

TOTAL DEDICATION

Romans 12:1

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. God is good! Every good thing in your life comes from Him. And He has given us many things.
2. What should we give to a God who has given us so much? Romans 12:1 tells us.
 - i. **Romans 12:1** “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.”
 - ii. Worship.
 - iii. God desires our worship (Jn 4:23-24).
3. What do you mean by “worship”? Romans 12:1 tells us.
 - i. Unfortunately we have reduced worship to mean music and singing, and to what goes on at church on Sundays. And while worship does involve these things, the truest kind of worship, the basic definition of New Testament worship, is the total dedication of one’s life.
 - ii. I listened to a sermon on this verse, and the preacher called it “Giving God What He Wants The Most.” When you have a friend that you really love, you naturally want to give them gifts. And you want to give them something that they will like. This verse tells us how to give our Heavenly Father exactly what He wants the most. Total dedication.
 - iii. Another word for total dedication is total commitment, which Webster defines as “the alignment of one’s motives, resources, priorities and goals to fulfill a specific mission, accomplish a specific task, or follow a specific person.”
4. What do you mean by “the total dedication of one’s life”? Romans 12:1 tells us.

II. TOTAL DEDICATION INVOLVES

1. Reflecting on the mercies of God.

i. “Therefore”

1. When you see the word “therefore, check and see what it is therefore.”

- 2. It means that this verse is built on what was said before; it is based on what was said before.
- 3. What was said before?
- ii. "In view of the mercies of God"
 - 1. In Romans 1-11, Paul wrote about the mercies of God.
 - 2. The Greek word for "mercy" (Gk. *Oiktirmos*) means a feeling of compassion for another's suffering and a desire to alleviate it. It is feeling sorry for someone and then getting involved to help them.
 - 3. God looked at our sorry situation, felt sorry for us, and got involved to help us. He saw that we were dead in sin, enslaved to sin, separated from God, ignorant of God, headed for eternal wrath, and He sent His only Son to rescue us by dying on the cross.
 - 4. In "view" of those "mercies", dedicate your life to God.
- iii. This verse presents an important pattern: Doctrine leads to doxology; doxology leads to dedication.
 - 1. Doctrine: In chapters 1-11, Paul goes into great detail about the mercies of God; He explains all that God has done for us.
 - 2. Doxology (praise): Then at the end of Romans 11 Paul praises and adores God.
 - a. **Romans 11:33-36**
 - 33 Oh, the depth of the riches
and the wisdom and the knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments
and untraceable his ways!
 - 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?
 - 35 And who has ever given to God,
that he should be repaid?,
 - 36 For from him and through him
and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever. Amen.
 - 3. Dedication: Then in Romans 12:1, Paul writes about how our proper response should be the total dedication of our lives.

- a. Before Paul challenges us about total dedication, He motivate us with God's mercies.
- b. The only way you will find the motivation for total dedication is by reflecting on the mercies of God.
- c. **1 John 4:19** "We love because He first loved us."
- d. The deeper your understanding of what God has done for you, the more gratitude and affection and adoration you will have for God. Then you will have more motivation to dedicate your life to God.
- e. This is why studying God's word, and taking time for praise and thanksgiving are essential for the Christian life. They help us to reflect on God's goodness and greatness, which then give us the motivation for total dedication.
- f. If you are struggling with sin; if you have lost your first love; if you are living a lukewarm Christian life, it's probably because you have not been reflecting on the mercies of God.

iv. "I urge you"

- 1. This can be translated "I beg you," or "I plead with you."
- 2. Paul is issuing a very passionate plea total dedication.
- 3. Why is he so passionate about this?
- 4. Because he has just been reflecting on the mercies of God for eleven chapters.
- 5. When you reflect on the mercies of God, you will have the same passion and intensity as Paul for total dedication.

