

A Reasonable Service

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, forsaking all to follow Jesus, and living on God's resources, in order to be effective in spreading the gospel and making disciples of all nations.

Duration: 36:53

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:24, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 8:34, Luke 14:33, John 14:15, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Service"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher describes a powerful experience where young people from the streets came into the church and gave their lives to Jesus Christ. The preacher emphasizes the importance of obedience and trust in God, rather than seeking special experiences. He also highlights the urgency of presenting our bodies as living sacrifices because Jesus Christ is coming soon. The preacher acknowledges the gap between what Christians believe and how they live, and encourages young people to experience genuine life changes through trusting in Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Our Father, give us a vision, give us a vision of ourselves, our needs, give us a vision of your Son, the Lord Jesus, who alone can meet our needs, whatever they may be tonight. Speak, O God, for thy servants, listen, speak a message through our hearts, through Jesus Christ. It's a great blessing to see so many young people here tonight.

As you probably can guess, I'm a little closer to the younger generation than I am to the older, now caught in the middle with mixed emotions, especially when I see my three children. I wonder how it all happened. This work began by young people, 16, 17, 18, 19 years of age, about 10 years ago.

One of the messages I used to preach the most when I was about 16 or 17 and 18 was on this text of Romans 12. The Spirit of God has put it upon my heart to again speak on this, one of the most challenging texts in the Bible. I haven't spoken on it for a long time.

Look together with me at the first verse in Romans chapter 12, remembering that this is the Word of God. The only reason I'm here tonight, really, in the long run, other than Christ, of course, himself, is a deep, deep conviction that this book is the Word of God. My faith in this book has been attacked many times, especially at universities, and especially when I was taking the short-term courses in communist

universities of Mexico.

But through these years, it's just grown deeper. This is the Word of God. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good, acceptable, perfect will of God. Have you ever come to that place? Have you ever come to the place where you presented your body, your life, as a living sacrifice to God? I believe, without any doubt, this is probably the greatest desire of God, that his children come to that place of absolute surrender to him. That his children come to that place in which they turn from their own ways, their own will, and yield themselves completely to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A man who has made a great impact in the 20th century, who died just a few years ago, a man named A. W. Tozer, who's written about 15 books, and books I believe every Christian should read, made this statement in his book, *The Root of Righteousness*, or *The Root of the Righteous*. He said, We can prove our faith by our committal to it, and in no other way. Any belief that does not command the one who holds it is not a real belief.

It is a pseudo-belief only. It might shock some of us profoundly if we were brought suddenly, face to face, with our beliefs, and forced to test them in the fires of practical living. Many of us Christians have become extremely skillful in arranging our lives so as to admit the truth of Christianity without being embarrassed by its implications.

You might want to get that book and read those words over many times, because they are very penetrating. He goes on to say, So wide is the gulf that separates theory from practice in the Church, that an inquiring stranger who chances upon both would scarcely dream that there were any relation between them. An intelligent observer of our human scene, who heard the Sunday morning sermon, and later watched the Sunday afternoon conduct of those who heard it, would conclude that he had been examining two distinct and contrary religions.

And I think many of us have become very conscious in these days of the great gap, the enormous gap between what we sing and what we say and what we believe and what we are. And I think many young people are very conscious of this gap. One of the reasons I'm here in Britain now is to take a tour of British universities, speaking to many university students in this country.

And I have discovered, especially among thinking Christian students, that they are very, very conscious of this enormous gap that seems to be widening in the age of relativity, that seems to be widening to an almost incomprehensible state. And I believe that until we become serious about the demands of Jesus Christ, we will never really bridge this gap. Until we understand that Jesus is not looking for a crowd of people to drift aimlessly in his track, but he's looking for a mighty minority who will say, Lord, here is my life, my all, my talent, everything.

Take it, use it as you want. And until you come to that place in your Christian life, you will never know reality. Every year about 1,000 young people from all over the world come to our summer conference and then take part in our crusades throughout many different countries, working with missionaries, working with the Church, especially the National Church, to proclaim the Gospel.

Now, we don't accept young people because they're ready, they're spiritual supermen, they've proven themselves and all the rest. We're known for accepting almost anyone. If they're born again, they love God, they're willing to follow the basic instructions that come in our literature, we're ready to give them a chance.

