

Romans 12:3~8

I found my self sitting in my office, thinking, “*How in the world, did I get here?*”

Nancy VanWinkle, I want you tell me, how in the world, that little timid, shy, baby boy our yours, that boy that hated school so bad, that boy that never read a entire book in his life, didn't like reading at all. That same little boy, who would take zero's in class rather than stand up and give an oral report, that same boy that never attended church... I want you to tell me how; he end's up in the position of a pastor, leading the church of the God of heaven and earth...in the ways of God.

I'm still not clear exactly how I ended up where I am, but I do know where it began... At the age of 25, God spoke to me... I don't know how to really describe it, except that it is indescribable. Maybe that's the way its supposed to be, for He is God. Something outside of *me*, something outside of *my comprehension*, something outside *my understanding*, something *outside of me*...happened to me. And I am convinced to this day, that it was God... The God that made the heavens and the earth took time out to personally come to me that day, and make himself known to me. And He invited me to come...that's all I knew that day, was that I needed the Lord. So I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ that day, with no idea what all lie in store. That was 16 years ago, and looking back, I would have never dreamed in a million years, that I would be where I am, doing what I do... I still can't fully grasp it, but all I know is, that God has put it in my heart...to preach “*His Gospel!*” That's all I know, God's will and purpose for my life, the life I surrendered to Him to use however He sees fit, God's purpose for the rest of my time here on earth, is that of preaching and teaching His blessed word to His people.

Romans 12:1 marks a transition in Paul's letter... Beginning here, and continuing through the rest of the letter, Paul turns his attention to “*the Church of Jesus Christ.*” Up to this point he has been addressing a whole host of subjects, ranging from God's wrath, the purpose and role of God's Law, the depravity of all men, the “*righteousness of God,*” how God offered up His son, the believers new position in the Law, the place and role of the nation Israel in God's plan of salvation, and various other theological aspects of the gospel of Christ. But here in Romans 12, Paul turns his attention to those whose lives have been impacted by the gospel, those who have believed on Christ, and have been justified by his blood...the CHURCH...

According to the gospel that Paul preaches, men and women are made “*right with God,*” by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, A faith which is manifested by the *surrender of one's life to Christ*. Upon doing so, we become part of the *family of God*, commonly referred to as “*the Church.*” Something that separates us from all other people in the world, we are the people of God, and they the people of this world.

Here in this passage, Paul writes, giving instruction as to how the “*Church*” is to live while in this world... Which is extremely important, because the world is looking to the church as the standard of what God expects and requires of mankind.

¹I 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. ²And 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.

An unbelieving world knows nothing of the bible...other than what they SEE in us. Our lives are an open book for them to read. It is the only input and resource they have to make them aware of their need to repent and yield their life to Christ. That's what Paul says will happen, as they observe us yielding our lives to God, by seeing our worship of Him through our day to day lives...

... that ye may **prove** what is that good, and acceptable, and **perfect, will of God**...

The intended end of the gospel is to reconcile men and women back to God.

The CHURCH is but one of several name ascribed in scripture to God's people, the Church, we are called...The Family of God...His Sheep...The Elect...The Redeemed...and I'm sure many more. With each one having a certain significance. For example, the family refers to us as brothers and sisters, with God as our Father. Sheep refers to Him being our shepherd, leading us, guiding us, and protecting us. The Elect refers His "*Choosing*" of us. The "*Redeemed*" speaks of His purchasing us with His blood...

Here Paul uses a term that is very helpful to understand how the church works and how it functions.

The Body of Christ... Paul declares, that the "**Church**" is made up of *individual members*...which come together to form a single unit, best understood using the illustration of that of a body.

(Vs 4~5) ⁴*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: ⁵So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

He describes *the church*, the various people who make up the church, as being the individual parts of the Body of Christ, with each individual member being a specific part of the body. When we yield our "*bodies*" to Christ, we become a part of ***the Body Christ***... No longer using our lives to serve our will and purposes, we now surrender our lives to serve the will and purposes of God. We literally become the eyes of God, the ears of God, the hands of God, the feet of God, etc. We become instruments or vessels by which God ministers through, and makes His presence known in this world.

Here in this passage, Paul's intent is not to explain how each individual part works, nor to explain in detail the spiritual gifts that God imparts to us. That he explained in His first letter to the Corinthians in chapters 12~14. Here, his aim is to simply explain that God takes each life that is surrendered to Him, and He strategically places it according to His will, and uses it to carry out His purposes.

