

## Total Commitment (Romans 12:1-2)

1/14/18

The greater our comprehension of what God has done for us, the greater our commitment will be. God gave Himself for us in order for us to give ourselves to Him. The key to a satisfying life is not receiving more from God, but giving more to God. Total commitment requires us giving God our soul, our body, our mind and our will.

### INTRODUCTION

Premarital counseling: What is success or what will give you satisfaction in life?

We all would love to live a satisfied life. What the world says and what God says are very different. What is a satisfied life? What does that look like? What are we pursuing? For some, it might be not having stressful problems. For some, it might be having a six-digit salary. For some, it might be having a happy family. To really be satisfied, one needs to be fulfilling what they are created to do. For man, we are created to glorify God. (Isa. 43:7) "Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." We glorify God by acknowledging who He is and praising and worshiping Him. We are also created to have fellowship with God; to have a personal relationship with God. (1 Cor. 1:9) "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." A third purpose why we are created is to serve Him and others. (Eph. 2:10) "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

The earlier we understand that life is not about me, but it is all about God. If we want a satisfied life, then we need to fulfill what we are called to do. God must not only be an integral part of our life, but we must be totally committed to Him. If not, then we will miss out on the best in life. As we start a New Year, what does it mean to have a total commitment to God?

**BACKGROUND:** Before jumping into our passage this morning in Romans 12, let me give you some background and context. The Apostle Paul wrote many books in the N.T. There is a pattern in how he goes about writing his epistles. Usually, in the first part of the book, he focuses on doctrine. In the second part of the book, he focuses on duty - understanding what we believe, then looking at our behavior. It is imperative that we act upon the truth that we have received.

#### A. Total Commitment Requires Giving God Our Soul ( Rom. 12:1a)

This chapter starts with the word "Therefore". Whenever, we see the word, "therefore", we need to ask, "What are we concluding?" It links back to the previous 11 chapters. In the first 11 chapters of Romans, Paul explained the condition of man. We are sinful and there are consequences to our sins. The Bible explains that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Since God is holy and just, He must punish sin. Either we have to pay the fine or someone else pays that fine for us. Through Christ's work on the cross, we are redeemed. We have been justified or declared righteous. In our fallen state, sin separates us from God and makes it impossible to glorify Him on our own. But through Jesus Christ's sacrifice, our relationship with God is reconciled—our sin is forgiven and no longer creates a barrier between God and us

Therefore, the first step to making a commitment to God is to give God our soul. We understand the bountiful grace that God has given to us. Although we deserve to be condemned, God saved us. He did it all on the cross. There is nothing that we can do to gain more of God's love for us. (2 Cor. 8:9) "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich." We are sinners destined for eternal condemnation. Christ freed us from the bondage of sin and adopted us into His heavenly kingdom. Jesus, the Son of God, gave

up heaven to identify himself with us, live a perfect life so that he could be the perfect sacrifice on our behalf to take away the penalty of our sin. Not only did He die, but he rose again to show that God has accepted what he did on our behalf. Whoever believes in Him is saved. He made us princes and princesses of the King of Kings.

That totally blows my mind why God would do that. This is a demonstration of his mercy. Let's read verse 1, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God- this is your spiritual act of worship." A summary of the first 11 chapters of Romans speaks of God's mercy. Out of God's mercy and compassion for man, it caused Him to forego what man deserve, punishment for sin, and give them instead what they do not deserve, which is forgiveness.

[ May we take the first step in our relationship with God by giving Him our soul. Thank God for dying for us and saving us. Christ suffered so that we do not need to suffer. The greater our comprehension of what God has done for us, the greater our commitment will be. God gave Himself for us in order for us to give ourselves to Him. The key to a satisfying life is not receiving more from God, but giving more to God. The second step to total commitment is giving God our body. ]

#### B. Total Commitment Requires Giving God Our Body (Rom. 12:1b)

In view of God's mercy, Paul urges his readers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This word urge is a strong passionate word of exhortation. He is earnestly appealing to them to offer their bodies to the Lord. It is a reasonable response to the cancellation of eternal judgment. Paul is urging the believers to act on the truth that they have received by offering themselves as living sacrifices. We are saved to serve, not to sit. That is one of our purposes on earth.

