

Sacrifices  
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Romans 12:1-2, 9-18

Happy Mothers Day!

How can a follower of Christ live a more Christ-like life? How can I love others more like Jesus does? How can I relate to others in Christ-like harmony and friendship? How can I serve God with enthusiasm like Jesus did? How can I have a more Christ-like response when the bottom drops out of life? How can I respond in a Christ-like manner to those who hate me? How do I deal with evil?

Those questions should be on the lips of every Christ-follower. I've trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, now what? In Romans 12 Paul responds to our questions.

Big Idea: How can a follower of Christ live more like Christ? By SACRIFICE and SURRENDER. Surrendering all of ourselves to be filled by His Holy Spirit.

- After eleven chapters of teaching what God has done for all mankind through Jesus, Paul uses another “therefore” to turn very practical.
- Before we can live with Christ-like character, Paul needs us to understand there is an act of the will that must take place on our part. Jesus gave His all as a sacrifice for us, now we must surrender all of ourselves in return.
- To illustrate this I want us to get a picture in our minds. Imagine water flowing down from a faucet into a clear glass until the glass overflows and the water spills and spreads in every direction around the glass. The vertical flow leads to a horizontal spread of water around the glass.
- Keep that image in your mind as we study this passage.
- The “water” of grace is flowing, we need to place our glass under the flow.

Romans 12:1–2 (ESV)

**A Living Sacrifice**

**12** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Paul says, lay your whole self on the altar as a living sacrifice.
- What better image could Paul have used? His readers knew all about animal sacrifice and the shedding of blood for forgiveness of sin under the old covenant. He had just taught that Jesus died as the perfect forever sacrifice for our sin. Jesus is now a living sacrifice and we should be too!

- Paul appeals, urges, or beseeches us. It's the picture of a coach who is urging us on. Paul is our personal trainer in becoming spiritually fit.
- Our motivation for surrendering all we are to Christ: the mercies of God.
- Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:3 (ESV) "According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."
- God has shown us so much mercy how could we NOT respond this way?
- Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we can lay our lives on the altar as a living sacrifice that God will find "holy and acceptable."
- This is an act of worship that is reasonable. It only makes sense.
- Back to our illustration, this act of worship is like placing our glass under the flow of water. God turned on the flow of His grace when He saved us, but every day we need a fresh refilling of His power and grace.
- Some of us only short-change ourselves. We only get half a glass of grace and run into life. It's no wonder we're thirsty and dry before lunchtime!
- Conformed – "The most common use of the word in secular literature is in reference to molding clay around a form or casting metal. In both instances in the Bible, the verb is passive."<sup>i</sup> [Being molded by society.]
- The NLT states it this way, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world..."<sup>ii</sup> Illustration: Someone moved away and their accent changed.

Jesus prayed to God the Father in John 17:15–16 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

James 4:4b (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> ... whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- Don't be CONformed, shaped by the world, instead be TRANSformed.
- Transformed – [The Greek word] "metamorpho (3339) "to transform, to change into another form" [metamorphosis] ...illustrated in nature when a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly...fundamental transformation in the nature of something without altering its identity. For example, an acorn and the tree it produces are the same individual; however, the nature of the acorn has been radically altered."<sup>iii</sup>
- Conforming = A Christ-follower that looks like a pagan. Transformed = A former pagan looking more and more like Jesus from the inside out.
- Renewing your mind. **Question: if I'm displaying good behavior on the outside [remember the Pharisees?] who cares what I'm thinking in my mind? Why do my thoughts matter if I'm outwardly good?**
- We renew our minds through scripture, prayer, and time alone with God.
- Through scripture God transforms how I look at people and life. Ever go too long without getting glasses? How did the world look when you did?
- Asking God to renew my mind is like putting on God's eyeglasses.
- With new "lenses" God allows me to "discern" His perfect will for me.

- Speaking of glasses, back to our illustration, renewing our minds is like refilling that glass of the living water of God's grace for each day.
- I could selfishly just get enough of God's grace for me but His plan is for that grace to overflow for the benefit of others.
- In verses three through eight Paul talks about how the family of God is really like the parts of a human body. He talks about using our gifts for His glory. I encourage you to go back and read it. We're moving to verse nine.

