

Romans Study

Session 18 - Romans 12:1-8

The good news of Jesus Christ transforms lives. So far, up until this point, Paul has focused on the theology of the problem of how sinful man can be put into a right relationship with God and God's greater purposes in how He is bringing about salvation to mankind. Now there is a major shift in the letter to the Romans. Paul knows that until a person owns and lives out this theology, the gospel has not fully accomplished its work in that life. It turns out that the life lived out from the gospel truth looks and acts quite different than the life did before receiving the gospel. Chapters 12-15 explain to believers how to apply the new resources available to them through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Those resources and identity given to us through our justification will allow believers to confront the challenges of this world in God's will. This is the last major teaching section of Romans and is the ethical implications of the gospel - what does it do for the life who places his trust in it. This describes what Christians look like in the world and is where the rubber meets the road, so to say, as the first 11 chapters are academic if one doesn't follow through with the teachings in the rest of the book.

Read Romans 12:1-2

Every time you see the word "therefore" in Scripture, you need to go back and find out what the therefore is there for. In this case the word gathers all the information from chapters 1-11 - all of what came before the word "therefore" - and then seeks to answer the question, "So what?" What we find in these first two verses is the believer's response to the acceptance of the gospel. These two verses provide the foundation for everything else up through chapter 15:13. In fact, no believers is prepared to face the challenges of living the life of faith in Christ in this world without understanding and putting the teaching of these two verses into practice. (After 15:13, Paul begins to discuss personal issues and then sends greetings in chapter 16.)

The word "urge" means to "call near" or invite, desire or entreat. In other words, Paul isn't commanding the Roman believers but is inviting them to come near and participate in what he's about to teach.

The word "mercy" means "great mercy". It is the quality of God that moves Him to deliver man from his miserable state of sin and it underlies all the activities of Christ.

Read Hosea 2:19-20 - the mighty compassion of God one of the aspects of His nature which benefits all of mankind. What follows is our fitting and worthy response to receiving such great mercy.

Important note: What follows can easily be seen as a new law or a "Christian legalism". Due to the first 11 chapters, we know this isn't what Paul is doing. Our obedience to the Lord is the product or fruit of what He has done in our lives already. Obedience and love are not something we manufacture on our own. They are a response to the grace we've received and the fruit of having the Holy Spirit living within us now. Nothing from here on out is to be taken like an Old Testament commandment but rather a picture of what the Spirit-filled life looks like in this world.

Q: What are we to present to God? (*v.1 - our bodies*)

This use of the word “body” is not meant to exclude the soul and the spirit but rather is meant to be inclusive of every aspect of our being - as we’ll see in the next phrase. Our bodies are the very vehicle that puts into action the desires and choices of a the redeemed spirit that now exists within us. Thus we are to present to God all that we are.

Q: What is the form of this offering to be? (*v.1 - as a living and holy sacrifice*)

The word “present” (“offer”) means to stand beside, exhibit, recommend or yield up. This is the same word Paul used in Romans 6:13.

Read Romans 6:12-13

Q: What was the form of an offering under the law? (*It was killed or dead before it was presented to God*)

Here is one of the major differences between the old and new covenants. Under the old covenant, the sacrifice was alive and then killed so that it could be offered. Under the new covenant, those of us who were dead were brought to life so that we could yield ourselves up to God. Also, under the old covenant and the law, the priest had to offer up sacrifices for himself and present himself in a consecrated condition before he could present an offering for anyone else. Under the new covenant we are consecrated to God by God through the blood of Jesus Christ given on our behalf. So instead of being based upon our works and our gifts, under grace we serve God based our response to the work He has already done on our behalf and His gift we have received. Whenever we approach God on the basis of what He’s done for us, there is no need to do anything to consecrate ourselves as He consecrated us through the blood of Jesus already. Presenting ourselves to God is not a propitiating sacrifice (like Jesus’) but rather it is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving lived out through us.

