

Romans 12

Loving Sincerely

A pattern of St Paul's teaching. He begins with the big picture, the global view or the theological concept.

Then he brings it down to a smaller picture; in this case the Church. How does this theological concept live itself out in the Church?

Then He brings it down to you and me. How does the theological concept express itself in our lives? This is often when we can feel uncomfortable.

In Romans 12 we see a clear example of this pattern.

1. Verses 1-2; The Theological Concept. "Offer you bodies as a living sacrifice." And (as if that was not enough to meditate on), "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world". The big picture, the broad concept.
2. Verses 3-8; He brings it down to the level of the Church. What does the Church look like when they are living out these theological concepts?
3. Verses 9-21: St. Paul brings it down to the individual Christian. To you and me. This is where it can be uncomfortable. What do we look like when we are expressing or living these theological concepts out in our lives?

Tonight, I want to talk about the third part of this chapter; What do we as individual Christian look like when we are "offering our bodies as a living sacrifice" and when we are not being "conformed to the pattern of this world"?

First a Story: A family was having dinner at a restaurant. The 5-yr. old son eagerly and loudly volunteered to say grace. Everything went quiet in the area of the table they were seated at as the little boy closed his eyes, put his hands together and prayed just as loudly, "God we thank you for the food we have for supper. And God, I thank you especially for the ice cream sundae I will have for dessert. Amen" there were smiles on the people at the tables around them except at one table where a lady with a frown on her face said a little too loudly, "Imagine that. Thanking God for a needless thing as ice-cream. Ridiculous" Upon hearing it, tears swelled up in the little boy's eyes. The mother put a hand over his and said. "don't worry about her. Some people are grumpy because they don't have enough ice-cream."

After the main course, the waitress brought out dessert and of course the boy had ordered a chocolate ice-cream sundae with sprinkles. He looked at it for a moment and without saying a word got off his chair, picked up his sundae and went over to the lady who had complained. As he put it in front of her he said, "you seem to need more ice cream. Take this. God bless you" and then went back to sit at the table.

That little child expresses how we live "Offer you bodies as a living sacrifice." And "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world".

The first part of Romans 12: 9 states the principal of living out these expressions. "Love must be Sincere." The rest of the chapter is expressing a way to love sincerely.

Love must be sincere. This implies that we are not talking about an idea. But something we do. You have heard me before and will again in the future say that love is an action. It is something we do. Love is seen in our actions and by our actions.

Love is a choice we make. It is a decision to put the needs and welfare of the other first even over your own needs and welfare. That little boy in the restaurant lived this out. He wanted that Ice Cream; He was looking forward to that ice cream. But when he got it, he gave it away because he saw someone he thought needed it more. It did not matter that that person had just made him sad and upset. He made a choice to help her at his expense.

We are living in a time of crisis. We have experienced hoarding to a phenomenal level. People storing things up causing shortages of many things for others. Toilet paper, Hand sanitizer, surgical masks, food in many places. All stored up without consideration for others. We have seen price gouging. Store increasing their price 4 or 5 times the normal selling price.

But we have also seen sincere loving actions on the part of many. Doctors, nurses, emergency drivers putting themselves in danger to help others. We have heard of members of these groups catching the virus and yes dying. To get closer to home, people shopping and picking things up for those in isolation. People driving the sick to hospitals exposing themselves to possible infection. Phoning to make sure people are ok, safe, having the things they need or just giving an encouraging word.

People taking risks to help others, not because they have to, but because they choose to do so. One person told me he was taking groceries to someone. He said the guys a jerk, but he needs help.

This is letting your love be sincere (vs. 9)

This is honour one another above yourselves (vs. 10)

This in not be lacking in zeal (vs. 11)

This is blessing those who persecute you. (vs. 14)

This is Do not repay evil for evil (vs. 17)

It is in times of trouble, times of crisis that love is often clearly seen.

How is your love seen?

What actions define your love?

Who benefits form your actions?

How do you show love in the community you live in?

I will end by saying love is a choice we make. It is not some emotional ecstasy.

“Offer you bodies as a living sacrifice.” And “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world”.

Let us choose to love. And Love sincerely. Amen.