Paul begins by trying to establish the "*Right Mindset*" in the church...

(Vs 3) 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.*

The first thing Paul addresses in the "*Life of the Church*" is that of *Humbleness*... There's no doubt as to why addresses this first, for ***Humbleness*** is the key to a healthy and strong church! Paul is addressing here, what is likely the greatest reason for Israel's fall...*pride*. Pride is the spirit of haughtiness, the spirit arrogance that comes as a result of an improper evaluation of oneself, in contrast to others. By their yielding their lives to God's Law, Israel became puffed up. They saw themselves as superior to those around them. In spite of their so called obedience to God's Law, reality was, they were no more righteous than what they considered, the vilest of the Gentiles. But in Israel's eye's, they were far superior to the Gentiles. The Church is to learn from the nation Israel, what God thinks of *pride*.

Not only is the Church not to "*Conform*" to the worship that Israel offered God, but the Church is to learn from Israel, *the lesson of humility*. We must never forget, or lose sight of how we got where we are, and by what basis we are declared righteous before God...the Grace of God.

Be ye transformed by the "*renewing of your mind*"... Do not be high-minded, but walk in lowliness of mind. We who are part of the Church need to beware of the craftiness and the danger of the flesh. We must be on guard against the corrupting influence of the flesh. Paul says, we must "*think soberly*." "*Soberly*" speaks of a sound mind, sane, one that is in the right mind. It means *temperate*, or *self controlled*... His point is, we must keep our minds clear of the corrupting influence of the fallen nature that still remains within us...

(Vs 3) ³For 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.

Paul says we need to “Think clearly...” We are to guard against the rising up of the flesh, by keeping in mind, that we are where we are, and we are what we are by the grace of God...not our self-righteousness. We must never THINK that by the WORKS which come about by living surrendered lives, we must never think that we better than others. To surrender our lives to God is nothing special, we’ve done no great act of service by doing that. And if as a result of doing so, God uses us mightily, in carrying out His will, we must never forget, that it is not us, but rather the power of God in our lives. We’ve done nothing but yield our bodies to Him for His use...which is what everybody should do. There are no Christian celebrities, (even though some have made some out to be).

God uses all of “our offerings” differently...according to how He chooses. He may use you for one thing, and me for something entirely different. It’s like the different parts of the body, and how each part does something different, but all the different parts are working to and for the same purpose. Before I came to Christ, I used all of my various body parts to serve my will and desires. But now, my body, is grafted into His body, becoming the part He desires, and is used to carry out His Will...

The point here is, whatever part God places us in, whatever the capacity we are used of Him to serve in, we must be careful not to allow the flesh to cause us to think we are any more important or more spiritual than any other part. God may give you the “Gift of teaching,” and you may possess a special insight to the scripture, given special ability to understand the deep things of God. But the point here is, not to allow that to go to your head! We must be careful not to look on others, who maybe aren’t so knowledgeable, and think more of ourselves than we ought. We must keep in mind, that it all is a gift from God, that anything and everything we are and accomplish is a direct result of His empowering grace.

(Vs 6~8) ⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; ⁷Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teaches, on teaching; ⁸Or he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that gives, let him do it with simplicity; he that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

The point here is...*that we live in the power of the Holy Spirit*...That we serve out and fulfill our position in the church, in the power of God, not in our own strength and abilities.

We need to rightly understand our role or function within the church. Its important to understand, that all of this hinges on the fact, that we “*present our bodies as a living sacrifice*”... God is not asking us to “Live for Him,” but rather He is asking us to “Die for Him.” The call of Christ is to “live crucified lives,” dying to self-will, self-ambition, by voluntarily laying down of our life, so that He may use it to fulfill His will and purposes. As each one of us present our bodies to Christ in worship and service to God, God takes those bodies, and uses each one in different ways. But irregardless how He chooses to use our offering, the point is, we must remember to walk in humbleness of mind, and in the power of the Spirit.

My prayer to God is, that from this day forward, every time you think about the human body, that the Church, and the carrying out of God’s will comes to mind. I pray that as you use your hands to build something that you’d be reminded of the work that God has called us to. I pray that every time you think about your feet, how they carry you from place to place, that you’d think about going where God would have you go. The same with the eyes, ears, mouth, every part of the body...