Because we're not a missionary society, but a training program, an internship program, if I can use an American word. I'll probably use many more without knowing it. But young people come and they go through this literature and this training and meet in small groups and then they go out on a team.

I have a whole file of letters from these young people and many more testimonies on top of that about how so many of them, when they came or just before they came, felt that their Christian life was accomplishing very little. And it seems that a majority of Christian young people are in this position. So much so that many of them are not really sure whether they're born again at all.

And a high number of Christian young people, and I'm sure some of you are here this way tonight, are not really sure of your salvation. You can't really say, I know that I'm born again and that I have been saved and that I'm on the way to heaven. And the reason you're not sure is because you know that your life is not manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

It's not manifesting the basic things that you hear about so much in the church, in the Sunday school, or from any other Christian activity. And I meet so many young people who are just drifting along, confused, insecure, worried, filled with doubt. And unfortunately, there are adults in the same situation.

And of course, a confused adult generation will produce only a more confused younger generation. And how my heart goes out that God's people may know the reality of living 100% for Jesus Christ. Again and again, as we study the New Testament, we read about this message of discipleship and full commitment.

When they wanted to make Jesus king, you remember, he had just fed them. They were happy, they were full, satisfied. Terrific, they said.

Let's make him king. And it was at times like this that Jesus would turn to the crowd and literally startle them by saying, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. And when he said that, a lot of them went away with long faces.

Who can bear these things, they said. He speaks with such authority, they said. And Jesus constantly amazed the people who followed him with his outstanding statements concerning commitment.

In Luke 14, we have one of the most difficult statements perhaps that Jesus Christ ever made. And most of us, when we read it in our Bible, we simply pass over it and, well, to be quite honest, I'm not sure what most people do with this verse. But I know they don't obey it.

You know, there used to be many great men of God, and I think there still are, who study the Bible with a pen, and they mark their Bibles. But I believe we moderns, we 20th century evangelicals, need to study the Bible with a pair of scissors. And then all these verses that we have no intention of obeying, no intention of taking seriously, we can clip them out and put them in a scrapbook for the kiddies or for someone else.

And this is one of the verses that most 20th century Christians will probably want to pull out of their Bible. It's Luke 14, and it's verse 33. It says, So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he

hath, he cannot be my disciple.

What are we going to do with that verse, young person? Right away we say, well, that's for a special little elite, super Christian dedicated group, who perhaps are going to be called to live in a tent in the middle of New Guinea, eating who knows what. I better not say it, some may be embarrassed. But no, the commands of Jesus Christ in regard to discipleship are for every believer.

And when Jesus said that we were to forsake all, he meant what he said. You say, well, how am I going to do this? Can't I have a house? Can't I have a typewriter or any clothing? Well, of course, different people need different things for different ministries. It's true, the missionary in New Guinea probably will not need what the Christian businessman in Bromley will need.

But this is, first of all, an attitude and a reaction or action of the heart. We come to that place in which we present our body as a living sacrifice, and if we present our body as a living sacrifice, then automatically we will forsake all. It's an attitude of the heart.

Everything goes over to God. Your business, your home, your time, your talent, your energy, your children, your family, your life, everything is given over to God. And from then on, you live on his resources.

Many young people have never learned to live on the resources of God because they have never come to the end of their own resources. It's only when your bank account is dry, spiritually speaking, that you're going to be able to really learn to draw upon the bank accounts of heaven. You see, along with this great command concerning forsaking all to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, if the great promise of Philippians, and it must be all taken in context, God shall supply all of your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus.

If you're working out in India, that need will be, I'm sure, quite different than if you're going to open a small shop in your own town. If you're going to open that small shop, God is going to supply you with some capital so that you can open the business. And I believe that the constant separation of the sacred from the secular is a great mistake.

I believe that the man in business, the man working in the factory, in the office, in Britain, can be as committed, as spirit-filled, as much of a disciple as anyone laboring out in India, Hong Kong, New Guinea, or anywhere else in the world. And until the church sees this, we're never going to evangelize the world, because the missionaries go out to the field, but the church do not see their responsibility. They're not able to put the two together.

