

# The Gospel According to Paul: Romans

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## **Apostolic Counsel (12:1-15:13)**

### **On the Renewing of Your Mind (12:1-2)**

*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. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect (complete) will of God.*

As Paul introduced his theological section with a thesis statement (1:16-17), this section has an introductory statement as well (12:1-2). Throughout this block of material Paul appeals to the Christians at Rome to apply what he has said to them in the foregoing to their daily walk in Christ. In conversion to Christ their spiritual existence was created anew, their moral character was created anew, and their relationship with a view to lordship was created anew. A transfer of lordship had occurred. In what follows he instructs them that they should be living in consistency with who they now were as new creations in Christ.

His advice to them throughout this section may be summed up in the words "self-sacrifice." With the power of who they are "in the spirit" in control of who they are "in the flesh," they will be able to live in this world without being controlled by the desires of the flesh. It is a constant struggle

to keep the flesh from controlling our lives. Paul's answer to this is, "present your bodies (flesh) a living sacrifice to God" (12:1), then it is not so easy for one to live in service to the desires of the flesh. We are at war with this part of our "selves". The self-gratification of the flesh constantly wars with the self-service of the spirit. Paul's world was very much like ours, self-centered to the core. Paul counsels them, "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (12:2).

Life lived according to the flesh is life conformed to this world, life lived according to the spirit is a life of spiritual service. Such living has the power to transform us. In the material that follows, Paul applies this to problems dealing with relationships and to the issue of liberty in matters of opinion, especially as applies to the tensions that existed between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians of the Roman church. In this text we see some wonderfully insightful imagery designed to portray to us how we, as God's new creations, are to live before God in harmony and concord with his will. Our new existence is give to us as a gift; consequently, we are to offer our lives to God as a gift in return.

### **Present Yourselfes**

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1a)*

The imagery here is that of a worshipper coming before the altar of God to offer a sacrifice as a gift to God. Paul, as well as his Roman readers, both Jewish and Gentile, were very familiar with this imagery. All Jews of the Diaspora were required to come to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish Festivals at least once in their lifetime. The more pilgrimages they made to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice at the Temple, the more devotion, zeal for God, and righteousness was reckoned to the pilgrim.

The Gentiles readers would also have been very familiar with Paul's imagery here. Rome was literally filled with temples to the gods and goddesses of the Roman Empire. From the temple to Caesar, to Jupiter, Venus, and all other deity figures with Latin names drawn from the Hellenistic pantheon of deities, as well as Pagan deity figures of the conquered nations of the empire could be found throughout the city. All were, in one way or another, worshipped by means of cultus; i.e., the established or accepted religious rites of worship, usually involving the

offering of sacrifices to the deities by means of the priesthood.

The sacrifice Paul speaks of here is not that of a lamb, goat, bullock, or other animal usually offered to the deity; rather, Paul instructs these Christians at Rome to present their bodies as live or living sacrifices to God. The word “present” is significant here. It is the Greek word *paristemi*, which is a technical term in the Greek language for placing something before God as a gift or sacrifice (cf., Josephus, *Antiquities* IV.6.4). This is the word used in Luke 2:22 for the presentation of Jesus to the Lord in the Temple. This text echoes Rom 6:13: "Don't offer (*paristemi*) your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer (*paristemi*) yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life," (cf. Rom 6:19; Eph 5:27; Col 2:22, 28). The imagery is that of standing before the altar of God presenting ourselves as the offering we bring to him.

The purpose underlying bringing an offering or gift to God is to demonstrate the worshipper's recognition of the fact that all things come from God and what we have received from him we recognize as a gift from him and we return something of what he has given to us to him as a gift of appreciation or thanksgiving. This is not the same as a sin offering, which is offered with the shedding of blood to show the consequence of sin, which is death or the shedding of blood, in an act of transferring the sin to the sacrifice by confession, then taking the life of the offering to acknowledge our recognition of the consequences of violating the God to whom the sacrifice is offered. The sin offering was present in Pagan worship as well as Judaism, called propitiation for the appeasement of the god's anger.

