The Committed Christian
Romans 12:1-2

Introduction

In the final years of our imprisonment, the North Vietnamese moved us from small cells with one or two prisoners to large rooms with as many as 30-40 men to a room. We preferred this situation for the companionship and strength we could draw from our fellow prisoners. In addition to moving us to new quarters, our captors also let us receive packages and letters from home. Many men received word from their families for the first time in several years. The improved conditions were a result of public pressure put on the North Vietnamese by the American public.

In our cell was one Navy officer, Lt. Commander Mike Christian. Over a period of time Mike had gathered bits and pieces of red and white cloth from various packages. Using a piece of bamboo he had fashioned into a needle, Mike sewed a United States flag on the inside of his shirt, one of the blue pajama tops we all wore.

Every night in our cell, Mike would put his shirt on the wall, and we would say the pledge of allegiance. I know that the pledge of allegiance may not be the most important aspect of our day now, but I can tell you that at the time it was the most important aspect of our lives.

This had been going on for some time until one of the guards came in as we were reciting our pledge. They ripped the flag off the wall and dragged Mike out. He was beaten for several hours and then thrown back into the cell.

Later that night, as we were settling down to sleep on the concrete slabs that were our beds, I looked over to the spot where the guards had thrown Mike. There, under the solitary light bulb hanging from the ceiling, I saw Mike. Still bloody and his face swollen beyond recognition, Mike was gathering bits and pieces of cloth together. He was sewing a new American flag.

Mike Christian knows what sacrifice, commitment, and perseverance are all about. Mike Christian also knows what kind of pressure can be brought to bear to ‘think differently about what your doing!

Paul has left his digression. For three chapters he has dealt with the people and nation of Israel. Now Paul addresses practical matters. The form and style Paul uses is characteristic of all his teaching epistles. Doctrine and then duty, belief and behavior. Teaching should precede doing. In chapters 12, 13 and 14 Paul will deal with the practical issues of serving. The Christian believer is to be first and foremost a servant. This is God’s will for your life. I can say without hesitation or fear that God desires and then requires service from each and every person who names the name of Jesus Christ as Savior.

Service requires commitment. Commitment is something precious and rare and valuable in our culture. Rarely will people commit to anything. Paul knows we are by nature
The Committed Christian
Romans 12:1-2

selfish, egotistic, narcissistic, vain, and full of pride. Paul knows we must change the way we think if we are going to change the way we behave. The Christian is to be committed to Christ—devoted to God.

To commit means to pledge or assure to bind or to obligate. Would you consider yourself a committed Christian? A committed Christian is dedicated to the worship and the service of God! In this section Paul gives us ‘the basis of Commitment’; the Character of Commitment; and the Demands of Commitment’.

The Basis of Commitment (v.1a)

Romans 12:1 (NLT)
1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?

In light of what God has done, is doing and will do with Israel, Paul pleads with the Romans to present their bodies as living sacrifices. ‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God’. The basis for commitment is the mercy (mercies) of God. The mercies of God are rooted in God’s compassion towards you—God’s love for you!

Why make a commitment? Look what God has done for you! God has shown mercy to fallen human beings! God has given us a Savior Jesus Christ the Lord. Right learning has to translate to right living. The key idea in this section of scripture is ‘right relationships’. Here is Paul’s premise—if you have a right relationship with God you will have a right relationship with others. ‘If a man say, ‘I love God’ and hate’s his brother, he is a liar (1John 4:30).

The mercies of God include the glorious message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The mercies of God are overflowing, they are beyond ‘all that we can ask or think’. They are beyond our deepest desires. The believer is justified, sanctified. Think about what God has done for you! Jesus has made it possible to have a right relationship with God. We have been given the power to be set free from the terrible bondages of sin, addictions, fears, etc. We have been given the most glorious purpose in life, ‘to tell of his love and the life from above, the end will never see, the storms may come the storms may go, but is a Christian life for me! We have the privilege of being able to tell people about God’s son and how to be free from sin and death and to have eternal life!

“Therefore” appears for the 4th time. Rom.3:20 is the ‘therefore’ of condemnation; the whole world is guilty. Rom. 5:1 we saw the therefore of justification. Rom. 8:1 the therefore of assurance and now we have the ‘therefore’ of Rom. 12:1—the therefore of dedication.
The Committed Christian
Romans 12:1-2

Because we are no longer condemned, because we are no longer guilty, because we are justified, because we have assurance we should dedicate ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ! Give your all to Christ, who gave His all for you.

Peter Drucker once said; “Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes. . .but no plans.” The Lord is asking you to make a commitment to Him—on the basis of all that He has done for you!

The Character of Commitment (v.1b)

“that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”.

Paul describes the character of commitment with the language of sacrifice. To present or offer means an offering of holocaust. Sacrifices referred to the total offering. Because it is a living sacrifice it is a total call to commitment. There is no distinction between clergy and laity—this is not some extraordinary commitment made by an elite few! This is the call to commitment extended to every Christian believer. It does not matter if you are young in Christ or old in Christ.

Spiritual service begins with God. We are to give our physical bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice. There are only two living sacrifices that are mentioned in the Bible. The sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. A living sacrifice must be a willing sacrifice. Isaac had to be willing—most people forget Isaac was a full grown man in Genesis 22. He could have said to his dad Abraham—“No way-Dad—get yourself another sacrifice. Jesus came to earth in a body—a body that was used to conform to God’s will in order to accomplish God’s purposes.

Think carefully—we are to present our bodies to God—our dedication is not made to ourselves. The world teaches that your body is yours, and you can do with it what you wish to do. No—you are not to dedicate your body to your husband or wife or mistress or sexual partner or employer. No—you are not to dedicate your body for the purposes of houses, lands, property, money, cars, possessions, recreation, retirement, luxury, recognition or fame.

