

Title: Spiritual Service
Text: Romans 12: 1-16
Scripture reading: I Cor 12: 20-27
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Romans 12: 1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God

True doctrine taught by God the Father in the hearts of his children, produces children who are willing to honor and obey our heavenly Father.

We are going to look at what it is to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God--which is our reasonable, spiritual, service. Everything Paul has said up to this point--first 11 chapters--is the doctrine of the true and living God, everything he says here and afterwards is the doctrine of the true and living God. Each child of God will have to be taught of God the message of our passage today the same as the doctrine in the first 11 chapters.

Every saint was conceived in sin the first time, cut off from God, WE WERE DIVIDED AND WE WERE DIVIDERS. All we did caused division and we cared only for ourselves. Paul declared in the first 3 chapters our total depravity, our guilt and condemnation in that natural born state.

How has God made his children one with him and with each other?

That is the gospel of this whole book. Chapters 3-5 declares that our justification is of God's grace alone, through the faithfulness of God's Son alone, through God's gift of faith alone, to the praise of God's glory alone; chapters 6-8 declares our life--our regeneration and conversion--is of God, through the Holy Spirit, to the praise and honor of God; chapters 8-11 declares in more detail that our salvation is of God's sovereign grace: his electing grace, his predestinating grace, his redeeming grace, his grace in providence. Then this entire work of the triune God in the salvation of chosen sinners is summed up--this is what distinguishes the salvation of the true and living God from all false gods:

Romans 11: 36: For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. 12: 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.

That which unites believers in devotion to God is the mercies of God toward totally helpless creatures of sin as all his children are by nature.

Almighty God, the thrice Holy God who spoke heaven and earth into existence, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, who rebukes the waves and the wind speaking by his Holy Spirit through Paul does not say, "I command you" but he says, "I beseech you"; not as to a slave but to children, not by the law of Moses, but by the mercies of God; not by the precepts of men, but by the mercies of God; not by the command of the church, but by the mercies of God.

Law commands by a legal fear. Grace draws in loving kindness. This is what it is to be taught of God in the heart: to be under grace, not under the law; to be taught of our heavenly Father, rather than under the judgment of an offended God; to be led of the Spirit, rather than being in bondage to the law of sin and death.

To the religious men who rule by law and fear and threats, Paul asked, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to

repentance?" (Romans 2: 4) Either you simply despise him or you have no idea that it is the gospel of Christ which leads sinners to repentance.

Example: that harlot brought an alabaster box of ointment, she stood behind him weeping; she washed his feet with her tears, wiped them with the hair of her head, and anointed his feet with the oil. The Pharisee spake within himself, saying, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him for she is a sinner." (Luke 7: 39-47.)

The Lord gave him a parable: one man owed much, one owed less, neither could pay and their lord forgave them both, which one loves more? The one to whom much was forgiven. The Pharisee didn't think himself a needy sinner. But she did. She had been forgiven much by the Lord and it was his mercies that drew her to him.

Luke 7: 47: Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

Psalm 116:12: What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

Lamentations 3: 21: This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 22: It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23: They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

Now if you have been forgiven much: **Romans 12: 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.**

And Be Ye Not Conformed To This World

Brethren, verses 1-5 are declaring how it is that these sin laden bodies of ours are accepted of God. Miss this and you miss what it is to present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God. The manner in which you receive the doctrine will be the manner, the attitude, the spirit, in which you serve. There is a way the world serves and a way which God's saints serve. Be ye not conformed to the world's way.

If you received the doctrine *of men*, rather than *of God*, rather than *through Christ, through the Holy Spirit*; then your sacrifice will be *conformed to this world's* manner of religion, your sacrifice will be *to you*, to *your glory*, rather than to *God--to whom be glory for ever*. You may make great sacrifice--natural man can do that. But it will be a sacrifice by which you imagine you have made yourself holy, more holy. Your sacrifice will promote you, not Christ. Your sacrifice will puff you up and promotes division. You will always be examining others, taking note of how little they measure up to you and your sacrifice will not promote unity but individuality. God will not receive it. **Be ye not conformed to this world.** This world--in religion and out--promotes individuality, self-greatness, self-exaltation.

But Be Ye Transformed

Romans 12: 2: Be ye 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.

If you are truly born of God, then you have a new man within you created by God. "Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col 3: 10.)"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (Col 3: 1, 2.)

Meditating on things above--the mercies of God--has a transforming affect on the believer. In the heart, in spirit you will have communion with the Lord, at the right hand of God in heavenly Jerusalem.

