

Romans – Justified through faith

Week 20 – Romans 12 (The will of God for changed relationships)

1. **Our relationship to God: consecrated bodies & renewed minds (v1-2)**

In light of the mercy we have received from God we are to live holy lives. The word 'spiritual' can also be translated as either 'reasonable' or 'rational' indicating that giving our bodies to God (not just our 'hearts' as we often talk about) is the appropriate response to God's mercy. It's also distinct from ceremonial acts of worship – as our heart *and* mind are involved.

Paul then issues his own call to non-conformity, which involves modelling ourselves on Jesus the ultimate non-conformist. The transformation we undergo by having our minds renewed is of the same order as Jesus' change when transfigured on the mountain! (The gospels, here and 2 Cor 3:18 are the only places where this word is used). The transformation of our minds is achieved through the work of the Holy Spirit and us being immersed in God's word.

"All true worship is a response to the self-revelation of God in Christ and Scripture, and arises from our reflection on Who He is and what He has done. The worship of God is evoked, informed and inspired by the vision of God. Worship without theology is bound to degenerate into idolatry. Hence the indispensable place of Scripture in both public and private devotion. It is the Word of God which calls forth the worship of God. On the other hand, there should be no theology without doxology. There is something fundamentally flawed about a purely academic interest in God. God is not an appropriate object for cool, critical, detached, scientific observation and evaluation. No, the true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship, as it did Paul. Our place is on our faces before him in adoration....Bishop Handley Moule said at the end of the last [19th] century, we must "beware equally of an undevotional theology and of an untheological devotion."

- John Stott

2. **Our relationship to ourselves: thinking soberly about our gifts (v3-8)**

The 'measure of faith' can have two meanings, a measured quantity of something or an instrument for measuring. Rather than us having varying amounts of faith the passage could mean we need to measure our lives against the faith we have in the saving grace of God expressed through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. That's where how we obtain our sober judgement. We know who God is, what he's done for us and who we are in the light of that – the benefits we enjoy through salvation and also the responsibilities we have.

We need to expand our definition of 'spiritual gifts'; the lists in 1 Cor 12 & Eph 4:11 are not exhaustive. Whatever it is that we do we must do it cheerfully and to the best of our ability.

3. Our relationship to one another: love in the family of God (v9-16)

We must love each other (the Greek word is agape – the giving form of love) honestly and without hypocrisy. We need to put others first and not get lazy in our service to one another and God. How can the world know the love of God if they can't see us practicing it towards each other?

4. Our relationship to our enemies: not retaliation but service (v17-21)

Paul parallels Jesus' instructions to 'turn the other cheek' and 'go the second mile' with four *don'ts* of his own that are accompanied with the counter-cultural response that is expected of us.

Verse 21 presents a stark alternative, there's no neutrality or middle-way. If we curse, repay evil for evil or take revenge, then, because all these are evil responses to evil, we have given in to evil, been sucked into it's sphere of influence and been defeated or '*overcome*' by it. But if we refuse to retaliate, bless our persecutors, ensure we do good, if we're active in peacemaking and peacekeeping and leave all judgement to God and love our enemies then we've '*overcome evil with good*'.

Q1. Do we still think in terms of a separated physical and spiritual (classical Greek thought)? What are implications for God owning our whole body. (Think back to the sheets on Romans 5 & 6)

Q2. What steps can we take to see the level of transformation in our lives that Paul refers to?

Q3. What spiritual gifts do you practice already and which would you like to?

Q4. What, in practice, does it look like to live as described in v17-21 in the 21st Century?

Memory Verse:

"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."

— Romans 12:1