

Bible Studies for Life: August 6

Set Apart in the Way We Think • Romans 12:1-5, 9-13

By Don Hicks



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One of the most challenging things of the New Testament is

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That is a literal translation by Scottish Greek and New Testament scholar William Barclay. The New King James translates the same verse this way: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. which is your reasonable service.*

As we begin to look carefully at this demanding challenge it is good to remember in last week's lesson, "Set Apart but Not Alone," Jesus promised: *All authority in heaven and on the earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of*

the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV).

If you agree with my premise that the Apostle Paul’s challenge to make our bodies a living sacrifice is a very demanding requirement, then it is very reassuring when Christ promises to be with us even to the end of the age.

What I cannot do alone is possible when Jesus lives within me. Even with God’s gift of his Holy Spirit in and with us, the rest of the world outside of Christ cannot understand giving of oneself to anyone, especially a “God” they do not understand, know, or accept as real.

Scottish theologian William Barclay (1907-1978) believed the idea of presenting your bodies to God is a most characteristically Christian demand, but Greek thought and philosophy was just the opposite.

Barclay in his commentary on Romans writes: “To the Greek, what mattered most was the spirit; the body was only a prison-house, something to be despised... No real Christian ever believed that.”

Barclay correctly said in summary that Christians believe that the body was God’s good creation and the Christian’s body belong to God.

King David expressed it this way: *For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well. ...All my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began” (Psalm 139:13 -16 CSB).*

If we believe – and live like we believe – that God personally and purposefully knits together every baby in his/her mother’s womb, we cannot participate in killing babies through

abortion. We need to work with other believing Christians to stop the murder of babies by both surgical and now chemical, do-it-at-home pills.

The non-Christian Greek valued the spirit over the body. This same danger is present in many of the same ways in 21st century America. Non-Biblical spiritualism is a great problem and certainly not an asset.

Anti-Christian spiritualism is of the Devil and leads us away from the one true Holy Spirit – the third person of the Trinity and the Counselor Jesus promised in John 16:5-11 and then sent as promised.

Just a very quick aside: Many people today talk about how spiritual is this campus or that group of folks and especially some young adult groups, but those who do not fully accept Christ or the one true God and His Holy Spirit are deceived.

It is God's grace as mentioned in verse three of our text that allows the many parts of God's church to function and serve Him by loving and serving one another. Paul tells us, *In the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another (Romans 12:5 CSB)*. This loving and serving one another *should be without hypocrisy (Romans 12:9a CSB)*. Paul lists some characteristics of this love without hypocrisy:

- Detests evil.
- Clings to good.
- Loves one another deeply as brothers and sisters.
- Takes the lead in honoring one another.
- Diligent in zeal.
- Fervent in the Spirit.

- Serves the Lord.
- Rejoices in hope.
- Patient in affliction.
- Persistent in prayer.
- Shares with the saints in need.
- Pursues hospitality.
- Presents their bodies as a living sacrifice.
- Not conformed to this age.
- Discerns what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

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