

Romans 12:1-8 "Renewal of the Mind"

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Introduction

Today is the first Sunday of February. The first month of the new year has already passed by in a flash. Nonetheless we're still in the midst of this uncertainty caused by the coronavirus. Given this unpleasant environment, what should we focus on as we move forward? In today's message, we'll take a look at the fundamental principles of walking according to Scripture.

Romans 12: 1-18

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

I would like to especially focus on verse 2 from today's Scripture in light of the current coronavirus situation.

12: 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

I would like for us to bear this Scripture in mind together as a church this year. It's about renewing our minds and deepening our relationship with God. It's difficult for us to physically gather for service and worship, making it easy for interpersonal relationships to wither. Communities are likely to weaken as well, and I assume there are many people who feel lonely and isolated.

However, it is in times like these that we should revisit our relationship with God. Renewing our minds, we should seek to know the heart of God and realign our walks with Him. In today's message, there will be three points. The first point I would like to emphasize is that the focus of a Christ-filled life is on worship.

Secondly, as it is said to be a "holy living sacrifice," let's take a look at what a holy life entails, addressing the matter of holiness. Finally the third point will be about the interpersonal relationship that is highlighted in the idea of community that we see in verses 3-8. Again, the three points are worship, holiness, and community.

1. Worship

The book of Romans draws into its latter half from chapter 12. The former half, from chapters 1-11, makes clear how the righteousness of God was made manifest through Christ. It demonstrates how Jews and Greeks (gentiles) alike are sinners that have to be saved by faith, by believing in Jesus Christ, and be filled with the Gospel, which is the good news of

God. And the love of God is the driving force behind the salvation that comes to those who believe.

Paul is appealing to us that this love of God can change the world. The gentiles were worshiping idols that they set for themselves. Because of that, they were losing their sense of humanity. They were dominated by money, power and sex, and they only had pitiful relationships based on distorted values. Communities fell into conflict, hatred, confrontation or indifference. It is only the Gospel through Christ that can overcome sin and change the world.

The Jews, on the other hand, turned to the correct God to worship. However, they failed because they tried to use their own way, the righteousness of the law, to achieve salvation, rather than relying on God's way through the Gospel. They thought that by observing circumcision, the Sabbath, and certain food regulations, they could obtain salvation. They eventually ended up spreading hatred and strife. They didn't understand that it would only be by committing to a new way of life and a new vision that the history, traditions and teachings that they inherited would be fulfilled in the truest sense.

What do the vision, humanity, and community guided by the Gospel specifically look like? If you accept the truth of the Gospel and receive God's love, your life, values, relationships, and ways of life will all be altered.

True worship exists in the heart of the man who has been renewed in Christ.

12: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

If you think of worship as one beautiful aspect of your life, such as an accessory, that is a huge mistake. If you compare worship to a body part, it's like the heart that gives life to the whole body, and it's like a brain that integrates the physical body and the mind for balance.

Your life is directed and everything is governed by what you value most and what is most important to you, and therefore what you worship. That is why it is important to worship the true God. If you worship the wrong thing (idol worship), you end up in self-destruction.

Romans 1: 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.

But if you worship the God who created you and loved you by sending Christ, you will regain the true sense of the word, humanity, and be freed from sin. You will be able to live your true self freely and to the fullest. You will bear the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, tolerance, kindness, goodwill, sincerity, gentleness and self-control.

What's more, the worship I am talking about is not just performing so-called religious acts. Worship is at the center of renewed people living in the Gospel, and it is required of them that everything in their lives pleases God and reveals His greatness. To offer up your body to God means not only offering up your Sunday prayers, but offering all aspects of your daily life, including your work, your mind, body, words, deeds, time and assets.

2. Holiness

Paul refers to those who worship God as "holy living sacrifices." It refers to the sacrifice of the best animals offered for worship in the Old Testament, and it was promised that God would gladly accept it. Then, it continues as follows.

