

Topic	The Gospel and Emotionally Healthy Spirituality
Reference	Romans 12:1 – 2
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*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer **your bodies** as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is **your spiritual act of worship**. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of **your minds**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

*Romans 12:1-2*

The reason why Paul says ‘therefore’ is because Romans shifts at chapter 12. 11 chapters of theology are now put into chapter 12. So the way to understand verse 1 and the idea of the mind is to refer back to 11 chapters, in particularly the verses that got to do with the mind. So we look heavily at chapters 1 and 2, 1 really deals with the mind and we look at chapter 8 which really deals with the spiritual mind. Contextually, when you hear the word ‘therefore’, it means that you got to look at all the earlier chapters.

There are three things in the above verse that are tied together,

- *your bodies*
- *spiritual act of worship*
- *your minds*

When you look at act of worship, Matthew tells us this,

*15:8“ This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;*

Worship has got to do with heart.

**CONTEXT:**

To a Jew, when they say worship, they think tabernacle. They think bringing in an unblemished animal and going to a tabernacle for the sprinkling of the blood of bulls. So when Paul turns it on his head, he says, you are that living sacrifice. God has credited his righteousness in you. Paul is saying everything you do now is worship. Wholeness involves three things, your body or your actions, your heart and your mind. Paul says,

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Cor 10:31*

Every inch of us is worship. Now we understand that in our mind, but we don't understand this in our hearts. Because there is something below happening to us and if living sacrifice is this what is causing us to do this. What is causing us to worship God in every area.

What happen with lot of us in life is that we deal with the leaves because that is what you see, but we don't see what goes in the root and you deal with the root then the fruit will be healthy. In fact, Jesus says this, everything comes out of the mouth is from heart.

We deal too often with the symptom, we don't look at the cause and the cause according to Paul is the mind. So here is the reality of it, I could be active in church but completely dishonest at work. I could be a lousy husband but a loving father. The contradictions are here. I could be loyal to close friends. So human beings, church people are like this. There are multiple compartments in our life. In some areas, wow look at him, he is such a devout Christian. Then the wife will say, 'you should see him at home.'

***We have to ask ourselves what lies beneath.*** Science tells us that only 10% is above the surface, the ice berg model is quite used in this, but what really drives the iceberg is what is unseen, it is the same as the tree. Whether the tree is doing well, has nothing to do with the tree looking big, is the roots. If the roots are weak the tree can look great, a storm comes the tree will fall. So it is what is unseen which is important and is the mind that's the key.

Science tells us that, there is behavior and there is all your capacity to do things but is your belief, your values, your identity that drives it and if you are not clear in your beliefs, your faith that comes out in your values, you are not clear in your identity, you can appear Christian, you can come to church, you can serve, you can be a preacher, you can be an evangelist, you can be a pastor but the roots are weak.

Peter Scazzero is a pastor, who leads a very large church. His church was growing very fast, but his marriage was a mess and he was a terrible father. In his book, he tells that at one point the wife told him that she is leaving him. Basically, the wife was telling him you are two face. You go to church, you are very hallelujah, at home you are a different person. Peter Scazzero says when my wife left me and the wife didn't divorce, he said that was the best thing that happened to him, because it caused him to stop and look at what was unseen and he came out with few statements. He said,

*We can't change – or better said, invite God to change us – when we are unaware and do not see the truth.*

## **Sin Makes Us Stupid**

In Romans 1, there is this spiraling effect. They say they choose idol worship, although they knew God they never honored him and they replaced him with images of idolatry and then the verses use word, ***God gave them over*** to sexual immorality, unnatural relationships, depraved mind, a multitude of sins. We see here that sin has a spiraling effect and what is more interesting is God is involved. We can always say that God punishes in two ways: one, he punishes in eternity, but here Ephesians puts as this,

In the foolishness of their minds, Ephesians 3, the gentiles have been hardened in their hearts and when you harden your hearts there is a spiraling effect. These are symptoms, the root is just this in Romans 1:18. Meaning, you start off by suppressing the truth, a lot of things happen. Sin makes us stupid because you got to get to the root of why you are sinning. The evangelical response is normally this, you are sinning, bad boy, bad girl, you keep doing this you are going to go to hell. So the guy:

1. feels guilty; he gets depressed because he is in bondage, he can't get out of it because that sin has so much become a habit of him or her
2. they go into denial,
3. they don't care.

What we don't do is get to the cause of it and the cause here is, they suppress the truth. Get to the cause, the sin goes away. Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5, three things they did;

- they lied to God,
- they were hypocrites
- and they basically were thieves. They wrongfully declared the value of the land.

The root for this was one, a desire to be respected, but you can't see it and how do we know it is a desire to be respected because we are told in Acts 4, at the end of it Barnabas brings a piece of land and puts it at the feet of the disciples. Anyone will probably say, he got respected, I want to be respected too. To be respected by man was so important they lie to God that is ultimate stupidity and we can be like that. Some of us like to brag, which is very subconscious to man because man like to brag. It comes from a deep insecurity to seek approval but you don't see it. Deep down inside there is this desire for approval.

