

TITLE: “A Call to Reason” (Slide #1)

TEXT: Romans 12:1-2

DATE: November 11, 2007

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. We turn again this morning to a text that for many is a very familiar one and to a them that we visited last week but deserves a second look.
 1. If we were to look, I think we would quickly discover that Roman’s 12:1-2 is a parallel passage to Joshua 24:14.
 2. In both verses there is a critical turn in thought that is founded in the words that precede it and move to practical, spiritual life application.
- B. To review, let’s take a moment to revisit the lesson of last week from Joshua 24:
 1. In reading the first 13 verses we saw a summary of God’s foundational choice for His life: that He was going to love us and redeem us and care for as His people.
 2. In verse 15 we discovered Joshua’s foundational choice: as for me and my house we will serve the Lord – in other words, Joshua chose to sell out completely to a God who first sold out complete for Him – a reasonable response.
 3. In verse 14 we discover the challenge to the people of God: “What are you going to do in light of all that God has done for you?” is the question. As we read on in the text we discover the choice of the people of God: “We’re not dumb/we’re not ungrateful. We too will serve the Lord.”
 4. To put it simply, verses 1-13 are a summary of God’s goodness, verse 14 is the transition verse or challenge verse, and verses 15 through 27 is the reasonable response of the people.
- C. As we turn this morning to Roman’s 12, again, we are looking at a parallel passage, even though at first sight it may not appear to be the case.
- D. (Slide #2) Let me set it up:
 1. The book of Romans is the Apostle Paul’s classic summary of his understanding of God and theology.
 2. In classic, first century form, Paul writes the book of Romans in two steps:
 - a. In chapters 1-11 he writes what was in his day called the Kerygma (Slide #3) – a summary of the Gospel or a summary of the Good News of Christ.
 - (1) For eleven chapters Paul speaks in detail about the wonder of God and His marvelous, saving grace.
 - (2) In reading the first eleven chapters, the result for the reader should be that of adoration and praise and celebration of all the goodness of God.
 - b. In chapters 12-15, Paul writes what was in his day called the Didache (Slide #4) – a summary of the appropriate and practical response to the goodness of God.
 3. So here’s what we have:
 - a. Paul for eleven chapters tells the readers in glowing terms about the wonders of God and His mercies.
 - b. And then as chapter 12 opens, we find the hinge word indicating that we are moving from good news to appropriate response and practical application: the word THEREFORE.
 - c. What will now follow, that we will look at together this morning, are words of life – practical advice concerning how one is to respond to all that God has done.
- E. To put it in Paul’s words, what he is about to offer are words of counsel concerning what he would call

our (Slide #5) “reasonable response.”

1. In Paul’s mind, what he is about to suggest as a human response is the only reasonable or rational human response.
 2. Oh, there may be other responses – and many have chosen them – but in Paul’s mind there is only ONE REASONABLE RESPONSE TO THE GOODNESS OF GOD.
- F. So let us look together at Romans 12:1-2 and seek to discover Paul’s counsel concerning the church’s reasonable response to all the goodness of God.

II. (Slide #6) OBSERVATION #1: A GLIMPSE AT A PASTOR’S HEART.

- A. As the chapter opens, I think it is worthwhile to look for a brief moment at what I would call Paul’s pastoral heart – a model of what pastors encounter in every generation.
- B. Following the transitional word, therefore, we discover three words spoken by Paul that are important to note.
- C. Paul declares to his readers: “**I urge you. . .**” (Slide #7)
- D. Paul understood what it meant to be a pastor then and now:
 1. He knew full well that you can’t force anyone to do anything – he understood the nature of free will.
 2. With this understanding, he does not begin the practical application section with words that he most likely would like to have said, such as: I command you OR me demand of you OR you must.
 3. No, he begins with pastoral words that are hard to speak but necessary in the end.
- E. Paul says to his congregation: O.K., having listed all the marvelous things that God has done, and in anticipation of offering to you some sound advice concerning a reasonable response to God’s goodness, “**I urge you. . .**”
 1. If we look carefully at the words in the original language, Greek, the original words are passionate words.
 2. Other ways in which they may be translated are: (Slide #8) “**I implore you,**” OR “**I plead with you**” OR “**I beg you with all of my heart.**”
- F. These are pastoral words that are couched in understanding – and understanding that I have as well about this audience gathered here this morning:
 1. Paul understood, as do I, that there is no way that a pastor can force a person to do anything.
 2. Paul had a proper understanding of free will, as hard as it is to accept at times. While we as pastors value free will, there are times it causes grief because we know that some will chose the wrong path and it’s heart breaking.
 3. Paul understood, as do I, that all we can do is beg and plead and hope and dream and long for God’s very best for his people.
- G. Folks, when I read those words of Paul as he opens this account, I understand what they mean, and so I want you to hear this this morning: I urge you, I plead with you, I beg you today – because I know I can’t make you – listen to what Paul goes on to say.