The missionaries are considered some special little branch of the Christian church, and it becomes mainly something that the woman's missionary circle gets involved in. And yet until the laymen, until the businessmen, until the young people in the church become concerned about missions, concerned about world evangelism, and realize that they are responsible at home as the missionaries on the field, we'll never in all the world get this enormous job done. You'd think we could learn a few lessons from some of the false sects.

Think of the Mormons. The Little Mormon Church of the United States now has more men missionaries than all the evangelical churches of Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. That is no exaggeration.

They have 20,000 men on the march right now. They are the fastest-growing group in the British Isles. They now have close to 100,000 converts in Britain, despite the fact they preach the toughest little

message you could ever declare in Britain, the forsaking of tea drinking, and the fact that they're almost all Americans who can understand.

And it seems to me that these facts, and I could be here all night giving you facts about the false cult, just leave you your head spinning, but it seems to me that these facts should somehow wake us up to the fact that somehow we're missing God's plan. Somehow we've missed God's standard of commitment, and because of that we're not as effective as God would want us to be. These Mormon young men sweep across the world, banging on doors, winning hundreds, but how many young men in this church have been out on the doors for Jesus Christ? How many young men in this church have ever won a soul to Jesus Christ? Of course it could be tonight that your own soul is still not in the hands of Jesus Christ.

So to talk about going out and winning another is rather ridiculous. I'm always torn when I speak because I so want to communicate this wonderful gospel to any who may not know Christ. And yet I know at the same time that God's plan to communicate the gospel is not having our weekly Sunday evening gospel meeting.

That can be part of it. God's plan to communicate the gospel is that every believer becomes a witness, every believer becomes a soul winner, every believer becomes mobile and reaches out to their neighbors and their community, and then their contacts are brought into the church, grounded, taught, and sent forth to reach others. You say, what an idealist this fellow is.

And I want to tell you, I have seen that method work all over the world. Please turn your cassette over now and continue listening at this point on track two. You say, what an idealist this fellow is.

And I want to tell you, I have seen that method work all over the world. I know a Baptist church in the United States and I don't set USA Christianity up as the ideal. In fact, if you ever heard me speak to an American audience, you would probably think what they often think, that I'm anti-American.

Actually, I'm not, but I like to speak the truth. Anyway, this particular Baptist church decided they wanted to win men. They decided that they were tired of seeing empty pews, so they started a door-to-door visitation program at the Wednesday night prayer meeting, where quite a few began to gather.

They would challenge people to come Thursday for supper, an evening meal or tea, and immediately after that, they would go out in door-to-door visitation. And God began to add to that church. All kinds of people, the shy, the loud, they went out together and God blessed.

And that church now has a fairly good membership. It's pushing towards 15,000. Not a bad membership for a church.

Now, I'm not expecting anything like that. I realize the situation is different, but the message absolutely can be used, and I have seen it work in Britain. And I challenge you young people here tonight to give your body as a living sacrifice to God and then allow him to use you to win others to Jesus Christ.

And if somehow you've not yet come to Christ, you've never experienced this reality yourself, may tonight you determine to follow him and give him your heart. Whenever I see young people who are not active for God, I just think, years, years wasted. I was converted just before I was 17.

And from the day I was converted to this day, 13 years, I have never had one day without the joy of God, without the privilege of witnessing in some way. Of course, I've failed, I've sinned, but you know, there's

immediate cleansing when we sin. God says in his word, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I know so many young people who are Christians, but some sin has picked them up. Some problem in their life is hindering them, and they don't know how to deal with sin. In fact, I would say this is probably one of the biggest problems we face.

We don't know how to deal with sin in our lives as Christians. Like the man who walked along the street. This is only a story, but it illustrates the truth.

And it was very windy and cold and raining, and there was a lot of mud puddles along the road. And he tripped and fell. And he fell, right? Face down in a big mud puddle.

Now what would you do if that ever happened to you? Maybe it's happened. Would you start swimming? Would you lie in the mud puddle and think, oh, how did I get in here? What a foolish thing to do. Why did I fall? Of course not.

You would get up, and you would get your clothing clean, and you would go on your way. And this is the same thing that should happen when we fall into sin in any way. We don't start swimming in it, getting depressed, getting discouraged.

