

Living a Dedicated Christian Life (Part 1)

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Date: 10 September 2023

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[0 : 00] It is illegal in Poland to discipline your children. If you spank your children or touch your children in a way that they feel threatened or harmed, they can report you and you will face criminal offense.

That's the truth. It's similar in Austria. It's the same in Germany. And so we watched entire families held hostage by temper tantrum three-year-olds.

Time and time and time again, we watched families that were captivated by these children who were ill-disciplined and rude and selfish and had no regard for adults at all.

In fact, it was so bad when we were at the camp in Poland, Janik, one of the elders, pulled us aside and told us this was going to happen and we were going to see this. Please understand the dilemma.

And we did see it. And it did happen. You might as well just hold back and wait while all the kids rush the table and do whatever they're going to do because you can't pull them away and say, don't do that.

[1 : 14] You can't do that. At all. I mean in the slightest way, folks. We watched it happen time and time again. I don't know how far behind Europe we are with that kind of thing, but you watch.

You watch and see. I think we're moving in that direction. Well, what I'd like to talk to you about this morning, we're not going to be in the book of the Bible that I'm heading toward next. That may be a few weeks from now.

There's some things I want to share with you, and we're in Romans 12. Now, I realize that you've heard a couple of messages from Romans in the last few months or so, I think, or maybe four or five months, but we can't wear this out.

The title of my message, as you see, Living a Dedicated Christian Life. Living a Dedicated Christian Life.

What are we talking about? Dedicated is defined by the English dictionary as wholly committed to something. Completely, exhaustively committed to something.

[2 : 23] Set apart or reserved for a specific use or purpose. Set apart for or reserved for a specific use or purpose.

That's what it means to be dedicated to someone or something. As it concerns our topic for this morning, I want to say to you, right from the outset, there is not a person in this room who lives each moment of your life wholly and completely committed to God.

Now, I don't say that as an antagonist to you. I don't say that to demean you or discourage you. I say that to you to level the playing field this morning and put your pastors in the same boat with you. None of us live wholly and completely to the glory and honor of God every minute of every day, do we? We're all in that boat together.

So this message is for each of us, collectively and individually, as we think about what it means for Scripture to mandate for us living dedicated lives to God.

[3 : 36] You and I sin each day. When you sin, you certainly are not living from a heart entirely devoted and dedicated to the Lord, are you?

In that moment, that is not what sin is about in your heart. It's not about being dedicated to the Lord. You're dedicated to some idol, some issue in your heart that you're giving allegiance to instead of the Lord.

If you ask the question, is it even possible for us to live a dedicated life, a wholly committed and devoted life to the Lord, I'll reply to that question from Scripture using Romans 12, 1 and 2.

Can we read that together? 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.

[4 : 57] Paul's central appeal in these two verses is that we would avoid being conformed to the world by living our Christian lives entirely devoted to God.

So yes, friends, this is God's mandate. Is it even possible to live a life wholly devoted to God? Scripture says yes. Now, does that mean in perfection, without sin, without striving against sin? No. We can read the rest of Scripture and see plenty of examples of men and women in Scripture who love the Lord and were wholly devoted to God, and they struggled with sin, didn't they? This is the reality that we live in. It is imperative, therefore, that you and I grasp Paul's contrast right up front in these two verses.

You and I are being told to present ourselves on the altar of God's mercies as a living and holy sacrifice to God, and we're going to flesh that out together because it's beautiful and it's powerful. [6 : 08] That's the single true form of worship with the true God as its object. Do you understand what I'm saying there? When you and I sin, it's because we have lifted some idol of our heart into a God-replacement position.

Do you see that? That's why you sin. That's why I sin. Name the sin. It doesn't matter. The genesis of that sinful behavior is in your heart.

It resides within some desire that you have to replace God and God's wisdom with something that you want instead of, in exception to, and then you exalt that.

The Bible calls those idols. Idols of the heart give expression to sinful behavior. Do they not? That's what we're talking about. You and I have hearts that are constantly in a battle with whom we will worship.

Who will we dedicate ourselves to in this moment? Who will we be most loyal to in this moment? Self or Savior? This is the contrast that Paul is presenting to us in these two verses.

