

Total Consecration

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Dear congregation,

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

Most if not all of us know the line of this well-known hymn and it expresses the desire of every true Christian. All those who have been born from above desire in principle to live entirely for the Lord and for him alone. All those who have been justified freely by God's grace want to live in obedience to God and to his Christ. After all, the Bible says, "old things have passed away, behold all things have become new." If you do not want to live a holy life before God, you are not a Christian, no matter what you think, no matter what you do. But if you truly desire to be rid of sin, no matter what the cost and are willing to do whatsoever the Lord commands in his word for you to do, then you have the desire that marks a true child of God.

Now, there are many ups and downs in the Christian life. Often when we are newly converted, we have this fresh zeal to seek God and to do his will no matter what the cost, but after a while, especially after some struggle, the zeal can begin to wane, or more than that, and sin which had lost its attraction once again becomes attractive and the world that we left behind regains its hold on us once again and that's why sanctification is not just a blessing from the Lord, but it is also a high responsibility and a calling that we need to have issued in our hearing again and again. So with the Lord's help, we wish to focus on the words of our text which you can find in Romans 12:1-2 where you find Paul laying this responsibility upon us in a glorious and impactful way.

Romans 12:1-2, these words,

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 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, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Our theme with God's help is "Total Consecration." We'll see, first of all, the merciful motivation for this consecration; the glorious manner of this consecration; and the gracious reward of this total consecration. Total consecration: the merciful motivation; the glorious manner; and the gracious reward.

It comes as a thunderbolt out of a blue sky, "Present your bodies as living sacrifice." Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, is calling for sacrifice and what a powerful picture this would have been to every reader of the epistle to the Romans. Everyone would have immediately thought of an altar and an animal tied to the wood of the altar, and the knife going through the animal slitting its throat, the blood draining, and the fire being put to the wood and the smoke starting to rise from the altar and the sacrifice burning heavenward until nothing was left. The Old Testament was full of sacrifices and the pagan world knew all about sacrifices. The Old Testament pointed, of course, to the need for the shedding of blood which would come in the fullness of time through the Lord Jesus Christ crucified on Calvary, securing the forgiveness of sins and the new life of each and every one of his people. And the Lord Jesus Christ offered as the Lamb of God that ultimate sacrifice, that sin offering once and for all, in the end of time.

So why sacrifices? Why do we still need sacrifices? Well, we don't need literal sacrifices but we do need no longer a sin offering. The Lord Jesus Christ finished that but we need those offerings of thankfulness of which the Old Testament also was so full. Thank offerings. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" And this sacrifice that the apostle is speaking of here in our text is not an animal, it's not some grain or so that we bring and put on the altar. It's not some loaves that we present before the Lord. It wouldn't either be a libation or a drink offering of which you can also read in the Old Testament. No, congregation, you and I are being called here to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. As it were, Paul is taking us all to the altar and he's saying, "Yes, you need to offer yourselves entirely as sacrifices to God. You need to serve God all your days sacrificially, devoting yourselves totally to God. He deserves your all." You and I, all of us need to be on the altar. Nothing can be spared. It all belongs to God no matter what the cost.

This, congregation, these two verses are the high calling of the Christian to a total abandonment to God in all areas of life. Let me repeat that: these verses are the Christian's high calling to a total abandonment to God in all areas of life. Now, we're going to unpack in our second point what this sacrifice looks like and how we are to sacrifice ourselves before God but in the first point we need to get clear, something very clear and that is what is the motivation for this call to total consecration because we need to know what undergirds this, what grounds this, what's at the basis of this.

Notice, first of all, that Paul is not legalistic here at all. He's not moralistic. In fact, he comes here in a very gentle tone, "I beseech you, brethren," he says. Notice that. You could translate it this way, "I urge you, brothers, with all the pleading, the earnest pleading that I can muster, present yourselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord." It's an encouragement, a strong encouragement nonetheless but it's like that encouragement of a father who puts his arm around his son and he says, "Son, we're going. Let's go now

together, you and me. I beseech you, brethren." Do you see here we need encouragement, don't we? We don't just need encouragement in our pain and in our trouble, we need that, but we also need encouragement to live sacrificially unto the Lord.

