

Romans 12:1-8

Our Response to God's Altar Call

The subject of the book of Romans is the Gospel which is God's good news. The theme is the righteousness of God (or God is always absolutely right). The first 11 chapters have dealt with legal arguments as Paul defends God against accusations that he is unfair. He is absolutely right to be angry at our sinful behaviour and to judge us, no matter how moral or law abiding we have been (1-3). He is also absolutely right to offer pardon if we admit our rebellion and believe that, by his death, Jesus Christ bore the punishment for our sin on the cross (3-5). But that does not mean we now do as we like. God is absolutely right to expect us to change, to take on his character and live for Him (6-8). In the next section God is absolutely right to do as he pleases and to offer grace those who accept his sovereignty (9-11). To many these first 11 chapters seem to be "boring doctrine" and the real practical application starts in chapter 12. However, it is important to understand that what you believe will determine how you act. It is only as we appreciate what God has done in saving us from his wrath, through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and it's implications that we will be able to carry out the practice of the next 4 chapters. There are 4 important responses to God's call on us.

1. Offer your Body v1

God calls us to respond to all he has done for us. Do we really appreciate that in his mercy He has saved us from coming wrath? 2 Cor 4:14 says that God's love and grace should "compel" us to want to live for him. By offering our body for his use and service we express our gratitude for what He has done. 1 Cor 6:19-20 reminds us that we have been bought with a price so we should honour God with our body. The picture given is that of a "living sacrifice" which some would see as an oxymoron. Sacrifices are usually dead, but now we are called to be living sacrifices. However living sacrifices can crawl off the altar. What does God look for in a sacrifice? David in Psalm 51 reminds us that the true sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, and a broken and contrite heart will not be despised. Saul learned that obedience is more important than all the sacrifices he could bring. More than anything we can do for God, we are called to be obedient and holy, or set apart for God. To be holy is to live a life that reflects the character and nature of God himself. It goes against the culture and will take effort (Heb 12:14) This will be pleasing to God. Do we really want to please God? Then the deliberate act of presenting your body as a living sacrifice to God will please Him. (See Heb 11:6, Col 3:20, Heb 13:16, Psa 69:30-31 to see other things that also please God) This is described in various translations as a reasonable act of worship or service, reflecting the Greek word *latreia* that indicates that all our service is an act of worship to God. While for many this response is a definite event, like an altar call, to devote your life to Christ, it is also a daily yielding of our bodies to God's service.

Persuasion – I urge you
 Perspective – in view of God's mercy
 Presentation – of your body
 Picture – as a living sacrifice
 Purified – holy
 Pleasing – to God
 Purpose – your worship/service

2. Renew your mind v2

If the body is to be offered, the mind must be transformed. There are 4 stages in this process.

1. We are to resist the pressure to conform to the world. Christians should be different. In Romans 9, God is likened to a potter, gently moulding us as the clay to an object for his use. In Romans 12, we see the world also trying to shape us to its mould. Who are you allowing to shape your life right now?
2. We are to be transformed. The Greek word here is "metamorphosis" which we know from biology is used to describe the dramatic change that takes place when a hungry ugly, leaf bound caterpillar changes into a beautiful soaring butterfly. This is no patch up job or minor adjustments in lifestyle. This is radical transformation, described in 2 Cor 5:17 as a "new creation. The old is gone and the new has come. For butterflies, the change is in the body, but what changes for the Christian?
3. It requires a renewed mind. This is where the change should be noticed. There is a new way of thinking. You start to see the world as God sees it. Sin becomes more obvious. The things that once occupied your thoughts do not seem too attractive. This means we need to understand what God thinks by reading our Bible and allowing his word to transform the mind.
4. Then you will be able to approve by testing what the will of God is. Many people would love to know the will of God for their life is so that they can decide whether to accept it or not. But God only reveals His good, perfect and pleasing will to those who offer themselves and are transformed by renewing their minds. Then and only then the will of God becomes apparent.

If you are new or visiting; a special warm welcome to you. We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

This Morning
 Speaker Ross Pettigrew

This Evening
 • JCF 5.00pm

Next Sunday
 15th November - Ross Pettigrew
 22nd November - International Sunday

Thursday Kidz Club
 6:30 - 8:00 pm
 7 - 12 year olds
 Ph: Allan Maguire - 4767197

Prayer Items

Graeme and Rachel, Philippines, ask for continued prayer for those who attend the Bible Camp at which Brian Goodwin spoke. Pray that the messages they hear still resonate in their hearts and that the actions would reflect this.

