

A Reason for Living
Romans 12:1-2, Part 1
#42nd in a Series on Paul's Letter to the Romans
Faith Community Church – September 3, 2006

Objective: *To introduce Romans 12:1-2 and to encourage our congregation to base their life on the mercies of God.*

Introduction

1. There are some people and things that seem to be inseparably linked: Abbott and Costello, Romeo and Juliet, salt and pepper, milk and cookies, spaghetti and meatballs, night and day, thunder and lightning.
2. There is a biblical link that I would like to talk about for a few moments, and the first part is doctrine. The second part is practice. Doctrine and practice are inseparable from each other. Behaviors follow belief – or at least it should.
3. We've spent 42 weeks talking about the "doctrine" part of Romans – chapters 1-11. Over the next few months we're going to be talking about "practice" – how what we believe affects the way we live.
4. Romans 12-16 is really about relationships. This part of the letter addresses our relationship to God, to our church, to government, to people who think differently than we do, and a few other situations.
5. I want to spend the next few weeks looking at Romans 12:1-2. Just as Romans 1-11 flows out of Romans 1:16-17, so Romans 12-16 flows out of Romans 12:1-2. These two verses tell us that, because of what God has done, you and I are able to make a decision (or decisions) to reject one way of thinking and embrace another way of thinking that results in behavior that is pleasing to God.
6. Let's get some perspective by reading the entire chapter.

What Paul Says About Our Reason for Living

1. Listen up!
 - a. Paul is interested in getting our attention in the opening words of verse 1. He is not as dramatic (no "I'm the Apostle Paul and you're the little chickadees"), but he is interested in getting our attention.
 - b. The chapter starts with the words, "I appeal to you. . ."
 - i. Similar words are urge, exhort, entreat, plead
 - ii. It conveys the impression that what is to come is of great importance and that we really need to pay attention.
 - c. Forty-one years ago this week I spent my first day at Glen Rock Junior High School. I can remember walking into a classroom and taking a seat. There in the front of the room stood a woman who was known as "Mrs. T." Mrs. Margaret Trerotola was an educational veteran. Rumor had it that she had actually taught some of our parents. I have no recollection of what she taught us, but I'll never forget her introductory words on that first day of school: "Ok class. I'm the mother hen and you're the little

chickadees. If you step out of line, heads will roll, and I will hang you by your thumbs from the lights.” I’m pretty sure that is an exact quote. I’m not sure why that has stuck with me, but by the time she was finished we were paying attention. To what does Paul want us to pay attention?

2. Our mandate: there is a pattern of life that God commands.
 - a. We’ll spend several weeks thinking about the meaning of each of the things that Paul says next, but let’s identify them:
 - i. Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.
 - ii. Do not be conformed to this world.
 - iii. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you can discern the will of God.
 - b. What’s a living sacrifice? What is the world, and how might we conform to it? How do we go about renewing our minds? These are all things that no doubt were matters that the Roman Christians talked about, and we will too, both in my sermons on Sunday and in our small group discussions.
 - c. But I want you to notice that Paul is appealing to us because these are God’s commands to us, not suggestions. And as we explore what they mean we’ll see that they are life-shaping. The clear implication of what Paul says is that at the heart of our way of life is the understanding that we belong to God first and foremost. Anything else we do and are comes out of that. And that is different from the way we tend to segment life.
(visual)
 - d. But why are these things expected of us?
3. Our motive: this pattern of life is the only reasonable response we can make in light of what God has done for us.
 - a. Paul’s appeal – God’s claim on our lives – is based on the mercies of God.
 - b. What is he talking about? The word therefore in verse 1 refers back, and I think it refers back to the heart of what he has said in chapters 1-11. God’s mercies include the message about:
 - i. Condemnation – why we are alienated from God.
 - ii. Justification – how we can be made right God and find forgiveness through faith in Christ.
 - iii. Sanctification – how God makes it possible for us to live in a new way.
 - iv. Glorification – the future that God has prepared for us.
 - v. Predestination – how God has made us a part of his great plan to save some though none deserve saving.
 - c. The mercies of God – in Paul’s thinking – are the single-most motivating factor in life. Once we comprehend what God has done for us, Paul says that our obedience and allegiance are only fitting, natural, reasonable responses.
 - i. We see this as a factor in his life – Philippians 3:8-12.
 - ii. We see this as part of Jesus’ own teaching – John 14:15.
 - iii. Finally, it forms the heart of much of what Peter says – 1 Peter 1:13-19; 2:9-12; 2 Peter 1:3-9.

Making A Connection With This Passage

There are two questions for us, then:

1. Have you experienced the mercy of God?
2. If you have experienced God's mercy, can you think of a better foundation, a more reasonable motivation, than serving Christ and loving God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength?