

# A Consecrated Body

by John Murray

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God, using them for righteousness and not for sin.*

**Duration:** 46:47

**Scripture:** Romans 12:1

**Topics:** "Consecration"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the temporary nature of worldly desires and urges the listeners not to pattern their lives after passing fashions. Instead, they are encouraged to do the will of God, which leads to eternal blessings. The apostle's exhortation is to be transformed by renewing the mind and proving what is good, acceptable, and perfect in God's will. The preacher also highlights the importance of using the members of the body for righteousness and not for sin, urging the listeners to be mindful of their actions and choices.

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## Transcript

Let's pray. O Most High, Eternal and Ever-Blessed God, who art holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, who dwellest in light that is unapproachable and full of glory, who art light and in whom is no darkness at all, praise, honor and glory belong unto Thy great and holy name. And it is a good thing to extol Thy praise, for this is an exercise to which there can be no restraint.

Thy glory is above all the earth. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains. Thy judgments are a great deal.

Thou, O Lord, preservest man and beast. How precious is Thy grace. All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints shall bless Thee.

They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and they shall sing of Thy righteousness. We would, O Lord, draw nigh unto Thee in confession, in humble supplication, for we have sinned. We have all turned aside from the right way.

We have together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not even one. Our throat is an open supplicant.

Without tongues we have used it. The poison of asps is under our lips. Our feet are swift to shed blood.

Destruction and misery are in our ways, and the way of peace we have not known. There is no fear of God before our eyes, and it is this confession that becomes us. Blessed forever be Thy great and holy name, that we may come to Thy throne of grace to confess our sin.

Because Thou hast said, if we confess our sins, Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. O how precious that we may come with confidence to obtain mercy and find grace to help. Do Thou, O Lord, impress upon us the claims of Thy holiness so that we may take the place that belongs to us, that we may smite upon our own breasts, and that we may utter the suppliant cry of the penitent.

God be merciful. O Lord, our God, do Thou grant that we know the claims of Thy holiness upon us for our life and conduct, that we may not think that the claims of Thy holiness upon us have respect simply to those exercises of worship in which we are engaged. But do Thou grant that Thy fear, and therefore that we may have an all-pervasive sense of Thy presence, a continuous sense of our dependence upon Thee, and a continuous sense of our responsibility to Thee, so that in every detail of life we may realize how indispensable it is that the forces of redemptive and regenerating and sanctifying grace may be operative enough, so that we may bring by the operation of Thy Holy Spirit in our hearts every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Do Thou, O Lord, make us a sanctified people. Do Thou make us a consecrated people so that we shall live in our daily life and walk and conversation in a way that becomes the gospel of Christ and does honor to Thee the God of truth and does honor to Christ as the Savior. May He be the Lord of our life, for none of us lives to Himself, and none of us dies to Him.

Whether we live, we live unto the Lord. Whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

And may we understand the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, for it was for this purpose that He died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead. And do Thou grant unto us, O Lord, that we may be instructed aright in Thy word, that we may not be led astray with the error of the wicked, that we may not have our minds corrupted from the simplicity that is unto Christ, that we may not have our minds imbued with the vain philosophy of this world. May we not be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind, so that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Grant, O Lord, that in heaven we may have respect and justice and honor, that whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, may we think on these things. For, O Lord, we confess that it is as we think in the deepest, in the very essence, to Christ Jesus, our Savior, and us. Do Thou, O Lord, remember us as a branch of the interest? May we always have jealousy for the purity and the honor throughout the whole world, that we may recognize, indeed, that the church is the bride of Christ, the church is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

And O grant that we have in mind the advancement of Thy church and of Thy kingdom. Have mercy, O Lord, upon the nations. Do Thou cause righteous things to come forth before all the nations.

And do Thou grant that their purpose be fulfilled, that which Thou hast promised, that Thy people, Thy ancient people, might turn again to the Lord and might see the glory of the Redeemer. Do Thou hasten the day, O Lord, when the fullness of the Gentiles will come in, and when all Israel will be saved. O grant that we may have constant conversion of the Holy Spirit.

And have mercy, O Lord, of Thy Holy Spirit in understanding. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, the twelfth chapter, the beginning. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, chapter twelve, verses one and two.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is you reasonable servants. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good will of God. A great deal of thinking in the professing Church of Christ has tended to regard the physical body as evil and as a hindrance to the attainments and exercises of the human spirit.

That the human body is, as it were, a weight that drags down the human spirit. And that, after all, it is the body, that is the physical body which we possess, that is the source of evil. In the Roman Catholic Church, for example, it is taught that sin began at the beginning of human history because bodily appetites crossed the line of reason or transgressed the dictates of reason.

And that is how sin began and, of course, the meaning of that is that sin really has its source and origin in the human body. That there is something in bodily appetite that tends to sin and that is degrading. Now that view of the human body is not biblical at all.

