

Romans Chapter 12: (1 – 8)

1 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.

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.

3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;

7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;

8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

We are going to look at two aspects today.

- The first one is responding to the gospel personally (verses 1 – 2).
- The second part is responding to the gospel corporately (verse 3 – 8 onwards)

There are four statements which are being made in the first two verses

1. By the mercies of God,
2. Present your bodies as a living sacrifice,
3. Not be conformed to this world
4. Be transformed by the renewal of your mind

1. By The Mercies of God:

1 I appeal to you therefore Here ‘therefore’ is a very important word here. So the question is what is the ‘therefore’ relate to. Is it therefore based on what everything has been said just in the last sentences in verses 11? Most commentators would say that ‘therefore’ means everything you have just read from Chapter 1 to 11, all the theology and all the understands and everything that you have just understood from there, Paul says therefore you are going to do this and which you are going to have in chapters 12 to 16. I think it is a good time at this point of time since we are using the word therefore to do a quick recap of what we have learned in chapters 1 through 11.

1st Chapter: There is an introduction and the biggest sentence we have to remember is, therefore do not be ashamed for the gospel because it is a power of God to save all, first the Jews and then the Greeks and everybody.

2nd Chapter: Justification by faith. So the first part is sin, the need of the gentiles to be saved then the need of the Jews to be saved and then in

3rd Chapter: The universal need for salvation. Remember the verse, it says, For all have fallen short of the glory of the God. So all of us needs salvation.

4th Chapter: Then justification by faith, the provision made for salvation. So God's righteousness was given to us through faith and then we looked at Abraham as an example of that and then we cannot gain into the freedom, the result of salvation.

5th Chapter: Freedom from wrath

6th Chapter: Freedom from sin

7th Chapter: Freedom from law

8th Chapter: Freedom from death and the work of the Holy Spirit

9th Chapter: Jew and gentile, the scope of salvation. So that God chooses to save believers.

10th Chapter: How Israel chose to trust in their own righteousness.

11th Chapter: Both the Jew and the gentiles can have salvation through faith.

So this is kind of the overview that we went into and then Paul says, because of all of these therefore. So we will what does he say therefore to, in relation to the overall conduct we have a transformed life in relationship to your overall conduct.

Chapter 1 to 11 shows us the mercies of God. Here are some verses that shows the mercy of God.

- For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek (the mercies of God).
- For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through redemption that came by Christ Jesus (the mercies of God).
- While we were yet sinners Christ died for us (the mercies of God).
- Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

So these are the mercies of God that he is talking about. He says; because you have received therefore by the mercies of God present yourself as living sacrifices. It seems he is saying the motivation for our current lifestyle is the gospel. The motivation is the fact that Christ has saved us on the cross that he has died on the cross for us. The gospel is the motivation for the lifestyle that we live. It means that if we manifest our life through actions of head, hand and heart that is usually the common terminology that everybody will use. Then the gospel, the cross, Christ is the central motivation from where it is coming from. What is the difference

where can our motivation else come from? It could come from self. We can have self-motivation now, we can have self-motivation to do good intellectual things, be kind to people, being emotionally close to people and do things and do charity works. As Christians our motivation is the gospel and whatever we do is a response towards the mercies of God. What is the difference if we do not have the gospel. It means we put ourselves in the center and ourselves is the motivation.

- Head minus gospel is intellectualism.
- Heart minus gospel is emotionalism
- Hands minus gospel is moralism.

So we need the gospel in all three areas, otherwise we become those three different kind of things. Now a lot of people say, I could preach your message or we can share with somebody else, somebody could be change and suddenly they are doing great intellectual things. You know, they are doing charity with their hands and they are going out and being in community. If somebody does that without the gospel you have given the person a perfect religion. Many religions have good thoughts, have good actions and are close with each other. So if we giving somebody all these three actions without the gospel, you have given somebody the perfect religion to be a good Pharisee. He is saying the motivation is the gospel of Jesus Christ, nothing else that is the point that Paul is making here. So he is saying, be properly motivated. Our motivation is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. Present Your Bodies As Living Sacrifice.