[7 : 22] It's a transition time in the book of Romans. Very, very important that we grasp this and understand the object of worship that Paul is dealing with here is the Lord God Almighty.

The alternative is false worship. It's the only other alternative. And that's, again, what we do when we turn away from worshiping God in any given moment, bringing Him honor, bringing Him glory, being concerned and consumed with pleasing Him in this situation, in this moment, with this person, or whatever the context is.

The only alternative to that focus is false worship. Moving away from the true God, and God is our object of worship, to this idol that I'm lifting up and showing loyalty to in that moment.

You foolishly allow yourself, then, to be conformed to the thinking, priorities, values, and pursuits of this world in that moment.

You say, Jeff, that's not my lifestyle. Praise God. That's what we want. We don't want that kind of false worship pursuit to be your lifestyle because that's not the lifestyle of a Christian, is it?

[8 : 41] You can profess with your mouth and say you're a Christian, but if you're living like the devil, we got a problem. So this is all about worship.

This passage is all about a life dedicated to the true object of our worship, God Himself, or some idol, some God replacement. That's what we're dealing with here.

Paul's very, very concerned that we understand this right at the outset. He wants us to understand the power of sin and the power of the world to conform our thinking, our priorities, our values, and our pursuits to be that of worldliness.

And we can Christian veneer it, can't we? See, isn't that the problem? You and I can find all kinds of ways and reasons to justify Christianizing what is false or foolish worship.

something that does not reflect the priorities of heaven. I do this, do you do this? I need some amens, Greg. I'm up here all by myself. That's right.

[9 : 49] I do this, you do this, God help us, right? God forgive us and God help us serve the Lord Jesus more faithfully each day. We don't want to be conformed to the priorities, the thinking, and the values, and the pursuits of the world in any given moment and be defined by those things.

It's not what we want. Not as God worshipers, not as Jesus lovers. We can do this in so many areas of our life and we can do it so quickly that it's scary.

Our hearts just so scary. So Paul is going to tell us how to move through this. These two ways of living are in complete contrast to one another.

They don't complement one another. They don't mix with one another. Don't try to do that and if you're doing it, repent. Repent. How does Paul tell you and I to avoid foolish worship? How do you and I daily surrender the worship of our hearts to Almighty God in any given context or moment that we face in our daily life?

[10:59] It really comes down to that. So that you and I are presenting ourselves to God as, let's use Paul's language, living, holy sacrifices.

Acceptable to the Lord and offered to the Lord as our spiritual service of worship to Him. What a mouthful. But that's what he said. Look with me again at verse 1.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God which is this presenting of yourselves as living holy sacrifices acceptable.

That is your spiritual service of worship. That's worship. That is you aiming your life at being defined by the worship of Almighty God.

What most defines you? What makes Fred mostly Fred? What makes Jeff mostly Jeff? Bob mostly Bob? Jackie mostly Jackie? Well the question that we're asking given our text for this morning is this.

[12:05] Is it my worship of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is that what most defines the priorities, goals, and thinking and pursuits of my life? Do I reflect the priorities and values of heaven?

Do I have a heavenly mindedness about the way I think about life, perceive and interpret the issues of life? And in my relationships do I reflect those priorities?

To the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well Paul tells us the way. He shows us the way. He's just spent 11 chapters laying the doctrinal foundation for our relationship with God in Jesus Christ, hasn't he?

Now, Paul begins to spell out what a living, breathing, walking around sacrifice to God looks like because that's what you are.

You are a living, breathing, made holy in Jesus Christ sacrifice. You're not a dead one. You didn't have, see this is the thing, you didn't have to physically die and leave this world for all this to take place.

[13:20] you were already spiritually dead. What you needed to do was be made alive. And so God has made you a life-size walking around breathing, living sacrifice to himself.

That's who you are, that's what you are every day. What do you do with it? How do you live like that? Well, look, it looks, it looks, this is the whole thing I'm describing, it looks like a person who is entirely devoted to worshiping God in every detail of life.

So look with me at how Paul develops the profile for a person who is presenting themselves to God as a living, holy sacrifice. Now look, as I do this with you and as we read through this, this is what you can be asking yourself.

