

Romans 12-1

August 13, 2012

Romans 12:1-2

Last time we finished with the partial exploration of this amazing verse. The verse in the bible that tells us what is a reasonable way for us to respond to all that has been accomplished for us by our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.

Christianity is a practical religion. It is the truth of Christ that gives us order and the ability to live a life of purpose and goodness.

Do you want to live a godly life in this world?

Here is the how to do that, we present ourselves as a living sacrifice.

We are to be holy, that is set apart for God as we are a living sacrifice completely dedicated to Him.

This is your spiritual act of worship. This Greek word "worship" is any act done for God. The King James translates this as "reasonable", as in giving ourselves to God is the only reasonable way to respond to His mercy.

Why does He demand we present our bodies a living sacrifice? God does not live in buildings; by His Holy Spirit He lives in people, in those who are trusting in the LORD Jesus Christ. There is no earthly temple, our bodies are His temple. Our bodies are living sanctuaries.

There is another point to make here as well. We contact the world through our bodies, our 5 senses, and we contact God through our spirit and mind. It is critical that our spiritual life have control over our physical life. Only when our bodies are dominated and controlled by the spirit our lives please God. Is your tongue controlled by the Spirit? Do you need to offer your tongue as a living sacrifice to God? Are your words full of the love of God to Him in praise and to your family or neighbor in encouragement? It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks according to Jesus (Matthew 12:34). What do your words reveal about your heart?

What about your eyes? Have you presented your eyes in living sacrifice to God? The bible links eyes to adultery. Jesus said whoever looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart". I will not talk further about this subject but you all know how television and print media has become more and more pornographic, leading men and women to evil behavior. Evil gains momentum when it is not curbed. Can we say with the Psalmist "I will put no worthless thing before my eyes". If you don't know whether something is worthless, ask the LORD for wisdom.

Evil always gains momentum like a snowball rolling down hill.

If you are a believer in the LORD Jesus Christ, please give serious consideration to this verse. God is lovingly telling you how to have a life you want to have. A life full of peace, joy and purpose, the command is simple; present your body as a living sacrifice. He said it is your "reasonable service". Will you serve yourself or will you serve Christ, the choice is yours to make. The choice is to make daily, maybe even hourly as you strive to live a life pleasing to God, taking up your cross daily.

This is where faith becomes practical. Don't be discouraged if your first thought is not to give yourself, not to sacrifice for others, it is unnatural to do this; we are all so determined to have our own way with our time and energy. Ask God to help you obey this command. He knows us, He knows we are weak and selfish, He is as committed to our sanctification, that is overcoming self-centeredness, as He is to our

salvation. Put yourself in the flowing stream of His love and He will provide the strength to overcome selfishness and grow us up in righteousness. Think what it would mean in our village today if every Mom and Dad were committed to the self-sacrifice required for motherhood. Think what it would mean to all those lonely folks at Colonial Manor if families were ready to love elderly people who now have little to give but are still important and loved by God. It seems to me it would bring all kinds of peace and dignity to life right here in Loudonville. Remember Jesus said "greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friend". Well how about being that living sacrifice, laying down your life for your marriage, your family, whatever it is that God has called you to do. Dad

Why should I be a living sacrifice? It is a reasonable or worthy response to God's provision for me. God is a merciful God, to present our bodies to Him is safe, He is kind and compassionate. He made our bodies, He maintains them, He bought them.

Secondly, it is acceptable to God; the great purpose of our lives should be to be acceptable to God, the presenting of ourselves is pleasing to Him, it is an act of great faith to say; Thy will be done with me.

Thirdly Paul says it is our reasonable service. It is not a hard duty. We serve our God with our minds, we are reasonable, we serve with understanding. We worship God in spirit and in truth but we also present our bodies.

The last thing I want to say about the "living sacrifice" is this. Paul has commanded this "in view" of all that he has said before in this letter. In view of the fact that we are all sinners and that the wages of sin is death. In view of the fact that Jesus Christ has died and been buried and resurrected for our redemption. In view of the fact that salvation is available as a free gift of God, then present your body as a living sacrifice in gratitude not for the purpose of earning salvation but as a reasonable response to God for all He has done.

Romans 12:2

The mind must be renewed. This renewal begins with conversion and proceeds to sanctification. We are not what we were, old things have passed away all things have become new. Our mind is the acting ruling part of us so that by renewing our mind we are renewed. The progress of sanctification, dying to sin more and more and living to righteousness more and more is the renewing or transforming work. We are commanded to be transformed, it is not an option. It is God's work in us.

We cannot avoid being conformed to this world or age unless we fill our minds with the truth of the word of God. The thinking, the thoughts those are what shape behavior. And don't make the mistake of trying to be a believer conformed to this age, you will be what God calls "double minded", that is very unstable, drifting here and there, full of tension and stress.

What keeps us from being renewed and conformed to this world? How do we become a non-conformist to the world system? We seek God first every morning, praying and studying His word. We avoid worldly influence as God gives us discernment. You might notice that as you are maturing as a believer the TV program you watched last year has become disgusting and worthless to you. You know what it is that influences you to conform to this world, make the choice to avoid it.

What is the promise associated with this verse? You will mature in your faith, you will be able to make better choices, you will be making progress in the process of sanctification.

