

Gamma

Romans 12:1-8

Study 19 NEW RELATIONSHIPS: GOD AND THE CHURCH

1. vv.1-2

a. What two things does Paul urge us to do? What do they mean practically?

First, we are told to “offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.” The metaphor he uses is that of a worshipper at the temple, who comes in with an offering.

Now some offerings in the Old Testament were “sin offerings,” in which the worshipper was shedding blood and asking forgiveness. **But Jesus is our sin offering**. Therefore, the offering Paul points to is not a sin offering. The second kind of offering was a “whole burnt offering,” which was a valuable animal from your flock. It had to be without defect (holy and without blemish). It showed that all you had was at God’s disposal — you did not give God your leftovers! The burnt offering was always burnt totally, and it represented complete consecration and devotion to God.

To be “at God’s disposal” fully means: a) actively, to be willing to obey God in anything he says in any area of life, and b) passively, to be willing to thank God for anything he sends in any area of life.

The word “living” may mean that the sacrifice is a constant thing. The word sacrifice actually means “to kill.” That makes it a “living killing!” It means that we have to continually renew our position as wholly obedient and at God’s disposal.

Secondly, we are told to “not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed.” What does this mean? There are two patterns held up — the pattern of the world, and the pattern of God’s will. Paul tells us to recognize and reject the pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving that characterizes the world, and to embrace the will of God for all character and life.

In summary, Paul says we have put ourselves entirely at God’s disposal and become transformed from the inside out into the image of him.

b. What does Paul show is the only valid motivation to have for the two responses mentioned above?

There are two words that show the motivation for Christian living. First the word “therefore” indicates that we give ourselves to God because of all that Paul has been expounding in chapters 1-11, namely that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. The second word, “in view of the mercies of God,” essentially says the same thing. In short, the only sufficient motivation for the Christian life is gratitude for grace.

2. How well do you fit into this world? Have an honest conversation with the group about what areas in your life you need to think/act differently from the world?

(Open discussion)

Note for leader:

Conformed vs Transformed

There are two patterns held up — the pattern of the world, and the pattern of God’s will. Paul tells us to recognize and reject the pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving that characterizes the world, and to embrace the will of God for all character and life. The word “conform” is in contrast to “transform,” however. And that is interesting. The word “transform” is the Greek word metamorpho. The only other place Paul uses it is in II Cor.3:18. It clearly refers to an inner transformation, rather than merely an outward conformity. Notice that such an inner transformation is necessary because the will of God has to be “tested” by us. It takes wisdom and goodness to discover more of the wise and the good!

3. vv.3-4 What two mistakes should Christians avoid when thinking of themselves?

On the one hand, Paul tells us to avoid being “high-minded” about ourselves. Despite all the warnings about the danger of low self-esteem, the real danger is self-centeredness and egocentricity. Most of the world’s religions have identified humanity’s worst problem as stemming from inflated views of one’s own importance and abilities and rights (Buddhism is particularly insistent on this point.) We are all prone to exaggerate our own level of wisdom and competence and sincerity and power. As Christians, we must be able to avoid this. C.S.Lewis said he knew of no one except Christians who ever admitted to being proud and conceited. Paul shows us that we must always be on the look out for this danger. (This is important to set up his statements on spiritual gifts in vv.6-8. An

inflated view of the self tends to make us think we can do all things well, and it keeps us from forming interdependent relationships.)

On the other hand, we are to think “soberly.” Sobriety here means just what we think of as an alternative to drunkenness. To be sober means to be rigorously accurate, completely in touch with reality. Paul does not say here “be humble” or “prefer others as better than yourselves.” At this point he warns against thinking less of your abilities than is warranted as well. **We are to think straight about ourselves, not to low or too high.**

4.

- a. Based on your interests and experiences, list which spiritual gifts you think you might have. Write the name of each person in your group with at least one of the gifts that you think they may have .**

To enable you to think through this consider the following:

- i. Whom/where do you have passion to serve?
- ii. What do you have a burden to do ?
- iii. What do you find joy in doing for others?
- iv. What opportunities has God already provided for you to serve others?
- v. What thing are you best at and have most success in ?
- vi. What have godly people commended you for doing?
- vii. What acts of service have given you the deepest sense of satisfaction and joy ?

Note to leader: Remind the group that this list in Romans is not an exhaustive list. There are more spiritual gifts found in Ephesians 4:11 , 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter 4

- b. After completion share your results with each other
(Use this space to write down what others have said about you**

- c. In what ways can you best use your gifts for the church?**