The teaching of Scripture is very different and we need to be warned against that very dangerous tendency that has appeared again and again in the history of the Church, which regards this human body, this human frame, as essentially evil and as essentially degrading. The teaching of the Scripture points in the very opposite direction. Have you ever noticed that in Genesis 2-7, which is an account of the origin of man, it is the human body that is mentioned first.

It is that material that entered into man's being that is mentioned first. The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul or a living creature. And you find the teaching of Scripture to the same effect when it deals with the question of death.

Now death consists in the separation of the human body and the human spirit so that the human body returns to dust. It disintegrates and it returns to dust according to the word dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return. Now if the body is essentially evil, death would be a good thing, wouldn't it? Because it would separate the human spirit from this material, this material entity that we call the body.

But the Scripture doesn't represent death. The Scripture represents death as an evil, as the wages of sin, and as utterly abnormal. And remember that the final step in the redemption of God's people will be the destruction of death, the resurrection again from the dead so that man will be both spirit and body in glory.

Christ, we are told, must reign until he places all enemies under his feet and the last enemy that will be destroyed is death. And so when this corruptible will put on incorruption, when this mortal will put on, then will be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. Yes, the great goal of the whole redemptive work is the destruction of the last enemy itself.

And the dead will be raised incorruptible, and the living will be changed. The body belongs to the human person, and the man is constituted as no other being in God's creation. He is given a body, a physical body, and he is given a human spirit.

Physical body and a spirit. There was no disharmony when God created man at the beginning. There was perfect harmony between body and spirit, and that is the unique kind of being that man is.

God created angels, but they have no body. They don't have this physical entity that we call the body. They're simply spirits.

But man is both body and spirit, and these in perfect union, the one with the other, as he was created. Now Paul in this epistle has come to the point where he is dealing particularly with practical exhortation, with the exhortations which bear upon practical life and upon the practical science. And it is very important to notice that when he begins these two believers, he begins with this, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.

You see, the apostle Paul was not carried away by that error of the wicked. He was not carried away by that vain philosophy that regarded the body as something evil, as something to be, as it were, debilitated, as something to talk. The apostle Paul was imbued with the knowledge of the word of God, and therefore he regarded the body as of the greatest importance in the Christian life, and in that process of sanctification.

And consequently he says, I beseech you, that your very bodies, any means of... The apostle Paul was very concrete, he was very practical, and because he was very concrete and practical, he put in the forefront of practical exhortation that which is most concrete and practical, namely, the use of the human body. Let ye present your bodies, now what are they to be presented as? A living sacrifice. And we may very well be surprised to find in the New Testament such language as a living sacrifice, because it was in the Old Testament that sacrifices were offered, and that was part, that was necessary.

There could not be any effective approach to God under the Old Testament, and we might be surprised. There is the place, and he is making allusion to most of the meal offerings, and they were there for a living being. But I think that what Paul is particular about, for these animals, their blood was shed, and they were offered upon the altar, and part of their body was burned upon the altar.

No sacrifice, however living it might be, when it was brought to the altar, was placed upon the altar as a living being. And so you hear a contrast. We are not to come to God with our bodies, that they may be slaughtered.

We are not to come to God with our bodies so that they are like horses. And there is to be no slaughter. There is to be no shedding of the blood of our physical bodies.

It's a living sacrifice. And that is what we are to present to the Lord, and I shall show you just in a moment what that means. And Paul characterizes this sacrifice as something else.

As holy and acceptable. Holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Now when he says holy, he means that the body is to be holy.

It's a characterization of the body. And that means, you see, that of the human body there is such a thing that morality belongs to the human body. The human body is indeed material.

But the body that is to be presented, it's a body that is animal, and therefore it is to be holy. Now, of course, implies that sin is attributed to the human body. Apart from the process of redemption and regeneration and sanctification, our bodies are sinful.

And Paul characterizes the body of the unregenerate as a body of sin. And it means, you see, now that the body is to be the very opposite. Instead of being sinful, you remember what Paul says in another

epistle.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. But, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. But present your members instruments of righteousness unto God, and yield not your unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God.

That's what the body is to be, and that's what its members are. Now, let us ask the very practical, how do we use the members of our body? Do we use them in the practice of sin? How do we use our tongues? How do we use our hands? How do we use our feet? Are our feet swift to evil? Are our hands ready to be involved in the practice of iniquity? Are our tongues the tongues of deceit? It's very practical, don't you see? Let not sin reign in your mortal body, but present your members instruments of righteousness to God. In another epistle, Paul brings that to the sharpest focus when he says, What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God? And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.

Glorify God therefore. Holiness is to characterize the human body, and if holiness is to characterize it, it isn't to be characterized by the indulgence, by the dissipation, by the debauchery, by the uncleanness that are so prevalent and that are so characteristic of us. How do we use our physical members? Do we use them for uncleanness? Do we use them for the practice of that which is after all of our status, of our standing before God? Then you notice that the apostle not only characterized that is to be offered to God as holy, but as acceptable unto God.

