

Sunday October 27, 2019
Lesson 9: All In
Scripture: Romans 6: 1-8, 12-14

Context:

The next lesson on knowing God is from the book of Romans. The main point of the lesson is that we are to embrace what it means to offer every aspect of our lives to God as a holy act of worship. The scripture verses jump around in the sixth chapter of the book with the key verse stating: “Present yourselves to God as people who have been brought back to life from the dead, and offer all the parts of your body to God to be used as weapons to do right!” (Romans 6: 13)

The book of Romans is known as a theological treatise presenting Paul’s understanding of the Christian faith and providing what should be taught to the congregations in Rome. Of all writings associated with Pauline authorship, the book of Romans is one of the lengthiest and has formed much of the understanding we have today about Jesus. Our scripture lesson this morning comes early in the book as Paul explains how we should understand our bodies in relation to God.

From chapter six to chapter seven, Paul ties together the understanding of Christ and his impact on the Christian believer. Proceeding from chapter five, he brings up the concepts of sin, grace, and law and helps the readers understand more about the believer’s new life in Christ.¹ Paul asserts baptism allows for humans to participate in Christ’s reconciling death. Therefore, sin has no power over humans.² In that moment, the power of sin is dead and there is hope for humanity.

Yet there is another part to the story for Christians. Jesus died and yet he rose from the dead conquering sin and death. Thus, in baptism we share in the overcoming of sin and death. However, while reading the passage, there is a shift in tense. While our participation in Christ’s death is described in the past tense, our participation in the resurrection is described in the future tense.³ There is an opportunity for us to share fully in Christ’s death with a caveat that we will yet to experience the full power of Christ’s resurrection. We receive grace in the moment. We receive this grace as a gift and it is one that gives us the choice of freedom in how we live our lives.

Paul is urging the congregation to see that baptism is a gift, a means of grace. As a gift, there is to be respect and appreciation. The Roman Christians are to see their lives as an offering to God for what has been given. Their bodies are not meant to be used for their own passions, but for the glory of God. Their egos are to be kept in check by understanding that the gifts and talents they have been given are to glorify God and not themselves. Worship is not to just be a role reserved for when the communities gather

¹ Paul J. Achtemeier, “Romans,” *Romans: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, 1985), 102.

² *Ibid.*, 104.

³ *Ibid.*, 104. See Romans 6:5 and 6:8 for this subtle distinction.

together as it is meant to be an everyday opportunity.

Application

When discussing this passage, it is easy to assume that the “members” and “passions” refer explicitly to sexual lust and behavior. Yet read in context with the rest of the chapter and the surrounding chapters, there is another issue that is being addressed. Paul expresses to the Christian community that God wants our whole selves to be devoted to Christ. The passions we have in our lives are to be in tandem with serving God and every day is meant to be a new one in which we live with God and with others.

All of us have been fortunate to receive spiritual gifts and abilities by God to serve in this life. Hopefully all of us feel passion about something like our hobbies, our family, our values, our work, and our church. We find life in things where we can give of ourselves and delight that God is at work in our lives.

With the freedom to use our gifts and graces and the passion that we can bring to the world, we are given a choice about how we will use them. As those who are claimed by Christ, we can grow in those gifts and passion. It is a beautiful thing when we can claim the identity we have in Christ.

Yet Paul’s words also caution us to see that if not careful, we can miss that our gifts and passion deserve special attention. They are things we receive not by achievement or merit, but because God wants us to steward them in a responsible manner. Both gifts and passion can make the world a better place, or can they wreak havoc and bring heartache.

Whenever we have a good sense of self, we can be aware of our gifts and the good that they can do in the world. If we have passion for something, we can use it as fuel to have a positive impact. We can have confidence that God can use us as instruments of worship, bringing goodness and harmony to our relationships, our work world, and our church.

However, at times we may need an ego check. When using our gifts, do we see ours as more important than someone else’s? Usually, when we begin to dismiss others for gifts they have or do not have, we are abusing what God has given us.

The same concept goes for passion. You may have a great passion for a project or cause. We may give a lot of our gifts, our time, and maybe even money to something that stirs our hearts. What wonderful things we can accomplish when we have energy for something that bring us and perhaps others great joy! Yet as we channel our passion, we would do well to remember that our passion does not give us a right to shove others down or dismiss them when they have dreams and visions too. That is when we fall into the trap that Paul describes of letting sin reign in our mortal bodies.

The good news is that God has given us grace. We cannot earn God’s love or forgiveness. God has even blessed us with gifts and passion. As such, we should strive to honor what God has given us by seeking to be confident, yet humble believers understanding that everything we have actually belongs to God. Our gifts and our passion were given to us so that we may be a blessing and not a curse to this world. Let us celebrate being free from sin by seeing every day as an opportunity to worship by loving God and our neighbor.

What are the gifts God has given you? What is something that channels your passion for life? How have you seen God use you as an instrument of good? How have

you seen yourself perhaps abuse your gifts or passion? What are ways to help you have an “ego check” where you evaluate if you are using your gifts or passion for good or evil? Who are people that hold you accountable to a life of worship? How do you love God and love your neighbor?

Rev. E. Hunter Pugh
Pastor of Brantley – Brunson Chapel Charge
PO Box 71
Brantley, AL 36009