Q: What does it imply that we are to be living sacrifices? (*That God wants us to live yielded up to Him - other answers possible*)

Q: What do we need to do in order to offer ourselves as a holy offering to God? (*TRICK QUESTION. There is nothing we can do to be holy in and of ourselves. We have already been made holy by the blood of Jesus. We just need to accept the truth that we are God’s holy ones in this world and live that truth out.*)

Paul has in view here a life of service to God - more than just a one-time offering. Then Paul moves on to say that this presenting of ourselves to God is our spiritual service of worship.

Read Hebrews 12:28 & I Peter 2:4-5

The word “spiritual” translates the word “logikos” which means rational, reasonable, intelligent, or informed. Unlike the animals given up under the law who had no idea what was

happening to them, we use our minds to think what is acceptable and appropriate for God based upon what He's done on our behalf - the great mercy He showed to us. The word "service" is the same word used to describe the temple service - the deliberate act of coming before God to give back to Him in worship. Paul is describing worship that is both deliberate on our part but also thoughtful and intelligent based on all He's done for us. Thus, loving service is the proper result to worship. This new way of thinking, based on everything in chapters 1-11 now leads to a new way of living - a new orientation in our behavior.

Q: How does our culture define worship? (*many answers*)

Q: Based upon what we've just read, do you think that our culture truly worships God?

At the break between chapters 11 and 12 there is a major switch in verb tenses Paul uses. In the first 11 chapters, Paul used a lot of aorist verbs. (That the tense that describes an action that happened in the past but continues to be in force into the present. Thus, what God did for us in the past that still impacts us.) But now Paul is going to switch to the present tense. The present tense is the one of what's happening now and what the continuing action is. He's saying largely that continual vigilance is needed to live out by faith the blessings which have been given to us - not that we will lose them but rather that we will fall back into our old ways of life which don't reflect the grace we've received. Paul doesn't want the Roman believers to fall back into the patterns of their flesh and miss out on the life of spiritual abundance promised by Jesus (**John 10:10**).

Q: What are we to no longer be conformed to? (*v.2 - the world*)

The word "conformed" means to be fashioned.

The threat of our continued offering of ourselves to God comes from the world. Believers have been delivered from this present evil age (**Galatians 1:4**). Satan is the god of this evil age (**II Corinthians 4:4**). Instead we are to live by the powers of the age to come (**Hebrews 6:4-5**) Believers are here for a witness to the world not to live in conformity with the world.

Q: Instead of being conformed to the world, what are believers to be? (*v.2 - transformed*)

The word "transformed" means to be transfigured, changed, transformed.

Q: How are we to be transformed? (*v.2 - by the renewing of our minds*)

Q: What does it mean to have one's mind renewed? (*thinking of ourselves, others and our circumstances as the Lord thinks of them since we now have the Spirit indwelling us, other answers possible. Give examples.*)

Renewing is an internal process. Under the law, the focus was on externals but now the change of our lives is seen by the renewal of our internal ways of thinking. The word "renewal" means to renovate. Jesus is our example for this pattern of thinking. He overcame the

temptations Satan threw at Him and instead accepted the path that led to Calvary that His Father had for Him. We could sum up our service in that we are here to do our Father's will, as Jesus was.

Read John 6:38

The words "conform" and "transform" are both present, passive imperatives. This means that they are things that are on-going parts of life and as imperative they are things that will be done. But passive means that they are done to us by an outside force. In the case of conform we are commanded to NOT allow ourselves to be shaped in the form of the world by the forces of the world. Instead we ARE to be transformed perpetually by the power of God renewing our minds. There is no middle ground. No one can say that they are in some state of balance between conformity to the world and transformation of the renewal of the mind. One of them is happening to a believer at every point in their lives. There will be a force that shapes your life - it will be the world or it will be God. You get to chose which one it is.

Q: By living in a manner where we are renewing our minds, what does this do? (*v.2 - it proves what the will of God is*)

The word "prove" means to test or try or approve. Through this process we refuse the norms of this world and live as the living and holy sacrifice to the Lord.

