



St. Paul's Lutheran Church
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The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Romans 12:1-2

In Romans chapter 12, verse one, the apostle Paul addresses the Christians in Romans. Some translations list that he 'appeals' to them. Other translations say that he 'urges' them. That is to say; the translators believe that Paul is shifting from a section of doctrine to a section of practice where the Romans must put into practice what has already been preached. However, this assumes that Paul's appeal to them is an appeal to action when it is fairly clear that Paul's appeal to them is an appeal of encouragement and comfort.

We need to be very clear at this point that many people interpret Romans in a formula kind of way. That is to say; they see Romans 1-11 as Paul's argument, which then creates or legislates some sort of consequence, application, or action that must come forth in Romans 12-16. They think in the realm of cause and effect. While this may seem like a minor point, it really isn't. Paul has just laid forth the *power* of the Gospel, and now, in Romans 12, he is not talking about mere actions that result from the Gospel, but rather he is talking about the reality – the way things are – as a result of the power of the Gospel. The Gospel is not power unto a few changed actions. But instead, the Gospel is the power unto the Christian's

whole life of worship. Chapters 12-ff are not primarily about behavior (for this is way too narrow) but about the Christian's whole life of worship, which is a result of the power of the Gospel. The power of the Gospel creates and generates new worship for the Christian.

And so, the Apostle Paul is primarily encouraging – not admonishing. What an encouragement for the Christians in Rome to be pointed to something that you already have! What comfort to be directed to the power of the Gospel to have its way in your life!

This makes perfect sense now because our living bodies are not acceptable and holy before God unless there is an invasion of the Sanctifying Spirit of God! But that is Paul's point! We indeed present our bodies as living sacrifices because of Jesus' birth, death, and ministry to forgive us of our sins – the power of the Gospel! The encouragement is that we live in this new reality created by the power of the Gospel to daily stand before God as a holy, living, and well-pleasing sacrifice because we have been purified in baptism and live in daily repentance and faith.

There are some rather profound implications to Romans 12:1-2. For starters, We Christians do not live our lives to somehow obtain holiness and acceptance before God. But instead, we are holy and acceptable before God because of Christ, which means that we live this life in the context of worship – gratitude. All talk of trying to motivate Christians in good behavior or going to church to worship is a telltale sign of people not realizing the dynamite power of the Gospel as a current and present reality for the Christian. We don't step closer to God to worship, but instead, we worship because God has come close to us. We don't do good things to become more of a Christian, but rather, we do good works because we already are a Christian.

But what does this life of worship look like? To a great extent, the life of worship is the shape of our attitudes and our characteristics in our stations in life and not necessarily some narrow specific nonbiblical action that we have to check off a list to prove to others that we are Christians. In other words, Christian worship is not restricted to Sunday morning but is the context that we live in as we are placed into vocations - vocations that God has prepared in advance for us to walk in. A husband changing a diaper for his tired wife, knowing that the God of the universe has redeemed him and gifted him with a wife and child... is worship. A boss going the extra mile to help a struggling employee whose wife is sick with cancer, knowing that the God of the universe owns everything and has made the boss a steward of money to bless his employees... is worship. Whether a person is a barber, mechanic, pastor, mother, or student, they have particular vocations in life in which they worship every day. Worship is the constant battle of not conforming to this world. Worship is continually being transformed by the renewing of the mind so that the Christian can discern the will of God (i.e., 10 commandments) and do good towards their neighbor.

How tragic it is for a person to do an exclusive act/project and miss the greater context of worship! How tragic it is for a person to understand worship exclusively to Sunday mornings and not all the vocations of life! How tragic it is for a person to miss the forest for the trees!

The power of the Gospel creates new worship in the whole life of the Christian – in all their vocations!

