

## Romans 12:1-2

Good morning RCM. So good to be with you in person today after being remote 2 of the last 3 weeks. If you're watching this online, thank you for hanging with us here. I encourage you, to never let the online viewing of a service substitute for being physically gathered with the church on the Lord's day. Virtual church isn't a thing. It's not good for your spiritual health, even if you consider it is best for your physical health.

This morning we're finishing off a couple of weeks in Romans, and I'll ask you to go ahead and turn to Romans 12:1-2. If you have a device, make sure you go to the CSB.

If you've been with us in some capacity over the last few weeks, we've been camped in the book of Romans. This incredibly rich letter that Paul wrote to the church, seeking their help in continuing his ministry; what a treasure for us and the church for the last 2,000 years to have these words.

Some of the things that Paul has worked through so far:

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ, is the ONLY power of salvation
- That salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus ALONE.
  - Not a little bit of faith and a little bit of trying hard – Nonsense
  - Faith alone
- And that all people, everywhere are guilty before God and in need of salvation.
- But also that God offers salvation to all who will believe
- We've seen in Romans that sin entered the world through Adam, and all people for all time are sinners
- But the gift of life with Christ, the righteousness of Christ, is available to all who will believe
- Last week we looked at a portion of Romans 8 where Paul would point us to the security we have in Christ
- In the immediately following verses we get a glimpse of Paul's heartfelt desire to see his Israelites come to faith in Christ. To the point of saying that he would, if possible, give his own salvation to see them repent and believe in Jesus.
- Later in CH9 we see the truth that salvation is 100% from God (start to finish)
  - 9:16 So then, it does not depend on human will or effort but on God who shows mercy.
- In CH11 we see that some in Israel will believe in Jesus and be saved
- And then Paul closes CH11 with this incredible hymn of praise:

**<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches  
and the wisdom and the knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable his judgments  
and untraceable his ways!**

**<sup>34</sup> For who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has been his counselor?**

**<sup>35</sup> And who has ever given to God,  
that he should be repaid?<sup>[n]</sup>**

**<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him  
and to him are all things.  
To him be the glory forever. Amen.**

And then in Romans 12:1-2 he writes:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

In these verses, Paul is transitioning from theology – how we think about God – to how we live for God. And the next like 4 chapters unpack the APPLICATION of the Gospel to our lives. How we match what we believe, with how we act and behave. If you were with us when we studied the book of John, you remember that Biblically speaking, to BELIEVE in Jesus is to BELIVE-LOVE-OBEY Jesus. Because, to be sure, we are saved by grace alone through faith in Jesus alone – but our belief in Jesus will always, if it is authentic, will always make a claim on how we live. And it's the “how we live” portion of the book of Romans that Paul is transitioning to in Chapter 12.

And we see that in the very first word. Therefore.

### **I. Therefore In View of the mercies of God**

Paul's given us for 11 chapters, the beauty of the Gospel, the greatness of Christ, the glory of Jesus.

And specifically in Chapters 9-11, Paul has used the word mercy 10 times. It's as if Paul is saying **STOP AND REMEMBER THE GREAT MERCIES OF GOD**

- Remember what YOUR wickedness deserves
- Remember that God's has shown compassionate mercy to you
- Remember that you didn't just mess up a little, you were broken, jacked up and a total trainwreck

But God has shown mercy to all who believe. And allow the mercy that you have received to change how you live today.

### **II. Urge you to Present your bodies as a living sacrifice**

This urging that Paul is giving them, carries a weight of authority. He's not suggesting. He's not giving them an opt out form to sign. He's URGING THEM THAT THIS IS THE **ONLY ACCEPTABLE RESPONSE** TO THE MERCIES OF GOD!

He's not urging them to come to church for 90 minutes on Sunday. He's not urging them to read their Bibles every day. He's not urging them to try and develop a consistent prayer life. He's not even urging them to share Jesus with their neighbors and friends and families.

