

The Mindset of a Member

Romans 11:36-12:5

³⁶ For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen. 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. 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. ³ 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. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: ⁵ So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

We began the last message from 2 Corinthians 3:18 with this simple question: "What's your story?" The world has a storyline, and the Scriptures have a very different storyline for you. So, if your story had begun with "Once upon a time . . ." which story have you lived out? Which storyline do you trust? And how do you see that story lived out in your choices? For instance, Paul wrote in Romans 12:5 that we (as believers) are members of His Body. This is a living blueprint. And this is the story of His glory. It's the mindset of a member of His Body. Once you understand the story of His glory and embrace it as your own, your life can be transformed.

The Story of His Glory: Praising God Supremely

Paul wrote a doxology – a hymn of praise to God – in Romans 11:33-36. In fervent admiration for the mercies of God (see verse 32), Paul wrote: "³³ **O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!** ³⁴ **For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?** ³⁵ **Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again?** ³⁶ **For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom *be* glory forever. Amen."**

In his remarkable hymn, Paul summarized the first eleven chapters of Romans. This is like sailing a tiny sailboat on a vast ocean with nothing else in sight. The sheer size of the sea is stunning; but consider the depths below. The vast ocean of God's mercies are measureless; we are unable to plumb the depths of His wisdom. Exalting God's immeasurable ways of wisdom, knowledge and justice, Paul rejoiced in the Lord. Who is wise enough to counsel the all-wise God? Since the Creator God made all things, what can we give Him that He does not already own? Paul summed it up with three little phrases in Romans 11:36: "Of Him"ⁱ (or "from Him"), "through Him," and "to Him." Our Lord is the Creator, Sustainer and Merciful King of all. To Him be the glory forever!

Romans 11:36 is the foundational blueprint for all Christian living. It answers three essential questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? In earthquake country, architects design foundations that will "float" on earthquake "waves." The building is attached to that "floating" foundation in such a way that it remains stable in an earthquake. We need that kind of foundation for living. Romans 11:36 is the basis for a Christian view of the world. Meditate on this as a foundation for living. This is at the heart of our ministry of Christian education. It is the reason our Christian school

exists. Instead of the theory of evolution, we teach that God created everything; all things are from Him. Instead of stressing “Mother Nature,” or power politics, we teach that God alone is the Sustainer; all things are through Him; by Him all things consist; “history” is “His story.” Instead of humanism – the teaching that man is the measure of all things – we teach the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ; all things are to Him. Now the word “therefore” in Romans 12:1 comes into sharp focus. Once you understand the story of His glory and embrace it as your own, your life can be transformed.

The Story of His Glory: Giving Ourselves to God and Trusting Him to Transform Us

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.* 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.*

The matchless mercies of God (“... **that He might have mercy upon all,**” 11:32) are the basis for Paul’s appeal: “**by the mercies of God.**” When you consider God’s riches bestowed upon you, what is your reasonable response? “... **that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.**” Since our Redeemer gave Himself for us, we should give ourselves to Him. Think about how false religions must impose this on others. It has to be some form of “*He is God and you are not, so give Him everything you’ve got.*” That’s a recipe for dead, dusty, duty. But our Creator loved us and gave Himself for us. This frees us to respond to Him with sacrificial love. We can passionately proclaim this to others without becoming proud. The blood of Jesus washed away our sins; united with Him, we’ve risen again, victorious over death. Now we live to please Him who gave so much for us. Have you known the joy of giving yourself to the Lord as a living sacrifice? Once you understand the story of His glory and embrace it as your own, your life can be transformed.

But there’s more to the story of His glory. We have the freedom to turn away from conformity to the world. The word “conformity” translates a word from which we get our English word “schematic.” Don’t let the world wedge you into its blueprint – its mold. No! By renewing your mind, you can be transformed. The word translated as “transformed” is the basis for our English word “metamorphosis.” This is the same word used to describe that Jesus was “transfigured” (Matthew 7:2; Mark 9:2). Think of how His face shone when He was transfigured before His disciples. We should not expect that some physical light should shine out of us. But He transforms us into “the light of the world.” No longer in darkness, we live in the light. Our change – our metamorphosis – is much more amazing than the caterpillar who becomes a butterfly. Believers are the “firstfruits” (the first glorious fruit) of the new heaven and the new earth which are coming.

³ 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.

God turns us away from “the pride of life” to serve God and others. When you embrace the story of His glory, you learn to think about yourself differently. You don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. His grace changes all that. Place your faith in His ways. He will take care of you.