Don't you see the love in Paul's eyes as he comes and puts his apostolic arm around you and he says to you, looking you in the eyes, "I beseech you." That's something that touches your heart, doesn't it? You want that. You need that. Behind the apostle you see the Lord himself and the love in his heart. He is calling you; he is instructing you. Yes, he could command you and the Scripture is full of such commands, not taking away from that at all, but he condescends here in a most loving fashion and he encourages us and he comes alongside of us. "I urge you. I urge you, present your bodies as a living sacrifice."

So that's the first motivation here, that of encouragement, urgent pleading encouragement from the apostle, but notice that there's a second motivation here and it's in the address that the apostle uses, "brethren," brothers. He is picturing here the whole family of God. They are brothers and sisters. Believers are part of the family of God and it's like when we have a family occasion and we put our heads together and we make a plan for maybe a vacation or something that we're celebrating for our parents or something like that.

"Brothers and sisters, this is what we're going to do," and he pictures here this family of God, sons and daughters of God. It's that relationship to God and to each other that should motivate us to sacrifice ourselves unto God entirely. Yes, you should be willing to do it all by yourself even if no one else in this congregation devoted themselves unto God sacrificially, but the whole church of Jesus Christ in all times and places, all brothers and sisters, the whole family of God is marked by this. We call each other to this. Older ones, you call the young people, don't you? You look in their eyes and you say, "Present yourself along with me, your bodies as a living sacrifice." You're not going to not do that, are you? Encourage the family of God together to do this.

That's the second motivation, the family relationship here, but there's a third and this is the dominant motivation that Paul gives. It's a merciful motivation, in fact, look with me at these words, he says, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God." Notice the plural there. Those overflowing mercies of Jehovah, of God. But what are they, Paul? Paul has been talking about them through the whole letter to the Romans. He has given there in these first 11 chapters really a panorama view of the mercies of God. Yes, he started with man's sin, chapters 1 through 3, the depravity of all mankind; the dark horizon against which you have mercy after mercy after mercy. The mercy, the first mercy is out of justification by free grace for the sake of Christ. That's the first glorious mercy. Chapters 3 and 4, the second part of 3 and 4 and into 5, justification and all its fruits: peace with God; joy in the Holy Spirit; all these mercies. Then in chapter 6 he starts with the mercy of sanctification, how God gloriously renews the saved sinner through the Holy Spirit and grafted as he is in Christ, he is dead to sin and alive unto God. The benefit of God's saving work in Jesus Christ, it's mercy, friends. Justification is mercy, sanctification, pure mercy. He goes on to adoption in chapter 8 and glorification. He's heaping mercy upon mercy, the whole chain of salvation. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 deal with election which lies behind it all and you see that glorious chain of election: those

whom he foreknew he also called, and whom he called he justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified. Mercy, friends. The glorious Niagara Falls of mercy that springs from Calvary.

"I beseech you, brothers, by the mercies of God." Do you feel something of that bottleneck of Romans 12:1-2? So much comes cascading down there through these two verses by the mercies of God. It's as if he's saying, "Do you want to know what I've been speaking about for 11 chapters? Just give it this heading: mercies. Mercies of God." And this, congregation, is the grand motivation for sanctification, for this total consecration. Without it, sanctification becomes legalistic and moralistic. It's nothing else than Moses apart from grace who is hammering the divine requirements upon us and here we are without mercy, unable to obey what God calls us to do but not so the Apostle Paul and not so Moses, by the way either, but here the Apostle Paul says, "I beseech you. I urge you. Come along with me by the mercies of God."

Congregation, mercy will draw you like nothing else. Cords of lovingkindness will work within you to devote yourself unto God. God has done so much and it's all been pure mercy. Has the world every seen greater mercy than this? Let the mercies of God persuade us and lead us to say, "What shall I render to the Lord? No sacrifice is too great. I will offer myself wholly to the Lord. Nothing else will do." And this is, congregation, why the apostle says, "This is your reasonable service," and the Greek word there is connected to our word "logical." This is your logical service. This is reasonable. This is rational. If someone has saved you from death, what would you do? Simply go on with your life and wave that person goodbye? Never think of them again? And what would you do if someone saved you from the deepest death, from an eternity without God, a Christ-less eternity? Saved by the mercy of God, would you wave that God farewell in the rearview mirror of life or would you say, "I am thy bondservant, bound yet free. I render myself unto the Lord entirely." That's logical. You know, sin is so illogical, especially for the Christian. Believers, you have no business sinning. It's insanity to sin. A reasonable service is self-dedication, self-consecration to the Lord.

