**Lesson 32: The Believer’s Response to Grace**

Text: Romans 12:1-2

**Introduction**

Paul marveled at God’s plan of salvation. In the truest sense of the word, it is wonderful! We have come to a pivotal passage in our study of Romans. Up to this point, we have followed Paul’s presentation of the gospel. He wanted those in Rome to understand what he believed and preached. Having made his doctrinal position clear, Paul began to explain how the gospel ought to have an effect on the way they lived. That is why Paul moved from explanation to exhortation. Doctrine must translate into daily living. Belief should determine behavior. Your confession of faith in Christ should direct the conduct of your life. In this lesson, we will consider the believer’s proper response to grace.

1. **Based on the mercies of God, Paul urged the believers to present themselves to God. (v. 1)** 
   1. The word *beseech* means to “appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage” (Gingrich). It comes from a term that means to come along side to help an individual. If a friend is headed in a wrong direction, you should come along side to encourage him or her to take a right path. In the remainder of the letter to the Romans, Paul is coming along side those who have been born again to encourage them to go in the way that pleases the Lord.
   2. This section amplifies what it means to have new life in Christ. Whereas this truth is more generally presented in the early portions of the letter (Romans 6:4, 11, 13), Paul specifies what it looks like in real life.
      1. *Therefore* carries the idea of “consequently.” Based on God’s plan of salvation, here is how you ought to live. Chapters 1-11 explain God’s love to man. Chapters 12-15 detail the love that we ought to show to God and man.
      2. Paul’s opponents accused him of condoning sinful living. They said that if believers are no longer subject to the law, lawless living would be the result. Paul demonstrates that the application of God’s grace to a person’s life produces just the opposite. Grace does not grant license to sin. It transforms the life and liberates the believer to live for God.
   3. His exhortation to righteous living was based on the mercies of God. This is a summary statement of all that God has done to bring us to salvation as described in the first eleven chapters.
      1. Notice that Paul did not base his exhortation for godly living on his position as an apostle. If the only reason you are trying to live a righteous life is to please a significant spiritual influence in your life, then your effort will be short-lived.
      2. He did not base his exhortation on guilt. He did not exhort them to live right to make up for the wrongs they had done.
      3. He did not base his exhortation on greed. He wasn’t trying to entice them with prosperity.
      4. He based his exhortation on grace. They ought to live out their faith in gratitude for God’s salvation.
   4. Paul exhorted the believers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. The term *present* is a term used in association with the sacrifices brought to God. Since there was no more need of animal sacrifice, they should present their lives.
   5. Paul used three adjectives to describe the type of life we ought to offer to God.
      1. We are to live holy lives. Your life is to be set apart unto God.
      2. We are to live in a way that is acceptable (pleasing) to God.
      3. This is our reasonable service. It makes sense that we would live our lives for Him since He gave His life for us.
   6. The following verse explains what it means to present your life as a living sacrifice to God.
2. **You can present your life to God by living a transformed life.** 
   1. Paul urged the believers to avoid conformity to the world. (v. 2a) The reference to the “world” is the age in which we live. Christ died to save us from this evil world system (Galatians 1:4). Even though we are saved out of the world, we will continue to struggle with the influence of the world.
   2. The word *conform* literally refers to the “fashioning something by using a shaped container, form, or mold” (Friberg). As believers, we are not to allow the world to press us into their mold. This can take place without us even realizing it. Daily we are inundated with the images, ideas, and values of the world. Unfortunately, it is also possible for believers to knowingly allow the world to shape their thinking. This takes place through choices in friendships, entertainment, and other influences. In what ways, do you face the pressure to conform?
   3. Instead of being conformed, believers are to be transformed (v. 2b). The word *transformed* is the word from which we receive the word “metamorphosis.” It means to “be changed in form” (Friberg). It is used in reference to the transfiguration of Jesus in Mark 9:2. Applied to our lives, it means that we need to be different than what we used to be.
   4. God’s way of transforming our lives is through the renewing of our minds.
      1. We don’t naturally think the way God thinks about the issues of life. His thoughts are higher than our ways. (Isaiah 55:7-9)
      2. The sinful nature of man has corrupted his thinking (Romans 1). The new birth and application of truth reverse the effects of sinful thinking.
      3. The renewal of the mind is a process, not an event. The tense of the verb is present tense. We must constantly adjust our way of thinking to God’s way of thinking. “This reprogramming of the mind does not take place overnight but is a lifelong process by which our way of thinking is to resemble more and more the way God wants us to think.” (Douglas Moo)
   5. God changes us from the inside out. The essence of the Christian life is more than a list of rules that call for outward conformity to external commands. He works in us so that wherever we go and whatever we face, we can apply God’s way of thinking to life situations.
   6. The reason we need to be renewed in our way of thinking is so that we might test and approve that which is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.
3. **Central Idea: Paul urged the believers in Rome to offer their entire lives to God because they were recipients of God’s grace.**
4. **Application: A proper response to grace is a life totally devoted to God.**
   1. Have you reflected on the mercies of God?
   2. Have you offered your entire life to God? If not, what are you withholding?
   3. Is your life defined more by conformity to the world in which you live or the transforming power of the gospel?

**Conclusion**

What is your response to grace? Does your faith in Christ influence your daily decisions? If not, the purpose of this lesson has been to come along side of you to urge you to present your body as a living sacrifice. As we study further in this application section of Paul’s letter to the Romans, we will see what a life totally devoted to God looks like.