This Sunday, 8th November, is the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians. Lets pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world.

Sandy, Democratic Republic of Congo writes; Praise the Lord that after heavy rains I took our visitors to Angola last Thursday and filled the diesel tanks for half the normal price that we pay here at Katoka. It was a lovely day out and I was able to call at one of our churches on the other side and give encouragement to the Pastor who used to be here as a refugee. Visitors who have been staying with us leave this week. Please pray for a flight, for me if I have to take them down by car for safe travels.

Jerry and Hayley, Zambia, ask for prayer for their little girl who is sick with Gingivitis. Please pray that she will recover quickly.

3. Humble your soul v3-5

It is easy to become arrogant and believe that I am saved because of the person I am. Pride is a problem we can easily succumb to and is something God hates. This does not mean that we are constantly putting ourself down, or developing a "worm" theology. The call is not to over-inflate our position and importance. We need to have "sound" judgment about our place, recognising that as our measure of faith increases, so should our true appreciation of our place in the body of Christ grow. It should be noticeable that the more mature Christians have a more humble attitude. Phil 2:3 suggests that in humility we should consider others better than ourselves. None of us are independent but we become inter-dependant as part of a community of believers with a common faith and Lord. No one can boast about their place in the body for we belong to each other.

4. Use your gifts v6-8

This last section deals with *charisma* or spiritual gifts. This passage in Romans is one of 3 that list some of the gifts, given by God to his children. (1 Cor 12 and Eph 4 also list spiritual gifts) There has been much confusion about these gifts. Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural talents, although they may be combined to form a ministry. They are given by God (not chosen by us) and are not for our personal benefit but for the benefit of other believers. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift (do you know what your is?). This passage in Romans emphasises the way we should use our gift. We should encourage all believers to discover their gifts and to use them appropriately for all fellow-believers to enjoy. Spiritual gifts will be used proportionate to your faith (as you grow spiritually, it will become more apparent). Paul encourages using our gift generously, diligently and cheerfully. Spiritual gifts can be abused but when used correctly will benefit the whole church.

Lessons for today.

1. What is your response to what God has done for you? Have you shown your appreciation by offering your body to God as a living sacrifice to do as He pleases?
2. Who is moulding your life right now? Are you allowing God to mould you or the world to squeeze you into its pattern and lifestyles?
3. Do you think differently to those around you? Is your mind being transformed by what you look at and listen to each day? Are you radically different, or do you merge in with the crowd?
4. Do you have a sound view of your place in God's world? Has pride become a problem so that you will not submit to others possibly being better than yourself?
5. What is your spiritual gift? Are you using it as God intended?

Small Groups

Tuesday

- Ladies Home Group - see Laura Hannah 473-7954
- Central Home Group - see Steve Clark 479-2070
- Brockville Home Group - see Geoffrey Stewart 476-7888

Thursday

- JCF Home Group - see Gideon Chang 488-2118
- Town Home Group - see Dave Smeaton 453 0569

Friday

- Friday morning Home Group - see Bethney Stewart 476-7888

Prayer Groups

Wednesday

- Men's prayer group meeting at Dan and Steps from 6:30am till around 8am.

Thursday

- All Saints main church building from 5:15pm

Sunday

- All Saints Hall from 9.00am

NOTICES

- Crèche Roster
8th November; Jen Pettigrew
15th November; Courtney Stewart
- There will be an International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church at Woodhaugh Gardens on Sunday 8th November 2009 at 2.30pm. If wet this will be held in Grace Bible Church at Leith Bowling Club 2 Duke Street North Dunedin. All are welcome to attend. Enquiries to Rhoda Woodfield Ph 489- 4142.
- Dear Church Family
Our family would like to thank you all for your expressions of sympathy and support over these past two weeks since my mother moved to her higher calling. Thank you for just being there and letting us know that you care. Mum was a grand lady whom we will miss greatly. While we feel the loss deeply, there is great comfort in knowing that we have a future hope that was to become hers as well. What a privilege to be able to look to a saviour.
In Christian love, John Hannah

Any notices for the church newsletter should be sent to Ron Jack at ron@scsolutions.com or call 467-2024 before Thursday night!