The word "Offer" is a technical term used for the ritual presentation of a sacrifice. In the O.T. there were two kinds of sacrifices as recorded in Leviticus 1-5, namely, sweet savor sacrifices, which were the sacrifices of gratitude. These are the burnt offering, grain offering, and fellowship offering. Sweet savor sacrifices were voluntary. It is not required. When an individual is grateful for God and wants to praise Him, he would offer up a burnt offering to the Lord.

The second kind of sacrifice was the non-sweet savor sacrifice, which were sacrifices for sin, which were mandatory. They were the sin and guilt offerings. They were to pay for the penalty of their sins. Since Christ has fulfilled the sacrifice for sin once for all, we do not need to offer up non-savor offering to the Lord anymore. But living sacrifices of gratitude and praise are appropriate sacrifices for those that live by the mercy of God. These sacrifices are acts of worship to God. Paul does not tell believers to "make" a sacrifice, but to "be" a sacrifice. It should be a natural response based on what God has already done for us. That is what we call total commitment. It comes from the heart.

We are to offer our bodies. This is a command. The body speaks about our emotions, our mind, our thoughts, and our desires. Thus, the body represents the total person; it is the instrument by which all our service is given to God. In order to live for God, we must offer to him all that we are, represented by our body. It is the willingness to surrender to Him all our hopes, plans, and everything that is precious to us.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Elder John Joe has had a heart for missions for decades. Two years ago, he felt God was leading him out of a secure medical profession. He had an executive position with Baylor Hospital. He had a special contract with NASA. God was calling him to quit all of what he was doing to do business overseas in unreached areas for the kingdom of God. At the time, he had two children in private universities and one child in a private

high school. He stepped out in faith and resigned from his jobs waiting for God to open up business doors overseas. For an extended period of time, there was nothing going on while he had to support his family with his savings. That is total commitment to God. He not only gave God his soul, but his body and his heart. All of a sudden, during the past 6-8 months, God started connecting people in unreached areas all over the world with John. Doors are opening and many wonderful opportunities of ministries are becoming reality. When we make ourselves available for God to do whatever He wants us to do, then amazing things will happen.

Being a sacrifice is surrendering ourselves to the Lord. It is putting the Lord first in our life. It is making Him our priority. That is total commitment. That might mean giving up something precious to us in order to put the Lord first. What appears to be a costly sacrifice will turn into great joy. What kind of trade off are you willing to make?

It is not only a sacrifice, but it is a living sacrifice. "Living" says God does not want lethargic service. He wants active and energetic service. Another description of this service is holy, which means set apart. It is separated from the world. We should stand out with higher standards, where we are not like the rest of the world. In addition, it should be pleasing to God or acceptable to God. Sometimes, service which is acceptable to God is not acceptable to man. Sometimes, service which is acceptable to man is not acceptable to God. (Gal. 1:10) "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

[We have looked at the first two steps in total commitment: first it requires giving God our soul; then it requires giving God our body; third, it requires giving God our mind Paul in verse 2 said, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is- his good, pleasing and perfect will." .]

#### C. Total Commitment Requires Giving God Our Mind (Rom. 12:2a)

We are in a war zone, where Satan is doing all that he can to distract us, distort information, deceive us, and destroy us. He will make things look good on the outside, but deadly on the inside. Too often we are tricked by selecting short-term satisfaction over long-term gain.

Here in verse 2, the Apostle Paul says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." J.B. Phillips translates this section by saying, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold."

Don't be shaped or molded by the schemes of this world. Satan is working overtime to win us over to his side. Satan is in control of this world. (1 John 5:19)- "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one." He will use every means to trick us to believing his schemes and worldview.

The verb conform is a present imperative indicating that it is a command telling the believers to stop conforming. Stop being shaped and molded by the world. Stop it right now because it is damaging your life. Satan is giving you false promises.

How are we going to not conform to the patterns of this world? Paul answers this in this verse also - by renewing our minds. When we were unbelievers, we lived in the world and adopted the earthly worldview, where Satan rules. After we become believers, we need to come out of this mindset, where depravity is the norm. Therefore, it is critical that we renew our mind. We need to have a biblical worldview, which is based on scripture and not of this world. We need to uphold God's truths instead of Satan's lies.

Instead of conforming to the schemes of this age, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Notice that this is in the passive voice, which means that the subject is receiving the action. This transformation must be done by someone to us. This someone is referring to the Holy Spirit. One of the responsibilities of the Holy Spirit is to teach us and to remind us what we have learned. (John 14:26) “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” We are to submit to the Holy Spirit, who will bring the renewing of our mind.