Well, congregation, do you see how this text is an arm tonight wrapped around you and me tonight saying, "I urge you, I beseech you, brothers, by the mercies of God"?

Let me talk to those of you who are not believers, maybe you've just kind of put what I've said on hold because you're not a brother, you're not a sister, not truly, and you're not willing to consecrate yourself to the Lord. My friend, do you know why that is? There is one simple answer to that: it's because you never tasted the mercies of the Lord because if you did, you would know what every true Christian knows here. Oh yes, with many failings but they have this burning desire, "O God, take my life and let it be."

You've never tasted mercy and why haven't you tasted mercy? Is that because there is no mercy? The Scriptures are full of mercy. Calvary is an overflowing fountain of mercy. Why have you blockaded it all with your own hardened heart? Because that's what the sinner does. He will not live out of free and sovereign grace. He wants to live his own way. He wants his sin. He wants his own self-righteousness and mercy.

Mercy, he will block himself off from it and, you know my unconverted friend, you are offering yourself, the candle of your life is burning and it's burning rapidly and you're sacrificing yourself on an altar called the world. We'll hear more about that soon but it is entirely wasted. You're wasting your life, your God-given life, this brief time between the cradle and the grave. You're just giving it up. You're saying, "World, burn me up as fast as you can." That's what you're doing and that while the mercies of God in Jesus Christ are being preached to you Sabbath after Sabbath and the word of God is calling unto you. "Unto you, O men, I call. My voice is to the sons of men.

Friend, there is so much love in Calvary, even for the chief of sinners, even for the vilest of sinners. If you're here today, there's nothing that can conquer your heart like the mercies of God in Christ. Oh, that you would bow even now tonight under this call and say, "Lord, the chief of sinners, Paul, obtained mercy he said. Is there mercy for a sinner like me? Lord, have mercy upon me." And I can assure you if that's your true prayer from your heart, it won't be long and you'll consecrate yourself not to the world but to God. Plunge yourself, sinner, into the flood of mercy and you won't live for the world. You won't be able to live for the world anymore but for God and you'll be part of the family of God, devoting yourself to God as we see in our second point: the glorious manner of this total consecration.

Paul doesn't leave us in the dark as to what it means to devote yourself wholly to the Lord. Look at three words with me in particular: "present," that's the first, "your bodies," the second, "as living sacrifice." Present, it's an interesting word. It basically means offer them freely; give them up entirely, freely, voluntarily. Paul is not saying here, "You know, there might come a time in your life when duty calls and you might have to sacrifice yourself." No. Neither is Paul saying here, "Give yourself up grudgingly. You don't really want this but you know you kind of have to and so just grudgingly you give yourself up." No. "Present your bodies as living sacrifice. Be first in line. Give yourself up. Don't wait for a draft, volunteer. God's people are willing in the day of his power."

That's why we love to see young people or older ones who are ready to serve the Lord. "Tell me what can I do to serve the Lord? What can I do to devote myself entirely to the Lord?" Ready and willing. Oh, may God give that in our midst, willing hearts, first in line people ready to present themselves freely, yielding themselves freely for sacrifice. And yielding their bodies, secondly, notice that. That hit me hard this week, "present your bodies." A lot of times when we think of sacrificing ourselves unto God, we think of our souls and our spirits, our minds, and certainly God demands all of that. There's no doubt about it, but for some reason Paul has landed on this word "bodies" and I think for a very specific reason and that is the world wants our bodies. We'll see that in a minute. Our world gets at us through our bodies. It's claiming our bodies. It's preoccupied with bodies and it wants to make us preoccupied with our bodies. And there is a kind of religion, a kind of Christianity that gives its soul to God, at least it thinks so, and its mind to God but the body we hold back. That's ours. You even have a kind of Christianity that deprecates the body and doesn't pay any attention to the body; it neglects the body as if that would be somehow under God, that God wouldn't be interested in that.

Those are all heresies; they're wrong, entirely wrong. Paul says it here in no uncertain terms, "present your bodies," and, yes, everything else, but that which you look in the mirror every morning and see, present that to God as a living sacrifice. Every muscle. Every limb. Every sense: your eyes, your ears, your hands. God wants all of us entirely: bodies, souls, minds and spirits. We'll come back to that in a moment.

