

Romans (71) **Our Reasonable Worship**

Today we arrive to a significant turning point in the epistle to the Romans. Chapters 1 through 11 were chiefly *doctrinal* in content. Romans 12 through 16 are chiefly *practical* in content. This is not exclusively the case, for there were practical exhortations in the first 11 chapters and there are doctrinal teachings in chapters 12 through 16. But doctrine was predominating in the first 11 chapters and practical instruction is predominate in chapters 12 through 16.

We pointed out last Lord's Day that the order of these two sections is very important, first doctrinal and then followed by the practical. Biblical Christian living grows from and out of Christian doctrine. "The foundation of Christian practice must be laid in Christian knowledge and faith. We must first understand how we receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and then we shall know the better how to walk in Him."¹ "It is futile to give practical exhortation apart from the basis on which it rests or the spring from which compliance must flow."²

Here is the first paragraph of Romans 12:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul begins with an appeal to his readers. He calls them "brothers", who have a common relationship with one another through their adoption by God the Father into His family. This is instruction to Christians, members of the family of God.

The apostle appeals to his brethren to respond to the instruction that he is giving them. The English word, "appeal", in the English Standard Version (ESV) is a translation of a Greek word that may require a stronger assertion by Paul than what the word "appeal" conveys.

The Pauline exhortations do not merely contain good advice or his preferences. They represent the authoritative will of God and are enjoined upon churches in a solemn manner. Thus the words "beseech" (RSV) and "implore" (NEB) are not strong enough (so Cranfield 1979: 597). Dunn (1988b:708) comments that the usage of the term in Romans 15:30³ undercuts the idea that the term emphasizes authority, but the authoritative element should not be jettisoned in that text either. In light of what God has done in Christ, believers are summoned to obey the following injunctions.⁴

Paul's appeal to his Christian readers is based upon "the mercies of God."⁵ He wrote, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God..." In other words, Paul's appeal was *because* of the mercies of God that God had shown toward them in having brought them by His grace to faith in Jesus Christ and to

¹ Henry, Matthew, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 6, p. 795.

² John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans, 1965), vol. 2, p. 109.

³ Romans 15:30 (ESV): "I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf..."

⁴ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 642.

⁵ You may recall last Lord's Day we asserted that in Romans 11:36 in which Paul wrote, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!", that he was addressing three of God's attributes, not two, that "riches" should be understood as the riches of God's grace, which also included the idea of God's mercies. Paul appeal to God's "mercies" in Romans 12:1 reinforces that this is the correct way to understand 11:36 that we presented.

receive all of the benefits that come through their union with Jesus Christ. Here, therefore, Paul is asserting that because of the doctrinal truths that he had set before his readers in Romans 1 through 11, his exhortations follow, even necessarily follow. These are not words of advice, but words of command. If we have received and enjoy the blessing of God in Christ, because of His mercies toward us, we must so order our lives as the Lord directs us through the pen of the apostle Paul.

“The faith that justifies is a faith that ‘works by love.’ And there is no other way to heaven but the way of holiness and obedience. Therefore what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.”⁶

What are we to do because of the mercies of God that has been bestowed upon us? “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, *to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...*” When we are told that we are to “present” our bodies, it is given with the force of a command.⁷ This Greek word is commonly used in the idea of offering a sacrifice. The language of all of verse 1 speaks of the presenting or offering a sacrifice to God in worship. The apostle was teaching that the practice of worshipping of God by the Old Testament saints, when offering sacrifices in the tabernacle and the temple, now applies to New Testament Christians. Although it is not overtly stated here, it is elsewhere and it is implied here—Christians are priests before God who offer spiritual sacrifices of themselves to God. How you and I live out our lives daily as Christians is priestly service, or worship.

We are commanded to offer our “bodies” to God. This should not be pressed to suggest our bodies in distinction from our souls. The word “bodies” is mentioned because it is associates the offering of ourselves with the bodies of sacrificial animals .

In bidding us to *present* our bodies, he alludes to the Mosaic sacrifices, which were presented at the altar, as it were in the presence of God. But he shows, at the same time, in a striking manner, how prompt we ought to be to receive the commands of God, that we may without delay obey them.