Q: What are the three aspects of God's will given in v.2? (*It is good, acceptable and perfect - God's will is beneficial, fully agreeable, and mature*)

According to these two verses, worship is more about the way we live rather than what we do on Sunday morning. It's more about the attitudes we hold and the words we speak and how we conduct ourselves rather than looking pious in church once a week. When we come together corporately to worship, our meetings should be intelligent. We tend to focus on our emotions and how we feel and not that our feelings are unimportant or should be neglected but we should focus on what is going on in our minds. We should use our minds in our worship. Think of this: God does not care so much how we sing songs of praise to Him but He does care what words we sing to Him. We need to evaluate the message of our music and prayers and teaching and preaching to make sure it lines up with the renovated mind God has placed within us and isn't sinking into the patterns of this world which only cater to the emotions of a person. (*Remember: truth is the engine of the life that moves us forward, the way God wants us to go. We know truth through knowledge. The coal car is faith in Christ, who is the truth. Faith in Christ provides the power the train to move. Feelings are the caboose. They are not capable of moving the train in the proper direction. They follow truth and faith at a distance. Emotions are wonderful companions to our lives but they are lousy guides for life, powerless to overcome the problems of this world and can become cruel taskmasters if we make them an idol.*)

Paul then launches into the service he was mentioning in the first two verses. Of all the types of spiritual service to be rendered to God, the very first thing Paul mentions is the use of spiritual gifts within the church.

Q: Why do you think that Paul begins his teachings on worshipful service to God by discussing spiritual gifts? *(many answers possible - my thought - God has established His church as the instrument by which He is going to mature believers and bring the gospel to the world. He loves the church, as it is His bride, and it is vitally important to His mission. Spiritual gifts are given to build up the church. God wants His church to thrive and experience victory as well as display His grace to the world.)*

Read Romans 12:3-8

Q: When Paul says that one should not think more highly of himself than he ought, what does he mean? *(not to be proud in one's estimation of one's place or service to God)*

Literally, this phrase in v.3 could read "I say to every man among you not to over-think of himself than he should think." He's talking about conceit and pride. Though Paul does not personally know the Roman church (at least yet) he has seen the abuses of spiritual gifts in his dealings with the Corinthian church. He doesn't want them to repeat the mistakes of the Corinthians (thus I Corinthians 12-14).

Q: How are believers to think of themselves? *(v.3 - in sound judgment - according to the measure of faith allotted to them by God)*

Q: What does Paul mean by the phrase "measure of faith" in v.3? *(The measure of faith refers to using the faith fully that God gave to a believer. It's not so much the "amount" but rather the "percentage" of faith that is being used. Different believers have differing levels of confidence in demonstrating faith in differing situations. Use all you've been given in using your gifts from God.)*

Now Paul moves to the illustration of the church in comparing it to a human body - just as he did in I Corinthians 12. There is one body but it is made up of many members or parts and not all those body parts serve the same function. Feet don't taste. Eyes don't grasp things. Tongues don't walk.

Q: Why do you think that Paul brings up this point that though there is one body, there are many different parts with differing functions? *(1 - to make sure that everyone knows that they need the others God has placed within the body 2- to realize that there are a multitude of different ministries that God has for a church to conduct and will require many people of differing gifts to accomplish these ministries. other answers possible.)*

Q: How independent are believers from one another? *(v.5 - we aren't independent of each other at all - we are interconnected, interdependent)*

There are three truths from this short passage: 1) the body is united, 2) there is a diversity within the members of the body, 3) there is a mutuality of all members - we belong to one another. We cannot do what we are called to do independently of each other but only together. Further, each member profits from what other contribute to the whole and this leads us to be less

self-focused and more focused on each other and building up each other.

Read I Corinthians 12: 4-7

Q: According to I Corinthians 12:7, what is a spiritual gift? *(It is a way the Holy Spirit shows Himself alive and active in the life of a believer. the purpose of the gift is to build up the body of Christ - the church.*

It is not a "thing" but rather it is a display of the Spirit's life through the believer. The gift, which is the movement of the Holy Spirit, enables the believer to do something that he or she previously could not do as this is the Spirit doing the action. It leads a believer to the accomplishment of God's will and to experience joy. In some cases a gift might build upon a talent or skill a person already possesses but it will always be given in a way to show itself distinct and above any human talent.)