12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

According to the Bible, a person who worships the true God who achieved salvation through Christ is a Sacred being. Jesus himself says to his disciples in John 15:3.

John 15:3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Many people may feel uncomfortable with this word, thinking, "What? How am I a holy or clean person? I couldn't possibly be a saint!" Indeed, the word "holy" has ethical implications. It conjures up an image of a saint who is correct in his words and actions, in terms of both personality and daily life.

However, originally, the word "holy" means distinguished from, or different from. God is holy because He is infinite, eternal, and immutable-- entirely different from sinful humans. When we say humans are holy, it means we are distinguished by believing in and worshipping the God of the Gospel, who has given us the good news by sending his Son, and achieved salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross.

Therefore, we weren't holy from the beginning in the ethical sense. We worship the true God who is alive, embracing the vision of the Gospel that God accomplished and is still progressing through Jesus, believing in Christ as the Savior, and thanking him for forgiveness. It is holiness that comes from faith in God's grace and the gospel of Christ.

That's why it says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." In other words, we must not build our values and worldviews, ways of life and thinking, visions of daily life and future, relationships and communities apart from believing in God and worshiping Him.

Rather, as it is written here, it is always important to distinguish what is the heart of God, that is, what is good and pleasing to God and therefore complete. In the Old Testament, the holiness that God gives us is revealed in the continuous self-reflection of God's vision and wisdom that has been revealed and transmitted to Israel. Michael Horton

Our goal is ...to accommodate ourselves to the real drama of history. Jesus Christ and the drama of redemption that begins, climaxes, and is consummated in him is the real world, the real setting of our life's play. ...In Christ, "change" means growth in Christ as we are transformed through perpetual immersion in Scripture as the story of our life.
("A Better Way", p.57)

Of course, no one has perfectly managed to obtain holiness. Paul himself knew as much. He was created as a holy being resembling God, but he left God and degenerated into sin. But he was forgiven by Christ, declared a saint, yet is still distorted, but it is nonetheless reshaped by the Holy Spirit into a being that resembles Christ (in the form of God).

3. Community

So brothers and sisters, why don't we humbly encourage one another? That is the third point of today's sermon. Paul goes into a theory of community right after he talks about the holiness of worship. In fact, it is already expressed in the first verse that the people of God worship by encouraging each other, not isolating themselves.

"Your body" refers to the many people who worship God. However, the "holy living sacrifice" that God is willing to accept is singular and unique. As such, worship and holiness are

achieved in the community when many come together and become one holy living sacrifice.

12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Like the organs in one body, the members are united and cooperate together. Each person acknowledges that he/she needs others. We need mutual support in the community to live by the Gospel, and to understand ourselves and to live in the Gospel.

However, what is often seen in reality is that only a few people in the community are working very hard and many others are watching in the audience.

Pareto's law indicates economic activity using the 80:20 rule. In business, 80% of sales are generated by 20% of all customers. Eighty percent of product sales are generated by 20 percent of all product brands. 80% of sales are generated by 20% of all employees. According to Pareto's law, "the work, mission, and dedication of the Church are borne by 20% of all Christians."

The Bible takes a different view from Pareto's law. Each of us is an organ, and we are all responsible for different functions, and we are all cooperating with each other. What are your special gifts? I would like for people to say about our church, "Grace City is a bit different, isn't it? I don't think Pareto's law applies here. Everyone is used for his/her talent, everyone is doing different things, and they are working on spreading the Gospel through the unity of the Holy Spirit."

To that end, let's renew our minds. Let's reflect on how our worship of God is through the Gospel of Christ. Let's look back on Sunday services, daily devotions, and daily life and work. Are they focused on God? Is your heart on fire for God and are you walking with God in a holy manner? It is the vision of the holy worship and the holy walk that creates the real purpose of life.

Christ has sacrificed Himself for you. Worship is the service of God, but He really served as a servant for us first. The Lord followed death on the cross, and became our blessing. May Christ be praised, and may God alone be glorified!

Romans 12: 1-8

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