He is using Old Testament temple language. If we look at the word ‘present, sacrifice, holy and acceptable’. These are Old Testament temple language because he use to go to temple, he use to present the sacrifice and use to be a holy and acceptable and unblemished sacrifice that was being used. So this is temple language that he is using here. Why he is using this because he is kind of showing that we are like the living sacrifices he is saying. So the question is what kind of sacrifice is he referring to because in the Old Testament we have four basic kind of sacrifices. We have sin offering, guilt offering sacrifice. We have burnt offering. We have grain offering and fellowship offering. The sin and guilt offering he cannot be referring to because Jesus is our sin and guilt offering. So he is not referring to sin and guilt offering. We are not living our lives as a sacrifice so that we will have atonement for sin. Jesus has already secured that for us. It is not a grain offering because ultimately he is saying to bring an unblemished, holy and acceptable. The only other thing which is holy and acceptable is the burnt offering. So we are kind of like a burnt offering. A burnt offering was always given as a thanksgiving. It was given completely, it was burnt up wholly. What he is saying is that we must give our life completely. So since the sacrifice was completely consumed by fire, it is a complete offering there.

There was a lady in the 1930s she wanted to become a missionary. She was at a youth conference, she was 16 years old. She heard word of God, she was convicted. She wanted to go and become a missionary. So what happened was she went to different mission agencies, what do I have to do in life, and what do I have to do? They said you have to go to bible college, you have to study word of God and after different things she has done they said, “well you also have to get married”. Because she wanted to go to Asia and do missions in Asia she was convicted in her heart to do missions in Asia. She came back home, she said “Lord, I will give up my whole life to you, I will do everything, I will go to college, I won’t party, I won’t do anything, I will do everything for you, the only thing you have to give me is

a husband and I will depend on you for that". The pastor didn't think much of it because she was just 16 and in her youth and her mind can change very fast but she was there. She went to bible college, she went to school, she went to seminary, she went to missionary agency, she got everything done and when she was graduated from her first school, no prospect, no boyfriend, no husband. Then she went to grad school, no husband, no boyfriend, no prospect and two nights before she was about to graduate she was sitting in her room as an angry woman. She was angry as she had done everything but God have not given her a husband and she wrestled with God until she finally realized she has not been giving her whole life to God. She has not; because she says I will do all of this if you give me a husband. So whenever we do things and we do things for God, we say God we will do this if then that whatever comes after the if is the king we truly worship. Lord I will do this if you give me health, I will do this if you give me finance. Now if a woman who has dedicated her life to missions, willing to go to Asia and die back then, she gave up all her party life and all the things she could have done. If she is somebody who has realized she has not given her whole life to God, how about us? There are so many areas in our lives where we have not surrendered to God. What she realized was this, when she was wrestling with God, eventually she realized two facts about God. That God is infinitely wise and infinitely good. Whatever situations we do we must resort to one fact, God is infinitely more wiser than us and he is infinitely more good to us. So we must trust God because in his wisdom the situation we are in right now must be in God's infinite wisdom and in God's infinite love for us. Even though we cannot explain the situation, we don't understand why it is happening, even though we have dedicated so much we must trust.

When we say we have to live our life as a living sacrifice, it means understanding that God is infinitely wise, infinitely loving and we do things for God regardless of what situation we are in and whatever situation we are in we can trust God that he is doing the right thing. So it means that our spiritual worship is our life. It means every area of our life we are committing to God. So our life is worship. So the point is be seriously committed. One preacher once said, the difficulty about being a living sacrifice is a living sacrifice keeps on trying to crawl off the altar. A dead sacrifice stays there. We are living sacrifice we keep on trying to crawl off the altar and that is something we have to do. We have to perpetually continuously try to stay on the altar. It is not easy but it is something that we have to do. We have to continuously, consciously and constantly, all the time remind ourselves, stay on the altar. It is a play on word that he uses, a living sacrifice. In Greek it is actually a living killing, because something dies and one thing that dies is the fact that we surrender to God our willingness to choose everything for ourselves that dies. We submit ourselves to scripture through the Bible to God and even though we don't understand everything, why we have to do in such a why or why things happen we submit to that. Another thing is that, spiritual worship. The interesting thing about that word, it does not only mean spiritual, I think a better translation is probably rational. So that means, because of the mercies of God living your life as a living sacrifice is a rational worship. It is logical to respond in such a way.