But "present your bodies," and then it says, "living sacrifices." Now, we looked at this word "sacrifice," but notice living sacrifices. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were dead sacrifices. The moment they were offered, there was no life in these sacrifices at all, but the sacrifice that the Christian is called to offer is living.

Now, it's interesting, many people when they hear about this life devoted to God in Jesus Christ, they think of it as a morose life, kind of a morbid life. Well, the very opposite is true. The life of total consecration to God is the most alive life there is here on the earth. Do you want to see someone truly alive, whose heart is vibrant, full of life? It's a person who is devoted to God unconditionally, absolutely and totally. Their heartbeat is strong. They're living sacrifices. They've been made alive through God by Jesus Christ through the Spirit and every heartbeat is for God and for Christ. They are living sacrifices. They live already here and they shall live forevermore. They are dedicated to him, firstfruits belonging to him.

What a beautiful view this is of your life, people of God, living sacrifices. That's what you and I are called to but how do we go about doing this, practically speaking? Well, Paul doesn't leave us in the dark about that either. He says two things, two huge things. We could talk about these things for days. Let's make a start. Actually, this year at family camp, Christian living is going to be the subject matter and all the speeches that we have lined up are going to relate to this high calling to live in accordance with God's commandments and calling in our world, so we'll continue to speak about that, but let's see two things here from our text, two guidelines that are very profound. The first is this: be not conformed to this world. That's the negative. We'll get to the positive in a moment.

Notice that Paul doesn't say, "Leave the world. Get as far away from the world as possible. Keep your distance from worldlings as much as possible." The Lord doesn't say that here. Paul doesn't say that. What Paul is saying is, "Don't be conformed to the pattern of thinking that our world is so full of. Don't submit. Don't bow to the world's way of living. Don't let the world press you into its mold." You know what a mold is. Every kitchen here, I think, will have a mold, maybe a Jello mold or a Bundt cake mold and what you do is you put things in there and you put it in the oven and you bake it and out comes this thing and it looks exactly like the pan that it was in and that's what the world is doing to you and me everyday, pressing you and me into its mold. It's squeezing us all the time into its mold.

And you see here how Paul doesn't come when he speaks about sanctification to a list of do's and don't's. First of all, he'll mention many practical things but living consecrated to God is something that is sweeping, it's glorious, it's grand. He's saying there are two ways

of living: there is the worldly way of living and the world is out for you and wants you to live according to it. The prince of this world is busy each and every day to tempt you to live according to the world and the world is governed by three things. You can read about this in 1 John 2:16: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. That's what makes the world system tick. The world lives by the things that we can see and crave, the things that we can touch and taste and feel. This, after all, was the way that the tempter at the very beginning got Adam and Eve to sin. He pictured this fruit, it was pleasing to the eye and it was good for taste and there they took this fruit against God's command and this is exactly how the tempter does it still today. He hides all the consequences of sin but magnifies and glosses over all the pleasure of sin.

And this pattern of the world influences us deeply. If you think that you are not affected by the worldly way of thinking, think again. You and I are. The world has many attractions. We live in a wealthy society, for the most part, and all around us the world is grabbing our attention and focusing us on the luxurious, the pleasurable, the immoral, whatever it is. And it's not just outright sins because the world is quite happy if, yeah, maybe you avoid the worst of sins but if you're preoccupied and your heart is caught up with very legitimate things but it's bound up with them and they are idols to you, sports is a big one, material possessions, the pleasures of life. None of these things in and of themselves are wrong but when they take the first place of our heart and of our mind, then they're our idols and then the world has us and then we're conformed to this world. What the Bible says is use the world but don't abuse it. You're in the world but don't be of the world for the fashion of this world is perishing. Soon all this stuff will be gone. Don't you sometimes get a glimpse of that? All these stats of all these sports players, so important today, the radio lists them all the time. What are they? I'm glad the fashion of this world is passing away.

Resist conforming to the world, be a generation of non-conformists. That's what the Puritans were. The world said, "Do this," the Puritans said, "No." "We'll take away your stuff." "Fine." "We'll make life difficult for you." "Go ahead." They resisted the urge to conform to the mold of the world.

