

The Book of Romans

Romans 12

v 1 *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.”*

Paul returns now to the use of our bodies now that we have been shown mercy. In the end of chapter 6 the apostle had shown us how we had used our bodies before becoming saved. Amazing work, this same body, can now be presented to God as a living sacrifice unto Him.

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [Him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin...For he that is dead is freed from sin...ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity...What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things [is] death” (Rom.6:6,7-19,21).

“By the mercies of God” the Christian has been delivered from servitude to such practices of which we are now ashamed. What then is now to be the use of our body in this new freedom we have,?

It is a solemn thought that Christ gave His body a dying Sacrifice that we might present ours a living sacrifice. “And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake [it], and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you” (Luke 22:19).

v 2 *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

There can be an outward form of religion that does not “conform” to the world. Monasteries, isolated religious communes, communities or other such like separations from the world. However Paul describes such type of religion as a rudiment (or element) of the world which neglects the body.

“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh” (Col. 2:20-23).

The flesh can keep “ordinances” without any inward work by God. Christian nonconformity however is a result of an inward transformation (a change) by the renewing of our mind. Christianity works from the inside (transformation) out. Renewing is a complete change for the better. A spiritual renovation.

vv 3,4 *“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think [of himself] more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office”.*

We are about to be told to “*condescend to men of low estate*” (vs. 12). That is to take our proper place, a low estate, and not think more highly of ourselves. No one is more than just one of many members. May we realize this in truth. We cannot do without any member of the body, without loss to the body.

“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest” (Luke 22:24). We are so prone to value greatness in ourselves.

vv 5,6 *“So we, [being] many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith”.*

The apostle is not telling us we are of no worth, but just that we should not to think “*more highly*” of ourselves than we ought. We are fellow members of the body of Christ. We are to soberly use our own gift, for edification of the body, not for the exaltation of ourselves. Corinth seemed to have a special difficulty with this.

The gift, or grace, given to us as individual believers, is not for the individual, but to be used for the body's sake. To go beyond what has been given to us is not a result of being sober.

vv 7,8 *“Or ministry, [let us wait] on [our] ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, [let him do it] with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

We are to use our gift for its intended proper use. We are to “wait” or occupy ourselves with this ministry or gift. Timothy had a special gift, but he needed to be stirred up to use it. “*Wherefore...stir up the gift*

of God, which is in thee” (2 Tim.1:6).

The Corinthian saints seemed to be the opposite, and liked to show their gifts for self exaltation. This is so searching. How do we use what we have been given?—For our exaltation, or the body’s edification? “*For who maketh thee to differ [from another]? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive [it], why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received [it]?*” (1 Cor. 4:7).

There are also attitudes mentioned here—mercy simplicity, diligence, and cheerfulness. However, how we do something is important too. Nothing is used or done properly unless we do it in love.

v 9 “*[Let] love be without dissimulation (lack of sincerity) Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*”

Love in reality! Oh the enrichment this will give to our service in using our own gift! “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*” (Cor. 13:1).

v 10 “*[Be] kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another*”.

We see that where real love is, high thoughts of ourselves ‘isn’t’. We are to be found “preferring”—giving honor to others, instead of to our self.

v 11 “*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*”.

“*Business*” is a reference to anything we do in service for the Lord. We are not to be slothful in our service for Him but rather we are to be but “*Fervent in spirit*”.

v 12 “*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer*”.

Hope is an expectation. Following the exhortations of the above verses, we could expect a good result. We can rejoice in the anticipation of such a hope. Departure, however, from these exhortations, would not produce hope, or that sweet expectation which would give us reason to rejoice.

Our verse does not say “our” hope, as though a specific hope is before Paul (Such as the redemption of our bodies, which is a hope.) “We also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting ...the redemption of our body...For we have been saved in hope” (Rom. 8:23-24).

v 13 “*Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*”

“Distributing” is the opposite of “keeping” (for our own use). Saints have needs. All of us possess some gift from God that has been given to each for their good, not for our own personal exaltation.

But it also tells us, “given to hospitality.” I understand this “*hospitality*” would be especially exercised towards strangers who might have need of our care.

v 14 “*Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not*”.

When our Lord came to earth as a Man, He came in grace. We find this expressed in John 1; “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth...and grace for grace...grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*”

The blessed concept of grace being shown to enemies was to be displayed in a Christian’s life. Desire for judgment to be shown on persecutors was common prior to Christianity. Many prayers of this nature were asked of the Lord. “*Draw out also the spear, and stop [the way] against them that persecute me*” (Psa. 35:3). “*How many [are] the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*” (Psa.119:84).

Even the Lord’s disciples displayed this spirit: “*And when his disciples James and John saw [this], they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*” (Luke 9:54). But this is not the spirit we are to have as Christians. We proclaim a message of grace while warning of coming judgment. “*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course...and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24). “*And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*” (Acts 24:25).

v 15 “*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*”

Though our hopes are heavenly, and eternal, we are still on earth, and while here we are not to be insensible to the needs and feeling of others in their times of joy or sorrow.“

v 16 “*[Be] of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men*”

of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.”

We are not to have “favorites”, nor to esteem for ourselves some place of dignity here in this world. We are to go on with the lowly, in truth, as being lowly ourselves. This is contrary to the whole world system, which really began its united effort on the principle of: “*And they said, Go to, “let us build us a city...and let us make us a name”* (Gen.11:4). The motivating principle of the world is “us” not “God.” We are not to live our lives for “us” anymore. “*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it*” (Mark 8:35).

v 17 “*Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*”

While evil practices dominant the present world, evil doings are not to be practice by believers. Honesty in all things should be the character which always marks us as believers.

v 18 “*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*”

Sometimes it is not possible to be at peace with all men. Paul wrote: “*there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ*” (Gal.1:7). “*I would they were even cut off which trouble you*” (Gal. 5:12). So it is that in this present evil world, there may be circumstances where it is not possible for the believer to be at peace with all men.

We might notice here, Paul is not speaking of personal wrongs, when he speaks of judgment on others, but of their corruption of the gospel. Also we cannot always be at peace with their ways. Poor Lot sought peace with evil men, by means of an evil solution. This was very wrong. Yet, though peace with all men is not always possible, we are not to be the cause of trouble (see Gen.19:8).

v 19 “*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*”.

We desire righteousness on the earth at the present time. But it cannot be so now until our Lord comes back to reign in righteousness. “*But unto the Son [he saith], Thy throne, O God, [is] for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness [is] the sceptre of thy kingdom*” (Heb.1:8). This hasn’t yet taken place.

“*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world:*

if My kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence” (Jn.18:36).

vv 20,21 “*Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*”

We were told not to recompense evil for evil. Here we are told how to overcome evil by doing good to our enemies. Kindness is powerful if it is not motivated by self interest. I think the *coals of fire* also refer to kindness. Fire was essential to life in those days. It appears to be here used metaphorically. We find an instance of this in 2nd Samuel 14:7; “*..they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband [neither] name nor remainder upon the earth*”. To be without *coal of fire* was a condition of judgment not to be desired, any more than hunger or thirst. “[*there shall*] *not [be] a coal to warm at, [nor] fire to sit before it*” (Isa.47:14).