Dan Price was running a credit company, was helping out companies with debts. Last year he reduced his own wage from 1.1 million a year to 70,000 US dollars a year so that he could raise the minimum wage in his company for every employee, does not matter what he do to 70,000 US dollars a year as well. So when he came forward and he proclaimed that good news to everyone of his employees. Hey guys, I am willing to make a huge sacrifice for you all, because I think you guys deserve it and I will pay you guys minimum wage, there were some people that were getting more. The rational response was that all got up and they clap and they cheered and they were grateful. Actually what they did is they because of his

goodness got together a year later and they bought him a Tesla car because they realized that is what he most desired and even though he is a millionaire that 70,000 dollar car that they bought is probably nothing to what the money he has but it cost each one of them and they knew that he desired it. So they did something for him as a response of his goodness that he desired most and it was rational. So in the same way, Jesus died for us, he gave his whole life for us on the cross. A rational response would be to worship him.

3. Not Be Conformed To This World

The world actually means present age. Why he is saying in such a way because he is trying to point out to us that we do not belong to this world. We belong to a different age. As Christians we come to an age that is to come. We don't belong to this current age. We belong to an age which is to come. We don't belong to this world. We belong to the kingdom of heaven. So we shouldn't be conformed to what the world does but shall do what the kind of heaven requires or thinking through what we need to do in our lives depending on the future age, the age that we actually belong to. So in every area of our lives what are the decisions we are making that have to do with the kingdom which is to come, rather in the world that we are living in today. So we shouldn't be conformed.

All of us actually live may be in different kinds of worlds. Some of us for example have grown up as Christians, so you live in a Christian world. So your normal world will be, you wake up, you pray and then you do your things and then on Sunday you go to church and then you go to the discipleship program that is conforming to the world that we are living in. it is normal, you have grown up this way. He is talking about don't be conformed, you got to process for yourself whether what are you doing is it because you are just being conformed to the cultural setting that you have grown up in. You might have grown up in a Christian home, so going to church every Sunday is a normal Christian thing to do. So he puts this contrast here between being conformed and transformed.

Matthew 7 passage points out what it means to be conformed, it says

21“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ **23** And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

That means there are some of us who could be coming to church, doing all the right things, checking all the right boxes but we are just conforming to the world that we use to and we are just doing our daily routine because that is the world that we are used to. What this passage is telling us, don't be conformed, it is telling you to be visibly distinct. The best way of relational evangelism is, if we live ourselves in such a way that somebody comes up to us and says why are you so different, you have the gateways open to spread the gospel because all you have to say is because of Jesus. Then the person will ask the question, tell me about Jesus. So we have to be visibly distinct.

4. So Being Transformed By The Renewal Of The Mind.

Now how do we come visibly distinct? Being transformed is being different than being conformed. Conformed is an outer change, transformed is an inward out change. So we are

changing from inside out. So he is making the contrast between transformed and being conformed. He is saying being transformed, it is inside, out is from the heart and mind that happen. So how are being transformed, by trying harder or being transformed by changing our behaviors. The answer in this text is this; by renewing of your mind. There is something that happens in our mind, the reason we come to bible study here. The reason why the word of God is a word of God in a book that we can read. It is because there are something that happens in your mind that you have to understand that and then the Holy Spirit will take what is in our mind and push it our hearts. So that is the aspect of the spirit doing that as well. So information flow is from the mind into the heart through the hands. That is kind of how the flow goes. So there is a transformation of mind. There are some verses that show this. It says in Colossians 3:

9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

So the transformation of the mind needs to happen through renewing ourselves in the knowledge of the image of the creator which is Jesus Christ. It is not just a random knowledge. In Corinthians we read this,

For God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Being transformed means you being radically changed.