2. Deciding to give all of yourself to God.

- i. "Present your bodies as a... sacrifice"
- ii. In that day religions related to God through sacrifices, both Jews and Gentiles. A worshiper would purchase an animal, bring it to the temple and give to the priest, who would kill it, place it upon the altar and then burn it. The Jews offered sacrifices to pay for their sins, but those sacrifices didn't actually pay for sins. They were symbols of what Christ would eventually do. Then Christ came and offered Himself once and for all as the sacrifice for our sins so that now, we no longer need to offer sacrifices to pay for our sins. Instead we put our faith in Christ. In Romans 12:1, we

are not instructed to present an animal, but our bodies to God as a sacrifice. And the purpose of this bodily sacrifice is not to pay for sins, but to dedicate your life to God.

iii. What does the word “bodies” mean?

1. “Bodies” refers to the total person; all your human faculties; your total personality; everything from your head to your toe.
2. Your head and everything in it – your thoughts, attitudes, and emotions; your hair and how you fix it; your eyes and what you look at; your ears and how you listen, and what you listen to; your tongue and what you say and how you say it; your mouth and what you put in to it; your arms and hands and whatever you touch and do with them; your legs and feet and wherever you use them to take you; your entire body and how you dress; your sexual organs and how you use them. Your body refers to all of you.
3. “Body” represents everything about you – money and possessions; what you do with your time; your hopes and dreams and goals; your career; your sexuality; your friendships; your marriage; your children; your vacation time; your talents; your hobbies.

iv. What are you supposed to do with your body? Present it to God.

1. “Present” means give. You’re not to share it with God; He take some, and you take some. You’re not to let God borrow it sometimes, and then you use it the rest of the time. You are not to give it to God only to take it back. You are to give all of it to God for keeps.
2. Think about the ancient sacrifices. Once an animal was presented, or offered, or given to God, it was no longer theirs. There was a transfer of ownership. To present your body to God as a sacrifice is to transfer ownership from you to God.
3. It is like giving God a blank sheet of paper with your name signed at the bottom. Or it is like giving God a blank check with your signature at the bottom.
4. “Present” is in the punctiliar tense in Greek, which means you are to make this decision on a certain day, at a certain

time. In other words, Paul is calling for a firm decision. Every Christian is called to make this decision to give all of yourself to God; to surrender all of yourself to God.

5. Your Christian life should have two important days. The first is your spiritual birthday; your conversion. This is the day you were born again; when you decided to believe in Jesus and become a Christian. This is your John 3:16 day. The second day usually happens later in your Christian life; it is your dedication day. This is the day that you totally surrender all to Jesus. It is your Romans 12:1 day. Every Christian needs to have a Romans 12:1 day.
6. Unfortunately many Christians don't have a Romans 12:1 day. Some don't have a Romans 12:1 day because they don't know about it. They didn't know that God was calling them to decide to totally surrender every aspect of their life to God. Other Christians don't have a Romans 12:1 day because they don't want to surrender all to God. They don't want to give God complete control.
- v. The decision to give all of yourself to God is the decision to live out what is already true about you, or to give God what is rightly His. The Bible says that you already belong to God. You are not your own (1 Cor 6:19-20). He owns you by creation – He is your maker. He owns you by redemption – He is your savior; He bought you from slavery to sin. You already belong to Him. This is simply the decision to live in that reality.

3. Renewing your commitment daily.

- i. "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice."
- ii. What does it mean by "living"? Two things:
 1. Live for God.
 - a. Lest you get the wrong idea about sacrifice, Paul throws in the word "living." This is not merely the command for you to be willing to die for Christ, although that is part of it. This is a command to live for God's glory in all that you do – at home, at school, at work, etc.
 - b. In one sense it is easier to die for God than to live for Him. Dying for God involves just one decision; living

for God involves hundreds of decisions everything day. Physical death only happens once. But living for God is a daily, moment by moment lifestyle and attitude.

- c. So, Paul is saying, don't just die for God, but live for God.
 - d. However, living for God is form of death. It means dying to yourself every day, over and over again. The only way you can truly live for God is if you die to your desires, your will, your preferences, your goals and dreams.
2. Renew your decision daily.
- a. **Charles Hodge** writes that living means "perpetual, lasting, never neglected."
 - b. **Preacher's Outline and Study Bible** says "A constant, continuous sacrifice, not just an occasional dedication of one's body. Dedicate your body to live for God and then keep on living for God."
 - c. The problem with living sacrifices is that they tend to crawl off the altar.
 - d. It is important to have a Romans 12:1 day. Remember the word "present" is in the punctiliar sense, meaning do it on a particular day and time. But you are going to find yourself gradually crawling off the altar. You're going to find yourself trying to take back control of your life. So it is important to renew this commitment on a daily basis.
 - e. Every day start the day by praying a Romans 12:1 prayer. "Lord, I present my body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to You. I surrender everything to you: my time, my talents, my treasure, my relationships, etc."