That's the negative. The second is: be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. That's a different word, conformed and transformed. This is from which we have the word "metamorphosized." It's actually the same word that we saw a few weeks ago when we saw how the Lord Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration was transfigured before them. He was metamorphosized before them. It means undergo this process of transformation from the inside out. The best example, I'm sure you've heard this, is that what happens to a caterpillar when it becomes a butterfly. There is a metamorphosis going on and when you see this butterfly flying through the air, you can't imagine that at one point this very butterfly was there stuck inside this creeping-crawly animal on the earth. Now it flies free and beautifully in the sunlit sky but what accounts for that? Well, this process of complete metamorphosis.

That's what you and I need, we need to be transformed, and the word in the original is an ongoing thing. Be constantly transformed, not just once at the beginning of the Christian

life, not just as a stage early on, but be constantly transformed every day from the inside out by the renewing of your mind. Those of you who are older, who have walked the Christian walk for a long time, this is still your command. You're not all set. Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. We won't be done with this until our dying breath. We lay aside this our body and we pass through the Jordan and we come on the other side, then that transfiguration will be complete in a measure. We will be glorified. We'll be conformed to the image of God's Son.

And notice that it says here, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." We saw already that the world gets at us through the appetites of the body. That's the old order whereby so many are living even inside the church. They're just following the appetites of their body. They make things work, they have religion, they do enough to survive in life but that's really they live for the weekends; they live for what the world can give them: alcohol, drugs, sex, other things that please them. But the Christian is transformed by the renewing of his mind. Yes, his body is affected but it happens from the inside out because his mind is addressed and his mind is transformed. Truth comes to us and it gets into our hearts, into our minds by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. He shall glorify Christ.

How was it that you were transformed, believers here today? It was through the renewing of your mind when the old world and the old patterns of the world and your old life which was worn and combusting was uncovered for what it was and truth came and there was this spark of divine life in your soul, the life of God in the soul of man, and truth set you free and truth continues to set you free. If you're here tonight and you're unconverted, you're living according to the old order of things, an order that is old, it is decayed like a house that is falling apart and unsafe to live in. But believer, they have this inward renewing principle in them, inside of them, a new way of thinking about God and themselves, about sin and grace, about marriage and about the calling God has given to each and every one of us, about the purpose of life. Everything becomes new.

The Bible is where we get this truth. Preaching is how God renews our mind. God comes through our minds and he impacts our wills and our bodies and he makes his reign, his kingdom manifest in our hearts and in our minds and we go from that old caterpillar focused on the earth, crawling on the earth, to a beautiful butterfly by God's grace. Yes, there is this pushing through this cocoon of sin. It's not easy. Total consecration to God is not easy. Let no one think that this is a simple thing, an overnight thing. No, it's a life and death struggle. It's a total all-encompassing struggle but it's this that you and I every morning when we get out of bed, we offer ourselves up to God, not to live as we used to live and as the world lives. Let every part of our body from our head to our toes, all ligaments, all muscles, all our sinews, all nerves, everything belongs to God.

And this is our question, it's a question of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, "Lord, who art thou and what wouldst thou have me to do? The world doesn't have a claim on my life. This body is not my own. This mind is not my own. It is for thee, O Lord. It's for thee and thee alone. My talents, my time, my all, Lord, take it. Control it. My feelings. My feelings, take them, O God, and bring them in conformity to thy word. Transform me,

O God. Don't let me follow my instincts. Don't let that old man of anger, bitterness, manifest himself. Let me put him to death, the knife through him. Sacrifice time and let me live unto God forevermore."

Congregation, this is total consecration and this ought to be the main focus of our lives. In a sermon on this passage, Pastor Jeffrey Thomas, he says five things about this that I just put to you. He says this total consecration will not happen by accident. Secondly, it will not be accomplished overnight. Thirdly, it will not happen without the Spirit's work. Fourthly, it will not happen without our energy and determination. And fifthly, it will not happen except in a context of brothers and sisters putting their arm around each other and saying, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Go on, brother, go on, sister, go on, young person. We're ready to give up even now. Go on, go on, present your bodies as a living sacrifice," he says, "unto God, for then you will reap," as we see in our final point: a gracious reward.

Our text concludes with most remarkable words. Look at it for a moment, verse 2, the second part, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Now, this word "prove" means "to test the value of something; to put it into the crucible, into the fire to see what it really is all about." So many people, they take the will of God and they listen to it and then they go and do their own thing and that's not what the Christian is to do, but God is inviting us to prove how his will for our lives is good, acceptable and even perfect. His commands, his statutes, his precepts, they're good, they're acceptable, they're perfect.