In summary,

- be properly motivated,
- be seriously committed,
- be visibly distinct and
- be radically changed.

The second part is responding to the gospel corporately. Because being changed is not just an individual thing, we are not just being saved for ourselves. There is a corporate response that comes together.

1. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,
2. Not to think of himself more highly then he ought to think but to think with sober judgment
3. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let us use them

So these are three kind of areas that we have to look into.

1. For as in one body we have many members and the members do not all have the same function.

It means that we are all becoming Christians, become the body of Christ. Different passages in the Bible like 1 Corinthians also talks about this, so we are being saved into something. We are being saved out of sin but we are also being saved into something. We are not being

saved as individuals being saved into a community, how do we relate to each other and do things which one another. Colossians says, we have to admonish and teach and uphold, bearing each other burdens. That is what happens when we are being saved we come together into a community.

2. Do not think of himself more highly than he ought to think but think with sober judgment.

One of the biggest problems that happens in our community is that people think highly of each other or highly of certain people or highly of themselves and that is usually a big downfall of community. What he is saying is don't think too highly of yourself. Because all of us are equally sinners and all have fallen short of the glory of God. So we all need the same savior and we are all having the same destiny. There are people who have low self-esteem and there are some who are just too proud. We have opposite spectrums. We have to understand of who we are, understand our capabilities and we are not all equal, we all have different gifting. We have all different standings even in church hierarchy but God values all of us equally. We are all his children.

Sober judgment

16th century writers have great statements.

They that know God will be humble, they that know themselves cannot be proud.

We are saved into a team. We have different giftings, we are doing different things but we are saved into a team that we have to work together. There are different functions that everybody has but everybody is equally important. If one person does not do their job, the other people cannot function. So we are all saved into a team and that is something we have to corporately understand that when we become Christians we don't just become individuals who are saved to go to heaven but we have a corporate responsibility to act together as a team.

3. Having gifts that defer according to the grace given to us let us use them.

As we are saved into a team, all of us have unique talents and we have unique gifts. God has gifted us differently. Some people ask, is there is a difference between spiritual gifts and natural talent and my answer to that is which one did God not give you. God gave you your natural talents and God gave you your spiritual gifts, God gave you both. So whether it is your natural talent or your spiritual gift, the whole point is whether or not you use it for the building up of the body of Christ that is what the important factor is. It is not whether I could sing all my life, I became a Christian, does it mean that I should sing in a worship team or I could never sing, I became a Christian, now I can sing. It is kind of like a soccer field, if one team member is not pulling their way everybody is impacted. We cannot play a soccer game without the goalie. It does not mean that the goalie is more important than the striker, we need a striker as well. We only see the team playing but there is a huge and a bigger team behind this team. This requires to actually play the game. So if anyone of them functions are not being utilized we are actually robbing each other. It means that if you are not utilizing your gift you are robbing all of other guys individually of something that I could contribute. So if one of you guys are not doing something which you could do, you are robbing the other person from it. So anyone of us who is not using our gifts for the edification of the body is robbing the other person of that, because we have all being saved into a team and a

community. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. He actually says it very strongly because he says here,

By the authority given to me by God. So Paul is claiming his apostolic rights here. So we are all saved for a purpose and the purpose is to building up of the body.

So we are being saved into a community, so it is not by ourselves. We have equally important but we have different functions but we have been all saved for our purpose, a team has a purpose and the purpose is the building of God's church. We all have different functions and if we are not pulling our weights we are robbing each other of it that is what it means to be completely committed.

So responding to the gospel corporately means

- saved into a community
- saved as a team
- saved for a purpose.

Jesus died on the cross for you, therefore respond because he has given you mercy, respond with being a living sacrifice. We have to understand that we have to perpetually constantly think about putting ourselves on the altar, give our all to God in a way that builds the body and we edify each other here, helping one another to build the body of Christ.