

Paul was completely sold out to Christ. So much so that he urged others to be imitators of him as he imitated Christ.¹ This certainly a claim that many of us would hesitate to make – but it is the norm, in Paul’s heart, that should be. We should not be looking back on our lives and say – “woulda-shoulda-coulda.”

So, let’s take a look at Romans 12 and see his life and his desire for you and me.

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 (New American Standard Bible (1995 Update))

OK – we have a “therefore.” Paul was marveling over God’s whole plan of redemption – specifically how that He had for now set Israel aside so that the Gentiles might be evangelized. So, let’s match 12:1 with Paul’s comments in the previous chapter.

²⁵ **For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶ and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,**

"THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." ²⁷ "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

²⁸ **From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; ²⁹ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. ³² For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.**
Romans 11:25-32 (New American Standard Bible (1995 Update))

Now – that is a mouthful but let’s step back and see just what is the “big picture.”

The plan of Redemption is the big picture. All those who have responded to His call will be redeemed – period. We live in a part of Redemptive History called the Times of the Gentiles.² So, for the time being Jerusalem is to be trampled under foot by the Gentiles but what of Israel within Israel?³

¹ [1 Cor 11:1](#) (NASB)

² A reverence to [Luke 21:24](#)

³ **Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:** Romans 9:6 (King James Version)

Back to the topic at hand. So, we all have this responsibility to act within God's plan of redemption. We've done the first part – believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what about the rest of the story.⁴ We are to present our selves to the Lord *as living sacrifices!* That brings up what seems to be a contradiction – are not sacrifices to be slain to be sacrifices. So it would seem. MacArthur makes reference to the incident of Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice. Lenski spends a lot of time making a connection of a sacrifice with the death of the sacrifice. Most of all I like J. Vernon Magee's comment:

"Kenneth S. Wuest has an excellent translation -- actually an interpretation -- of this verse: "And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being, but is patterned after this age; but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing, and complete will, and having found that it meets specification, placing your approval upon it" (Romans in the Greek New Testament, p. 290).

Although this is rather elaborate, it is exactly what Paul is saying in this passage of Scripture. Paul is urging the believer not to fashion his life and conduct by those around him, even those in the church." —J. Vernon McGee's Thru The Bible

But even this explanation falls short of what I think Paul is referring to. **After all – a sacrifice is a sacrifice – not a metaphor.** There is a biblical reference to this seeming contradiction. It is found in Leviticus. For this I refer you to a lesson I taught years ago in my [Our Fathers Faith](#) series. I refer you to the lesson on [Leviticus](#). I think this is the most direct reference to which Paul is thinking, namely, **we all as believers are like the Levites. We are set aside for the Lord's service. We have, on entrance to salvation offered ourselves as living sacrifices just as the Levites were when they were consecrated to the Lord's service.** For the rest of the lesson please refer to the lesson on Leviticus.

Just before we go into the lesson on "**Leviticus, Serving God**" Let's be mindful of Paul's reference to the overall reference to the mystery of God temporarily setting aside Israel so that the Gentiles might be evangelized. Let us also be mindful that this is the only reason for us to be here on earth – so that we might be a part of this wonderful service of bringing others to Christ. Finally, let us also be mindful that we *are* to be different in that we are His and as such our lives should reflect that we have given ourselves over to Him just as the Levites had been consecrated to the Lord's service. Now – let's go to the study of Leviticus.

⁴ As Paul Harvey would insist on.



Leviticus, Serving God

This next book is a natural progression in the developing theme of tracing God's Plan of Redemption throughout the Old Testament. A background study of the tribe of Levi is in order.

The Levites, Living Sacrifices in the Lord's Service.

The book of Leviticus is a book about service to the Lord. The Levites were a tribe of Israel devoted *entirely* to service to the Lord. As such, the Levites paint an interesting picture of our Christian life. They were ordinary Israelites with one exception; because they had chosen the Lord during the golden calf incident, God promised them a special blessing - they were to be inducted into the service of the Lord. This gives us a valuable lesson that we can apply to our own lives.

The Lord, our Service

Special blessing for the tribe of Levi, service in the Lord's "house." *Exod 32:26, 29; Num 1:49-53*

Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day." Exodus 32:29, NIV.

As the believer/priest has been cleansed from the filth of his sin, he now enters into the service [worship, fellowship] of the Lord. The tribe of Levi was consecrated to the service of the Lord. It was their appointment by the Lord to act as assistants to the regular priests.

A little background is necessary. Both Moses and Aaron were descendants of the tribe of Levi (*Exod 6:16-27*). When the Israelites grew tired of waiting for Moses while on mount Sinai, they rebelled and made a golden calf for an idol. When Moses returned from the mount and discovered their sin, he stood at the gate of the camp and said, "whoever is for the Lord, come to me!" and all the sons of Levi gathered together to him." (*Exod 32:26*). Because of this loyalty to the Lord and to Moses, the Lord reserved a special blessing to the tribe of Levi (*vs 29*). **This blessing was to be in direct service unto Jehovah in the keeping and maintenance of the tabernacle, a type of Jesus Christ (*Num 1:49-53*).**

It was the Levites who were to prepare the tabernacle for Israel's journey in the wilderness. "...it had been their duty to look after the sacred vestments and vessels; the store-houses and their contents; and the preparation of the shewbread, of the meat-offerings, of the spices, etc. They were also generally to assist the

priests in their work, to see to the cleaning of the sanctuary..."^[1]

The tabernacle is a picture of Christ and His relationship to His disciples. This close relationship teaches the total consecration of the Levites to the Lord *and* the total consecration of believers today to Jesus Christ.