Example: The word "transformed" is the same used to describe the "transfiguration" of the Lord Jesus on the mount. He was on earth, but he communed with God, in the midst of the spirits of just men made perfect.

As you put on the new man--meditate upon the word of God and the mercies of God--this transforming is commune with God in the heart, being led of the Spirit, away from the waves below to heavenly Jerusalem above. The songwriter put it this way:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.*

The Acceptable Sacrifice

Romans 12: 2: that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

When the Holy Spirit has created you anew in Christ, as you set your affection above, on Christ Jesus, you "prove"--discern, approve, delight yourself in--that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. In other words, your sacrifice will not be in conformity to this worlds way of sacrificing but you will know more and more the only true sacrifice with which God is pleased.

I. This living sacrifice, this holy sacrifice, this acceptable sacrifice is COMING TO GOD IN ONE, THAT IS, CHRIST and IT IS ALL OF US AS THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST COMING IN HIM TOGETHER.

Holiness and Love is A State of Being Made One in Christ (Jonathan Edwards said that and it is true)

I want you to see that this living, holy, acceptable sacrifice is ONENESS IN CHRIST. The Lord Jesus praying to the Father said, "**Father, I will**"...here is that good, acceptable, perfect will of God. Notice how, this is sanctification--separation out of the world into Christ. And this be made one is transformation out of the world into Christ our Holiness. When God creates life in a wordly, self-righteous sinner, behold this transforming which is in Christ is the only way that the world may know the difference.

John 17: 11: And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*....17: Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth...

It is by the Lord Jesus Christ that though his saints remain in the world, they are not allowed to be conformed to the world. They are transformed into Christ through the truth imparted into the heart so that they are one, not with the world but with God the Father and God the Son.

John 17: 19: And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 21: That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22: And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Now go back to our text for a moment, and let's see that this holy separation is oneness in Christ--Christ in us, the Father in Christ, each saint made perfect in One body.

Romans 12: 1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies (plural--all of you) A LIVING SACRIFICE (one, united, sacrifice, how can we do that?)... 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.

In Christ our Living Sacrifice We Are Alive, Brethren

Romans 6: 10: For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12: Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13: Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

In Christ our Holiness We Are Holy, Brethren

Holiness is a state of being, it is not in degrees. You either are holy or you are not. Conformity to this world will result in you thinking of holiness as the world does--that some are holier than others--only those God hates imagine holiness is in a relative sense accomplished by their acts (Is 65: 5) How are God's saints in a state of being holy?

Romans 11: 16: For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.

Christ Jesus is the Firstfruit; his body is the lump. Christ Jesus is the Root; his body are the branches. Because Christ is holy; every believer is holy. He is in us, the Father is in him and we are in Christ--holy, inseparable oneness.

Hebrews 10:22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

In Christ's One Offering All Our Spiritual Sacrifices Are Accepted

I Peter 2: 5: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The word "reasonable service" means "spiritual service." It is used one other place in I Pet 2: 2: *desire the sincere milk "of the word" that ye may grow thereby*. This service is a spiritual service. Only those born of the Spirit of God, renewed in the new man, made one with Christ in us and us in Christ, can come to God alive, holy and accepted--all in Christ. So first and foremost, this sacrifice is coming to God in Christ Jesus--each of us individually and each of us together as brethren in this place coming in ONE-CHRIST JESUS. This sacrifice is based solely on God's mercy to us in the sacrifice of his darling Son. Brethren, this service is a reasonable, spiritual service. It is how we are used as instruments of God to help one another to grow and to be grown of God. Unlike the world, this true service to God does not promote individuality and pride, but humility and unity.

II. THE ATTITUDE AND THE OFFERING

Romans 12: 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....6: Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,

Gifts of Faith

Mark this word--"gift". We are about to see very particularly, specifically, some of the gifts of faith which God measures out to the members of his body. We have nothing to be proud of--in ourselves--these are all GIFTS--*of God, through God, and to God*. Paul even says, **I say, through the grace given unto ME**. Ephesians 4 says Christ ascended and gave gifts unto men and he gave some apostles. Here is Paul. He is one of those gifts and he is gifted to serve to teach them. He says and even this grace was given unto me. Not only is he teaching us this in the subject of his message but he says it is by this grace that I am able to teach you this. It is a gift. Only one possessed a full measure of these gifts of faith--Christ Jesus the Son of God--out of his fullness have we each received, according to the measure he gives.