When God transforms us, it is not transformation at a distance. No! He makes us members of His own Body! **⁴ For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: ⁵ So**

we, *being many*, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. And now, we are members with each other. We are joined together in the same Body of Christ. Once you understand the story of His glory and embrace it as your own, your life can be transformed.

The wise men brought their gifts to Jesus. How can we be like the wise men with our spiritual gifts? In our family fellowship groups this evening, we want to talk about how we can use our gifts for Him. Those gifts are “from Him” and “through Him;” how can we give them “to Him?” Some of the gifts which He gave to us at Calvary Baptist Church are listed in verses 6 through 8. Verses 9 through 21 teach us important principles to keep in mind as we serve together. How should we apply today’s text?

Applications of Today’s Text

- ❖ **Set aside some time this week to praise God for His vast wisdom and knowledge – which extends far beyond human understanding, 33-34** Use Psalm 19 to consider His wonders in the heavens. Or use Psalm 139 to think about the wonders of your human body. Give Him praise!
- ❖ **Thank Him for being the Sovereign Source of everything good thing in your life, 35**
- ❖ **Honor Him as the Creator, Sustainer and merciful King, 36** Think through what it means to say that “The Lord is my Shepherd” (Psalm 23). As our Shepherd, He owns us, but He also comforts and protects us. We don’t live under “He’s God and you’re not so give Him everything you’ve got.” No, He is our caring Shepherd.
- ❖ **By giving careful thought to how to serve Him, please the Lord by presenting your body to Him as a living sacrifice 12:1**

Only one life will soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last. (C.T. Studd)ⁱⁱ

If Jesus is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all. (Jim Eliot’s appeal to believers to be a living sacrifice.)

Only two choices on the shelf: pleasing God or pleasing self.

Are you going to live for your nerve endings, or for what is never ending?

Is your body a toy for your lusts or a tool for the Lord?

What is it that you have given up recently in order to please Him?

- ❖ **Think about the world’s blueprint – its storyline for you – and how you will refuse it this week, by renewing your mind to be transformed. 12:2** Think about the way others drive – with disregard for the speed limit and human life. How should you respond to the pressure to drive like they do?
☺ What is the world’s storyline for how you should use your money? What does God’s Word say about your finances and how will you respond? What is the best use of your time according to our society? How will you use the Scriptures to confront that pressure this week? If you don’t have time to read God’s Word and meditate on Him, you will have plenty of time to follow society’s scheme. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. If the Messiah is your King, then it’s time to let Him change you. Otherwise, you will follow the way of all mankind and try to be a “man-king.”
- ❖ **Using the grace of God and your faith in Him, put away your pride by confession and repentance. 12:3** God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:5; 1 Peter 5:5). Follow the advice of Hosea 14:4, “**Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously . . .**” Pride could destroy our fellowship. Turn away from it.
- ❖ **Recognize your membership in the Body of Christ and think about ways that you could respond to other members of His Body here at Calvary. 12:4-5** This is the mindset of a member.

Once you understand the story of His glory and embrace it as your own, your life can be transformed.

*The depths of His riches of wisdom, we praise!
His judgments unsearchable, and all His ways!
His knowledge surpassing can never be known,
And what can we give Him that He does not own?*

Creator, Sustainer and Merciful King,
To Him be the glory in everything!
For “from Him” and “through Him” and “to Him” we rise
To know the Lord Jesus as our highest prize.

*My sacrificed body I give Him today
By living to please Him in every way,
Refusing to be to this old world conformed,
Renewing my mind that I might be transformed.*

*His will I discern as He changes my ways,
And what He will do will astound and amaze!
His grace will transform me – my passions and pride –
As I seek to serve Him and live by His side*

Discussion questions for this evening:

How could someone use Romans 11:36 to change his or her thinking?

From the list in Romans 6:6-8, what gifts do you recognize among your fellow members at Calvary?

Which spiritual gifts need to be more skillfully employed within our congregation?

What spiritual gift (or gifts) do you enjoying using to serve the Lord?

Among the people in your discussion group, how have you benefitted spiritually from the way they have used their spiritual gifts?

Today’s text clearly teaches that the Lord transforms believers; this is the story of His glory. Would you be willing to give a testimony of how the Lord changed your thinking and helped you to serve Him more effectively?

Which principles in verses 9-21 help you to put Romans 12 into practice? Why?

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ⁱ “Of” translates the little preposition [ek] meaning “out of” or “from.”

ⁱⁱ C.T. Studd’s entire poem is worth reading and thinking through. When his brother became seriously ill, Studd asked himself, “What is all the fame and flattery worth ... when a man comes to face eternity?”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Studd You can see the entire poem here:

<https://scripturetype.com/blog/2017/3/1/only-one-life>