III. (Slide #9) OBSERVATION #2: A CALL TO REASONABLE THINKING – WHAT IS OUR REASONABLE RESPONSE?

- A. So what is it that Paul is begging his readers to do.
- B. Well, I don’t want to try to be too simplistic, but if I were to boil Romans 12:1-2 down into a brief summary statement, I would state it like this: **BE REASONABLE.**
 1. In the NIV translation, we read toward the end of verse 1 that what Paul is asking his audience to

do is to live their lives as a **(Slide #10) “spiritual act of worship.”**

2. The KJV and others translate the phrase **(Slide #11) “your reasonable act of worship.”**
 3. Expanding the thought a little more in the New Living Translation, the interpretation given is: **(Slide #12) “When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask?”**
 4. John Peterson in the Message writes: **(Slide #13) “Embracing what God has done for you is the best thing you can do for Him.”**
- C. Whatever the translation, they all seem to be saying the same thing: In light of all that God has done for you, “BE REASONABLE,” “RESPOND IN A WAY THAT DEMONSTRATES YOU LOVE AND APPRECIATION FOR GOD AND HIS GOODNESS.”
- D. **(Slide #14)** So how is it that we can respond reasonably to God?
- E. **(Slide #15) Being reasonable begins with a clear understanding of God and His mercies – we call this worship.**
1. As Paul continues to write in verse 1 – having introduced the transitional word, therefore, and issued his pastoral call – the next thing he writes is **“in view of God’s mercy.”**
 2. Toward the end of verse 1 he talks about the call to the act of worship.
 3. It seems to me that in reading the words of Paul, there is a call for a serious pause after his first ten words: **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, IN VIEW OF GOD’S MERCY. . . .”**
 - a. None of the rest of Romans 12:1-2 will make sense if we don’t first grasp the power of these first ten words.
 - b. The first ten words seem to instruct us to put down our Bibles, close our eyes, and meditate upon what we know about God and His mercy.
 - c. These first ten words are more than introductory words, they are foundational words upon which the next directive is built.
 4. The question Paul seems to be wanting us to answer as we read those first ten words is this: “Have you found God to be merciful in your life? Have you discovered in God One full of compassion and love and care and provision and much more.
 5. When you stop and think for only moments, quite a case can be built for the mercy of God:
 - a. As we read through the scriptures, we read of a God who from the beginning of time loved and cared for mankind, even in their rebellion.
 - b. We read of a God of covenant who promised to be our God, ever present, ever helping, ever interceding, ever overcoming on our behalf.
 - c. Time and time again in time of need, we read of a God who did the miraculous because of His great mercy.
 - d. As we move into the NT, we read of a God who loved the world so much that He literally came to earth to rescue us.
 - e. We read of a God who endured the trials of life that ultimately led to the ultimate sacrifice on a Cross to pay for the sins of the world.
 - f. We read of a God who rose from the dead and, before ascending into heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father to plead our case every day, He gave one last gift, the Holy Spirit who would walk with us and live in us every moment of our lives.
 - g. But then let’s take it even further – and you can add your testimonies as I speak: there are the times when we were out of food and funds and God provided, times when our children were sick and God healed, times when we were lost and He guided us, times when we had damaged relationships and He healed them, times when we were discouraged and He lifted us up, times when we were lonely and He drew alongside us and became our dearest friend, times when

we were disobedient and He just kept loving us, and on and on I could go.