Differing Gifts

He does not give all the same gifts of faith.

Romans 12: 6: Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,

These gifts of faith are different, but they are of ONE LORD, OF ONE SPIRIT, FOR ONE AND THE SAME PURPOSE--to be helpers of one another's joy, to promote unity in the body, that there be no schisms in the body. (Let me read Eph 4: 12-16; I Cor 12: 1-27.)

Purpose of the Gifts

There are many more gifts of faith, but Paul lists several here. But notice the point: whatever gift of faith has been measured to you, use it, serve with it, edify one another with it.

Romans 12: 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7: Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8: Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

The key is--use the gift God has given you whole heartedly: wait on your gift, do it in abundance, with diligence, with cheerfulness. These gifts are given to be used. They are for the good of each member in the body, so attend to them.

Abhor Hypocrisy, Cleave to the Good

Romans 12: 9: Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

This word "without dissimulation" means "without hypocrisy." If my motive is to exalt my self, seek a reward, holiness other than Christ, my way, my agenda, etc...then the work itself may be a good work, but it is defiled because I am not serving anybody but my own lusts. It is hypocrisy. It is evil. **Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.** The good is Christ.

The spirit and attitude of true service.

Romans 12: 10: Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

He began by saying, "Brethren." Brethren, our omniscient, omnipresent God is our Father. His Son is our Lord, our Savior--a Son over his own house, whose house we are if we hold fast to him. We are brothers and sisters in the household of God. This love is family love--brotherly love. Not preferring my honor--not to prove my point, or to exalt myself, or to make others speak highly of me--that is thinking more highly of myself than I ought to think, but preferring the welfare and honor of my brethren. First, of our Elder Brother Christ Jesus. Secondly, of these brethren. In making our brethren rejoice, believers find our happiness. In giving, we receive. In promoting another's welfare and honor, Christ is honored and we are honored.

Application: Make it a point to never say one critical word to a brother or sister, even your spouse, about any of your brethren. If we really spoke of one another the way we would like for them to speak about us, we will prefer their honor over our own. Someone said, "A man's character is not always revealed in what others say about him, but in what he says privately about others."

A Good Zeal

Romans 12: 11: Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

We are still dealing with this spiritual service. Be not slothful, be fervent in spirit--God wrought zeal is good zeal. IT is good to be zealous in a good thing. Serving the Lord: this service is to the Lord, we present ourselves a living sacrifice to the Lord as we serve the Lord's sheep, our brethren.

Trust, Wait, Ask

Romans 12: 12: Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Knowing we serve the Lord we look to the Lord as we engage in this service:

1. Rejoicing in hope: because the Lord has promised to bless the gifts he has given to the edification of our brethren and the whole body we serve rejoicing in a good hope.
2. And because our Lord has proven his faithfulness to us and we have this hope, therefore be patient in tribulation--wait on the Lord to give the increase as he promises.
3. Continuing instant in prayer--praying in prayer, inwrought earnest prayer, asking God to give the increase (we saw it all through the book of James)

We Are Serving the Need of Saints

Romans 12: 13: Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

This is the business--distributing, using these gifts he has given--to provide the NEEDS of his saints. GIVEN to hospitality--a generous, welcoming, helping, refreshing spirit ready to provide for one another. Freely you have received freely give.

One Body One Mind

Romans 12: 14: Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15: Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16: Be of the same mind one toward another.

The scripture begins to move toward our dealings with men without, but even in this verse--though brethren do not persecute one another as the world does, we are still full of sin. If someone injures you--presses you--bless and curse not. If a brother says something injurious he is like a withered hand--when your hand is withered the rest of your body pampers that one member (bless and curse not), when your hand performs some task well your whole body rejoices (rejoice with them that do rejoice), when your heart is in sorrow your whole body aches (weep with them that weep.) Be of the same mind one toward another. Remember: This holiness, this love, this living consecration to God is to be in a state of ONE in ONE. We are members one of another IN ONE--Christ Jesus. If one member is in bitterness, bless; if one member rejoices, rejoice; if one member weeps, weep. Be of the same mind one toward another.

Come Down Off Your High-Horse

Romans 12: 16: Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Carnal men love the finest and wisest this world offers and despise low and base things. Be contented with low things. God's children are men of low estate--base things, things this world despises (Pr 26:12.)

1 Co 3:18: Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

When you descend from the high and lofty and are content with the Lord's simple ones--you will find you are among the finest and the wisest. Amen!

