

“LIVING THE LIFE WORTH LIVING!”
ROMANS 12 / 08-02-15

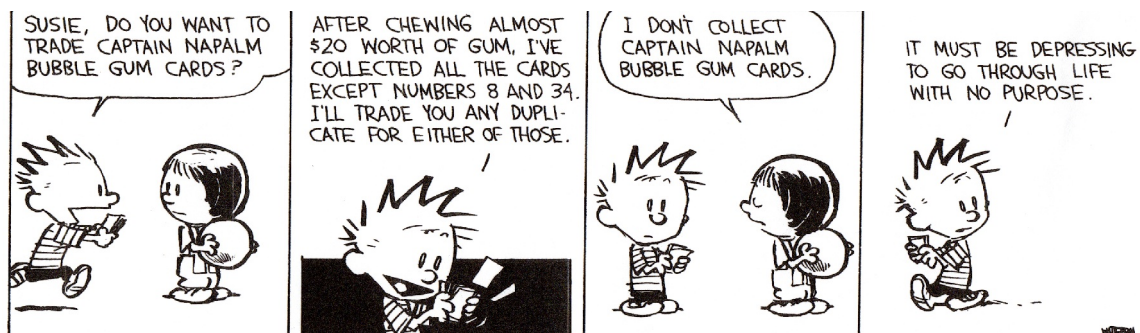
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Last week we considered that Life Is Worth Living because of

EMPTINESS BEING FILLED.
BURDENS BEING LIFTED.
FETTERS BEING BROKEN.
PEACE BEING IMPARTED.

TODAY I want us to consider living a life that is worth living.

Here’s Calvin who considers that he knows what makes life purposeful and good to live:



How little he understands. Well, he’s just a child; but many today have a childish [as opposed to a commendable childlike] approach to life.

There are any number of Bible passages I could choose which would detail some aspects of a Life Worth Living. I have selected the Christian Endeavor chapter, **Romans 12**. It encapsulates the character of the Christian life. “Encapsulates” – that’s a cool word that means to express briefly or succinctly.

Paul wrote, “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. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone

among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 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, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” **Romans 12:1-21 (NASB)**.

Let’s see what Paul says and how it applies to living a life worth living.

I. IT IS A SACRIFICIAL LIFE:

- A. **We are told to present our bodies as living sacrifices:**
 - 1. **That is in contrast to the slain sacrifices of the Old Covenant.**
 - 2. **That is in contrast to the Dying Sacrifice Jesus offered on the cross.**
 - 3. **To sacrifice is to surrender or give up what is precious and desirable.**
- B. **What does this mean in practice? How do we live sacrificially? How do we lay our lives on the altar?**
 - 1. **It means to use our bodies for godly purposes not sinful ones.**
“Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an

instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.” **Romans 6:13 (NLT)**.

2. **It means to keep ourselves morally pure since our body is His temple.** “Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.” **1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (NLT)**.

3. **It means to lay down our lives in serving others; when we do, we serve Him.** “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.” **1 John 3:16-18 (NASB)**.

C. **Note a contrast:**

1. **Modern culture would have us self-absorbed and self-indulgent.**

a. “I demand the best!”

b. “I’m entitled to it!”

c. “Look out for Number 1!”

2. **Christ teaches others-centeredness and self-denial.**

a. “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” **Philippians 2:3-4 (NASB)**.

b. He wants us to give of our best service, generous benevolence, and willing assistance.

D. **You probably remember the illustration of how to spell “JOY.”** “JESUS FIRST; OTHERS SECOND; YOURSELF LAST.” J.O.Y. JOY!

E. **David Jeremiah tells a story about a fellow who manifested that paradigm.** Bob Pierce had advanced leukemia but he decided to visit a friend in Indonesia before he died. As they were walking through a small village, they came upon a young girl lying on a bamboo mat next to a river. She was dying of cancer, and she only had a short time to live.

Bob was upset. He said, “Why isn’t she in a clinic? Why isn’t someone taking care of her?” His friend explained that she was from the jungle and she wished to spend her last days next to the river, where it was cool and familiar.

Bob felt compassion so he got down on his knees in the mud, took her hand, and began stroking it and he prayed for her. She said something. “What did she say?” Bob asked. His friend replied, “She said, ‘If I could only sleep again, if I could only sleep again.’”

Bob reached into his pocket and took out his own sleeping pills, the ones his doctor had given him because the pain from his leukemia was too great for him to sleep at night.

He handed the bottle to his friend. “You make sure this young lady gets a good night’s sleep, as long as these pills last.” Bob was ten days away from where he could get his prescription refilled. That meant ten painful and restless nights.

And that is what a living sacrifice looks like.

A Life of Sacrifice is a life worth living. Further,

II. IT IS A TRANSFORMED LIFE:

A. TRANSformed not CONformed.

1. Conformed means

- a. To be fashioned after a pattern.
- b. The word in the Greek is “syschemata” from which we get “schematic” which is a diagram or pattern of an electrical circuit.
- c. We are not to be fashioned to the pattern or schematic of the world; i.e. the lusts, values and philosophies of an anti-God culture.