Hence we learn, that all mortals, whose object is not to worship God, do nothing but miserably wander and go astray. We now also find what sacrifices Paul recommends to the Christian Church: for being reconciled to God through the one only true sacrifice of Christ, we are all through his grace made priests, in order that we may dedicate ourselves and all we have to the glory of God. No sacrifice of expiation is wanted; and no one can be set up, without casting a manifest reproach on the cross of Christ.⁸

Paul described the offering of our “bodies” to the Lord to be a sacrifice. Paul wrote, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies *as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...*”

Paul does not describe our sacrifice as “*living*” in order to contrast with Old Testament animal sacrifices which were killed, for they, too, were brought to the temple “living” when they were offered to God, and then they were slain. The word “living” modifies sacrifice in the same way the two words that follow modify “sacrifice.” The offering of ourselves is offering ourselves who are “living, “holy”, and “acceptable” (to God). The idea of “living” is that we are spiritually alive who offer ourselves to God. “It is precisely those who are alive in Christ who are called to give their lives to Him as a sacrifice.”⁹ An unbeliever is not able to perform this action of offering himself as a living sacrifice to God, for he is not living, but is dead in his sins.

⁶ Matthew Henry, p. 795.

⁷ Schreiner, p. 643: “The infinitive (‘to present’) following Παράκαλῶ (‘I appeal’) functions as an imperative and should be construed as a command.”

⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, New Testament Commentaries, p. 275. The last statement in this quotation from Calvin’s commentary are a veiled rebuke of Rome and their claim that the Mass is a bloodless sacrifice that expiates sin; it actually is a “manifest reproach on the cross of Christ.”

⁹ Schreiner, p. 644.

The adjective “*holy*” was used to describe that which was offered as a sacrifice to God under the Old Testament economy. As Christians we are holy *positionally*, having been set apart by God for Himself. We should strive to become holy *practically*, that is more pure and more conformed to God’s will because we have been made holy positionally by God. We are to become holy (practically) because we are holy (positionally). This is why all true Christians are called “saints” for they are “holy ones”, having been set apart by God for God.

The word “*acceptable*” does not mean that we are to offer ourselves in an acceptable manner, although we certainly should do so. Rather, it says that when we do offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, this is acceptable, even pleasing to God. When the right persons offered sacrifices to God in a right manner, God was well pleased with those sacrifices. He is pleased with you and me when we offer ourselves as living, holy, sacrifices. We are received by Him. We are accepted by Him. It gives God pleasure when we offer ourselves as living, holy, sacrifice to Him.

Paul then described this action we take as being a rational, reasonable thing to do. Again, Paul wrote, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual worship*.” That is how the English Standard Version (ESV) reads. Some of us might be more familiar with the language of the King James Version (KJV) or the New King James Version (NKJV), which reads, “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*.” I would suggest that the translators of the ESV were right in using the word “worship”, rather than “service” in the NKJV. However, I would say that the translators of the NKJV were right in using the word “reasonable” rather than “spiritual” in the ESV.

The Greek word translated as “spiritual” (ESV) and “reasonable” (NKJV) is λογικῆν (*logikain*). It is from the word group of λόγος (*logos*), which is translated “word” or “reason” or “rational.” We get the word “logic” from the Greek word, λόγος. When we read the English word “spiritual” in 1 Peter 2:5, Peter used the Greek word πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*), which is from the word group of πνεῦμα (*pneuma*), meaning “spirit.” If Paul wanted to convey the idea of “spiritual” worship he could have easily used the word that is more commonly translated that way, which is πνευματικός. Here are John Murray’s comments on this matter:

“Your spiritual service.” The term used here is not the term that is usually rendered by the word “spiritual” in the New Testament. Reasonable or rational is a more literal rendering. No doubt the presenting of the body as a living sacrifice is a spiritual service, that is to say, a service offered by the direction of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5). But there must have been some reason for the use of this distinct term used nowhere else by Paul and used only once elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Pet. 2:2). The service here in view is worshipful service and the apostle characterizes it as “rational” because it is worship that derives its character as acceptable to God from the fact that it enlists our mind, our reason, our intellect. It is rational in contrast with what is mechanical and automatic. A great many of our bodily functions do not enlist volition on our part. But the worshipful service here enjoined must constrain intelligent volition. The lesson to be derived from the term “rational” is that we are not “spiritual” in the biblical sense except as the use of our bodies is characterized by conscious, intelligent, consecrated devotion to the service of God.¹⁰

And what of the word translated as “service” (ESV) and “worship” (NKJV)? It is the Greek word, λατρείαν (*latrian*). It is another term in this sentence that is associated with the Old Testament worship of God in the temple. The priest would perform his daily “service” which was his act of “worshipping” God. What Paul is saying here is that the Christian serves as a priest not by the public assembly of people in the temple, but rather through the whole of his everyday life.