4. Pursuing holiness.

- i. "Holy."
- ii. Total dedication involves pursuing holiness.

- iii. Again, this verse alludes to the OT sacrifices in which an animal presented as a sacrifice had to be without blemish. It had to be as perfect as possible.
- iv. What is holiness?
 - 1. **Jerry Bridges** “Holiness is conformity to the moral character of God.”
 - 2. **Lewis A. Drummond** “Living a holy life simply means developing a lifestyle that is yielded, pleasing to God, separated from sin, and totally Christlike.”
 - 3. **JC Ryle** “A holy person will strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- v. Pursuing holiness involves two steps: subtraction and addition. And it is important to take these steps in this order. You find these steps in several passages (2 Tim 2:19-22; Heb 12:1-2; Col 3:8, 12-13; Eph 4:22-24).
 - 1. Subtraction: Eliminate the sin in your life. These include sinful actions and attitudes. Stealing, gossiping, pornography, sexual immorality, etc.
 - 2. Addition: Cultivate the Christian virtues. These include love, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, humility, generosity, faithfulness, etc.
- vi. To progress in the pursuit of holiness you must make three vital decisions:
 - 1. View sin as an offense against God, and not merely a personal defeat. Your motive must be glorifying and pleasing God, not merely improving the quality of your life. Only then will God grant you the strength to make progress.
 - 2. Take personal responsibility for your sin. Don’t blame your sin on God, on your parents, on your environment, on your friends, on your circumstances. It’s your fault.
 - 3. Decide to obey God in all areas of your life, however insignificant the issue may be. Sin is a disease that grows and spreads. If you allow some sins to survive in your life, it will make it difficult to kill the other sins. You have to make a sweeping commitment to total holiness.

5. Aiming to please God above all.

- i. “Pleasing to God.”

- ii. The Greek word means “utterly satisfying to God” (MacArthur). It means “well-pleasing, approving, and extremely satisfying to God” (*Preacher’s Outline and Study Bible*).
- iii. As you think about total dedication, it is important to remember the ultimate goal: to please God. To make God happy.
- iv. The ultimate goal of total dedication is not...
 - 1. To be happier. Even though you will be.
 - 2. To be healthier and wealthier. Some people pursue total dedication so God will bless them.
 - 3. To be more useful so God, or to have a more successful ministry. Even though you will be more useful.
 - 4. To impress others with your piety. Even though some people will praise your devotion, while others will envy it, and still others will hate it.
 - 5. The goal is to please God for His mercy poured out on you.
- v. When I was in middle school I was so self-conscious. I so wanted to fit in. I was terrified of being teased. My clothes needed to be the right name brand. I had to have the right hair style, and it had to be fixed perfectly. I’m so glad I’m no longer in middle school!
- vi. So much of our lives is motivated by the opinions of others. But our ultimate goal in life should not be to please or impress your peers, your friends, your classmates, your teammates, your family, your coworkers. Your goal should be to please God. Total dedication means living for an audience of One.
- vii. **2 Corinthians 5:9** “Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to him.”
- viii. Total dedication is the decision to please God even if it means displeasing people; even if it means losing your spouse; even if it means disappointing your parents; even if it means being rejected by friends; even if it means getting mocked, teased, criticized, or worse.
- ix. **Thomas Watson** said, “It is better to have God approve, than the world applaud.”
- x. Total dedication is the decision to please God rather than yourself. It is the commitment to do what God wants, even if it means the loss of money, job, career, relationships, comfort, reputation.