Put yourself right in the middle of this and say, as I read this, as I listen to Jeff read through this, does this characterize my life? is this on the whole who I am and how I'm seeking to live?

All right? Let's, let's, you just follow along. We're gonna, we're gonna jump right in, in verse 9 of chapter 12. This is Paul giving us this profile for a person who's walking with the Lord, dedicated to God.

[14:43] Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Now, let's just stop right there. Are you loving people without hypocrisy?

Are you living a secret life? Are there secret sins in your life? Are you spending more time trying to cover up and cloud over your tracks than live transparently before people and God?

are you abhorring? What a word. Are you abhorring evil? Is evil so abhorrent to you, so distasteful to you that it's like vomit in your mouth?

Do you hate sin in your life that much? Does it break your heart for you to sin against almighty God given what he's done for you in Christ? Does it just crush your spirit to know when you sin in a relationship with another human being that the worst part of that sin is that it is sin against almighty God?

Is that what crushes your heart more than anything? Is that what drives you to your knees in repentance more than any other aspect? Is that I've sinned against the God who gave me his son and purchased life for me?

[15 : 56] Is that where you live? Is that how you think about sin? Is that how you're nurturing your heart against evil? Is it abhorrent to you? Now I know you say we're going to read all the way down to verse 21 if I keep that up that'll be all I have to say right?

Well that'll be okay I'll just turn the page and we'll start next week right there. Be devoted verse 10 or cling to what is good abhorred what is evil that's great but now cling to what is good do you do that?

Do you have in your mind and in your heart a way to live your life where you are learning to reach out and grab on to what is good and cling to it bring it into your heart and cling to it I mean put a grip on it and what is good well God's defined what is good it's got to be the good the way God defines it we can call a lot of things good and veneer it over and it's not good and it's no good for us to fool ourselves be devoted to one another in brotherly love that is just beautiful be devoted there's our word dedicated devoted to God be devoted to one another in brotherly love look at this one boy does the world need this give preference to one another in honor man that's not American culture and it's certainly not European not lagging behind in diligence see we need to be a spiritually diligent people don't we fervent in spirit fervent in spirit means this fervent in the things of the Holy Spirit serving the Lord serving the Lord if I just took that one phrase that would be life changing rejoicing in hope no matter where you find yourself whatever trial or suffering in your end can you rejoice in hope knowing that

Jesus loves you and has designed your suffering for his glory and your good persevering in tribulation persevering God has given you the gift of being able to persevere through the trials of life by the power of the Holy Spirit devoted to prayer we are a people devoted dedicated to prayer why because we're weak we're needy we need God so we pray we seek the Lord in prayer contributing to the needs of the saints do you contribute to each other's needs do you know enough about each other in this church to know when people are in need maybe it's financial and maybe you're able to meet it maybe you're able to privately and discreetly make an offering to someone to help them in a time of financial need well you you won't know if you don't ask if you don't involve maybe it's emotional encouragement that they need maybe they suffered a loss maybe they're having a hard time at work maybe they're in a very distressing relational situation maybe their marriage is strained maybe they're just worn out by raising kids no offense right life beats you down you come in here on Sunday and you've had you have the world the week of the world clinging all over you we need to encourage each other folks contributing to the needs of the saints you don't know to meet the needs if you don't ask and get involved this church is not a place you want to be to fence sit please go down the road

I say that in love it is no fair to you and not loving from my heart or your other pastor's heart for us to let you sit this fence spiritually invest or go down the road contribute to the needs of the saints folks you can't do that unless you're willing to wade into the mess of people's lives I need you in my mess I need you we just told the men in our meeting yesterday morning when Matt taught great job brother he did a fantastic job of encouraging us in the truth Greg and I told them we said listen you guys you men of our church help Greg and I be better pastors you help us be more faithful as pastors as husbands raising our kids we need the men of our church in our lives don't we brother and I hope that you'll feel the same way toward us contributing the needs of the saints practicing hospitality having people into your home being willing to go into their home introducing people to the way that you live the priority of how you live not being afraid for people to see who you are unless you have something to hide verse 14 bless those who persecute you bless and do not curse there's just no room see rejoice with those who rejoice weep with those who weep be of the same mind toward one another oh no don't be haughty in mind don't be all full of yourself associate with lowly people do not be wise in your own estimation don't be all stuck up and rude and think you've got it together never pay back evil for evil to anyone respect what is right in the sight of all men if possible so far as it depends on you be at peace with all men never take your own revenge beloved leave room for the wrath of God for it's written vengeance is mine