How would Paul have intended his language and imagery to be understood in this statement to those initially receiving his letter? For the Christian, the sin offering would have already been made in his behalf by the self-sacrificial offering Jesus presented to God on our behalf on the cross. So, we must look at the alternative concept of presenting a sacrificial offering to God; namely, that of giving back to God a gift from what he has given us. What God had given the recipients of this letter was their new creation existence in Christ. In recognition of our thanksgiving to God the worshipper, in turn, offers to God what God has given him – his life. To refuse to give your life to God is to hoard and withhold from God that which belongs to him, that he has shared with you. You will never know the true love of life by possessively hording it.

## A Sacrifice

*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 (Romans 12:1).*

The word sacrifice is the Greek word “*thusia*,” which was the word used throughout the Mediterranean world for something given up or give to someone else, which cost that person something to give it up. A sacrifice is not just a gift someone gives; it is a gift, but it is much more. It is a gift that works a hardship on us to give it up. It is something we need, but we give it up and do without it, even though we could justify keeping it purely on the basis of need.

To the typical Jewish shepherd, a *thusia* would be an animal that could and would provide breeding stock, wool, and even food for the shepherd and his family. For some it may be grain that one could use for bread, but it is given as a gift to God rather being kept and used for that purpose. There is a difference between giving (which is the Greek word *doron*), or offering something to someone, which would be *prospora* (to bring to, an offering). These are very good words for very good actions, expressing our care by sharing what we have with others. But the word sacrifice means more that offering something we have to someone; it means giving something to someone that is going to cost us something to make that gesture.

The idea of suffering the loss of something of value for a greater purpose is intrinsic in the concept of sacrifice. This is what *thusia* means, and this is what Paul tells these people in Rome to do. To present themselves to God as living sacrifices; these people were to give their lives away, they were to give them to God. Of course, the wonderful thing is that this is the only way your can truly and fully experience what your have, by giving it away.

## A Living Sacrifice

The word translated “living” is one of three Greek words which may be translated as life or living. It is not *bios*, which essentially means biological existence, nor is it *psuche*, which is translated as “life” in 40 occurrences in the AV. *Psuche* is conscious existence and is more

associated with the personality than with simple biological existence. The term we have here is *zoe*, which is the term always associated with God as a living God and with such concepts as eternal life; it is life in its fullest sense, the life Jesus said he had come to give man in abundance (John 10:10).

The concept of "living sacrifice" is best understood in contrast to the idea of bloody sacrifice (i.e., the sacrifice of a slain animal). The concept of non-bloody sacrifice was well developed within Hellenistic Judaism. The Jews of the Diaspora had replaced the bloody sacrifice of the temple cultus with a different type of sacrifice in their synagogue services. This sacrifice was called the sacrifice of praise (i.e., hymns and prayers). This idea of sacrifice is reflected in Heb 13:15-16, which was, in all probability, borrowed from the synagogue worship. The substitution of non-bloody sacrifice for the animal sacrifices of the temple was practiced by the Dead Sea Sect as well.

The idea of "living sacrifice," however, is a more complex concept. It is present in Hellenistic religion as well as Judaism. A living sacrifice is the sacrifice of a life - not to death, but to a special way of living. One presents him/herself to the service of another - not to die for them but to live for them. Christians, as a priesthood of believers, are to daily offer sacrifice to God - and that which is sacrificed (presented/offered) to God is not the blood sacrifice of a slain animal, but the living sacrifice of the believer him/herself (i.e., the sacrifice of his/her very being). This is precisely what Paul had done (cf. Gal 2:20). See also: Rom 15:15-16; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Heb 10:19-25; 12:18-13:16 for other similar usages of cultic language in speaking of Christians as living sacrifices.

### **Holy and Acceptable**

Not all offerings or sacrifices are acceptable to God. The animal sacrifices brought to God had to be without spot or blemish. To offer God the worst or the least of the flock was not a sacrifice, it was a mockery to the very idea. If it is truly a sacrifice, then it is to be from the best of what he has given us. One of the greatest atrocities of the Second Temple period was the practice of the temple priests selling the Diaspora pilgrims animals that were not fit for sacrificial offering. This practice was a part of "Annas' Bazaar," which consisted of the priests associated with the old High Priest Annas, who had been deposed by Rome but was yet the behind the scenes godfather figure of the temple hierarchy. These priests sold imperfect

animals for the Feast Day sacrifices and exchanged foreign currency into temple coins for offerings that were to be made in the Temple. The animals brought to God for a sacrificial offering were to be holy and acceptable.

