

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 5TH-6TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

A LIVING SACRIFICE (ROMANS 12:1-2)

- In all of his letters, Paul concludes with a list of practical instructions based on the doctrines that he had discussed.
- The "therefore" in vs. 1 works as the hinge of the entire book of Romans.
- In the 1st 11 chapters, Paul tells us what the gospel is; now in the last 5 chapters Paul will tell us what we should be because of the gospel.
- Obedience is our response to the gospel.
- We obey because of the mercies and by the mercies shown to us by God - God commands us to obey and then empowers us to obey.
- Think of all the mercies of God we've read about in Romans so far...
- In light of all of this mercy - Paul appeals to us to present our total selves to God as living sacrifices, which is how we worship.

WE GIVE GOD OUR BODY (VS. 1)

Before we trust Christ, our bodies are used for sinful pleasures and purposes, but when we surrender to Jesus, God gives us the desire to use our bodies for His glory.

- Just as Jesus willingly laid His body down as a sacrifice in obedience to the Father's will, we're called to deny our flesh and present our bodies to God for service.

This sacrifice we make is "living" - it's brought alive to the altar, it stays alive at the altar, and every single day we are called to re-offer ourselves to God.

- Presenting our bodies to God means that God wants all of us-not just our rule-following or our good deeds.
- God takes control over our bodies now.

WE GIVE GOD OUR MIND (VS. 2A)

The world wants to control and conform your mind to its patterns of thinking, but God wants His Word to transform your mind from the inside out.

- Christians must think differently- and that all happens by the, "renewing of the mind".
- Many Christians want the key to a victorious life to be feelings, while others simply want it to be doing.

Your feelings and your behavior are most heavily influenced by how you think, which is why God wants your mind to be renewed!

- Feelings and actions that aren't grounded in foundations of truth about God through His Word will either dry up over time or get off track.
- Daily time spent in God's Word - reading, meditating, studying, and memorizing- is how the renewal of the mind works.

Your mind influences how you behave and feel, and your will influences your mind.

- It's only when we surrender our will to God's will that His power can take over and give us the will power to live the Christian life.
- God's will is, "good, acceptable, and perfect"- and we surrender to it through prayer.
- This is the hardest part! We want our own way.

ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS (ROMANS 12:3-8)

- Paul will now speak about how we're to exercise spiritual gifts in the body of Christ, but he begins in a very interesting way - he starts with a call for humility (vs. 3).
- We're not to think of ourselves more highly than we should, but with, "sober judgment" (accurately, sensibly, sanely).
- So often there can be an inordinate amount of pride in those who begin to understand that they've been gifted by God in spiritual things.

We're all gifted by God to do different things in the body of Christ (vs. 4), and we won't play the same part.

- But at the same time, we're all working towards the same goal and members of the same body (vs. 5).
- So don't think that your role is more important than someone else's!
- You were so needy and helpless that God had to save you entirely through an act of grace, and by His power, not yours.

There should be great diversity in the body of Christ, but there should also be profound unity.

- Uniformity isn't God's vision for the church, but it also isn't to be a place of silos working independently on their own "pet ministries".
- Paul then lists a series of diverse spiritual gifts and how they are to be practiced within the church to promote unity and exalt Christ.
- That's the purpose of spiritual gifts!

"IF PROPHECY, IN PROPORTION TO OUR FAITH..."

Biblically speaking, prophecy isn't necessarily "fore-telling" in a strictly predictive sense, but more speaking the revealed truth of the heart and mind of God, which may or may not include a predictive aspect.

- "In proportion to our faith", means that if we don't have the faith and trust that God has genuinely spoken to us, we shouldn't say it.

"In proportion to our faith" also means it must align with the "faith delivered once and for all to the saints" (Jude 1:3) - a word of prophecy given has to align with the accepted body of doctrine given in scripture.

- The NT gift of prophecy isn't the same as the OT office of the prophet- and NT saints with the gift of prophecy operate very differently.

"IF SERVICE, IN OUR SERVING..."

God has gifted some to do more administrative and "behind the scenes" ministry.

- If that's you, then why aren't you using it?
- "Teaching, in his teaching..."
- God has gifted others to teach theology, doctrine, scripture, and Christian living.
- So, use your gift! Disciple others by teaching them to obey what Jesus has commanded.