[21 : 26] I will repay says the Lord if your enemy's hungry feed him if he's thirsty give him a drink in so doing you'll heap burning coals on his head and then this this sums it all up we can do verse 21 and it takes us right back to verses 1 and 2 do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good folks there you go friends there is the normal Christian life there you go isn't that amazing the normal Christian life so what do you mean this is the normal Christian life made alive in us by Jesus living in us you can't live this and I can't live this apart from Jesus living in us right this is Jesus life in

you in you and in me this is how we show the world that Jesus lives he lives in me and he lives in you and here's the proof now admittedly this is not lightweight

Christianity but it's not elite Christianity either this isn't for the elite this kind of life isn't for the seminarians or the academics or those who really want to be holy this is for people like you and me who've been saved by Jesus and want to love Jesus and want to love people well in Jesus this is for us this is our life you see it's the wrong question to ask this can I even do this is this even possible listen the question is this are you Christian are you being conformed to this world or are you being transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you are proving what the will of God is that which is good acceptable and perfect that's the question a heart devoted to God strives to live in worship to God in all things and in all ways and so the question is are you striving are you striving in holiness before the

Lord did you hear me say that now I'm not asking you are you perfect all right I'm going to show you now here's what we're going to do we're going to just test this the line for perfect Christian living forms at that door let's see who the first person is to go over there and stand in the line you'll notice that I'm going to walk over here and I'm going to stand by my brother there's no such line is there we are strugglers we are strivers this is why we need each other this is why we have treatises like this in the Bible we need each other while it's not about you it is about us it is about us in the Lord it's about the church it's about God's people living on this earth displaying the love of Jesus to other people and we need each other to do that we fail if we try to live this as individuals we fail if as individuals we allow ourselves to be conformed to the thinking priorities values and pursuits of the world we fail you've heard me say this before

I didn't make it up Christianity is not a lone ranger kind of thing it's not an individual sport it's a team effort it's designed that way in the Lord Jesus Christ we are the church so this is not about elite Christianity a heart devoted to God strives to live in worship to God are you striving so my friends this is an urgent appeal from Paul to his readers and I'm just trying to help you capture that I don't want to say another word about the text until I've got you right where you are in terms of this urgency in the Lord urgency in the Lord the fact that this is an appeal is made clear by the expression I urge you so you see right there urge urgent Paul is saying I am giving you something very urgent in my heart this is a soulful passionate serious appeal to holy living for the sake of Jesus Christ so this urging is coming from the depths of Paul's heart and being and so please folks think of what I'm saying to you now this morning in what I hope would be a similar serious sobering way coming from my own heart as your pastor in terms of your walk with the Lord so if I summed it up this is what I would call it this is an urgent encouragement I want it to be encouraging but I don't want the urgency of it to escape you that's why I'm not embarrassed to tell you this is not about spectator Christianity this is not about fence sitting this is a call to arms because the days are evil and your time is short friends there's simply no time for me to give you false encouragement with empty appeals like these please get your spiritual act together no please think about taking your faith seriously no please consider being part of our church nope won't you think about following [27 : 15] Jesus more faithfully nope look I've said all those things to us in the recent past and I meant them warmly and very kindly kindly and warmly meant those things are not for this moment none of that is helpful or even faithful to the message Paul is bringing to us in this passage he's not making some mamby pamby appeal to our feelings he is making a sobering urgent appeal to being dedicated to God because the days are evil and our time is short and we need to be motivated to make the most in our devotion to Jesus you expect to hear this from this pulpit do you not if I brought you a message any less than this you would be like what's wrong with Jeff he's kind of off today all right so how how do you bring devotion dedication to

