

A CALL TO WORSHIP: ONE-ANOTHERNESS (pt 3)

Romans 12:1-5



March 17, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON

The great Aristotle believed that the planets and the sun revolved around the earth. He saw no sign that the earth was in motion, and therefore believed it to be the center of the universe. This was the standard belief until in 1515. At that time a Polish priest named Nicolaus Copernicus proposed a heliocentric model, one where the earth was seen as a planet like Venus or Saturn, and all planets actually circled the sun.

Romans 1 says that when we take center place in the universe, we worship but we aren't worshipping God. We worship the inferior over the superior. We worship the creation over the Creator. As a result, God gives us over to our desires and our foolish hearts are darkened.

We enter a world of coping, covering, plotting and anxiety. Our fractured identities manufacture manipulation, lies, blame, fear, denial, anger and control. We turn into a well-oiled factory of self-absorption and self-centeredness. One way or another, our internal negotiating of our self-importance is going to rear its ugly head.

Christ came to deliver a marvelous gift to us. Nicolaus Copernicus proposed a heliocentric model of the universe and so does God. His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, must take center stage.

Jesus says to the Samaritan woman in John 4 that neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will she worship God. Instead He was giving her life that would become in her a fountain springing up to eternal life. And what this life will produce is a radical transformation of worship where you can worship in spirit and in truth. Worship is not about the right location or the right time; it's about a genuine, humble exchange between the Holy Spirit, God's Truth and your spirit.

**According to Paul, reasonable worship is a life of selfless, living sacrifice,
giving preference to one another.**

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Romans 12:1-5

Paul summarizes the first 11 chapters of Romans with this phrase, "by the mercies of God." What was true of Christ in His death becomes true for us. When Christ died on the cross, He broke the penalty and power of sin and freed us forever. Our union and identity to Adam has been buried and we have been raised with Christ. We are clothed with all of Christ's righteousness and we have been given new life; we have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

In view of each of these mercies of God, Paul exhorts us - he urges us - to make a presentation. The word for "present" is an Aorist Active Infinitive. This is unusual and unique. Exhortations are almost always in the present tense, but not here. What I think, along with many Bible scholars, is that Paul is asking the community in Rome to have a reckoning, to present themselves as a living sacrifice.

Romans 12:1 uses the language of worship and sacrifice and links it to the Levitical sacrificial system. The Law demanded a flawless sheep, but we are not flawless lambs. Christ was that flawless lamb. The "living sacrifice" that Paul is asking for is not a sacrifice for sin. Because of the mercies of God, the sacrifice God wants now is a living sacrifice which is our logical (*logikos*) worship (*latreia*).

Paul uses verse 2 to describe the process that God takes us through when we make this presentation. The Present Passive Imperative tells us that God does the transforming; we allow the transformation. When God is permitted to transform, we experience the good, well-pleasing and perfect will of God.

Starting in verse 3, we see a very specific area that God wants to transform our thinking. When we get grace, humility shouldn't be difficult to comprehend. Grace by definition means we didn't earn it. The only proper response is humility. But it's not some generic humility. God is asking us to have humility in a very specific way. He is asking us to humble ourselves in community. It's in one-anotherness that He is going to release the Holy Spirit's gifts.

In verse 5 Paul says, "So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another." Individually we are members, one to another. We are many, but one. We are different, and our differences are what make us absolutely irreplaceable as one body.

REASONABLE WORSHIP & ONE-ANOTHERNESS

True worship is realizing that this time here on Sunday morning is a culmination of a life of worship where I present myself as a selfless, living sacrifice preoccupied with making Christ the center of my universe and realizing my place in this one another-ness. We belong to one another and Paul says in five verses, "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom 12:5).

How many times have you gone to church and it wasn't some amazing sermon or fantastic worship set that profoundly touched your heart, but it was a friend who said, "Come sit with me"? Or maybe it was a smile or watching someone worship in spirit and in truth or an encouraging word that someone shared with you before you left? Or maybe it was seeing a couple holding hands who were thinking about divorce a year ago?

We work so hard to receive something from the stage, but most of what God is doing is in those rows that we are sitting in, and He desperately wants us to be a part of it.

- What if your discipleship to Christ Jesus is absolutely contingent on being with and connecting with the Body of Christ?
- What if God created this whole thing so gifts, smiles, voices, encouragement, and exhortation are the very ways that He is going to grow our knowledge, faith, hope and love?
- What's the part that God is asking you to play today?