6. As Paul writes, He begins his appeal to reason by instructing us to just stop and think for just a few moments – or for as long as we would like.
7. And as we think about God, Paul knew, as do I, that it is impossible to think about God for very long without a well-spring of joy and thankfulness flooding our souls because God is so full of mercy and grace and kindness and forgiveness.
8. Oh friends, there is none like God. Such a realization leads us to the practical action step of this text.

F. **(Slide #16) Being reasonable calls each and every one of us to respond to such mercies in the only reasonable way possible: absolute, unconditional, total, unreserved surrender of our lives to God.**

1. Listen to Paul as he continues: **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God–this is your spiritual/reasonable act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is–His good pleasing, and perfect will.”**
2. Now I understand that these are words that have been heard by many for years and years.
3. Many of us have heard messages down through the years that call us to absolute, unconditional surrender of our lives to God.
4. We have heard the words of Paul and preachers who have declared to call to become “LIVING SACRIFICES” to God – laying ourselves completely at the disposal of God.
5. Truth is, such a response is the only reasonable response – all other responses fall far short of an appropriate response in light of all that God has done for us.
6. The question that needs an answer, however, is what does it mean?
7. This morning, it is my aim to make this truth as clear as I possibly can. I want to suggest to you that our text offers to us very clear steps concerning how we can surrender our lives to God – steps that I want to illustrate for us this morning.
8. **(Slide #17) Step #1:** Place every area of your life on an altar of sacrifice. . . .including yourself.
ILLUSTRATIVE ITEMS:
 - a. Picture of my family representing my family
 - b. Garage door opener representing my home and all the rooms and activities.
 - c. Pay stub representing my employment.
 - d. Golf club representing all of my entertainment.
 - e. TV representing all that I watch at home or in the movie theater.
 - f. Computer representing all I do on the computer and on the Internet.
 - g. Report Card representing my school life.
 - h. Check book and wallet representing my finances.
 - i. TSA summary representing my future.
 - j. On and on I could go, but I think you’re getting the point.
 - k. Finally, I must climb onto the altar myself.
 - l. Having placed all on the altar before God, there is a second step to be taken.
9. **(Slide #18) Step #2:** Ask God to slay all this is on the altar that are in conformity with the world instead of in conformity with God.
 - a. As I revisit each of these items, I must ask God, “Have I adopted a worldly/secular view of this in my life and if so, will you burn up and eliminate such a lifestyle.

- b. One by one a surrendered life must ask God to take away that which is not sacred.
 - c. This is the step of elimination – removing from us that which does not please God.
10. **(Slide #19) Step #3:** Ask God to sanctify or transform in our minds, or make holy all that remains – a renewing or returning to divine sanity of our thinking.
- a. As once again I revisit each of these items, I must ask God to do this: Will you purify my heart and mind in regard to this area of my life so that I will think like you think and act like you like.
 - b. Sanctify, set aside, put in right order, bring under your control these areas of my life.
 - c. Transform me back to how I was intended to be as your vessel.
11. **(Slide #20) Step #4:** Step off of the altar as a newly transformed vessel and walk fully in the will of God – His good, pleasing, and perfect will.
- a. God does not want us to stay at the altar. He wants us to pick up our lives with all of its areas, now cleansed and made whole, and live as living sacrifices.
 - b. The result will be that we will now, having been sanctified, live lives that are good, pleasing, and in keeping with God's perfect will.
- G. THIS IS OUR ONLY REASONABLE RESPONSE.

IV. **(Slide #21) THE CALL.**

- A. Last week as we came to the end of the service, the challenge was to secure our spiritual foundations by determining that the choice that would guide all other choices would be “as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”
- B. Today's sermon is no different than last week's – just different terminology.
- C. In the end, God is once again looking for men, women, teenagers, and children who will decide this day that they will make God number one in their lives, laying their entire lives in the palm of God's hands to do with us as He will.
- D. He's looking for a people who will act reasonably in light of all of God's mercy – to lay our all on God's altar to be sanctified and made holy.
- E. I understand as Paul did: All I can do this morning is asking, to urge you, to beg that you come into a sanctifying relationship with God.
- F. The first step is placing our all on the altar. God will take it from there.
- G. Who will come this morning? Let's do some sacrificing to God. It's our reasonable response.