2. Transformed means

- a. Changed into a new form.
- b. The word in the Greek is “metamorphao” from which we get “metamorphous” which means to be altered in nature as from a caterpillar into a butterfly or a seed to a plant.

- c. “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB).

B. **This transformation takes place by the renewing or renovating of our mind.** We can have a new mind. Not new as in recent but new as in different.

1. **This implies a repentant mind** because repentance is essentially a change of mind that produces a change in behavior.
2. **It implies concentration on something different.** As Paul wrote,
 - a. “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” **Colossians 3:1-2 (NASB).**
 - b. Unlike those of whom Paul wrote, “whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.”
 - c. We are to be of a different mind, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” **Philippians 3:19-21 (NASB).**
3. **It involves having the mind of Christ who willingly emptied Himself to die on a cross. Philippians 2:5-11.**

C. **Not conformed to this world; transformed and then conformed to the likeness of Christ!**

1. **That is His work**, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” **Philippians 1:6 (NASB)** .
2. **And**, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” **Philippians 2:13 (NASB).**

D. It has always been God’s dream for us to become like Jesus:

1. **“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;” Romans 8:29 (NASB).**
2. **“Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.” 1 Corinthians 15:49 (NASB).**

3. **Being like Jesus begins when we rise from the water of baptism matures through this life and finds perfection in eternity. His concern was that we**
 - a. Love as He loved.
 - b. Serve as He served.
 - c. Obey as He obeyed.
- E. **Transformation is a process that takes a lifetime to accomplish.** Let me illustrate in this way: Dr. David Osborn at Denver Seminary says, “Too often we try to use God to change our circumstances, while He is using our circumstances to change us.” (Compass, April 2003)

God is right now in the process of refining us and making us like Christ. Think of the process of refining maple syrup. Maple trees are tapped with buckets hung under the taps, and out drips a sap which is thin and clear, like water, but it is essentially useless at this point with only a hint of sweetness.

Then the buckets are emptied into large bins that sit over an open fire. The sap comes to a slow boil; and as it boils, its water content is reduced and its sugars are concentrated. Hours later, it has developed a rich flavor and golden-brown color. Next, it must be strained several times to remove impurities before being reheated, bottled, and graded for quality.

So it is with us. We start like raw, unfinished sap, but God knew how to transform us into something useful. The long and often painful refining process brings forth a pure, genuine disciple who bears the sweet likeness of Jesus. (From a sermon by C. Philip Green, Our Living Hope, 4/26/2011)

A life worth living is a transformed life and:

III. IT IS A DISCERNING LIFE:

- A. **By discerning I mean**
 1. **The ability to see correctly.**
 2. **The ability to distinguish the difference between things.**
 3. **The ability to make good decisions and to use sound judgment.**
- B. **Look back at the text; it will point out that we ought to be discerning**
 1. **About ourselves, thinking none too highly (or too lowly) in self estimation of our importance or wisdom.**

2. **About our place and function in the church, Christ's Body of believers.**
 3. **About really loving each other, not faking it.**
 4. **About good and evil; good being that which is beneficial in effect and evil being that which is sinful. harmful and detrimental. Overcome evil by doing good.**
 5. **About our responses to others.**
 - a. Enemies: to do good for them leaving all revenge to God.
 - b. The needy to be generous and hospitable
 - c. The lowly and humble to accept and associate with, and not look down on, them.
- C. **We need to distinguish or discern the difference between things that differ;** as Paul wrote, "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, ..." **Philippians 1:9-10 (NIV).**
1. **There is right and there is wrong; can we tell the difference?**
 2. **There is good, better and best in life; can we discern which is which?**
 3. **There is that which is helpful and there is that which is harmful; can we distinguish between the two?**
- D. **We need discernment!**
1. **Not every desire is a godly desire.**
 2. **Not every idea is a good one.**
 3. **Not every action is a noble deed.**
- E. **An artist took a paint brush and painted a picture in two colors. He called the picture "BLUE AND GRAY."** The artist listened to a critic who lacked discernment and who couldn't even paint and threw the picture in a corner and it gathered dust many years.

One day someone with artistic discernment saw the picture and offered to buy "BLUE AND GRAY." Today this painting is considered a Masterpiece and hangs in a museum. The picture had a new name, "Whistler's Mother." It was the work of James Abbott McNeill Whistler.

Many copies have been made and sold. What a pessimist saw as worthless, an optimist saw as valuable.

What made the difference between a dust catcher and a work of art?
Discernment. The ability to determine what is bad and what is good and desirable.

So it comes to the “So what?” part of the sermon. “So what does sacrifice, transformation and discernment have to do with my life?” I answer saying, “Those are the qualities and attitudes that associate us with Christ as His followers.”

So, what will you decide about the life you want to live and for what and Whom you will live it? For a life worth living give it all to Jesus. Let Him have your life – he can do more with it than you can – and you will discover for yourself what kind of life is worth living.