The Levites, in the Service of the Lord. *Num 8:11-26; Rom 12:1.*

It is significant that the wave offering was used in conjunction with the Levites. Moses did not bring the usual material that was used in a wave offering (a harvest of grain). Rather, he was to present the Levites themselves as the wave offering.

The Levites are a picture of you and me. They were appointed to the worship/service of the tabernacle of the Lord (which we know, is a picture of our Lord, Jesus Christ).

Aaron is to present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the Israelites, so that they may be ready to do the work of the LORD. [12] "After the Levites lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, use the one for a sin offering to the LORD and the other for a burnt offering, to make atonement for the Levites. [13] Have the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons and then present them as a wave offering to the LORD. [14] In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine. Numbers 8:11-14, NIV.

Num 8:11-23. Here the Levites are a wave offering to the Lord - living sacrifices, if you please (*vs 13; 15; 19; 21*). **Vs 16 "...I have taken the Levites for myself."**^[2] The wave offering involved a special way of presentation, as the offering was moved back and forth in an horizontal fashion as it was presented to the Lord. However, the Levites being a wave offering may refer to the it's root meaning which refers to a swinging motion as in wielding a sickle as a tool in harvesting grain. ***The Levites were to be a tool in the Lord's hands in the service of the tabernacle.***

Now turn to Rom 12:1.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1

"...living sacrifice..." I think Paul had precisely in mind the service of the Levites. The Levites were living sacrifices. ***They were the offering, not a shief of grain.*** The whole idea of this unique sacrifice was that the Levites were to be dedicated wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ in the type of the tabernacle. You and I are an offering to the Lord Jesus Christ.

They were given to Aaron and his sons (a type of Jesus Christ)

Of all the Israelites, I have given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the Tent of Meeting on behalf of the Israelites and to make atonement for them so that no plague will strike the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary." Numbers 8:19, NIV.

You and I are given to Jesus Christ *Hebrews 2:13* **"And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."** They had no inheritance in the land of Israel for the Lord was their inheritance **"But to the tribe of Levi, Moses had given no inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as he promised them."** Joshua 13:33, NIV. Likewise you and I have no inheritance in this world, Jesus Christ is our inheritance (*Eph 1:11, 12; Gal 4:7*).

They were to be a tool in the hand of the Lord (*the meaning of the root word*) - their vocation was Jesus Christ (*again, the tabernacle*) Num 8:26; 3:5-4:49. You and I are to be a "tool" in his hands - our vocation is Jesus Christ **"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."**

(1 Cor 15:58, NIV). We are His ambassadors **"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."** (2 Cor 5:20, NIV). We are his servants (*John 13:13-16; Rom 1:1; 16:1; Col 4:12; Jude 1*). He has made us a kingdom of kings and priests unto God (*Rev 1:5, 6*).

Anything short of total consecration to the service of Jesus Christ is rebellion against his service. For this read Num 16 - the Levitical rebellion led by Korah.

Finally, this consecration is our reasonable service, worship (*Rom 12:1*) - it is the only Christian life-style that makes sense. It is our "charge," our work, our occupation.

An Outline of the Book of Leviticus.

The book gets its name from the LXX and then on the the Latin version in translating "relating to the Levites." The subject of the book is living a holy life before Jehovan in service to Him. The language of the book addresses the approach to Jehovan and includes regulations on how to live a holy life before Him. The believer of New Testament times should not pass on from Leviticus shunning it because of some of the ceremonial laws because intertwined with the ceremonial are very important principles of living a holy life before Him.

Here's an outline:

1. How to approach The Holy God - 1:1 - 16:34.
 - A. Approaching the Lord with offerings 1:1 - 7:38.
 - B. Ordination of the priests and the sin of Nadab and Abihu - 8:1 - 10:20.
 - C. Living a clean life before Him - 11:1 - 15:33.
 - D. The Day of Atonement - Standing before Him - 16:1 - 34.
2. How to live for Him - 17:1 - 27:34.
 - A. The relevance of the Shed Blood - 17:1 - 9.
 - B. Keeping the horizontal and vertical in perspective - 18:1 - 20:27.
 - C. Living a clean life before Him - 21:1 - 22:33.
 - D. Observing the Agenda of the Lord. - 23:1 - 44.
 - E. Observing a balance between what we do at church and in the world - 24:1 - 23.
 - F. Observing The Lord's Sovereignty in our lives - 25:1 - 55.
 - G. Avoiding the temptation of idolatry - 26:1 - 46.
 - H. Placing great importance on our commitments - 27:1 - 34.

I am convinced that there is to be no distinction between work in the secular workplace and a full-time, professional, Christian vocation - not when it comes to any perceived difference in levels of commitment to the Lord. We are all in full-time Christian service. Some of us happen to be gainfully employed in a professional vocation and others are in the so-called secular workplace. We are all to be in full-time Christian service to the Lord.

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1. The Temple: Its Ministry and Services, Pg 60 Alfred Edersheim.
2. Amplified.