Sacrifice is the relinquishing or giving up of something highly valued for the sake of something considered to have a greater value or claim. Sacrifice is giving up something you would like to keep. It is one of the oldest concepts of human existence, going back to the sons of Adam and Eve. Here is found a story (Genesis 4:1-5) in which something of the essential idea associated with sacrifice can be seen. Able sacrificed that which was of greatest value to him, “fat portions from some of the first born of his flock,” the best he had to offer. Cain, however, Genesis 4:3 tells us, brought “some of the fruits of the soil” as a offering. The language of the text seems to suggest the reason why God looked upon Abel’s offering with favor but not so with Cain. Abel’s offering was a sacrifice, he gave back to God the best of what he had, and Cain only gave “some of the fruit of the soil,” which was probably not much of a “sacrifice” to him.

### **Reasonable or Spiritual Service**

Few expressions have presented more translation difficulty than this one here in 12:1b, “*logiken latreia*.” It is translated by the KJV, NKJV as “your reasonable service,” by the ASV as “your spiritual service,” by the NASV as “your spiritual service of worship,” by the RSV as “your spiritual worship,” and the NIV as “spiritual acts of worship.” The Greek terms here are somewhat complex, at least for someone living two thousand years removed from the time they were originally penned.

The first term is *logikos*, which is found only twice in the New Testament. It’s meaning is a “toss up” in both occurrences (Romans 12:1 and 1 Peter 2:2). This term is part of a large Greek word family: the verb is *logizomai*, which occurs 41 times in the NT, and means, “to reason, think, speak or express oneself, to reckon, consider, give discourse, give an account, take into account, to infer, conclude, ponder, or reflect upon.

There are a number of cognate terms that derive from this root. The most familiar one is *logos*, which may be translated as word, language, the expression of thought, discourse, speech, expression, message, announcement, narrative, and treatise. There is *logismos*, which can be translated as a concept, thought, logic, cognition, or even as “imagination.”

*Logion* is an oracle or divine communication. *Logios* is to speak as one learned or to speak with eloquence. *Logikos*, the term with which we are concerned here is lexically defined as, “pertaining to reason or the mind, that which is reasonable or rational, agreeable to reason, following reason, reasonable, logical; responsible thinking or thought.

You can, obviously, hear the word “logic” in the term *logikos* and its cognates; and it is the term from which we get our English word “logic.” But it is not logic in the technical sense, as in Aristotelian logic or syllogistic argumentation; rather, *logikos*, is the “ology” you hear in such words as **theology** - the study of, or the accumulation of knowledge about God. **Biology** is the study of or the accumulation of knowledge about *bios* or human life. **Psychology** is the study of or the accumulation of knowledge about *psuche* or the personality. **Christology** is the study of or the accumulation of knowledge about Christ.

The term *logikos* is a term, however, which had a special use in certain religious writings as well as certain of the Greek philosophers. It appears that in some of these writers, the term *logikos* was used to describe rational or intellectual existence in contrast to somatic or bodily existence; or, to put it in philosophical terminology, metaphysical existence in contrast to physical existence. Usually this aspect of man is described by the Greek terms *pneumatikos* (spiritual) or *psuchikos* (of the soul).

Some ancient Greek writers appear to have preferred the term *logikos* over *pneumatikos* or *psuchikos* to speak of man's metaphysical or spiritual existence. This was due, no doubt, to the fact that the term *pneumatikos* was used in such a diverse way; i.e., from being filled with enthusiasm to possessing breath; and *psuchikos* was a term used by some to describe man's creaturely or animated existence. *Logikos* would have been an optional term to describe man's rational or intellectual behavior set in juxtaposition to overt somatic behavior, a mental expression presented to God rather than a concrete object of sacrifice, prayer and praise rather fire and smoke consuming a blood sacrifice.