III. CONCLUSION

1. I want to return to the ultimate motivation for total dedication. The ultimate goal is to please God, but the ultimate motivation is God's mercies. God has been so good to us. Every good in your life comes from Him. Notice that the word "mercies" is in the plural. God hasn't just been merciful once, but is merciful constantly. He hasn't been merciful in only one way, but in countless ways. Let me point out one way that God is merciful. He has aligned His happiness with yours. He has created you in such a way that you will be happiest when you are most dedicated to His happiness.
2. The reason why so few Christians make the decision of total dedication is that they fear it will lead to unhappiness. They fear it will lead to a life of misery. But remember that God is your heavenly Father, and He loves you perfectly, and He knows what is best for you. Imagine if your high school child came to you and said, "Dad and Mom, I'm going to let you decide where I go to college, and what I study, and what career I pursue." Would you try to make your child unhappy? Would you try to ruin your child's life? Of course not, you would do your best to pick the college and the career that would make your child the happiest in both the short and the long term. God loves you infinitely more than that, and He is infinitely smarter than you. If you give Him complete control, He is not going to make you miserable. He is going to make you happy.
3. There was a little girl named Jenny. When she was in the store with her mother, she saw a fake pearl necklace. She asked if she could have it, and her mother told her she would have to save up for it. So over the next few weeks she did extra chores and saved her money and went back and bought the necklace. And she cherished it, wearing it all the time. Each night before bed her father would go into her room to kiss her goodnight. One night he said, "Jenny, do you love me?" "Yes!" "Then give me your pearls." She couldn't do it. She said, you can have my toys, but not my pearls. Her father said, "No thanks." He kissed her goodnight, and they went to bed. Her father asked her the same thing every night, and each night she would say no, and offer him something else. One night, as her father was approaching her room, he heard her crying. He asked her what was wrong, and she handed him her pearls. After he took her pearls, he reached into his back pocket and took out a

little black velvet pouch, and he gave it to Jenny. When she opened it she took out a real pearl necklace.

4. Total dedication means surrendering everything you are, and everything you have to God. It means giving God complete control and ownership of your pearls. That terrifies many people, and like Jenny, they refuse to surrender. But you have to remember that God's happiness is aligned with yours. He has so created you that the more dedicated you are to pleasing Him, to living for Him, to serving Him, the happier you will be.
5. **Chip Ingram** "Total commitment is the channel through which God's biggest blessings flow."
6. Jesus said He came to give you not just life, but abundant life. And full and meaningful life. True life. The best life. He has an amazing plan for your life. As long as you resist Him, you are not just living in sin, you are missing out on the best life. You are missing out on God's best blessings.
7. Make today your Romans 12:1 day. Even if you have totally dedicated your life to God before, I urge you to do it again. Pray a prayer like this one, by a writer named Ruth Myers:
 - i. Lord, I'm YOURS. Whatever the cost may be, may Your will be done in my life. I realize I'm not here on earth to do my own thing, or to seek my own fulfillment or my own glory. I'm not here to indulge my desires, to increase my possessions, to impress people, to be popular, to prove I'm somebody important, or to promote myself. I'm not here even to be relevant or successful by human standards. I'm here to please YOU.
 - ii. I offer myself to You, for You are worthy. All that I am or hope to be, I owe to You. I'm Yours by creation, and every day I receive from you life and breath and all things. And I'm Yours because You bought me, and the price you paid was the precious blood of Christ. you alone, the Triune God, are worthy to be my Lord and Master. I yield to You, my gracious and glorious heavenly Father; to the Lord Jesus who loved me and gave himself for me; to the Holy Spirit and His gracious influence and empowering.
 - iii. All that I am and all that I have I give to You. I give You my rebellion in me, that resists doing Your will. I give You my pride and self-dependence, that tell me I can do Your will in my own power if I try hard enough. I give you my fears, that tell me I'll

never be able to do Your will in some areas of my life. I consent to let You energize me...to create within me, moment by moment, both the desire and the power to do You will.

- iv. I give you my body and each of its members...my entire inner being; my mind, my emotional life, my will...my loved ones...my marriage or my hopes for marriage...my abilities and gifts...my strengths and weaknesses...my health...my status (high or low)...my possessions...my past, my present, and my future...when and how I'll go Home.
- v. I'm here to love You, to obey You, to glorify You, my Beloved, may I be a joy to YOU! Amen.