We can repeat this in many parts of the Bible. Simon the sorcerer tried to bribe the apostles to give him the power because he was a magician and Peter told him, your heart is full of bitterness.

*How did bitterness lead him to try to brag the apostles?*

We can't even find it, but there is a root. So here is one thing this morning, we all have to sort of look deep inside and ask ourselves what drives our actions. You don't need to be a psychiatrist to do this, scripture tells us this. We all are driven by man things insecurity, past pains, pride,

past hurts, desire to be accepted, and these things drive us on this level at the roots, it comes out in many ways.

If you feel life has cheated you, quite likely you would be very negative. Every time you meet someone, you will be molting them down because there is this root of bitterness. Paul is not saying everyone is going to end up like Romans 1, because not everyone ends up into sexual depravity. He is giving an illustration.

If we look at Buddhism, Buddha understood that life was about suffering. Buddha understood that man was sinful, he had enlightenment. If we look at the Tao sign, it is very profound, it is very noble, it is about life and it is about rest, that's the white point. Life is about wrestling, that's what Paul says, rest in God, wrestle in God and that is always turning. There are days you wrestle, there are days you rest and at the point of resting, the black dot, you will wrestle. At a point where you are wrestling, there will be rest. It is very profound and life is found in the interphase of the two, that's why it is called the Tao, which means 'the way'.

The Indian culture long time ago were very-very wise and Paul lived in the time of Hellenistic Jews who understood similar philosophies. The stoics were like this. Seneca wrote letters and a lot of the values of the stoics were very biblical, but there is one big difference and Ephesians picks this up, there is enlightenment by yourself and an enlightenment by God and the basic difference is this. Ephesians 4, Paul talks about how the gentiles had been made foolish by the hardening of their hearts and its says this,

*...to be made new in the attitude of your mind. Ephesians 4:23*

Paul is saying that our minds have an attitude. Sinful men have an attitude which doesn't want God in the center of it, no matter how noble it is, no matter how righteousness it is and the moment you put God outside the picture, you offend God and Romans 1 tells you, you take God out of the picture, I am going to let you think whatever you want, is going to go down and down and down. So not all of us may be so immoral like what is explained in Romans 1 but we will have certain traits.

All of us choose to believe many things, you either believe what you want to believe or what you should believe. It takes a lot of courage to pull yourself down and says, I may be wrong but here is what the gospel does. The gospel allows you to be honest with yourself, why, because the grace allows you to know yourself better. I am a sinner, I need to repent, I glorify God when I repent. It is always those little-little things you do that is worship. There is always the case of what you should believe versus what you want to believe.

Romans 2 picks up another group of people and you can imagine, Jews reading Romans 1, sinful man, I am not like that, I am circumcised, I go to the temple, I am not like these pagans and Paul flips it. If you read Romans 2 and first thing he does is he just goes after them. Romans 2 opens with a bang, you therefore have no excuse you who past judgment on someone else. We can list now what they do and again we list the root. The root again is the same thing, stubbornness and unrepentant heart. Ephesians 3 calls it, the hardening of the heart. This is where the mind and heart happens and these are religious people. So to put it, these are like Christians, who are so proud they become judgmental, they become hypocritical, they are thieves, and we are only concerned on Sunday when we come to church to look good.

Why this chapter is interesting is because chapters 1 and 2 are side by side, they both see the same thing, one is to gentiles, one is to the religious world. One is to the liberal left and the other one is to the right, but here is what is fascinating about this, Paul is saying this is double life. Romans 1 is the ultimate liberal, I don't care. I do all of this, so I have nothing to hide because I don't give a dam. Romans 2 is on the church people, if you only knew so and so did this. Paul is saying that the Pharisee had two minds, he had the public self and the hidden self. The person you wish everyone to see, that's the one that comes to church on Sunday, the hidden self is the one that's behind closed doors but there is that third person and it is that third person where you discover where your weaknesses are and is this third person which most of us want to shut our doors with and if you can unlock and discover this third person, you discovered where your roots are, your roots of sin. The third person is the defensive self, it is the person who reacts to protect the hidden self. Now the scripture support this so much.

The most obvious was the Pharisee and Jesus, there was the public self, they were the religious right, very popular, pray at the street corner but the hidden self Jesus calls them lovers of money and power. What's the defensive self? It was the ones that accuse Jesus, because that's the only way they could deflect it. Now here is a very simple thing. Whenever people ask us things and we get worked up and you don't know why you get worked up instinctively there is a trigger that's the area you got to work on or someone is talking about certain topic and suddenly you want to shift that topic that's the area you got to work on. Now that's painful but that's gospel reality, that's the trigger mechanism because you are trying to conceal this area nobody wants to.

King David was another example. The public persona about him was a righteous king, the private person was a very-very horny person, love woman. What was the defensive self, he had many politic streak to cover his tracks, he would stop at nothing including murder? When Nathan comes to him and gives him a story of two people, he can't see it. His righteous side takes over, he gets very righteously angry, who is this person and Nathan says you are the man.