In Stoic philosophy it was this aspect of man (i.e., his intellect) that linked him to the gods. Epictetus, a first century Stoic philosopher, wrote, "If I were a nightingale I would do what is proper to a nightingale . . . but in fact I am a rational (*logikos*) creature, so I must praise the gods," (*Discourses* I.16.20).

The term *logikos* appears to have been a more desirable term to describe man as a spiritual or rational being, especially among the academics or philosophers. It was man's rationality that made him the superior creature. Both philosophy and religion in the first century Mediterranean world considered man's rational powers as a divine gift and even evidence that man had a trace of deity within him. The term *logikos*, as used in these writings, meant man's spiritual being as contrasted with his creaturely nature (i.e., his rational or intellectual being as contrasted with his being as flesh).

A full appreciation of what this apostle is saying to his readers here in this text demands that we give this data full consideration. However we translated this expression, whether as “spiritual service” or “reasonable service,” the “service” we are talking about here has to be understood as qualified by or associated with the mind or one’s thinking, one’s informed understanding. In this context it would be service which proceeds from the renewing of our minds, a new way of thinking.

### **Ritual Service or Worship**

This brings us to the term translated in our text as, “service” or “worship.” It is the word, *latreia*, which is, essentially, a service one performs for another. It is from the verb, *latreuo*, which means to serve for hire, to serve, to administer or minister to. It is, essentially, any service or ministration, either to the gods or men. When used of religious service, it is the ritual or liturgical work or activity of the priests performed in sacred services; i.e., the offering of sacrifices, the worship of God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship.

*Lateria* is used in later Greek as a technical term for the labor of priests: the ritual activity of a priest in public worship - especially of offering sacrifice. In the Greek Septuagint this word (and its verb form) is used almost exclusively of the sacrificial cultus of the Tabernacle and almost all occurrences are found in those books dealing with the activity of the Levitical priesthood. It is used almost synonymously in the Septuagint with the term *leitourgia* (ritual, priestly function), the word from which we get our term, "liturgical."

To the philosophers the ritual of sacrifice (*latreia* or *leitourgia*) offered to a deity must befit the deity. To offer him blood was interpreted by them as truly Pagan. Such a gift offered to the gods was an abomination

in the thinking of the academics or philosophers of the Hellenistic culture. The question here then is this: If one should not offer slain animals in sacrifice to a deity, what kind of sacrifice was acceptable? Here is where logike *latreia* enters the discussion. One scholar says concerning this expression:

To understand it [i.e., the expression *logiken latreian* –mwl] aright one must know its tradition, which has its origin in the Stoic and popular philosophical polemic against the superstitions of the ancient sacrificial system (cf., Beam, TDNT, 4:65). According to this it is irrational and makes a mockery of the deity which permeates the world as spirit if his veneration takes place unspiritually. The use of bloody animal sacrifices is thereby abhorrent, (Kasemann, *Romans*, 328).

The philosophical community of which we speak here was influential in effecting reform within many religious communities. This is reflected in such religious movements as Hermeticism, Gnosticism, and, especially important for our purposes, much of Hellenistic Judaism. This is important because it is out of this historical setting that a very possible understanding of Paul's use of this expression emerges, in that in the literature of these religious movements (all literature extant in the first century), we find the use of similar expressions.

In a prayer prayed to Hermes, the worshipper prays, ". . . receive pure spiritual sacrifice (*logikos thusias*) from a soul and heart offered to you," (*Hermetica*, I.31). He offers a prayer [hymn] in XIII.17-18 in which he concludes with a request that Hermes receive as a "*logiken thusian*" (a spiritual sacrifice), an expression almost identical to Paul's *logiken latreian* (spiritual service) of Rom 12:1.

Similar expressions are also found in the literature of Hellenistic Judaism. The author of the *Sibylline Oracles* (second century BC) has God saying:

Man is my image, having right reason. Set for him, you, a pure and unbloodied table, having filled it with good things, . . . Accept the afflicted and stand by the suffering and provide for me, the living one, a living sacrifice (*thusia zosan*), (*Sibylline Oracles*, 8:402-08).