**ILLUSTRATION:** The word transform is where we get the word metamorphosis, which means to change form. This reminds me of the illustration of a caterpillar being transformed into a beautiful butterfly. This is a gradual process. While the butterfly is in the cocoon, its wings are being developed. The butterfly works hard to strengthen its wings. If you interrupt this process, the butterfly will not survive. In the same way, in our Christian growth, we are wrestling between the old nature and the new nature. It is good to have questions about our faith so to think through what we really believe.

**ILLUSTRATION:** A mother came up to me last week sharing her concerns about her teenaged son. She said that he grew up in the church, but he is questioning his faith. I told her that it is not that bad thing. He needs to wrestle and think through thoroughly what he believes and why he believes it. It is through this process that the Holy Spirit is renewing his mind. Each person needs to embrace Christ personally. We are not just worshipping our parents’ God, but worshipping our God.

Instead of being conformed to the present evil age, believers are to be transformed into the image of God. Paul in Romans 8:29 claims that as believers, our ultimate goal is to be conformed to the likeness of God’s Son. We are being changed into another person that resembles Christ. This is an internal transformation by the Holy Spirit. How is this renewing of our mind actually take place?

Renewing our mind need to think like Christ or to see things from Christ’s perspective. The believer must be transformed and changed inwardly. Real change occurs within the hearts. The mind of man has been affected by sin. That change can only be done through Scripture, which is where we will find truths. We are to think differently from the world. Therefore, it is critical for us to know the Word of God and to practice it.

**APPLICATION:** To renew our mind, we need to spend regular time in scripture. May we develop a habit. We all know that we should have consistent quiet time. But some of us do not have it regularly. As we start a New Year, may we allocate a specific time each day to commune with God. Set a reasonable time frame. It is more important that we develop a healthy habit than try to cover massive amount of reading. What is more important is to reflect and meditate on what you read. Not just read the Word, but let the Word read us. What is critical is what we remember and practice. I usually answer two questions. 1) What is God saying to me? 2) What am I going to do about it? For some of us that are having regular devotion with the Lord, I challenge you to read through the New Testament this year. If you want a bigger challenge, read through the entire Bible this year. May we not read for information, but for transformation, which will require practice. Our goal is to know God intimately and learn to love Him more. As we love Him more, we will obey him more and serve Him more. When we submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit to teach and remind us from the Word, then our mind will be renewed.

[We have mentioned three steps to total commitment: Giving God our soul, giving God our body, and giving God our mind. The last step to total commitment is giving God our will. We see this in the second part of verse 2. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is- his good, pleasing and perfect will." ]

D. Total Commitment Requires Giving God Our Will (Rom. 12:2b)

Total commitment requires giving God our will. We cannot serve God effectively if we do not know God's will regarding what we are to do. Our lives can prove what the will of God is only by doing those things that are good and acceptable and perfect, which means complete, to Him.

According to the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." Total commitment involves aligning our will with God's will. We come before Him with open hands believing that God has the best in store for us.

ILLUSTRATION: Last month, I went to a friend's memorial service, who had a heart attack and went home to be with the Lord at 53. He was a quiet man, whom God had called to teach the middle school boys. That is a difficult group to teach as they are going through hormone changes. Most people would not choose to minister to them. My friend had other areas he was thinking of serving, but God made it clear to him to serve the middle school boys. Year after year, he taught, modeled, shepherded these boys. He would call each one every week to see how they were doing and pray for them. At the service, there were 5 middle school boys that shared their testimony of how my friend had made an impact in their lives. One of them was a college student, who was a student of my friend. He shared how his SS teacher would call him every week for the past 8 years. He has called up to the week that his teacher had the heart attack. Now, this college student leads a small group and he calls them every week as he learned from his teacher.

ILLUSTRATION: As we seek God's vision for the church, it is critical that we pray and ask God what He wants our church to be. We are seeking God's will. Once we understand what God's will is, then we need to align our will with His will.

The greater our comprehension of what God has done for us, the greater our commitment will be. God gave Himself for us in order for us to give ourselves to Him. Life is not about us, but it is all about God. The key to a satisfying life is not receiving more from God, but giving more to God. May we be so overwhelmed by God's mercy that we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in showing our appreciation for Him. Total commitment requires us giving God our soul, our body, our mind and our will.