

Just Checking In #124 Stewards of God Romans 12:1-10

May 15, 2012

Psalm 39:12 "Hear my prayer, O Lord... for I am a 'pilgrim' with You..."

Stewards of God

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. 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. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

(You can also hear the sermon series on Romans at www.bbcpa.org - click on the Sermons link)

Paul has taken us on a panoramic tour of man's ruin in sin and restoration in Christ through the first 11 chapters of Romans. We have viewed man's awful misery and God's awesome mercy. God's mercy is underserved, saving, freeing, transforming, and sovereign. It has taken us from being SINNERS WITH GUILT (Ch 1-3), to being SAINTS WITH GRACE (4-5), to being SONS WITH GLORY (6-11), and now in chapters 12-16, STEWARDS WITH GIFTS.

Paul begins the application section of his letter with the word "**Therefore**...". He has used this word strategically throughout his letter to summarize the major conclusions we arrive at in the gospel. See the following...

Regarding sin... 3:20 **Therefore** no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law....

Regarding faith... 4:16 **Therefore**, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace...

Regarding justification... 5:1 **Therefore**, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

8:1 **Therefore**, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Regarding mercy... 9:16 **Therefore**, it does not depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

9:18 **Therefore** God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy

Regarding response.. 12:1 **Therefore**, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices

Oh what mercies we have seen in the gospel! It is of God's mercies that we are justified, have been given faith, righteousness, adoption, sonship, co-heirship with Christ, and ultimate glorification in His presence. It was all undeserved from beginning to end. In view of God's mercies that has transformed you from sinner to saint to son and to steward.... offer yourself as a living sacrifice to God for His glory and the good and growth of His church.

LIVING SACRIFICES

If we view God's mercies aright, this is the only reasonable (literally "logical") response. God has made us holy and acceptable through Christ, so that we can be offerings pleasing to Him. Apart from Christ we are totally unacceptable and like Nadab and Abihu fatally discovered, unacceptable offerings bring only wrath. But in Christ Jesus we are cleansed and perfected so that offered to God we are a pleasing aroma and a delight to Him.

The contrasts between the old covenant and the new are seen in bold relief in this text. OT offerings were animals. We ourselves are the new covenant offerings. OT offerings were dead. We are living. OT offerings are consumed by fire. We are transformed to live out God's will in this world. OT offerings were unwilling. We are willing. OT offerings were given in view of God's wrath. We are viewing our self-sacrifice in view of God's mercies.

INVESTING STEWARDS

Paul then calls us from sacrifice to stewardship. We are made acceptable and offered up as sacrifices, realizing that we are gifted as stewards to serve His church. The offering of myself to God as a living sacrifice is demonstrated as I invest my life as a steward in serving His church. **He who does not serve is not a living sacrifice. "If you love me, feed my sheep!" John 20.**

God never separates our relationship with Him from our relationships with His people. To serve God we serve His people. To love God we love His people. To give to God we give to His people.

Paul then reminds us that each of us have been given faith, and given gifts, so that we might invest ourselves in serving His body.

We are stewards of our gifts, servants of His church, sacrifices to our God.

Not only are we stewards of our gifts, but we are stewards of our relationships as well. It is interesting to note that while we have a list of spiritual gifts, each of them are also related to commands we all are responsible for. Some have teaching gifts, but we all are commanded to communicate the gospel. Some have the gift of giving, but we are all commanded to be generous. Some have the gift of serving, but we are all called to serve one another in love. Let not an absence of gift excuse you from a lack of obedience!

Paul now gives us four clear commands that will be developed through the remainder of the letter. These four, foundational commands are to be lived out in our relationships to believers, unbelievers, governmental authorities, and with God Himself.

THE BIG FOUR Love, Purity, Loyalty, Harmony

LOVE **LOVE must be sincere.** Not an act! Not just words! But real, practical, and active.

PURITY **Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.** Absolutely abhor evil and be glued to good. We are to be passionate about true holiness. A lukewarm attitude towards sin is all too prevalent among us. We want to avoid the consequences of sin, but do we hate, despise and loath sin for what it is, an offense to our God, the cause of the cross and the suffering of Christ?

LOYALTY **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.** We will not walk away from the brethren. We are family. We will love with loyalty our forever family in Christ.

HARMONY **Honor one another above yourselves.** We will show respect and honor for other brothers and sister, considering that they deserve higher honor than I do. Therefore, if my brothers and sisters

are celebrated and I am forgotten, it is right to be so. They deserve the higher honor. There is no place for envy, jealousy, competition, slander or evil speaking in my heart, as my brothers and sisters deserve to be honored, and I will join in honoring them at every opportunity. In this way the body of Christ is united and His love abounds among us.

The rest of chapter 12 shows how these four commands are to be lived out in our day to day lives. LOVE, PURITY, LOYALTY, HARMONY... as Jesus Christ deals with us, so we are to deal with others.

Wonderful, merciful Savior
Precious Redeemer and Friend
Who would have thought that a Lamb
Could rescue the souls of men
Oh you rescue the souls of men

Counselor, Comforter, Keeper
Spirit we long to embrace
You offer hope when our hearts have
Hopelessly lost the way
Oh, we hopelessly lost the way

You are the One that we praise
You are the One we adore
You give the healing and grace
Our hearts always hunger for
Oh, our hearts always hunger for

Almighty, infinite Father
Faithfully loving Your own
Here in our weakness You find us
Falling before Your throne
Oh, we're falling before Your throne

SELF CHECK:

- 1) Am I a daily offering to God offered up on the altar of service to His church? Look over your calendar and see if "sacrifice" is an appropriate description.
- 2) Are you developing and investing your gifts in the growth of His church? What are your gifts? How are you using them? Do you need to talk with your pastor to see how to use your gifts more actively in the church? Be willing to serve where you're needed. You may discover a gift you never knew you had!
- 3) Are you viewing the greatness of God's mercy daily? Or has your vision of His great mercies dimmed due to spiritual dullness, great suffering, or carnal straying. It is only with a fresh vision of His mercies that we are enabled to live out a life of living sacrifice.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1 Peter 4:7-11 Peter uses only two classes of gifts - speaking and serving

Ephesians 4:1-16 Paul speaks of gifted people given to the church - with gifts of revelation (apostles and prophets) and gifts of outreach (evangelists) and gifts of shepherding (pastors/teachers.)

1 Cor 12 - yet another list of gifts- some temporary until scripture is complete, and some enduring throughout the church age. In each of these chapters we discover these clear realities

- 1) All gifts come from God by His decree and design
- 2) All gifts are to be invested in serving His church

3) All the gifts are necessary and each believer has at least one

4) We all belong to each other and grow together as every one of us is active and engaged in serving - there are no spectators in the church - so get in the game!

O Merciful Savior, we stand in awe of your mercies. We are amazed at the greatness of them, the cost of them, the number of them, and the continual flow of them. We deserve not one of them, yet are given all of them! How can it be?! In view of your mercies, I give myself to Thee as a living sacrifice to You, a servant to Your people, and a witness to Your world. Take my life and shape it to be a more useful instrument to bless Your church. You have made me a saint, a son, and a steward. I want to bring you glory by a life of love, purity, loyalty and harmony. I ask this for your glory, in your Name, O God of infinite mercy. Amen and Amen. "

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... Jn 9:4 Ron & Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable, changed by The Immutable,

running after The Irresistible with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows,
spending our time on eternity, owning nothing yet possessing everything that matters and lasts.

We are Pilgrims in Paradox. Welcome to THE JOURNEY