

Day 123, Romans 12

by David Servant

David Servant's sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience, understanding spiritual gifts, and the call to love one's enemies based on biblical principles.

Scripture: Romans 11:22

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Christian Living"

Description

David Servant emphasizes the importance of understanding the 'therefore' in the Bible, indicating that what follows is based on what was previously said. He urges believers to present themselves as living sacrifices, highlighting the connection between obedience and faith. Paul stresses the significance of each believer's specific function within the body of Christ, emphasizing the need to discover and operate in one's spiritual gifts. Additionally, he underscores the principles of love, humility, and refraining from seeking vengeance, drawing from both Old Testament and New Testament teachings.

Transcript

It has been said, "Anytime you see the word therefore in the Bible, stop and consider what it is there for." The word therefore always indicates that what is about to be said is based on what was just said.

The first word of today's reading is therefore. So the first verse could be read, "Because of what I just wrote, I urge you to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice..." What had Paul previously written? A good portion of the previous chapter was a warning to Gentile believers that they could be severed from God's tree of salvation if they abandoned their faith (11:17-24). If they did not "continue in His kindness" they would experience God's "severity" (11:22). Israel was an object lesson of this very thing. Thus Paul urges his readers to be obedient to God, as obedience is the fruit of faith.

All true believers are committed to holiness, but their transformation takes time as their minds are renewed (which is what you are doing every day with me!). Not all learning produces spiritual growth, but you can be sure that no spiritual growth takes place without learning. Don't focus on the latest teaching fads or the "deeper truths" that side-track Christians and fill them with pride. Rather concentrate on learning what is God's will, so that you can demonstrate it in your own life.

Paul seems to indicate that every member of the body of Christ has a specific function, and each person's function is a result of a gift given to him or her by God's grace (12:4-6). Do you know what your gift is yet? Paul lists several possibilities, including prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation (my wife has this one),

giving, leading and showing mercy (my wife also has this one). Of course any of us might do any or all of those things at various times. But those who are gifted in one of those are bent towards it and everyone knows it. They are flowing in their gift often.

I don't think that Paul's list is exhaustive by any means. Whatever your gift is, you love functioning in it. In many churches only a minority of people know what their gifts are. That is because the majority don't have gifts because they aren't in Christ's body. Goats don't have gifts. Their pastors need to stop giving sermons on "How to Discover Your Gift," and start giving sermons on "How to Repent and be Born Again."

Christians are "love people," but they are also "hate people." They "abhor what is evil" (12:9).

Do you "associate with the lowly" (12:16), or do you associate only with those in your class or status?

Have you noticed how frequently Paul quotes from the Old Testament in this and other epistles? He obviously believed that there were truths and principles in the Old Testament that are relevant to new covenant believers. Sometimes he even quotes Old Testament commandments as if they are binding upon Christians.

But have you noticed that Paul never encouraged believers to keep any of the ritualistic aspects of the old covenant? This is because Paul practiced exactly what he and the other apostles preached, that Christ's followers are not obligated to follow the Law of Moses, but rather the law of Christ only. Of course, every moral aspect of the Mosaic Law was included in the law of Christ. That is why Paul sometimes quotes moral commandments from the Old Testament in his letters as being binding upon believers.

In the Law of Moses God said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (12:19). Since God never changes, that is still true of God, and that is why Paul could instruct his readers never to take their own vengeance.

Loving one's enemies is not a uniquely New Testament concept either, as it was prescribed in the Old Testament. Long before Christ, God was instructing people, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink" (12:20; Prov. 25:21-22). This is the way to win our enemies, by overcoming evil with good. As the Chinese proverb so aptly says, "He who seeks revenge should dig two graves."

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