Also in the *Odes of Solomon* (late first century AD) we read:

I am a priest of the Lord and serve him as a priest; to him I offer spiritual sacrifice (*logiken thusian*). For his spirit is not as the world, nor like the flesh, nor like those who serve (*latreia*) him according to the flesh (*Odes of Solomon* 20:1-3).

One of the most revealing quotes from this literature is found in the *Testament of Levi* of *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (second century BC). Here Levi, before his death, sees the angels worshipping God: In the uppermost heaven of all dwells the Great Glory in the Holy of Holies superior to all holiness. There with him are the archangels, who serve and offer sacrifices to the Lord in behalf of all the sins of ignorance of the righteous ones. They present to the Lord a pleasing odor, a rational/spiritual (*logiken*) and bloodless sacrifice (*thusian*), (*Testament of Levi* 3:4-6).

All of these writings give us insight into how this expression "*logiken latreian*" may have been understood by these first century readers. The references from Hellenistic Judaism are of special significance in that Paul was himself a product of Hellenistic Judaism, where these writings would have likely been known and read by such young scholars as Saul of Tarsus. From this data one scholar concludes:

'Spiritual worship' (*logike latreia*) is said to refer in Hellenistic literature to the act of spiritual thanksgiving which replaced the offering or sacrifice in early forms of worship . . . 'Spiritual' seems the best rendering, provided we include the worship of all that is highest in man - mind, spirit, will, (Matthew Black, *Romans*, p. 151).

In the Greek Septuagint, *latreia* is the word used for the service and worship (Hebrew *abadah*) of the Tabernacle, according to the Levitical requirements of the *Torah*. The Judaism of the Diaspora, i.e., Hellenistic Judaism, tended to see in the *Torah*'s language of sacrifice a broader meaning than blood sacrifice exclusively, and included in this concept (i.e., *latreia* and *leitourgia*) the sacrifice of praise, or the fruit of lips, which were the songs and prayers offered to God in the synagogue services of the Hellenistic Jews of the Mediterranean world.

The question here is, how is Paul using this term in his instruction to these people of the church in Rome? Some scholars like to say that in this

text Paul is saying that all life is worship. One would need to be clear about the specific concept of worship under consideration. *Lateria* is not the common term for worship in the Greek language. That word, as used by Jesus in John 4:23-24 is *proskuneo*, which is a combination of the word *pros* (to proceed toward) and *kuneo* (to kiss); i.e., worship as an act of proceeding toward an object of devotion with expressions of affection or adoration. *Latreia*, however, is the word for the priestly service offered in Temple worship, the activity of offering sacrifices on an altar, whether animal sacrifices, meal offerings, wine or water oblation, or the burning of incense.

Whatever is offered is consumed by fire and smoke or evaporation; in this the sacrifice ascends into the heavens as a gift given to God. Since Paul is talking about the sacrifice of ourselves to God, this would be the appropriate word to use to express this idea. Just as Jesus of Nazareth offered his body in sacrifice for the world and we remember his sacrifice in the bread of communion, we are to present or offer our bodies, i.e., our total somatic and rational existence, as a living sacrifice to God.

### **Conformation Verses Transformation**

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

What has been said thus far flows beautifully into what follows in 12:2. Paul instructs his readers to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God, which he identifies as their "spiritual service" - their priestly ritual. Their *logiken latreian* is a "liturgy of life" - each Christian is both priest and sacrifice in his daily *latreia* or *leitourgia*.

Two words are played against one another here: conformed (*suschematizo*) and transformed (*metamorphoo*). *Suschematizo* is a compound word that means to be conformed to a pattern. Specifically here it is a pattern of behavior. The grammatical construction of Paul's words in the Greek text indicates that he is telling them to stop being (i.e., do not continue to be) conformed to this present age.

The powers of this age are continually working upon us to conform us to its rule of behavior - to yield to the enslaving reign of sin. We must be continually resisting these powers, especially the power of sin, and the power at work in us that gives us conquest over this power is the power of

*charis* - grace (cf. Rom 5:20-21); and the means of accessing that power is belief (cf. Rom 5:2-5; see also 12:3-8).