God is eager to guard your mind with the peace which passes understanding as you dwell on whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure and whatever is lovely and of good repute, as commanded in Philipians 4:8.

This words "prove", in the Greek "dokimazo", test, examine and secondly to recognize as genuine after examination. Also to approve what the will of God is, is the idea of discernment.

Romans 12:3

You might wonder for a moment what this verse is doing here, but think with me. If your mind is renewed, if you are gaining insight into the will of God for your life and becoming wise in the understanding of what is good then you will be in the process of developing sound judgment.

What is an indicator of sound or sober judgment as the KJV has it? I believe that pride is the number one sin which is part of our DNA. It is something so easy to see in others and so hard to see in ourselves. We see examples from the puffed up, arrogant man to the one who is said to have "low self-esteem". All of this is pride; it is the focus on self. How do you behave when you don't get your own way? The answer to that question will give you a sense of your pride quotient. Do you have to be the center of attention all the time?

We are to look at ourselves honestly, ask God to give wisdom and find out if we are properly modest about our abilities which have been given to us by God. Why this focus on pride? It was the cause of the fall in the Garden of Eden. Just look at the reasons Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Genesis 3:6 says the "tree was beautiful to look at and desirable to make one wise". They were not satisfied with their Father who knew all wisdom and who commanded them to not eat it, no, they wanted that wisdom for themselves.

Self-esteem is such an important idea in our culture that in many places our public school education has elevated it over the learning of necessary information. I have never met anyone with too little self-esteem, we are focused on ourselves from morning to night. We may be puffed up and arrogant or we may be shy and withdrawn but it all comes down to the same thing, too much emphasis on me.

What is the basis of healthy self-esteem or self-worth? The key to an honest and accurate evaluation is knowing the basis of our self-worth—our identity in Christ. Apart from him, He says we can do nothing of eternal value; in Him we are valuable and capable of worthy service. Evaluating ourselves by worldly standards of success and achievement can cause us to think too much about our worth in the eyes of other and thus miss our true value in God's eyes. Quoted from the life application New Testament commentary.

Why not be proud if you are gifted greatly?

God gives all talent and ability. Instead of thinking how great we are at something, we should be concentrating on how kind God is to give us this gift or power.

We see also that God gives gift in a certain amount, according to the measure of faith. Notice here is another reason for a humble spirit, God has given to everyone, we are not unique in having received from God. If we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God and constantly renew our minds with His word we will have a proper understanding of Who He is and who we are and how we fit into His plan.

Romans 12:4-5

Here is truth that can help us stay grounded as we consider our gifts, every one has a gift and it is to be used for the sake of others, rather than self aggrandizement. Paul says we are like a body. The body works best when it is whole, take members away and nothing is going to work well. Every person has his or her part to do. There is to be unity in our service of Christ as we bring our gifts together to serve Him.

Romans 12:6-8

So we are not to be proud of our talents but offer them to Christ through the service of others.

I believe this reference to prophesy is not to those who foretell the future but that gift of warning the people concerning sin and duty or reminding people what they already know, just as the Old Testament prophets frequently did.

Preachers are prophets as they reveal God's word. Remember all these gifts are to be exercised in faith so the preacher, the teacher, those who serve the church and those who exhort (encourage or urge); all this service to Christ is to be done in faith and with diligence and cheerfulness.

Romans 12:9

Friends all our duty to each other is summed up here, it is to be done in love. What does it mean to say that love is to be without hypocrisy? It is genuine love and it is generated by the love of Christ, it is not a pretend love. This is God's love, agape love. This is the self-sacrificing love, the loves that does good for others as they have need even at the inconvenience of self. It is Christ's love. True believers have God's love within them because "God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us Romans 5:5. Remember Jesus said that would be how people would know we are His disciples. It is not by how we dress or where we go to church, it is by our love for one another.

I recently have had an opportunity to share the gospel with a young woman who has had a very hard life. Neglected, raised in foster care and suffering the consequences of bad choices I shared the good news of the love of Christ with her and she received Christ as her Savior. A few weeks later I inquired as to how she was doing and when I asked her how she knew she was saved she said "because I love people now, I used to hate everyone" I thought that was a very profound statement. Friends it's no wonder she hated everyone. Every person in her life who she should have been able to trust let her down, broke her heart and wounded her soul. Only the love of Christ can heal the wounded soul and He did just that, not only healed but also filled her with enough love to share with others.

Well here we have an instruction of just exactly what we are to hate, or abhor. We are to hate evil. Can we admit that hatred is a Christian virtue? Hatred must be there and it must be directed against what is evil, rather than against individuals. We tolerate evil at our peril. Hebrews 1:8 and (quoting Ps 45) tells us that Jesus hated lawlessness. What is lawlessness? Turn to 1 John 3:4 "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness". Jesus hates sin. We can easily see what He hated as we walk with Him through the gospels. He hated the behavior of self righteous hypocrites who pretended to be religious but inside were like graves "full of dead men's bones", meaning defiled. Time after time Jesus exposed the Pharisees hypocrisy and lack of love or even kindness. Jesus perfectly embodied this verse; He loved genuinely and He hated evil.

The LORD JESUS was and is God, and the Bible is everywhere marked by God's hatred of all that is evil. When we are commanded to hate what is evil it is saying that we are to be like our Savior.