God down to the level of your everyday life with your kids your work your marriage your friends the way you use your money the way you prioritize the events of your life and all the other aspects of your daily life after all here's the reality it's the reality for your pastors it's your reality we are not naturally desirous about being dedicated to God are we that's not a natural thing we have to get saved to want to serve the Lord Jesus had to die on the cross to bring us to the place where we want to know and serve God our hearts are so selfish and disloyal we want to live a life that honors him but that's not natural to us apart from being saved a life truly devoted to God doesn't just happen you can't go out here and just work your jobs and go about your life and think that you're going to somehow morph into being a more faithful

Christian that's why Paul says not lagging behind in verse 11 so it's my introduction I hope we're where we need to be so that we can tackle the next part all right let's just we'll look at it and I'll stop I'm not going to go a lot longer but let's look at this no not a lot of slides today just just a couple of them here's the first thing I want to talk where your devotion to God begins that's what I've been talking about leading up to if you'll notice in my translation it reads this notice in yours it probably the same verse chapter 12 verse 1 therefore therefore therefore takes us back into the text from chapter 1 through chapter 11 therefore is another way of saying consequently or because these things are so what things everything he's been saying back to chapter 1 because all these things are true therefore now you're ready everything

I've been saying to you this morning up to this point is the therefore I just wanted to get you to the therefore and now we're there what is Paul referring to in the therefore well it tells us therefore I urge you brethren by the mercies of God the mercy of God mercies of God mercies is an intensive plural in the Greek it conveys the idea of great mercy that's the intensive aspect great mercy or another word a synonym for this a different Greek word but a synonym we'll see it in another passage great compassion by the great compassion of God poured out on you and it took Paul 11 chapters in the book of Romans the greatest theological treatise ever written to tell you about those mercies you go back and read 1 through 11 and you get something of the depth of those compassions those mercies shed on you flooded to you through the cross of Christ and now Paul transitions in chapter 12 and says now anchor yourselves in those wonderful forgiving mercies of your almighty God and he tells you how to move forward pick your head up look up and move forward be a soldier for Jesus so I strongly and solemnly urge you by God's great mercies mercies plural intensive plural he sums up what he told us for 11 chapters about salvation in Christ by calling it the mercies of God now obviously we're not going to go back and do all 11 of those that would be me you know expositing the book and we'd be here for years doing that that's fine but I'm not going to do that now I want you to just be reminded of this chapter 1 verse 1 through chapter 3 verse 20 here's what he's talking about we sin because we are sinners at heart we are all guilty criminals in the sight of

[32 : 38] God because we have broken God's law of life with him and others now again that's not a popular message is it it's not a popular message to go out there and lead out with you're a filthy guilty criminal in the sight of God you're a sinner you sin because you're a sinner in nature and in your heart and God looks at you that way and if you stay in that condition you're going to die and go to hell because God will punish you for being a criminal against his life against him I realize people don't like to hear that but it's the truth we can still say it with great grace and then we can quickly follow it wait wait wait don't hit me don't hit me I have good news too and then we tell them the good news don't we but God has done something to help you with that problem to save you from yourself to save you from your criminality and deliver you and remain a righteous God in the process miracle of miracles we stand then before God in God's estimation you and I as criminals we stand accused and condemned before a righteous

God due to sin this is our condition without Jesus Christ without the wonders of the cross spiritually applied to the depths of our souls we're criminals because we are guilty criminals we deserve death for the sins that we have committed the wages of sin is death right that's chapter 1 verse 1 to chapter 3 verse 20 then Paul transitions from 3 21 to 11 36 here's what he talks about he tells of mankind's way of deliverance and rescue from the sin conditions which enslave and condemn us to death the way of our freedom from sin comes to us because our sin debt is paid in full for us our death penalty has been served for us by another person a substitute this person is the son of the living