Romans 12:9–21 (ESV)

### **Marks of the True Christian**

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

- Before we unpack these Christ-like character traits here's an important point. I spent so much time on verses one and two because surrendering ourselves, renewing our minds, and being transformed makes it possible to actually DO what's in the rest of this chapter.
- None of this works unless someone has trusted Christ as Savior and Lord.
- No matter how long an unsaved person holds their glass under the faucet, there is no flow of grace until God turns it on at the moment of salvation.
- Verses nine and ten: Have genuine love not "fake" love. There's lots of "fake" love in the world and even in the church. We might challenge Paul and say, *"I have to fake it till I make it when it comes to loving some people!"* *"There are some people I don't even like much less love!"*
- Those are real emotions, but Jesus even said love our enemies.
- I told you these things would only work with our glass filled with grace.
- This is agape love as described in 1 Corinthians 13. It's putting the other person's interests ahead of yours. That's hard to do with some people.
- That's why Jesus said love your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27) Applying that standard changes our thinking about loving others.
- Lord, help me want what is best for this person as much as I do for myself.
- When Paul says "hate what is wrong and hold tightly to what is good," I think he's pointing us to what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 13: don't envy or boast; don't be arrogant or rude or insist on your own way; don't be irritable or resentful; don't rejoice at wrongdoing.<sup>iv</sup> Be patient and kind.

In John 13:35 Jesus said, (ESV) <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

- We are to love people with brotherly affection and go overboard in showing them honor. Sometimes that takes a "glassful of grace."
- Verse eleven: Serve the Lord with enthusiasm not laziness! "Fervent in spirit" is a picture of water boiling. Serve Him with gladness!

- Verse twelve: When times are tough, Christ-followers still rejoice in hope (our hope in Christ), show patience in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Sounds like the COVID-19 crisis to me!
- When trouble comes God’s promises don’t cease, they INCREASE!
- Verse thirteen: “Contribute to the needs of the saints and show hospitality.” This also applies to the current COVID-19 crisis.
- That’s how we are react to circumstances. How should we react to others?

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

- The MESSAGE paraphrase: “Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they’re happy; share tears when they’re down. Get along with each other; don’t be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don’t be the great somebody.”<sup>v</sup>
- Wouldn’t you like to have a friend or family member like that!
- Some of my most special memories of true friends are times when we laughed together and cried together. It’s true friendship when you do both.
- Paul, there are a lot of evil people in this world. What about them?

<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

- “If possible” and “so far as it depends on you” live peaceably.
- So, where do we draw the line with that? Are we to be “doormats?”
- I would propose three different situations: offenses, broken relationships, and physical (or national) harm. Here’s what I mean:
  - Verbal criticism or offense – In general, let it go!
  - What about someone slandering your reputation? Pray for guidance on whether your reputation is defense enough. Sometimes confrontation and defense is appropriate. See Paul’s example in 1 Thess. 2; 2 Cor.10–13.
  - A Christian brother or sister causes harm to another – See Matthew 18:15-17 for how to handle this biblically.
  - Someone physically attacks you, your family, or other innocent people, to do harm: fight to defend from physical harm then pursue justice through the system God has ordained for that.
- What about payback? Score settling belongs to God.

<sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” <sup>20</sup> To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## So, What's the Takeaway?

- Living the Christ-like life is a radical proposition!
- Loving the unlovable, being patient in trouble, blessing those who hurt you, never paying back evil with more evil, this kind of living runs counter to every human instinct we have. It can't be done in our "humanness."
- We can only live this way if we are filled with the grace of God and the power of His Spirit living in us. Remember that picture of God's flowing grace filling the empty glass of a believer to overflow?
- He turns on the flow at the moment of salvation, but we have to place our glass under the flow as we surrender all of ourselves to Him.
- It's a daily exercise (some days it's an HOURLY exercise) as we renew our minds and transform who we are by reading and obeying His word, praying for His strength, and spending time in His presence.
- Only those who have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord can live like this.
- If we are saved, living this way starts with SACRIFICE and SURRENDER.
- Surrendering all of ourselves to be filled by His Holy Spirit. Turning over the "keys" to our minds, bodies, and lives to Jesus.
- If Paul were here this morning he would be URGING us as our personal, spiritual trainer to lay our lives on the altar each day asking God to use us in any way He sees fit.
- It's only reasonable that we do this because of all Jesus has done for us!
- When we get up tomorrow let's don't forget to fill up your glass with His grace. Then we can get up and GO as living sacrifices who are growing more like Him.

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<sup>i</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Romans* (Swindoll's New Testament Insights) (p. 223). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 12:2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Romans* (Swindoll's New Testament Insights) (p. 223). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

<sup>iv</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (1 Co 13:4–6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>v</sup> Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Ro 12:14–16). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.