Now there the apostle is pointing to something which is after all the regulating principle of the believer's life. What after all is the governing, regulating principle of a believer's life? What is it? Try for yourself to answer that question. What is the first thing that looks when you are confronted with a certain decision? When you are confronted with a certain situation that demands action, what is the first thought that blows up in your mind? Is it the material advantage you're going to get out of this, this course of action? Is it some purely material, worldly consideration? No, if we are presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, and holy, we are to present our very bodies as acceptable to God.

And the first thing that blows up in the mind and thought of a believer when he is confronted with a certain... What is well-pleasing to God? What is the will of God in this situation? If I'm going to choose one course of action, if I'm going to enter into one business, if I'm going to choose one vocation, what should be the first consideration? It is this. What is well-pleasing or acceptable to God? And you see, that governing principle of the believer's life is brought to bear upon what am I going to do with my hands? What am I going to do with my tongue? What am I going to do with my feet? What am I going to do with all the other various organs? What are they going to be the instance? This is the question that will determine what is well-pleasing to God. What is the will of God? You young people who may be choosing a vocation, who are going out into life with all its problems, and sometimes with its very crucial decisions, I plead with you, my dear young friends, to lay that principle in the very forefront of your thoughts.

Put that always at the forefront. What is well-pleasing to God? Now, I know I'm not answering yet the question. What is well-pleasing to God? But we'll come to that in just a moment.

But nevertheless, let that always be paramount. And let it be paramount even in connection with the use, that it is to be acceptable to God. And then he characterizes that to be that presentation of our body holy and acceptable as a reasonable service.

So reasonable. And you could translate that by saying, no, don't think, that the use of the human body or the purpose to which the human body is devoted is only a rational thing. It's perfectly true that this human body is material.

It's composed of elements that on the chance of death return to dust and will return to dust. These components of our bodies are material. But don't think that reason, that mind, that spirit doesn't come into our... And perhaps what Paul means when he says, your reasonable service is this.

It is a service to God that derives its character, its meaning, and its acceptableness with God because it enlists our mind. You can't deal you can't deal with your... The human body is the servant of the spirit. It's the servant of the mind.

And therefore the mind, the reason, the intelligence comes into the fullest operation in connecting the rendering, the presentation of our bodies as living sacrifices holy and acceptable unto God. But there is something more than that in this expression. But what Paul is speaking about here is not but the service of worship.

And perhaps I could render the thought this way. It is your reasonable service of worship. The word that Paul uses here is a word that means of worship.

And therefore it is a spiritual service. It speaks of spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The people of God, you see, are built up, a priesthood, are made a priesthood to offer us spiritual sacrifices.

That is, sacrifices that are indicted and impaled by the Holy Spirit. And that is certainly implied when Paul says that this is your reasonable service. The devotion to God in the fullest sense of the term, that is spiritual devotion, enters into this particular exercise.

Presenting our bodies a living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God. You will notice, of course, that the Apostle Paul goes further. In connection with his practical exhortation, he goes on in the second verse to bring in something that is, as it were, a more inclusive.

And he says, Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable. Now, you see, Paul turns to other aspects of sanctification. But it isn't as if he now leaves entirely behind the thought that present your body in a way that is now in this exhortation you will not say something that they are not to do.

Now, that's very simple. In every situation we do something else, we don't do the other. And so it is very practical and very simple indeed for the Apostle Paul to present his exhortation in that form.

Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed. One is negative, the other is positive. Be ye transformed by the renewing Be not conformed to this world.

And when Paul says be not conformed to this world, and in the Scripture there's an age to come. It's not because time is easy. It so happens that sin entered into this age.

And sin very is somewhat synonymous with what we would call this present age. When he says be not conformed he just means something like Do not have your character and conduct patterned after the pattern. It's not the pattern.

You young people know pattern. If you have had any and if you have had any any if you have any sensitivity or any conscience with reference to Christian obligation you know perfectly well how difficult it is to practice what you may have been taught at your father's or your mother's knee in reference to the Christian the Christian faith how difficult it is to practice that. Because you know the pressure of the world of this present evil world you know it just as well as I do.

What a pressure it is from the ungodly world around you. You're constantly required by this present evil world to suppress and indeed to eliminate your Christian convictions or your the Christian instruction is always the pressure from this present evil world to adopt its patterns its fashions its customs and that's exactly what the apostle Paul cultivating the pattern will bring you down to you need you know the commandments these are the patterns of the kingdom of God these are the standards of the world what the contrast is between the commandments of God on the one hand and the commandments of this sinner be not conformed in the language that Paul uses here for Paul is not only and the completing character of this present evil remember this this age is going and if the patterns that we follow in this life of ours are the patterns with full age then they come down with tumble upon us and they will tumble us all that is in the world the lust of the is not and the world has he that doeth it will and I think there is something to want you don't completely destroy it's a passing all that is in the world and now in contrast with that but be transformed by the renewing of your mind prove what is

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