¹⁰ John Murray, *Romans*, vol. 2, p. 112

Paul's application of the OT is of immense importance here. Activity and language that focused on the cult (here used as a technical term for a religion's religious practice) in the OT is now extended to embrace every facet of a believer's existence... The worship and sacrifices of the OT can no longer be confined to the cult. The cultic language is spiritualized to include the whole of one's existence. He (Paul) understands the OT cult as now being fulfilled because the new age is inaugurated. In other words, Paul's understanding of the cult is fundamentally eschatological. The call to worship causes the theme of the letter to resurface, for the fundamental sin is the failure to worship God (see Rom. 1:25). Those who worship God give their entire lives over to Him so that He is honored and praised in everything they do.¹¹

Having offered ourselves to God as living sacrifices, we read in Romans 12:2 what we are to do.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ***2Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.***"

This is a call for the Christian to become *sanctified* in his life. Here we are told the steps which we are to take in order to become increasingly sanctified by God.

Sanctification is the experience of all true Christians. Salvation as God's inheritance belongs to all and only those who are sanctified. Sanctification is necessary and essential to our salvation. What is sanctification? **The Westminster Catechism** sets forth a god definition and description:

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

And so, sanctification speaks of God making a person holy. The Holy Spirit imparts grace to the believer giving him/her both the desire and ability to do the will of God and become more and more Christ-like in life. It is a *work* in that it is a gradual process that God produces over a lifetime. It is a work of *grace* in that God performs this work in the lives of His people solely due to His kindness and love that He has for them.

Now I think that it would be important to affirm a matter at this point. Although we have practical instruction before us here in Romans 12:1 and 2 on what we are to do in order to become sanctified, we must not forget that this is not the ground or even ultimately the manner in which we are sanctified. We saw earlier in this epistle that it is through the believer's union with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection that enables the Christian to live in a holy manner. And further, it is because of the gift of the Holy Spirit to Christians that power is available to the Christian to become increasingly sanctified. We read back in Romans 8:3ff.

³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells

¹¹ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 646.

in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. ¹²Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but ***if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*** ¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom. 8:3-14)

And so, the instruction of Romans 12:1 and 2 follow and flow from what we learned earlier. We resort to our Lord to give us manifestations of the Holy Spirit so that we would be enabled to desire and to have the strength to defeat sin and to live righteously. But the direction of our thoughts and effort is set forth in Romans 12:1 and 2. As the Holy Spirit enables us, we are to perform the command of God given to us.

In Romans 12:2 we are first commanded ***not to be conformed to this world.*** When we were born into this world as sinners, we were of this fallen world. We lived for this world. We thought as all others thought within the world. We were worldlings. Our way of thinking reflected how we were living in this fallen world. Let us consider what the Word of God says regarding the “world.”

The word “world” commonly used in the Scriptures. The KJV of our Bible uses the word “world” 287 times in 247 verses. The meaning of “world” varies from context to context. When studying the Scriptures, we must be careful when we see this term due to its many shades of meaning. Sometimes “world” is used of the entire ***universe***. John 1:10, “*The world was made by Him.*” In other places it is used to describe ***a large number of people***. Of the popularity of Jesus we read in John 12:19, “*Lo, the world is gone after him.*” But in many places we see that “world” depicts the culture of this fallen world including its ***ideas, values, and practices*** that are in opposition to the will of God. This is the use of the word that we are addressing. It is depicted in **1 John 2:15-17**, in which we read,

Love not the *world*, neither the things that are in the *world*. If any man love the *world*, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the *world*, ***the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,*** is not of the Father, but is of the *world*. And the *world* passes away, and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God abides forever.

Let us make a few statements about the “world” and how we are to deal with it. ***First, the World is opposed to God and should be opposed by us Christians.*** We read in James 4:4, “You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” We see then, that as Christians we are to resist and defeat the world and its influences upon us. 1 John 2:17, “The world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.”