By the power of the gospel we all have sights we need to pull out. There is root and there is fruit, there is cause and there is symptom. Do not deal with the symptom, whatever your sins are, look at your root.

A lot of sexual sin comes from hurt in the past, the need to dominate because you were battered, so that comes out in this kind of really wild thinking that leads to abuse women because all sexual sin is abuse of woman. So what churches do is they hammer you there, they don't teach you to respect woman, you get to the root of it and you learn to respect woman you find this sin doesn't straggle you so much. We could repeat this with many things like money, jealousy, bitterness but get to the root and David's root was flesh and he carried it onto his son and his son had the same problem but 10 times worse with Solomon and that caused his downfall.

If a kid had a trauma when he was young, you didn't love the kid, something happened, he felt nobody loved him later on very likely he will get depressed. So sin doesn't just happen to us, sin happens to others and this is where the gospel tells us, gospel family we look out for one another and in this congregation there will be some of us that things happened in the past and we bury it away and I want to urge you this morning, take this to God, because this burying it away manifest itself in many ways, which will be very damaging. Look at Romans 1, all they did was they hardened their hearts and God gave them over. Deal with your roots.

*How do you know to deal with your roots?*

Find your public self, find your private self, that interface that's the defense mechanism. You pick that up, you know your issues. Then you pray and you take it before God.

***Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2***

Paul is putting them two side by side, 'do not be conformed' is an outside in thing that badges you, 'but be transformed' and the Greek word is 'Metemorphothe' from where we get the word metamorphosis. As used in two text (Matt 17:2, Mark 9:2), it was used at the transfiguration. Paul is saying that at the transfiguration Jesus shown, his glory was so much because of insight. There is a similar reference that is used in the New Jerusalem at the end of revelations because at the end of revelations with the New Jerusalem we are told that Jerusalem shine and he says there is no sun, because the Lord God was their light. He is saying transformation is from the inside, not from the outside. So if you do not want to conform from the outside, you go from the inside or to use the same metaphor, you go and build your roots. First you identify the bad roots and now you build the good roots. Here is another thing he tells us, he says ***by the renewing of your mind.***

So transformation is inside out, the Holy Spirit has another job of renewing of mind. That verse again, that particular word is only used once in Titus 3

*He saved us... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5*

You can't do this by psychology, you can't do this by psychiatry although they help, you can't do this by self-awareness or meditation, you do this by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is what separates us from everything else. This is the key, the Holy Spirit. This is how Romans moves from Roman 7 to 8. This is how it tells in Roman 7, what a wretched man I man, the things I want to do I don't, the things I don't, I do.

Romans 8 opens, therefore there is now no condemnation in Christ Jesus and then he goes to the mind of the spiritual man. He sat on things above, how, he goes to the Father. Paul is saying that, the first thing you do, you got to recognize that you and I do things we don't do, but that's not the state you should be in, you are not supposed to be wretched, so 8 opens there is no condemnation, God's grace saves you, you have been bought by the blood of the lamb. You go to the Father and you change your heart. That is life-changing and that is victorious living.

There is a thinking called Groupthink. It is a proposition that when you are in a collective, the collective drives your mind to think a certain way, it is called conformity. This is what Paul is saying.

We all struggle with our faith, some of us struggle with doubt, some of us struggle with past hurts, some of us struggle with sin. If you bury it inside, your roots are weak, they will manifest itself in many dangerous way. If you hide them inside, one day when the storm comes you will fall and if you don't fall you will join the so many that come to church, sit at the back and don't serve and I plead with you, your eternal soul depends on this. Go to the roots, fix it.

*How do we do that?*

Hide in God, don't hide in yourself. Paul says, do not conform but be transformed inside out, how to do it, first you recognize your sinful habits and I tell you that takes great courage. How do you know it is a sinful problem, is when I talk to you and you say I don't want to talk about it and that's your area.

You talk to God like Romans 8, you plead Abba Father. There is now no condemnation Lord but fix me, let my mind be set on things above, you fix me Lord. It will not change you in a night, it will slowly come in and change you and God will feed you and he would embrace you and that's what the Holy Spirit does. It works at the heart and the heart won't be so hardened, the heart is receptive.

Locking it inside your self is deadly dangerous, your fruits will not face the storm. Thirdly, if you got the courage, join a small group. We got to work with your sin, that's why we gather together. Inside out is not enough, you got to go outside in. You need to have scripture, you need to have friends, you need to be aware of the effects of sin. So this is how the Holy Spirit works, you go from inside out and you go from outside in and when you do that I tell you your life will be set free and you will be like tree that prospers like the mustard seed and you will have fruits.

***Transformation is not an overnight process. You will be fighting sin to the day you die.***

*Cling to Christ and as you really cling, he is the vine you are the branch and he will lead you through the dark night of your soul and that dark night can be long, it can be months, it can be years, but he will hear you and he will take you to places and you will not dream of and he will heal you and restore you.*