You see, congregation, the will of God needs to be proved, not just known. It's not sufficient simply to know the word of God, to know the right things to do, but as you do them you taste and see that the Lord's will is good. There in the crucible of trial and testing as you seek to put one step in front of the other and do what God has actually called you to do, what happens? Oh, it's hard but God is in it and he's giving you a taste of what it is to obey his will from the inside out. And do you know what we do when that happens? We say, "Thy will, O God, is good. From the outside, from the outset it looked bad. I didn't like it. I have to say that it looked like it would rob me of pleasure, of good but, Lord, I see it now. I was wrong. It's good. I submit to the will of God which is only good."

You notice there are steps here in what Paul is saying. We would prove that the will of God is good, that's the first step, and then the second step is acceptable. That means something that should be readily received. You know, there are times when we say about what the Lord is asking us to do, "I know it's good. I know it's good," but it's another thing to say, "God, I'm ready to receive this. I'm ready to do this. I'm ready to accept this no matter what." Do you see that love? Do you see that readiness of mind to do what God is calling you to do? That's an inward thing. That's from the inside out. You don't look at the will of God and say, "Oh, that's acceptable." No, you look at the will of God when you're in it, when you're doing it and all the hardness that it brings into your life and you say, "Lord, this is good but this is also acceptable. This is acceptable." And the third step here is it's perfect. That's sometimes the hardest thing to say. Sometimes we can say

acceptable in the sense that, "Yeah, this is good for me. I know it's good for me, but if there had been a better way, I would want that better way." I have noticed especially in older Christians that have suffered a lot, as they look back on their life, as they have sought to follow God no matter what the cost, they come to the place where they say not only that it's good, not only that it's acceptable but it's perfect. "It was perfect, God. It was perfect. I doubted you in my life. It was perfect. Thy will is always perfect."

If we had never sinned in paradise, that's what would have happened. If in the moment when the serpent would have come to us and said, "Go ahead and eat. Nothing bad will happen, actually good will happen." If we had resisted him, we would have known the will of God from the inside out and we would have said not only, "Yeah, that's the will of God," we would have said, "It's good." We would have said, "It's acceptable." We would have said, "It's perfect."

This is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did all his life long. Was there anyone who offered himself as a living sacrifice unto God like the Lord Jesus Christ? Every action, everything he thought, did, said, performed, his life was entirely devoted to the Lord. The offering on the altar burned. That was Christ. His whole desire was to do the will of him that sent him to finish the work and he did that all his life long and he did it even on the cross. He did it meritoriously on the cross and he proved what it was, the will of God, to be good, acceptable and perfect. What happened in the garden of Gethsemane when he said, "If this cup could be taken from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done," that was Christ from the inside out from experience saying about the Lord, "Thy will is always good, acceptable and perfect."

Congregation, as we close tonight, do you see what the Lord has here? He opens up his will, his perfect will, and he says, "By the mercies of God, I beseech you, come. Come. Come. Come. I know the altar looks hard. I know the wood looks dangerous. I know the knife is sharp. I know you dread the idea of sacrificing your bodies as living, living, living sacrifices unto me but I tell you there is a gracious reward. You'll know from the inside out that my will is good and acceptable and perfect."

Well, congregation, what a condescension of the Lord. He wants us to be holy, he wants us to be acceptable in his sight as we consecrate ourselves wholly unto him. Ask yourself about anything and everything: is it holy? Is it devoted to God? Ask yourself: is this acceptable to the Lord? Maybe you say, "I can't be acceptable unto the Lord. What I do is never acceptable to the Lord." Well, the Lord calls it that. Through Jesus Christ, through his Son, it is acceptable unto him.

My closing words tonight, congregation, are for those of you who are not sacrificing yourself to the Lord at all. I want to leave you with an arm around the shoulder. I want by the Spirit of God if he enables this to be blessed to you, I want to come and say, "You don't know what you are missing." You don't. This good and acceptable and perfect will of God, it's not yours now, what you need, my friend, is mercy. You've been offering your life far too long on the altar of the world. You are a dead offering and God is calling also you tonight and he's saying there is a way for you to be a living sacrifice. The candle

of your light is burning for God and you'll know the perfect will of God. Isn't it amazing that God stoops so low in Jesus Christ and comes to people like you, people like me and he says, "I beseech you, offer yourselves as living sacrifices unto me. Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may be able to prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." For Christ's sake. Amen.

Let's pray.