Second, true Christians are promised by God that they will be victorious over the world. John declared, “For whosoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4).

Third, because we are creatures of the world, we tend to be worldly by nature. The world is an expression of the ***ideas, values, and practices*** that reside in our own fallen nature. Consequently, and this is important, there is an affinity that we have toward the world. ***The world’s ways seem to be right and reasonable to us, even though they are in complete opposition to God and His will.***

Because of this we do not easily recognize worldliness that resides in our own thinking. The world imposes upon us daily its ways of thinking, its values, and its ways of behaving. And sadly, to our own detriment, we readily embrace them. We do not readily embrace God’s Word when it confronts our worldliness. We are prone to resist and resent the ways of His Word. This is because (1) His ways do not make sense to us, (2) His ways do not appeal to unspiritual minds.

What are we then to do? We are to use the biblical means to correct worldliness. We must humble ourselves before God and recognize our ignorance and the likelihood we do not see things rightly. We are to immerse ourselves in the Word of God so that we may learn to replace worldly thinking with God’s ways. We are to embrace in faith and act upon the truth of God’s Word even though it may not make sense to us or

it runs counter to our own reasoning and desires. We are to order our lives according to His Word even though it runs counter to our natural way of thinking. We deny ourselves and we purpose to do the will of God. In this way over time we may develop discerning minds so that we recognize and repudiate and correct worldliness in ourselves and others when we see it. To the degree that we order our lives in this manner will be to the degree we encounter the true blessing and power of God in our lives. Everything we have just said about addressing and correcting worldly thinking is capsulated in Romans 12:1f.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

This is the essence of what the Bible presents as spiritual warfare. There is much misunderstanding about spiritual warfare among Christians. All too often the spiritual battle we wage is presented as though it is between us and evil spiritual forces “out there.” No, ***spiritual warfare has to do with battling wrong thinking that results in wrong behavior.*** As we identify wrong belief and replace error with the truth of God’s Word, and live according to that truth, we are winning battles of spiritual warfare. ***Spiritual warfare is in the realm of understanding.*** Listen to the classic passage that deals with this:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), casting down ***imagination***, and every high thing that is exalted against ***the knowledge*** of God, and bringing every ***thought*** into captivity to the obedience of Christ; . . .” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Now again, perhaps the clearest expression of what the “world” is may be 1 John 2:15-17.

Love not the *world*, neither the things that are in the *world*. If any man love the *world*, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the *world*, ***the lust of the flesh***, and ***the lust of the eyes***, and the ***pride of life***, is not of the Father, but is of the *world*. And the *world* passes away, and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God abides forever.

If you will take note of the nature of these three aspects of worldliness, you may observe that they are all in the realm of what we ***desire***. When we speak of desires of an unregenerate heart we commonly use the word “lust.” Look again at this passage that describes the world. “For all that is in the world, the ***lust*** of the flesh, and the ***lust*** of the eyes, and the ***pride*** of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. The first two are described directly as lusts. We may say that the “pride” of life is also a lust, a sinful desire that governs man. God commanded us through Paul in Romans 12:1 that we would not be controlled by the world, in other words, our goals, decisions, and efforts in life should not be governed by our worldly lusts, or desires; but rather, we read in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but ***be transformed by the renewal of your mind***, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

This sets forth something we asserted some time ago. When we became Christians, God has reestablished in us the preeminence of the mind over the affections. Before we were Christians, our lusts governed how we think and live. After conversion we are to begin to order our lives according to our understanding, which is a function of our mind, of the Word of God. ***Christian living is largely a function of the will exercised in response to the understanding of our mind.***

God made each of us a living soul. Our soul includes the capacity for thinking, which is the function of the ***mind***, the capability of feeling, which is the role of our ***emotions*** or ***affections***, and the ability to act upon what we know, or believe we know, which is the function of our ***will***. The mind, affections, and will are the components of the soul. When God had originally created man, He created him with the mind or the intellect, which was to govern the soul. Adam and Eve, having been instructed by the Word of God, were to

serve God in the Garden in which He placed them as they were governed by God's will, that is, His Word that He had given them. Their affections, or emotions, were in tune with God's will before their fall into sin. They delighted in knowing and doing the will of God, and they enjoyed richly the fellowship they were privileged to have with God in the garden in the cool of the day.