God the Lord Jesus Christ who reversed the way of death wrought by Adam's sin Adam the first man sinned and put the entire human race as his posterity into sin the second Adam Jesus Christ corrected reversed and made way for forgiveness from what the first Adam did the second Adam was Jesus you just read Romans 5 and you'll get all of that it's beautiful it's deep it's wonderful this is what Paul is talking about our death penalty has been served for us Jesus Christ opened for us the way of life through faith in him through the cross of Jesus you and I can be justified forgiven and made holy in the sight of God justified means declared righteous you were once a criminal without Jesus by faith in Jesus Christ in that very moment you came to accept to receive to trust in Jesus and his work on the cross on your behalf as your substitute in that very instant God declared to the heavens that you are now righteous you are clean in his sight you are pure he declared that to the

heavens that's justification you are now justified in the sight of the great law giver isn't that something then you're forgiven all your sins past present and future are forgiven in Jesus Christ all of them everything's covered under the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and then you are made holy in the sight of God what does that mean you are given the perfect spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ as if you lived his sinless life you are given the righteousness of Jesus the fact that Jesus never sinned lived a perfect life is perfect in every way that perfection is applied to you as if you had lived it yourself and so now

God sees you in that way as a Christian he sees you as perfectly righteous before him and so now your entrance into heaven is paved by the blood of the Lord Jesus it's not your righteousness it's his given to you imputed to you credited to you and nothing can take that away from you once that is declared about your life from the God of heaven the lawmaker the creator of heaven and earth it is a done sealed deal the Holy Spirit living in you is the seal the proof of that reality that you belong to God the fact that you are now able to live to the glory of God worship him dedicate your life to him is proof that God has done that work of salvation in your heart now you may say to me at this moment you may say Jeff I just don't think my heart has that kind of love for God friend friend it can that heart that you have can know

[38 : 02] God in this way you turn to Jesus Christ and trust him as your substitute going to the cross to pay for your sin debt in your place with your sins being laid on him and God the father then punishing Jesus to death for the sins of your heart laid on Jesus as if he committed those sins instead of you and him taking the punishment in your place and then God saying now I will give to you what my son purchased for you forgiveness freedom power spiritual life the mercies of God and Paul is saying by those mercies live to God as a sacrifice breathing and walking around in life it's it's brilliant it's just nothing short of brilliant therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in

Christ Jesus you and I are given the privilege and ability to love and be devoted to God to be devoted to one another in love finally in 12 1 through 16 27 the end of the book where we are in our chapter to the end of the book Paul describes a saved and forgiven person's grateful response to God now let me say that again I want to really labor this point Paul is describing for us a saved and forgiven person's grateful response to God based on God's merciful pardon of their sins through his substitute his holy son the Lord Jesus which he provided for us who he provided for us there's an illustration in scripture of this mercy it's the prodigal son of Luke 15 now don't turn there let me just tell you real quickly you remember the story most of you know the story there was a rich man he had two sons the younger son came to him when he came of age and said father

I want my half of the inheritance now I got some things I want to do so his father gave him his half of the inheritance and the younger son went out and what did he he was really having a hard time he went and got a job slopping hogs I know what slopping hogs is and looks like I did it for many years for my grandfather and I can tell you this I was never hungry enough to eat what I fed those pigs never this man it says was hungry enough that he wished he could eat the food he was feeding the hogs that's how bad things got for him well he came to his senses and said I tell you what I know this my father's servants eat better than the people here are eating I'm going to go back to my dad and I'm going to tell my dad

I'm sorry I'm not even fit to be your son will you forgive me let me be hired on as a hired hand not so the man got up and came to his father but while he was still a long way off his father saw him and felt compassion that's a synonym for the same word for mercies in Romans 12 he felt his father saw him and felt compassion or mercy or pity for him and ran and embraced him and kissed him you see there's your God there's your God you were never lost God knew where you were the entire time you were just lost to yourself but God came he found you and he embraced you and kissed you and he put the royal robe of the blood of Jesus Christ over you but the father said and the son said to his father father

I've sinned against heaven and in your sight I'm no longer worthy to be called your slaves quickly quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him put a ring on his hand the ring of authority and sandals on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat let us have a celebration for his son was dead and now has come to life again he was lost and now has been found and they began to celebrate that chapter ends but we had to celebrate and rejoice for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live and was lost and has been found amen now that's the story of redemption that's what it looks like for God to save people like us people out slopping the hogs and he finds us slopping the hogs and doesn't even say get a bath he puts the royal robe of the blood of

