

Lesson #8

God's Plan After Salvation



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Preparation for study

The only thing that prevents the Holy Spirit from teaching us is our personal sin(s). King David of the Old Testament clearly put it this way:

If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear; (Psalms 66:18).

Therefore, if the Lord cannot hear a believer's prayer due to unconfessed sin in his soul, it follows doctrinally that the Holy Spirit will not teach the individual.

Here is the solution:

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [sins, known or forgotten] (1 John 1:9).

At this point, you may want to pause and acknowledge directly to God any sin that may hinder you from being fully blessed through the Word of God.

Being Preoccupied with the Kingdom of Heaven (continued from lesson #7)

King David crossed the line, reaching maturity, and he was given the title, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). The apostle Paul was also among the few believers who had a glimpse of the glory of God. Having crossed that line, he said:

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things [wealth, being famous, etc.] to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish [excrement] so that I may gain Christ (Philippians 3:7-8).

One should know that spiritual detachment from this world is not a one-time decision. It is not a reaffirmation of faith, which is meaningless. It is not going to a man-made altar and rededicating yourself every Sunday morning. It is not kneeling down and asking God to forgive you and promising Him that you will “never do it again.”

In light of the sinful nature all men inherited from Adam, you probably will do it again and again, unless you have enough Bible doctrine to restrain you - should you choose to apply it. It is not singing “Just As I Am.” God already knows who you are and what you are capable of doing at any given time.

Spiritual detachment from this world is the moment-by-moment decision to maintain fellowship with God and to be restored to that fellowship when it has been broken. Here is the solution for the restoration to fellowship:

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins [those we are aware of], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins [known sins] and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [unknown or forgotten sins] (1 John 1:9).

This is God’s ONLY grace provision to assist believers in getting back into fellowship with Him whenever there is a failure in the spiritual life. In addition, spiritual detachment from the world is the result of daily intake of the Word of God and consequently applying it to one’s daily circumstances.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1-2).

Many Bible teachers have a thousand and one interpretations of these verses. The purpose of this work is not to attack anyone, but to present the truth according to the wisdom and grace God has given to me.

My goal is not to force my presentation of the Word of God down anyone’s throat; no minister has the right to do so. My objective is to present the truth and allow the believer the freedom to compare the teaching with the doctrine in his soul. Having said this, let me examine these two famous verses recorded by the apostle Paul.

Romans 12:1 - Your Bodies, A Living Sacrifice

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship (Romans 12:1).

The apostle begins Romans 12:1 with the Greek word *parakaleo*. This word has many meanings - among which are “to urge,” “to beseech with stronger force,” and “an appeal.” What we have in this context is similar to an army commander bellowing to his guard unit, “Attention!” This command puts everyone on alert to listen for the orders that will follow. Therefore, the apostle is making a strong appeal - he wants to get the attention of every believer in order to tell them about the plan of God for their lives after salvation.

There are four key parts of Romans 12:1 examined below:

1. Brethren: Paul is referring to those who have personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, by calling them “brethren,” he is demonstrating that the Roman believers, to whom he was writing, have equal standing with Jewish believers before God on the basis of God’s justification.

Therefore, having been justified by faith [plus nothing], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

For you are all sons of God through faith [alone] in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ [union with Christ] have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-28).

2. Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice: This is where many legalistic believers have missed the mark. A believer who enjoys smoking puts a cigarette in his mouth. Another believer corrects him by saying, “Do you not know that you are burning the temple of God, brother?”

Another person drinks from a glass of wine; someone jumps on him: “Don’t you know that you should present your body as a living and a holy sacrifice?” A believer puts gum in her mouth, another believer jumps in to correct: “A believer isn’t supposed to chew gum...”

Some ministers even ask people to come forward to the altar to present their bodies to God. Is this really what it means “to present your bodies a living sacrifice”? No!

To understand what Paul was saying in Romans 12:1, I need to ask one simple question: Was the apostle Paul a legalistic believer? All his epistles show that he is not a man of legalism. What then does “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice” actually mean?

One thing is very important in this verse: “present YOUR bodies.” The apostle Paul is saying that the believer is totally responsible to present his body as a living and holy sacrifice before God. How does the believer go about this?

The believer should endeavor on a regular basis to abstain from willfully committing personal sins. Also, the believer should confess [acknowledge] to God and Him alone any sin as soon as he is aware of it (1 John 1:9). The Psalmist puts it this way:

If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear (Psalm 66:18).

King David affirmed:

For I know my transgressions [sins], and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight (Psalm 51:3-4a).

King David added:

I acknowledged [confessed] my sin to You [alone], and my iniquity [adultery with Bathsheba] I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; and You forgave the guilt of my sin (Psalm 32:5).

John echoed in the New Testament:

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins [those we know and have confessed] and to cleanse us [make us holy or set our souls apart unto Himself] from all unrighteousness [other sins we have forgotten] (1 John 1:9).

We may forget our sins, but God does not forget them until we acknowledge them to Him. According to 1 John 1:9, until we confess the known sins, both known and unknown sins will not be forgotten by God.

At this point, may I pause to add that 1 John 1:9 is the only means of restoration to fellowship with a holy God when sin has been committed. Now looking back to Psalm 66:18, one can easily conclude that if God fails to hear a believer's prayer because of unconfessed sins in his life, then it follows that God would not regard the individual [his body] as a living and holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

Therefore, 1 John 1:9 is a provision of grace by the merciful God to enable believers to stay in fellowship with Him whenever they fail. It is not a license to willfully commit sin. A believer who thinks otherwise should remember that divine discipline is still applicable (Hebrews 12:5-11).

King David's painful experience after his grievous sin, adultery with Bathsheba, which led to his attempt to cover up Bathsheba's pregnancy and his plot to murder her husband, must never be forgotten. The righteousness and the justice of God must be respected. If believers play with fire, they will get burned (Hosea 8:7).

This covers the first two points of our study of Romans 12:1. Please join us in lesson #9 as we study points 3 and 4. Until then we pray that the Lord will bless you and keep you.