According to v.6, every believer has at least one spiritual gift.

Q: Based back on v.3, in what attitude should Christians use their spiritual gifts? *(in humility, not pride. God was not obligated to spread His gifts so lavishly but He did in the church.)*

The will of God is identical for all believers in respect to living a life of complete dedication and devotion to the Lord. However how that life is lived out in God's will can vary widely as there are varied gifts and varied ministries - all working together for the advancement of God's kingdom.

Paul then mentions a few of the spiritual gifts but does not give an exhaustive list here.

1) Prophecy is the first gift mentioned. Prophecy is the forth-telling of God's word. It deals with receiving a revelation from the Lord and sharing it with the church. **I Corinthians 14:3-4, 31-32.** It isn't primarily prediction, though it can contain prediction, as it is the communication of revealed truth from God that will both convict and build up believers.

Q: How should one with the gift of prophecy use this gift? *(v.6 - in according to the proportion of his faith)*

This phrase "proportion of his faith" applies to all the spiritual gifts and goes back to v.3 comment on the measure of faith. This is the subjective use of the word "faith" not meaning our teaching or doctrine but rather how we use what God has given to us. To proportion something is to measure out something accordingly. Paul is urging believers to use their spiritual gifts with the full measure or proportion of faith God has given them.

Read Ephesians 1:15-19 - Everything we have is from God. There is no room for boasting or self-centeredness in the expression of spiritual gifts as they are God working through us - not us doing anything on our own strength or wisdom.

2) Service - this is a broad term that means those who are able to help others.

- 3) Teaching - this means teaching. It deals with knowledge and the communication of knowledge as from Scripture. This gives help with Christian living.
- 4) Exhortation (Encouragement) - this means to encourage or comfort or build up another.
- 5) Giving - contributing to the needs of others - benevolence with a singleness of purpose - not with mixed motives and without regret.
- 6) Leadership - about to stand before others and govern effectively and rightly. It is not an office to enjoy or abuse but a service to others. The leader does this diligently - it means speedily or earnestly.
- 7) Shows Mercy - ministering to the sick, poor, downcast, imprisoned, orphaned, widowed, etc. It is done cheerfully and spontaneously that conveys a blessing as opposed to engendering self-pity among the ones receiving the ministry.

Q: Do you know your spiritual gift(s)? *(give time to answer)*

I have a spiritual gifts inventory if you don't know your gift and would like to explore it more. While we may live fine as a believer without knowing our gift, we won't live fine without using it by faith often in the church.

Now for the big question of the week based upon all that we've covered in this session.

Q: Why is TV (or internet) church, not church? *(many answers but here are three. 1) The implication between vv.1&2 and vv. 3-8 is that a believer cannot fully renew their mind without the active help of other believers. We cannot fully understand the Scripture without dialogue with other believers who are studying the same passage. We cannot live as disciples of Christ without the nurturing context of a community of believers encouraging us, praying for us, and setting an example for us. 2) Believers must participate in the local church to help others grow. Gifts are given to us for the edification of others - not ourselves. Other believers in the body, as a whole, need what I have to offer and I need with they have to offer. Imagine a body without a foot or leg or arm or eye or ear. We call that body disabled. A church is no different if it doesn't have and use all the members God has appointed to be part of it. 3) There is no accountability for a leader or member in a "TV church". It caters to your feeling and possibly your mind but there is no outlet for your spiritual gifts. This is not to say that there is no place for TV or internet "church" or programs. They can teach valuable spiritual truths (though often they don't) and there are times or seasons of life when a believer is providentially hindered from attending a church faithfully. However, as mentioned above, they are not a body for those sitting on a couch listening to the message only. There needs to be an outlet for the teaching and use of one's spiritual gifts and godly, meaningful interaction with other believers to truly qualify as a church body.)*

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?