[43 : 34] Jesus on us puts the ring of ownership on us clothes us and brings us in and celebrates in heaven that we've come to know Christ and have been adopted into his family as son and daughter this is the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ this is what Paul is telling us in these verses God's mercy and love are the bases for you living a life that is dedicated and devoted to him your devotion to God is a grateful response of your heart to God's mercy towards you did you get that please don't go out of here and miss what I just said hang on a few more minutes with me let me say it again your devotion to God the dedication that Paul is speaking about in these verses has everything to do with you offering a grateful response of your heart to God's mercy toward you you are simply responding to what

God has shown you and done for you in Jesus and the rest of your life is lived like that you're not making it up as you go you're reading it here and saying oh that's the way I'm supposed to be at my job oh that's the way I'm supposed to raise my kids that's the way I'm supposed to be at church and on and on it goes because that's what it looks like to be saved in Christ he didn't save you and then say good luck make it up that's not where Paul is at all folks listen there are many many heathen religions during Paul's time and hours that base their relationship with their god their idol on serving and worshiping that idol to earn mercy to earn favor and they have to keep going back and keep going back and they always feel that sense of emptiness in what they're doing it's amazing to me of all the times the scripture mentions that people like the Philistines would go and lay their offerings of Dagon's feet the statues that they made all these different people and guess what happened when they came back the next day still there Brian said it's all rotting why because rocks don't eat wood doesn't eat this is the insanity of our hearts when we have given ourselves over to self and idols the Christian faith teaches that our service and worship to God is in response to God's active mercy and love which he freely and undeservingly bestows on us in Jesus Christ you are all about living as a responder you're a repenter all day every day you're in the mode of repenting that's good that doesn't have to be morbid since responding to God's mercy is the key to our hearts devotion to God how how important is it for us to daily rehearse and remember

God's tremendous mercies toward us through the gift of his only son folks you and I present ourselves to him because he gave himself for us did you hear that you and I present ourselves to him as a living sacrifice because he made a living sacrifice for us of himself all we're doing is following our Lord's example he laid down his life for us what are we doing in return laying our lives down for him who made the greater sacrifice I mean come on if we're going to take all of our cards and put them on the table who's got the trump Jesus or you absolutely see you and I get saved out of filth where did he leave to come and die where was he before that's right what did he leave to come and purchase you what are you giving up to come to him thank you now that's the Bible that's the perspective of scripture to help you and

I take stock and measure careful stock and measure who we are and what we are all right I'm not going to get to point number two so let me say two more things and I'm done you got to understand now I've been saving up he says brethren therefore I urge you brethren by the mercies of God just want to say this real quickly the gift of God's mercy is an exclusive gift and we don't need to be shy about that it only applies to Christians so that only Christians can be truly devoted to God this is not a add to it religion it is Jesus or nothing we know that all of this and all of what follows is exclusively applied to Christians because Paul uses the word brethren he means Christians brothers and sisters we can now bring all of that together

[49 : 16] Paul is saying I urgently encourage you my brothers and sisters in Christ based on the great mercies of God shown to you that you in the next point that I'll get to next week what it means to dedicate or devote your body to God we had to do all of that just to get to there but man is it good it's foundational life it is not a joke it is not something to play around with it cost Jesus his life to purchase the church and so we need to love the church love the Lord of the church and follow him faithfully let's pray together dear dear friends almighty God we thank you that in Christ Jesus we are the church we are your people and that you have called us to be dedicated to you devoted to you wholly completely exhaustively and yet we confess to you Lord and I represent all of my friends as

I say this to you please forgive us please forgive us for the times the moments the context the situations where we have shown self over Savior where we have spoken in ways that have not shown the treasure of our hearts to be Jesus where we have related to others and harbored secret sin and attitudes in our hearts that are not about heaven they're certainly not about loving other

people well and they have nothing to do with being devoted to the priorities of heaven here on earth please forgive us almighty God as we run to the throne of grace and confess our sins to you help us to find in you that wonderful mercy forgiveness and grace that will lead us of loving you and loving each other very well for we are well loved in Jesus thank you for all that you do in our lives and through our lives as you call us to walk with you and relate to you and know you and taste and see that you are good our good and gracious king we thank you that all we have is Christ in Jesus name amen