

# Living Sacrifice – Gift of Life

Thomas Robinson, *Life Renewing 1*, September 17, 2017

## Romans 12:1-13

<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, through **God's mercies to you**, to present your **bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and pleasing to God, which is your **worship that fits with God's message** (*logos*).

<sup>2</sup> **Do not let yourselves be shaped by this age**, but be **transformed by the renewing of the mind**, in order that you may discern what is **God's intention** – which is for what is **good and pleasing and mature**.

<sup>3</sup> For through **the grace given to me** I say to everyone among you not to **think** with high delusions beyond what is fitting to think, but to **think in a sane manner**, each according to the growth of **faith** that God has apportioned them.

<sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many different body parts, and not all the body parts have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are **one body in Christ**, and individually we are **members one of another**.

<sup>6</sup> We have **gifts of grace** (*charisma*) that differ according to **the grace given to us**:

if it's **prophecy**, in proper relation (*analogia*) to our faith;

<sup>7</sup> if it's **ministry** (*diakonia*), in ministry; if you're one who **teaches**, in the teaching;

<sup>8</sup> if you're an **encourager**, in encouraging; the **giver**, in simple generosity;

the **leader**, in diligence; the one who shows **mercy**, in cheerfulness.

<sup>9</sup> Let **love** be genuine; abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup> love (be devoted to) one another with mutual affection (*philadelphia*); outdo one another in showing **honor**. <sup>11</sup> Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in the Spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in **hope**, be **patient** in suffering, persevere in **prayer**. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend **hospitality** to strangers.

## Romans 1:28-32

<sup>28</sup> And just as they did not think fit to hold God in their knowledge, God handed them over to an unfit mind to do what ought not to be done: <sup>29</sup> filled with all injustice, evil, greed, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness....

## Romans 6:3-4, II

<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

<sup>4</sup> We therefore were buried with him through baptism into death, in order that, just as the Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ...

<sup>11</sup> Thus think of yourselves as dead in relation to sin but living in relation to God in Messiah Jesus.

## Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. I live but no longer I, but Christ lives in me. But what I now live in flesh, I live in the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

## 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old things passed away; look, new things have come. <sup>18</sup> But all things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

## 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts of grace (*charisma*), but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of ministry (*diakonia*), but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who works them all in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the process of manifesting the Spirit for the common good.

## **A Living Sacrifice in a World of Sacrifices**

Think of Paul implementing Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in the Greco-Roman world. The world around is very religious – sacrifices continually in temples – trying to manage or fend off the evil of the world. Jesus insists on not managing evil but going deep into God's heart and purpose, really living in God's reality – simplicity, solid rock, joy, love.

The cities smelled with burning sacrifices. Paul points to a new vision of living sacrifice, the whole person, not just “spiritual” but body, a whole life offering to God, a vision of worship that is *logikos*, fitting the message (*logos*), the Word of Jesus' Cross and Resurrection.

## **God's Reality and My Mind and Body**

Like Jesus (“*Change your way of thinking*”), Paul urges not to let “this age” with its patterns of thought, ways of valuing human purpose, problems, relationships, be the mold for our life. In Jesus, God's kingdom has broken into our little world, a new creation, new birth, new age.

Life is molded from the inside out (not by externals). Reality is that we are always being shaped by the thinking of our age. The Renewing of Mind is a transformation – like Jesus' teaching.

First, all starts from really seeing God at the center of everything. Knowing that we are God's creation – physically, spiritually. In Jesus God has shown himself in his self-giving love and life-creating power, for all creation, promised since Abraham. The heart of it is God's Grace.

We're challenged to think (not be deluded), to think with sanity and faith, seeing ever more clearly what God has done in Jesus. Embodying the level of faith God has led us to so far.

This is a process of ongoing renewal of mind, worship, vision, discerning God's good purpose.

## **Gifts of God's Grace – Christ's Body in the World**

Second, we are in community. From experience Paul knows the diversity of people God calls and how God brings them into the “one body in Christ.” Part of the new mind is seeing this larger reality for our individual lives, sharing with other people in the one bodily life of Christ by God's gifts of grace. We're as diverse as body parts, but still one physical/spiritual body. We belong to each other and learn from and with each other sharing different journeys of faith, gender, ethnic identity, social standing, intellect, age, physical ability, interests, etc.

God brings diverse individuals into one living body. God gives grace for the individuals all to contribute to the shared life and serving love of the whole body. Prophecy is a gift that grows with faith and serves in community. Each gift requires focus on using it effectively and for the shared life / purpose of the body defined by Jesus. In the process God is working in each individual and in the whole to bring God's reality/kingdom on earth as in heaven.

There is no division between miraculous and natural – that is the thinking of this age. Rather every form of ministry is an opening for manifesting God's Spirit, for God to work both in us to shape our own growth and through us to serve God's world. Serving, teaching, exhorting, encouraging, giving, leading, showing mercy – the God who feeds birds works everywhere.

## **Living in the Grace of God**

Paul begins to unfold the shared life of this kind of community. Learning judgment to recognize God's intentions for good and reject the evil. Love without hypocrisy, learning real devotion to people very different from myself. Competing only in showing honor to each other.

Learning to live boldly, with the Spirit's fire. Hope that creates joy even in suffering. Always seeking to help each other and to welcome the outsider and stranger. A Mind Renewed!