Why did I do it? Why did God fail me? Or why did I fail God? I know people who go for years discouraged and depressed by sin, eaten away by regret. And regret many times, regret for our sins, is nothing more than a very, very subtle form of self-love. And when we sin, we think, well, now a few days will have to pass before I can really get on top again.

But that's saying that the victorious life is the cross plus some time. The cross plus some regret. The cross plus something you're going to do.

No. The cross is so powerful. The blood of Jesus Christ is so effective that we can know instantaneous forgiveness of sin the moment we repent and take the sinner's place.

A young person, if sin is holding you back in your Christian life, some habit, something that's not right in your life, may you come to the cross tonight and experience this reality. Now, the cross can be very unpleasant. This same man, Tozer, once wrote this about the cross.

He said, the cross will cut into our lives where it hurts worse, sparing neither us nor our carefully cultivated reputation. This is the trouble with many of us young people. We have a reputation.

And if we go all out for Christ, we present our body as a living sacrifice, we begin to witness, we begin to mobilize for God, our reputation might get a little soiled. We may be called a fool. That's what God says, that we should be a fool for Jesus Christ.

He goes on to say, it will defeat us and bring our selfish lives to an end. It means, rather, that current Christianity has moved away from the standards of the New Testament. So far have we moved, indeed, that it may take nothing short of a new Reformation to restore the cross to its right place in the theology and the life of the Church.

It was Adrian Ravenhill, or Leonard Ravenhill, who said, the accent in the Church today is oftentimes commotion instead of devotion. And all kinds of Church activities will never be a substitute for devotion to

the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone can produce this love for people and this desire to spread the gospel out to the uttermost parts of the earth. Who do you think it is, young people, that's going to evangelize the world? The older generation? If you think that, you need to read a little bit of missionary history, and you need to listen to what the older generation is saying, because almost all the people in the older generation that I know involved in missions are saying the answer lies in our generation.

And if you and I, young people, do not become serious about the commands of God, the world will never hear about Jesus Christ. And if you think this is something that just a few odd people are getting involved in, I only wish you could come on one of our campaigns and see the young people that God brings in from all over the world, and to see the reality that has come forth in their lives, quite a few of them converted through previous crusades. Over in Austria, one missionary told us some years ago, he said, if you want any people on your crusades, you'd better win them to Christ yourself, train them, and then bring them on your crusades.

And the harder and the longer we worked in Austria, the more sense this made, and that's just what the Lord did. Austrian students came to Christ, just a few of them, they're now making up the nucleus of the force that we believe is going to reach Austria with the gospel. It is literally amazing what happens when a man presents his body.

God is reasonable, and he says that this is reasonable service. Let me just quickly give you a few of these reasons why I believe that you, all of us, should present our bodies, our lives, absolutely to Jesus Christ. If we're not yet born again, then tonight we should come and surrender to him.

Some of the best Christians I know are people who took the message of salvation and the message of discipleship on the same night and bypassed many of their Christian friends in service and in love to Christ. I believe one of the problems is that oftentimes our gospel preaching is one of doubt. We tell young people, now believe in Christ, and you're going to be happy, you're going to have your sins forgiven, and you're going to feel great, but we don't tell them what Jesus told people, that when you receive Jesus Christ, you're entering into a revolution.

You're saved by grace alone, but the man who is saved by grace becomes a revolutionary individual. His life changes, his attitude changes, his time usage changes. And if you've never experienced any of these changes in your life, even to the beginning degree, then I doubt whether you've ever really trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior.

And so whether you're a person who has never been born again, or a person who is just drifting along in a lukewarm state, God's message to you tonight is present your body as a living sacrifice. Yesterday in Holland, the day before that in Switzerland, the day before that in French-speaking Switzerland, we were having meetings with young people. We were challenging them about spiritual revolution.

We were challenging them about giving their lives to Jesus Christ. And many of them stood to their feet, to their feet to commit their life to Christ. It was a thrill to see these Swiss young people coming forward, signing decision cards that at any cost, they wanted to be a revolutionist for Jesus Christ.

After the first night, many of the young people went out into the streets. And the next night, they brought people right off the streets. All kinds came in, hair down their necks, and ditching their cigarettes at the doors, and making lots of noise, and they came in.