"THE ONE WHO EXHORTS, IN HIS EXHORTATION..."

Others have a gift to encourage others within the body of Christ as they're walking out their faith.

- Never withhold a word of encouragement if God brings it to your mind- speak it! It's a work of the spirit in your life.

"THE ONE WHO CONTRIBUTES, IN GENEROSITY..."

We're all told to be generous, but some are gifted to notice needs and to generously care for them.

"THE ONE WHO LEADS, WITH ZEAL..."

It's easy for leaders to get discouraged and feel like giving up, but they have to persevere with zeal if they're to exalt Christ and promote unity.

- "The one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness..."
- It's hard to give someone something they don't deserve, but even harder to be cheerful about it.
- That's why this is a supernatural gift.

LET LOVE BE GENUINE (ROMANS 12:9-13)

Jesus said that the world will know that we are truly one of His disciples by the love that we have for others.

- Paul is going to discuss what our love should look like towards our friends (vs. 9-13), and towards our enemies (vs. 14-21).
- Our love should be "without hypocrisy" (vs. 9)- authentic, sincere, not phony, not simply being polite without having genuine love.

Churches, particularly in the South, can be cesspools of hypocritical love.

- Everybody seems nice, polite, helpful and warm on the outside...but beneath that veneer is often a heart filled with backbiting, jealousy, judgmentalism, and gossip.
- When unbelievers see that kind of phony hypocrisy amongst people who claim to represent Jesus, they run and want nothing to do with it.

We're to "abhor what is evil, and hold fast to what is good"- we're against things that are evil, but we're also FOR things that are good.

- We're to love each other like "brothers and sisters" and outdo one another in showing honor (vs. 10).
- We're not to be lazy and slothful in serving the Lord and in spiritual lives, but rather "fervent" (vs. 11)- if we don't play our part in serving, we can be burdens not blessings.

We're to "rejoice in hope"- we find our joy in the reality that the best is yet to come in the Lord.

- That leads us to being "patient in tribulation"- we understand our sufferings are light, momentary, and purposeful in our lives, even when they're painful.
- Joy and patience can only be accessed through being "constant in prayer"- we love each other by praying for and with each other.

If our love is genuine, it will express itself in tangible actions (vs. 13).

- Taking care of and noticing the needs of others is how we care for those inside the church.
- Showing hospitality (being welcoming, friendly, having good manners, being interested in them, opening-up our homes, becoming their friends) is how we show love to people outside the church.

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD (ROMANS 12:14-21)

If only this chapter ended with ways to show love towards your friends- but the Christian message is revolutionary (vs. 14, Matt. 5:44).

- Vs. 21 is Paul's summary of our calling as exiles in this broken world- "don't be overcome [conquered] by evil, but overcome evil with good".
- There's a way in which we can be overcome by evil.

When we're wronged or sinned against, and we respond with sin as a means of retaliation- we've just been "conquered" by evil.

- Instead of being the light of Christ in a world of darkness, we've just added to the darkness, brokenness, and the noise with our own sin.
- We're NEVER to repay "evil to evil"- but instead, we're to choose the path of honor, even if we're shown dishonor (vs. 17, 19).

We're also to be considerate and humble as we associate with other people (vs. 15-16).

- So often our "un-Christlikeness" and lack of empathy towards others is a result of us seeing them from a fleshly, human perspective (vs. 16b) instead of from a spiritual one.
- We're to live at "peace with all people"- sometimes that's not possible, but we're to never hold grudges, offenses, or bitterness (vs. 18).

How do we deal with our enemies?

- We don't "avenge ourselves"- we leave that role to the Lord and let Him do it for us (vs. 19).
- We destroy our enemies with kindness and love (vs. 20) - being kind and merciful to those who wrong us and hate us with result in heaping "burning coals on their heads" (Prov. 25).
- This is a Jewish metaphor that means a couple of things.

Your kindness to your enemy will place on them "burning conviction" to how they've treated you.

- Your kindness to your enemy will be like you doing an undeserved practical act of service to a neighbor (lending coals from a fire for them to cook) who then becomes a friend.
- This is how you destroy your enemies- you love them as a friend.