But something terrible resulted from their sin. Upon their sin, Adam and Eve no longer governed their faith and practice by their minds informed by the Word of God, for their mind had become darkened through sin. Rather, due to their initial sin, their lusts, or desires, or affections--the emotions or affections, took presidency in the soul. Thereafter man has insisted on doing what he *feels* he wants to do, not what he knows in his *mind* that God has told Him to do. This is a *pathological* problem that is inherent in the human race.

God addresses and corrects this problem in His people through *regeneration*, or the new birth, which God brings to pass in sinners, which results in their understanding, responsiveness, and obedience to the Word of God. Their new spiritual *understanding* of who they are and who God is and who God's Son is, being Savior and Lord, once again begins to govern their *affections*, which results in their compliant purpose and commitment to do the will of God; they will to do God's will because they love what they have come to know about God and His Word. As the Scriptures say, it is "he who does the *will* of God that abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

And so, every fallen human being has this pathological problem, which is the usurpation of the emotions over the mind, our lusts becoming the leading functionary of the soul. As the Scripture says,

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same *mind*, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, *that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God* (1 Pet. 4:1f).

There you have it—there are two ways of living with two destinies. Christ died so that we should live according to the will of God as we are directed by our *mind* to understand that will, lest you continue to order your life according to your *lusts*, which will result in your certain damnation.

And so, how does this work of God of sanctification take place? Some say it takes place only when the believer becomes wholly passive, simply trusting God to do in him what he cannot do for himself. Others say it is the result of an experience of the Holy Spirit, in which a person is all of a sudden elevated, being transformed into a new and victorious life. Both of these views put little emphasis on the believer's responsibility to grow in understanding of the will of God and resolve in faith to conform one's life to that understanding. We would assert that the Bible teaches sanctification involves the mind. Sanctification occurs only when there is clear rational thinking in correcting errant belief and practice, coming to understand truth. Consider **Colossians 1:9-14**.

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with *the knowledge of His will* in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God*; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

I would suggest that this reveals to us that much of what characterizes evangelicals regarding their understanding of the nature of the Christian life is errant. There are many today who reject the importance of the mind. In fact, they say that if one must become holy, the believer must bypass the mind so as to truly experience God. Most Christians believe that they are most spiritual when they feel moved by God and their affections are influenced, this is when they truly experience God. They believe that they are closest to God and most pleasing to God when they are caught up in an ecstatic state, in which they are filled with a sense of

joy and peace. But if their affections are not influenced by, even produced by, and understanding of truth in the Word of God, they are not being spiritual, but rather carnal. Spirituality has to do with learning and knowing the truth of God's Word, being transformed by the renewing of Your mind. Our Christian experience flows from and due to our understanding of God and His will. Our lives are to be governed by our understanding, not by mindless impulses or "movements of the Spirit" that are actually not of the Holy Spirit. The mind with its understanding of biblical truth, doctrinal truth, is to govern the life of the Christian.

The Lord teaches us through the hand of Paul that when we live in this manner, seeking to conform our thinking to the Word of God, ordering our lives according to this knowledge, that we will be able to determine the will of God to be good, acceptable, and perfect. Again, Romans 12:2 reads:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, *that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

The idea being conveyed is that after a process of testing and examining, you discover that the will of God as directed by the Word of God is the most pleasing, beneficial, and in every way perfect way to live. In a sense, this is one of God's overall purposes in history in bringing salvation to His people. In the beginning while in the garden, Adam and Eve made a determination after having been influenced by the devil to yield to their own lusts (affections), they thereby and thereafter determined that the will of God was not good, was not acceptable, and was not perfect. They would be as gods, determining for themselves what was good, acceptable, and perfect. As a result, their minds became darkened. They thought that their own desires, their own lusts, doing their own will would result in their best good, their happiness. This has been the state of fallen man ever since. God's will does not appear to be the best course to take. God's commands, God's ways, appear to be the way of misery and alienation, a life of slavery and drudgery. And because our minds are so darkened, it appears to us that to order our lives according to our own desires will result in our happiness. But the Christian, in faith begins to order his life according to the Word of God out of obedience, because He has come to know God is good and true. There are times when God's word instructs him to take a course that to him does not make sense. It appears that things will fall apart and chaos and sadness would result from following such a course. But what does he discover? He discovers that by renewing his mind, conforming his values and his ways to God's Word, proves to be in every way good, acceptable, even perfect. He comes to understand and believe he would have it no other way. He comes to understand experientially the truth and reality of true Christian experience. And then his affections are also stirred, due to his apprehension of the truth that is in Jesus. Here are **J. C. Philpot's** words in which he describes the soul that comes to know God through deep experience that is informed by the Word of God:

As the veil is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel what a power there is in true religion, what a reality in divine teaching, and what a sweetness there is in the inward testimonies of God. Most men's religion is nothing else but a round of forms. Some have their doings, some their doctrines, and others their duties; and when the one has performed his doings, the other learnt his doctrines, and the third discharged his duties, why, he is as good a Christian, he thinks, as anybody; whilst all the time, the poor deceived creature is thoroughly ignorant of the kingdom of God, which stands not in word, but in power. But as the veil of ignorance and unbelief is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel that there is a power in vital godliness, a reality in the teachings of the Spirit; that religion is not to be put on and put off as a man puts on and off his Sunday clothes; but when we come away from chapel we cannot take off our religion, fold it up, and put it away into the drawer, and there let it lie safe and quiet all the week. Where vital godliness is wrought with divine power in a man's heart, and preached by the Holy Ghost into his conscience, it mingles, daily and often hourly, with his thoughts, entwines itself with his feelings and becomes the very meat and drink of his soul. But till the veil was taken away, we could put our religion on and off at pleasure; and were often glad to take off the tight Sunday coat, and slip on the easy week-day clothes. As then we begin to see and feel the reality and power of vital godliness, it separates

us from those who have only a name to live while they are dead; it makes us manifest as one of “the peculiar people;” and our friends and companions, nay, the only persons whose society we really love, are those who have felt divine realities by divine teaching. We can no more do with a dead profession of truth, than with a dead profession of error. We can no more make friends and companions of presumptuous professors, than of swearers, adulterers, or drunkards. And feeling, or at least desiring to feel, in our hearts, light, life, savour, dew, and power for ourselves, we look out for those who have experienced these things themselves; and in whom we can read, if we have a discerning eye, the legible lines of God's Spirit written upon their conscience, or towards whom we can feel a sweet knitting of soul, as taught by the same Spirit the same realities which we believe the Holy Ghost has taught us.

Now when a man comes to this spot, to see and feel what a reality there is in the things of God made manifest in the conscience by the power of the Holy Ghost, it effectually takes him out of dead churches, cuts him off from false ministers, winnows the chaff from the wheat, and brings him into close communion with the broken-hearted family of God.

But as the veil is removed, the soul also begins to see and feel the workings of inward sin that it was previously ignorant of. The removal of the veil not merely shows us the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but every thing contrary to that glory. The pride of our heart, the power of our unbelief, the enmity of our carnal mind, the awful hypocrisy, the daring presumption, the abominable treachery, the fleshy lusts, and all the obscene imaginations of our depraved nature, that will work in us in spite of all our groans and cries to the contrary—all this, as the veil is taken off the soul, becomes more and more manifested, and we have (and O, what a sight it is!) a sight of ourselves. Did ever a man see so filthy a sight as himself? When he looks down into the sewer of his own nature, does he not see every thing there, creeping and crawling, like tadpoles in a ditch, to disgust him? But even this works together for good; for as a man feels a measure of light and life in his conscience, and sees and feels too more and more of the workings of his depraved nature, and the breakings forth of the hypocrisy of a treacherous heart, he is brought to look more simply and more singly to the glorious Person of the Son of God, and cast himself more sincerely and unreservedly upon that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

And thus, as the veil is removed from off the heart, he begins to drink more deeply into the spirit of the gospel, into the mind of Christ, into the reality of the things of God, into union and communion with Jesus, into the solemn renunciation of himself, into an abhorrence of evil, and separation from the world, and learns to live a life of faith upon the Son of God.¹²

May the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Pet. 5:10)

¹² J. C. Philpot, *Sermons by J. C. Philpot* (1802 – 1869), vol. 10, pp. 106f