Some of them walked out during their testimonies. But when I got up to speak, somehow God, in answer to prayer, quieted everyone. Before I was done, ten to fifteen of these young people off the streets came forward into the prayer room to give their lives to Jesus Christ.

This is the answer to the dilemma of our society. This is the answer, young person, to your problems tonight, to your state of confusion, to your anxiety, to your lack of assurance, and to your sins. May you not hold back.

May you decide tonight to present your body as a living sacrifice. Why? Because Christ gave his life for you. This is the gospel.

Simple. Never will change. Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins.

When you receive Jesus Christ into your heart and life, he forgives you of your sins, and the Holy Spirit indwells you that you may live the kind of life he lives. To me, that's enough reason to give my life completely to him. I think it was C.T. Studd who once said, say something similar, to if Christ has given his life for me, then what, how much or what should I ever hold back from giving to him? We should give our lives completely to Christ because he died on the cross for us.

Secondly, we should give our lives completely to Christ and our bodies as a living sacrifice because of the condition of the world. Tonight as we sit here so comfortably, I've got one of the best meals I've had all year in my stomach. Beef from the Isle of Wight, I was told.

Yorkshire pudding. I'll never forget it. It was almost a traumatic experience.

At least after being in Nepal for four months. Some of you have had it, well, quite a few times a week perhaps. Maybe not.

But as we sit here so comfortably, so well fed, nice homes, clothing, millions of people around the world are hungry. Thousands are starving to death. Prince Philip once said, half the world goes to bed on a diet that would reduce the average Westerner to skin and bones.

How can we be content? How can we be lukewarm? How can we be lackadaisical when thousands are starving? And worse than that, half the world has never had the Word of God. Half the world has never had its first spiritual breakfast, has never seen John 3.16 in print or heard it in a sermon. To me that's reason enough to give my life completely to Christ, to say, Lord Jesus, use me wherever I may be, in London or in Bombay.

The third reason why I believe we should present our bodies as a living sacrifice is because the Word of God commands it. Where are those Christians who will simply remember the words of that old hymn, trust and obey? There is no other way. Too many people are running around looking for some special experience when God wants them just to come in obedience.

And when we come in obedience at the foot of the cross, He will fill us with the power and the grace that we need to live this kind of life. God says it. I believe it.

That settles it. Is that your philosophy of life? Oh, that more people would know the reality of obedience. Fourthly, I believe we should present our bodies as a living sacrifice because Jesus Christ is coming soon.

As we think of these men right now whirling out into outer space to go to the moon, it should bring us right to our knees. The Bible says in the last days there will be an increase of knowledge. Scientists tell us that we have advanced more in the area of knowledge in the past 70 or 100 years than in the previous 3,000 years.

We are approaching the last days. We do not know the hour nor the time, but as we watch what's happening in Israel, as we see the earthquakes taking place across the world, as we see the various signs of the times, we realize Jesus is coming soon. What are you going to be doing when He returns? Are you going to be involved in this spiritual revolution? Is He going to find you with your life given over to Him? Or is He going to find you in some half-hearted, lukewarm situation not really knowing His love and His fullness? There are many other reasons why I believe we should give our bodies as a living sacrifice, but time does not permit.

Certainly these four and others that the Holy Spirit is bringing to your heart personally as you sit here are more than enough. A few days ago in Switzerland, in some countries, we celebrated Ascension Day. We remembered the Lord Jesus ascending into heaven.

And at that time, just before He went, He gave the command to go into all the world. He said we would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. And yet 50% of the world has never heard.

Doesn't that speak to your heart? Doesn't that concern you? I believe everyone in this church tonight is either a missionary or a mission field. You have to make the decision. And you could become a missionary tonight instead of a mission field.

And after Jesus ascended, two angels came, and you know what they said? Do you remember? Why stand ye dangerous? Do something. This is, I believe, the word of God, the word of the Lord to the church today. To so many Christians who are standing gazing, perhaps with a hymn on their lips, perhaps with a Bible in their hands, needless to say, gazing, resting instead of moving, giving, reaching, loving, winning.

Are you gazing tonight? Lukewarm? May God, even at this moment, enable you to present your body as a living sacrifice to Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

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