pure, warm, and changeless be,
a living fire.

Instead of offering to Him sacrifices of lambs, goats, bulls or doves; it is these hands, your feet, your minds, your mouths, your money, your first love:

Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee,
ever, only, all for thee.

This is a rich doxological life in these two packed verses –

The new life is lived by the grace of God

The new life is lived in and through our bodies and does not neglect them

The new life is radically God-oriented as priests and sacrifices to Him.

The new life is worshipful - holy, consecrated to God from our head to toe.

The new life is counter cultural – there are other worshippers contending. In fact, everybody is worshipping something.

The new life is not just outward but engages the mind, transformed by the truth.

The new life is in accord and by the will of God.

Oh, the hour has come and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers! Amen!