

Giving Yourself Totally to God (12:1-8)

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ is more than facts to be believed; it is a life to be lived – a life befitting the saved person.
- It is a Pauline distinctive to begin a letter with a strong doctrinal section, followed by an exhortation to live out the Christian faith. Sound doctrines must always be the basis for godly living.

1. Wholehearted Consecration (12:1)

- The Christian life always has a “therefore” of consecration to God. Paul makes this appeal on the basis of God’s mercies – ie., all the great truths stated in Romans 1-11. God is concerned not only with WHAT we do, but also with the ATTITUDE with which we do it. A powerful motivation for living for God is gratitude to Him for saving us.
- The 1st sacrifice we offer in consecration to God is ourselves (1 Pet 2:5). We surrender ourselves entirely to God, to allow Him to deal with us as He sees fit (cf Exo 29:20). Everything that we are or do, we live for God and glorify Him (1 Cor 10:31).
- “*Living sacrifice*” - we have died to sin (6:2,11) that we should live for Christ (6:8,10). We no longer live for ourselves; we are alive in that we now live for God (Gal 2:20). When a Christian presents his life to God, he is not making a big sacrifice; he is simply presenting to God what is already God’s (1 Cor 6:19-20). Consecration isn’t our giving anything to God. It is our taking our hands off what already belongs to God.
- This sacrifice or living for Christ is to be holy (set apart) & acceptable (pleasing) to God. All of our life must be lived every day in surrender to God. This yielding of our lives to the Lord is our “reasonable service” or “logical service of worship before the Lord.” When we are totally yielded to God, it is the highest form of worship that we can render. This is the will of God for us.

2. Progressive Transformation (12:2)

- When we present our bodies wholly to God, our lives will be transformed.
 - Negatively – “*be not conformed to this world.*” To be “conformed” is to be moulded or stamped according to a pattern. JB Phillips: *Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould....* We are called to be non-conformists (Jas 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15). Lot represents a tragic example of a believer who gradually conformed to the world (Gen 13:10-12; 19:1; 19:9-29).
 - Positively – “*but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” The word for “renewing” is the word for “renovate” - it means to rip out the old and put in the new. The moment we are saved, God begins to teach us how to think differently, to renew our minds. We act as we think (Prov 23:7). The principal means that God uses to transform our lives is the Word of God, and it is that which renews our mind (John 17:17).

- The result – we will be transformed, totally changed. This word “transformed” is related to the Greek word from which we get our English “metamorphosis.” Believers are to be changed into the likeness of Christ (Rom 8:29).
 - To be transformed describes a change on the *outside* that comes from the *inside* (cf Matt 17:2). Paul is calling for an outward change in the character and conduct of the believer, which is to correspond with his or her inward spiritual condition.
 - Transformation is not something we do by our own power. Rather, we submit to God’s power and by His grace, we are progressively changed into the likeness of Christ.
- The goal of transformation is to become like Christ. We will be able to “*prove*” or live out God’s will - ie, we learn by experience 3 truths about God’s will:
 - it is good or beneficial in its effect (Rom 8:28).
 - it is acceptable or pleasing, desirable, proper (Job 23:10).
 - it is perfect or complete; it covers all of life (Gen 50:20).
 The emphasis is not so much on “discovering” God’s will as it is in DOING God’s will.

3. Humble Service (12:3-8)

- If we are going to be like Christ, then we must be humble. It is only by God’s grace that Paul is an apostle (1 Cor 15:9-10). The Christian’s proper attitude is one of humility; there is no place for pride.
 - A renewed mind thinks soberly about oneself. Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. JB Phillipps: *Don’t cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance.*
 - “*The measure of faith*” means “according to the measure of faith God has given you.” The sense then is, ‘Let everyone think of himself according to the nature or character of the gifts which he has received.’

A right estimate of oneself will always be a humble estimate, a recognition that, in ourselves, we can do nothing, but that in Christ we can be used to the glory of God (Prov 16:18).

- Paul expresses 2 principles concerning the Church:
 - V4 –The human body is made up of a number of different members; they don’t all do the same thing. Each believer is a member of the body of Christ and has his own place in it. In the body of Christ there is unity but not uniformity.
 - V5 – In Christ we who are many are one body, and each member belongs to one another. We are still ONE body in Christ. No person is more a member than any other believer.

The Body of Christ reflects diversity working in unity. We are all dependent and interdependent on one another.

- In the Church, God has gifted us in different ways. A spiritual gift is a Spirit-given ability to believers for the purpose of service. Paul lists 7 spiritual gifts with which believers may be endowed for the benefit of others.
 - PROPHECY. Today, the gift most akin to prophecy is preaching where one proclaims the counsel of God by expounding upon the Word of God. As the prophets in the OT days was to declare God’s message faithfully, preachers must deliver the “whole counsel” of God “*according to the proportion of faith*” or the body of Christian truth (1 Pet 4:11).
 - MINISTRY. The gift of practical service. In a more official capacity, it is used to describe those appointed to serve as deacons.
 - TEACHING. The gift of teaching is the ability to interpret the text and clarify its meaning (Neh 8:8). Those with this gift must prepare carefully.
 - EXHORTING. The ability to build up and encourage others (eg. Barnabas). Teaching & exhortation often work together. Teaching lays the foundation; exhortation is the gentle prod or push.
 - GIVING. All Christians, without exception if they really know the Lord, will give. But there are some who have a special gift of giving. The word “simplicity” is translated as “liberality.” The idea is that he must give with pure motives, ie., with no ulterior motive or strings attached to his giving.
 - RULING. This likely refers to the work of elders (pastors, overseers). “*With diligence*” has the idea of earnest effort, but it also has the idea of urgency and haste.
 - MERCY. Some have the special gift to help those in difficulty, the sick or bereaved. They are to show mercy with cheerfulness or gladness.
- Believers are to serve God with the different gifts given (1 Pet 4:10-11). Every Christian plays an important role in the body of Christ. The evidence of a consecrated life is a transformed body, manifested in humble service of one’s spiritual gift.

Notes