

Living with what God has given you

Romans is the great theological text book, but what is often neglected is its practicality. People talk of the big issues of sin, predestination, grace and righteousness yet often forget that the book is a workshop manual or pattern for applying those principles. That's where we are at now. We pick it up at 12:1

As an aside, it is notable that the key word "righteousness," which until now has dominated the book, occurs only once in the closing chapters (14:17;)

Paul's exhortations over the next four chapters include both commands and prohibitions and are spread over various areas of application: Christian conduct toward fellow believers, toward society (especially in meeting hostile reactions), and toward the state.

We need to know how to live today, here's where we get the principles to live by and we start with a biggy.

RO 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

A couple of things here.

Firstly, 1. the way we live is because of God's grace. Here spelt out as God's mercy. What should be our motive for ministry?

God's mercy and grace. We looked at grace last year. Remember, Grace can be seen as God's Riches at Christ's Expense.

It can also be explained as God's unmerited favour toward us.

This is the one I like, the practical application of God's goodwill.

What about mercy?

Mercy = "abstention from the infliction of suffering on the part of one who has the right or power to inflict it."

In other words not hurting someone when you have the right to. In light of this passage, God has the right to punish us for sin, He doesn't so that is God showing His mercy to us. So in view of the fact that God could hurt us and hasn't Paul urges us to present our bodies to God. This concept is giving God credit for what He has done for us. That is called worship. So worship is not related to what we do here, but how we live.

Secondly, 2. ***to offer your bodies as living sacrifices,***

This is not duty. This is your choice.

The word here in the greek *parastesai* = to offer or present as it is usually translated but also means place at the disposal of someone.

We can offer our body to God.

We can present our body to God.

We can place our body at God's disposal.

Which translation is right?

All of them.

This is the amazing part of the authors intent here. I think he wants the readers to look at all the possibilities here. The whole New Testament is like that. Partly it is the way the greeks thought, words had more than one meaning and the more meanings you could get out of a word the cleverer you were. But Paul is relating to that culture and we need to think of all the possibilities here. And it affects how we relate to the passage. Placing all three meanings on the word gives us a rounded view of ministry.

1. **Offer ourselves to God** – Place ourselves at a place where we acknowledge God as having the right to our physical selves.
2. **Present our bodies.** This concept is one of actually making the commitment to be placed under God's instruction.
3. **Here we have the whatever attitude.** Whatever you say God I will do!

All are slightly different. All are part of one issue. God using us for Himself.

Another point is this living sacrifice bit. There are illusions to Christ's sacrifice. There are illusions to the sacrificial system in the Old Testament but the difference is – Paul is talking about sacrificial life not sacrificial death.

An on going permanently living tool for God's glory.

What was a sacrifice in the Old Testament? Getting rid of sin, whatever.

Well really **every sacrifice is about acknowledging God for who He is.**

He can take away sin, He can save us, He can do mighty works and miracles, He deals with the issues.

See all sacrifices acknowledge God. We are called to acknowledge God permanently, all the time.

The next part of the verse takes us a bit further. ***holy and pleasing to God.***

If I am holy then I am pleasing to God aren't I ???

Not necessarily. Last year I talked about holiness. How the word really is about being set apart. That's what it means.

Holy = Set apart or consecrated for God's use.

You can be holy but reject the holy call. We seem to think holy means perfect or sinless. It doesn't! You can be holy or set apart and disobedient, that's why the words pleasing to God fleshes it out a bit.

Pleasing to God means that set apartness is accepted, or recognised. , ***to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.***

Yeh, living sacrifices. The other thing about the sacrifices is that it was a show that the issue had been dealt with. Nearly a dramatic representation that God had dealt with or was dealing with the issues. Our living sacrificial life is a demonstration to the world God is dealing with us. We aren't perfect, we are holy. We are set apart for God and we should be living that life.

This is where verse 2 fits.

. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

We are told to live this holy, set apart life for God not what live like people who don't know God live.

That is spelled out in chapter 1 of romans.

Chapter 1 is all about sin, and sins effect on life.

Here in 12:2 Our lifestyle is to be a movement away from that. I have heard it said that when one becomes a christian sin no longer affects that person. Uh uh, No way, until the person dies sin is always affecting someone. Our job is to move away from it. Deal with or more correctly, let God deal with it.

How? By renewing our minds. Here we have it. ***Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.***

How do we do that?

Read the book. Bible study.

To know God's mind you must be in the book. Bible studies are there for us to learn, sermons are there for us to learn, seminars are there for us to learn, but if we don't spend time regularly in the bible individually and personally we wont grow spiritually. If we don't avail ourselves of learning times like coming to church, bible study and small groups etc we won't grow spiritually. It is a fact – those who get into bible study grow spiritually. If you don't have a bible study group, get into one, if you don't know what is available – ring the office.

More than that this verse says we won't know the will of God.

At the conference I went to once, we talked about church decision making processes and the issues caused by so called democratic church government. The biggest weakness in our church government system is that people who are not relating to God have the same vote as those who do.

Those with personal agenda's have the same vote as people who want to do the will of God. It is our strength and weakness as a denomination.

Here is my theory - If you aren't reading your bible regularly, you have no right to think you know God's will.

Just prayer is not enough, but you cannot divorce prayer and bible reading, if you don't do both , the relationship to God isn't functioning and its your fault.

Renew your mind, read the bible, If you don't know what to do, grab some Scripture Union reading notes from Koorong, or a daily devotional book. It will change your life.

So where does that leaves us? Practically challenged. This passage is about offering ourselves.

That is where we are at.

Your offering. **Time for you to offer yourself.** You may have already done it before but as life goes on so does the sacrifice. RE- offer yourself to God.

Communion is a logical time for us to re-offer ourselves. It is a time of contemplating what Christ has done for us.