All of those things are good and helpful and should be priorities for the ordinary Christian life. BUT...Paul peels back a layer, and says offer you bodies as living sacrifice to God.

Now, I don't know where your travels have taken you. I don't know what you've experienced in this life. I've never seen an actual sacrifice. Never. The closest thing I guess I've ever witnessed – a couple of times when I was travelling in Tanzania, my mission team was presented with the gift of a live chicken. We had made contact with this family, and we kept coming back to visit with them and share Jesus with them. And on a couple of occasions, the patriarch of the family presented us with a live chicken as a gift. And well that chicken became dinner. And our cook looked at me and laughed, and said “organic”. The chicken though, he left it all in the stew pot for dinner. Nothing left off.

And this is how we need to think through the offering of our bodies to God as an act of worship. **Nothing is left off. No area of our life is off limits.** As one commentator says from the home life to the marketplace, nothing is off limits.

And unlike the Old Testament animal sacrifices, we are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices – nothing in our lives is outside of His authority and use. Sadly though, every one of us if we're honest, is going to silo off sections of our lives. We won't actually say it, or maybe you will, but a lot of us won't actually admit that there's an area of our life that we just don't want to use for the glory of God and good of others. We want to just sit back in comfort in an area.

But...the call to offer yourself as a living sacrifice is a call to offer ALL of yourself, IN RESPONSE TO THE GREATNESS OF THE MERCIES OF GOD! **It's really the only acceptable response!**

The glad and joyful offering of ALL of ourselves to God. I couldn't help but think through the hymn lyrics to a song – I Surrender All – I grew up in a church we sang that one like every Sunday.

All to Jesus I surrender  
All to Him I freely give  
I will ever love and trust Him  
In His presence daily live

All to Jesus I surrender  
Humbly at His feet I bow  
Worldly pleasures all forsaken  
Take me Jesus, take me now

Many of us though, if we're honest, really are sing "Some to Jesus I surrender / Some to him I reluctantly give"

Paul call this living sacrifice of ourselves our "true" worship. The word translated true is from the same Greek word that we get logic or reasonable. You could translate it reasonable – saying that, this type of offering of ourselves (all of ourselves) - this is the only reasonable response to those that have grasped even a little bit of the mercies of God.

As we offer our bodies – we also Guard Our Minds

### **III. Guard Our Minds**

#### **Re-Read V2**

#### **Do Not Be Conformed**

- It's like being squeezed into a mold
- Don't let your mind be squeezed into a mold of worldliness (this age)
- Our natural drift ISN'T toward Godliness. Our natural drift is toward worldliness. And these wonderful little devices make it even harder

I think we all would be well served taking the warning from Hebrews 2:1

"For this reason, we must pay attention all the more to what we have heard, so that we will not drift away."

## **But be transformed**

How?

Deal with sin radically / Consume the scripture regularly

Here's how Paul put it in Colossians 3:1-5

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is your<sup>[a]</sup> life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.

## **But there's a purpose behind this call to guard our minds → SO THAT YOU MAY DISCERN**

We must be able to tell what is from God and what is from the world. Some of you may think, well Paul it's super easy. And some things are super easy. But most things aren't, until and unless we allow the Word of God and the Spirit of God to renew our minds DAILY.

And here's the thing about being discerning. It's not so much knowing the difference between right and wrong. That's important, sure. But there's way more to it. Charles Spurgeon, 19<sup>th</sup> Century reformed Baptist pastor, defines discernment as "knowing the difference between right and almost right." There's a lot of opinions and ideas that sound almost right, but are lies straight from the pit of hell.

And it's only as our minds are transformed by the Spirit of God through the Word of God that we will ever know the difference – and be able to discern what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God.

## **Closing**

**Have you experienced the mercies of God?**

**What are you doing, to allow your mind to be renewed?**

**Are you willing to offer all of yourself to the Lord? I'm convinced there are most of us here today that, if we're totally honest, there's a few places that we almost think are off limits. Finances, time, relationships, workplace, school friends, what we watch on TV/Internet.**