



ROMANS 12 - 16

Devotional

I remember

*as a kid getting my church candy, right before the sermon would start. One of my favorites, that we only got occasionally because the wrappers were too loud, was the Anise candy. I loved the Anise candy because I could suck on it slowly and it continued to give good flavor right through the sermon! In many ways this is a picture of what we get as we continue to hold the candy of the Word in our hearts and minds enjoying its flavor. To that end our sermon study team is going to be providing five days of additional hard candy to be enjoyed following each sermon in our **By Mercy** series on Romans 12-16. Each day will take a small part of the larger text for further reflection and prayer. In many ways these five devotional offerings will expand on the questions for further thought/discussion (which they will replace) and will be attached to the Friday letter. You can also choose to have the daily devotional sent to your email inbox M-F. In addition to personal growth or reflection, these short reflections could be used in families for growth/reflection, C-groups as basis for discussion/prayer, or you could use them with a co-worker or neighbor for Bible study. However they are used, we want to take the Word, allow it to dwell richly within us, so that we can test and discern the will of God.*

Pastor Andrew

Day 1

ROMANS 12:1a

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God ...

Think back over the 1st 11 chapters of Romans - What are some of the mercies of God in view which Paul is urging them to consider. (cf. 5:1, 6:1, 23, 8:1, 14-16, 31-37)

This is another example of the Bible's use of the indicative to ground the following imperatives. Why is this important to note? (cf. Ex. 19:2ff)

Paul appeals to the church at Rome to heed his exhortation. How do you receive this appeal as it comes through the centuries to you?

This text grounds me in what truth?

This text has what duty?

This text highlights the beauty of the Gospel in this way?

Prayer

Father thank you for the mercy that you have provided for people like me who desperately need it. Thank you that while I was still a sinner you went to the cross to die in my place. Thank you for rising again to newness of life and pouring out the gift of the Holy Spirit on me! Thank you for not asking me to earn my salvation, but rather for gifting me with salvation and asking me to live a life of gratitude. Holy Spirit, help me this week to answer your appeal to be the person you have declared me to be. I pray these things in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Day 2

ROMANS 12:1b

“to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

Consider the word “sacrifice.” The Christians in Rome reading Paul’s letter would know about animal sacrifice: (bloody, costly, something dead on the altar). What comes to our present-day minds with the word? (sacrificing something for the sake of something else?) But the idea of a “living sacrifice” is paradoxical! A living death/a dead life. As Christ-followers we’ve become familiar with these paradoxes and can follow them to the arms of Jesus. He lived a perfect life that led to death so we could die to ourselves and receive life. A “living sacrifice” isn’t possible without Jesus, so let’s start today by resting in him.

Yesterday we reviewed some verses from earlier chapters in Romans to remember specifically how God has been merciful to us. Today we need to keep those mercies clearly in view as Paul urges us to respond with abandon and no reservation. We offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God who already loves us, has given us peace, saved us from eternal death, freed us from any condemnation, made us his children and is FOR us. We can’t earn more love from God by our sacrifice, instead we are responding to the infinite love of God with it.

How do we do that? Let’s give our fingers to God, our hair, our tongues, our skin, our feet, our private parts. Let’s give him our brains, our hearts. Let’s give him our sore knees, our arthritic hands, our confused minds and our legs that need the help of a wheelchair or walker. Our bodies are holy and acceptable to God because Jesus, our sacrifice, makes them perfect!

Spiritual act of worship. Go back to the liturgy of this past Sunday found on the website. Sing the songs, read the scriptures. Respond to the mercies of God. Offer yourself to him.

Prayer

Dear God, I confess that I don’t want to do this. Reveal what I am holding onto. (Open your hands.) I open my hands to you in surrender, as an offering of obedience with my whole body. Show me what I am afraid of losing. Help me to see how living my life however I want to ultimately leads to death. Give me faith to give myself completely to you, dying to myself, which leads to life! Fill my heart with you, so this offering I make is a response to the mercy you’ve shown me, not an attempt to earn your love. Teach me what this means and give me a heart that wants to obey you. (Move your open hands to your heart.) Amen.

Day 3

ROMANS 12:2a

“Do not be conformed to this world”

Similar to Paul, John says “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15) How is the word world being used here? What does it mean to love the world?

Throughout Romans Paul is telling us that in the Gospel of Jesus we find comfort, purpose, belonging, absolution, and salvation. The world tells us that we find those same things at the gym, in our food, on social media, through busyness, parenting, politics, leisure, etc.... Talk about both the obvious and subtle ways the world allures you.

Paul says elsewhere, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” (Colossians 2:8) What light does this shine on the motives and methods of “the world”?

This text grounds me in what truth?

This text has what duty?

This text highlights the beauty of the Gospel in this way?

Prayer

Father this is the world that you have made. But right now this world is feeling the effects of the Enemy. Help me to recognize the hollow and deceptive philosophies of this world that depend on human tradition rather than on your Word. Help me not to be content with empty promises of gratification through food, sex, or money. Keep me from drinking from the broken cisterns of performance or success. May I not be satisfied with social media “likes,” an abundance of leisure, or romantic love. May I truly not be conformed to this world, but may I indeed be transformed to your likeness.

Day 4

ROMANS 12:2b

“but be transformed by the renewal of your mind”

Elsewhere Paul says, “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” (Ephesians 5:8-9) How does this image of dark and light help us understand the charge to “be transformed”? Think about the outward visible component, as well as inward character.

Earlier in Romans we see that the battle for our mind is rooted in our sin-problem. “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.” (Romans 1:28) Yet in Christ, God graciously breathes new life into believers that they may no longer be enslaved to a fallen mind! Reflect on how this renewal based in grace differs from worldly efforts to improve ourselves. (cf. 7:4-6, 8:5-6, 8:9-11).

The call to be transformed is not a vague challenge to be a better person. We are called to adjust our thinking about everything to reflect the new life we have in the Spirit. What guide has God given us to know what we are transforming to? Why is it important to get this right? (cf. 8:27-30, 2Cor. 3:16-18)

This text grounds me in what truth?

This text has what duty?

This text highlights the beauty of the Gospel in this way?

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to You, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly Yours, utterly dedicated unto You; and then use us, we pray, as You would, and always to Your glory and the welfare of Your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

(Book of Common Prayer, Prayers #61)

Day 5

ROMANS 12:2c

“that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Paul encourages the Ephesians, “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” How do we understand what the will of the Lord is? Are there aspects of God and His will that we can not understand?

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 29:29) The secret things reveal that we need to trust, obey and humble ourselves before God, for we are not meant to understand all of His ways. How does testing to discern God’s will move us to trusting in God’s will? Why is it hard for us to trust in something we can’t see?

Reflect on the ways you have seen God’s will at play in your life. Where has God deepened your faith; active, loyal trust in Him and His son Jesus, over the years? What might this reveal about the will of God?

Prayer

Father, to know you is to have a glimpse of your ways. An inside view of what is good, pleasing, holy and perfect in this world. Oftentimes I don't feel that way, act with that accord, or exercise that knowledge. Like Paul I cry out that I do the things I ought not to do, and don't do the things I ought to do. Yet your Spirit is at work on me; my heart, my mind and my body. Father through your word would you give me wisdom to discern how then to live with gospel insights and eyes. I look to you O God, for this direction. In Jesus' name, Amen.