Before we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, many of us used our bodies for sinful purposes to accomplish the satisfaction of our own desires.

We sometimes fail to see just how important our bodies are to God. I cannot think of a single thing that is more abused, neglected ignored. We abuse our bodies by overeating, by becoming inactive, and by becoming to active, by ingesting harmful toxins, by caring for the external but ignoring the internal, by getting too much or too little rest!
The Committed Christian
Romans 12:1-2

But now our bodies have been presented to the Lord. The word “present” means “to present once and for all”. This a one time commitment—like marriage. You covenant or commit once to get married. You should not have to debate whether or not you are really married. Just like you make a commitment “once” in marriage you now live your life like a married person.

Have you presented you body to Christ? Have you dedicated yourself to the Lord? You may have thought, “God wants my soul. He could give a rip about my body”.

Wrong! The Lord demands your body. He demands that you present it to him. He demands you present a living sacrifice.

In your dedication to God you need to do three things:

(1) The first thing you do is ‘present’ your body to God. That simply means you give your body to God. There are two reason you do this (a) it is the right thing in light of all God has done for you (b) This commitment makes perfect sense. It is our reasonable service (logikos). A halfway commitment is not logikos. If we worship the Lord apart from a commitment to the Lord our worship is false. This is the meaning of the text—it is reasonable and spiritual service. This means that every time you do anything with your body it becomes a worship service!!!

(2) You give Him your mind (v.2a) and

(3) You give Him your will (v.2b).

This may come as a shock to you—but right now—your body is either causing God’s heart to feel pain and hurt or joy and rejoicing.

2 Corinthians 5:9 (NKJV)
9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

1 Corinthians 6:20 (NKJV)
20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

The Demands of Commitment (v.2)

Romans 12:2 (NLT)
2 Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)
The Committed Christian
Romans 12:1-2
2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Here Paul reveals the **demands of commitment**. We can no longer conform to the world. Rather, we are to be **transformed**. One is negative the other positive. One—we are to do—the other we are not to do. The word ‘conformed’ means to pattern after this world—or to be molded by the world. Conformed comes from the Greek word *schema* or scheme.

The word ‘world’ means not so much the planet earth—but rather the age or ‘the times in which we live’. The ‘world’ in the simplest terms means ‘the world’ and everything in it. The world is passing away, the world is corrupt, the world is temporal, fallen, cursed. A paraphrase might read; “Don’t be conformed to the schemes of this passing age”. If the world controls your thinking you are a ‘conformer’. If God controls your thinking you are a transformer.

We live in a culture that desperately cares about ‘opinion polls’.

But the Bible says, 1 Corinthians 7:31 (NKJV)  ‘and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away’.

2 Corinthians 4:18 (NKJV)
18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

God uses the Word of God to transform the mind of men. The Word of God has a powerful, cleansing effect on people’s thinking. God’s Word transforms our minds. The images and words in our culture and society all seek to control our thinking—and then our living. Popular culture, music, television, sports, entertainment; these are all powerful influences that provide a spiritual intoxicant. This is why we must be careful what we allow ourselves to see because it affects the way we think.

I grew up in a generation that came to ‘Question Authority’.

I question ‘man’s authority’. I question opinion polls. We need to learn how to think about presuppositions critically. “Because secularism is in the saddle, it follows that the Christian mind is suspicious of fashionable current conformities (Harry Blamires; *The Christian Mind*).

People become drunk with the wine of the pleasures of this world. The word *transform* has come down in our language to mean metamorphosis. A metamorphosis is a change from within—internal. The Word of God is meant to change you from within. When the word is used elsewhere in the New Testament (Matt.17:2; Mark 9:2; and 2 Cor.3:18) it describes the glorious transformation of Christ and the transformation we experience as
are “transformed (same word) into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)
18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Give God your mind and you give God your will. The mind controls the body and the will controls the mind. We are to surrender our wills to God. Some people assume that power. Most of us fail. This was Paul’s experience in Romans 7 (so don’t feel bad). We are to surrender our wills to the will of God. **How do we do that?**

**“you are to prove”** that means find and follow the will of God.

**By disciplined prayer. “not my will—but thy will be done”** (Luke 22:42).

Prayer is our way of admitting—we can’t do it—we trust the Lord. Prayer is our way of acknowledging our weakness and God’s strength, our poverty God’s wealth. Prayer provides strength because God’s will is to impart His strength in our weakness.

**God’s will can be known—**

Romans 2:18 (NKJV)
18 and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,

God’s will can be done—

Matthew 6:10 (NKJV)
10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

It is God’s will for people to be saved

Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)
17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Follow Christ

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV)
24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

We are to surrender our bodies and our minds and our wills to God. When you spend time in His word you allow your mind and your will to be immersed in His will. Pray and yield your plans for the day to God. “Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect” (Rom.12:2 New English Bible).
When you live the committed life, you have the power to perceive the will of God and do the will of God.

Alexander Maclaren put it this way: “To know beyond doubt what I ought to do, and knowing to do it, seems to be heaven on earth, and the man that has it needs but little more”.

The one who is committed to the Lord can afford to see the will of God with the lens of commitment. What is the basis for commitment? God’s wonderful mercy. What is the character of our commitment? Presentation of our bodies, minds and wills on the altar. What are the demands of commitment? We no longer are a pattern for this world but rather a pattern that transforms us into the very image of Christ with the mind of Christ. What is the effect of commitment? We will know the will of God.

Nothing but total commitment makes sense.

Conclusion