In contrast to being conformed to this present age, Christians are to be transformed. The Greek here is *metamorphoo*, from which we get our word "metamorphosis." This word is used in Matt 17:2 and Mark 9:2 to describe the transfiguration of Christ; and is found again in Paul's writings at 2 Cor 3:18 where Paul says, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Paul has chosen one of the strongest words available to him to describe what happens to the Christian in conversion: he is transformed - radically and wonderfully changed.

Paul's use of the present tense, which in Greek grammar communicates the idea of continuous action, implies that this transformation is to be a continuous or ongoing process, it never stops. We continually change as we continually become more and more like Christ (2 Cor 3:17-18).

"The renewing of our minds" continually effects this continuing transformation. The word for mind here is *nous* that means, "the faculty of reflective intelligence." For those of the new creation, the mind is continually informed by revelation from God. Because we are who we are "in Christ" we should be superior in intelligence and because our minds are informed by revelation from God we should be superior in knowledge. This is a beautifully developed theme in Paul's writings:

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, (Phil 1:9-10).*

*For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, (Col 1:9-10).*

*Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him, (Col 3:9-10).*

*That you put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxes corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth, (Eph 4:22-24).*

Our transformed existence requires of us not only a higher level of moral behavior, but a higher level of intellectual activity as well. The renewed mind is the mind that is awakened to a higher level of activity and thus develops a greater longing for content. Who we are as believers is determined by the content of our beliefs. The greater the content of our faith, the greater will be our faith. Faith must be informed in order to grow and the renewed mind is always open to every opportunity to inform itself and every opportunity to gain new insights that can give new dimension and greater substance to his faith. What we believe about Jesus has transformed us, and the more we know him the greater will be our transformation. As Paul says in 2 Cor. 3:18, "We, who with unveiled faces reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit;" and in 4:5-6,

*For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

### **Renewal of the Mind**

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

The word "renewing" is *anakainosis*, meaning, "to make new again." The word "mind" is *nous*, which occurs 24 times in the NT (21 of them in the letters of Paul), and is translated as "mind" or "understanding." *Nous* is the mind or the intellectual faculty of understanding. It is a truism of human behavior that we behave as we do because we think as we do. God revealed

to Solomon over 3,000 years ago, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he," (Prov. 23:7). If pleasure, profit, posterity, and power are what we think about most of the time, we will surely be conformed to this age, our lifestyle will betray our preoccupation. But if we are new creations in Christ, and our will is one with the will of God, we will be transformed by the ongoing or continuous renewing of our mind.

### **Sacrificing Oneself to the Will of God**

*. . . that you may prove (dokimazo) what is that good and acceptable and perfect (complete) will of God.*

*Dokimazo* is the word Paul uses in Rom 1:28, of those who did not conclude or decide (*dokimazo*) to retain God in their knowledge. *Dokimazo* means to prove something true or false by putting it to the test; it means, "to test, examine, scrutinize, judge worthy, or to decide upon after examination."

As Paul said in 2 Cor 13:5, "Test (*peirazo*) yourselves to see whether you are in the faith, examine (*dokimazo*) yourselves." What you believe can only become real to you when it is lived out in your life. Dr. Carroll Osburn, my professor of Greek Exegesis at Harding Graduate School of Religion, was always making the point that, "doctrine is good for us only if it is good doctrine, but even good doctrine is worthless to us, unless we live out of it."

It is in the living of it that you prove to yourself what is the good (*agathos* – intrinsic or morally good), the acceptable (*euareston* – well pleasing), and perfect (*teleios* – complete or fulfilled) will of God.

In Phil 1:9-10 he writes,

*And this I pray, that your love abound more and more in deeper knowledge and all discernment, that you may prove (dokimazo) what is excellent, and be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.*

This concept is in all his writings; in Colossians 1:9-10, he writes,

*We do not cease to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with deeper knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual*

*understanding to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God; and in 3:16-17, he says,*

*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father (Col 3:16-17).*

Living your life with a song in your heart, with his word filling your mind, his story filling your life, living every day filled with thanksgiving for God's presence in your life is what Paul is talking about here.

*you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect (complete) will of God.*

As the Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 2:5, "You, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices (*pneumatikas thusias*), acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." We are a priesthood of believers, offering daily our spiritual sacrifices to God, and those sacrifices are our lives.

MWLIII