

Romans 10:33-12:13

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Lecture 12

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living sacrifice, renewing of the mind, corporate body of Christ, brotherly love, blessing enemies, God's sovereignty, non-conformity, hospitality

Abstract

This lecture explores the pivotal transition from theological foundations to practical application within the book of Romans, focusing on the shift from God's sovereignty in history to the believer's moral duty. Dr. Craig Keener explains that the renewal of the mind acts as a direct reversal of the corrupted human intellect described earlier in the letter, enabling believers to view their lives through an eternal, kingdom-oriented perspective. Central to this transformation is the concept of the living sacrifice, where believers offer their bodies in service to the corporate body of Christ rather than conforming to the present age. This renewed mindset manifests in sincere brotherly love and humble service within the church, as well as an unprecedented commitment to blessing enemies and overcoming evil with good.

Outline

I. Romans 11:33-36: The Concluding Doxology

A. Rousing Rhetoric of the Sublime

1. Poetic style and rousing rhetorical elements are characteristic of Paul's spontaneous worship.

2. Often used to close major speech sections or entire books in antiquity.

B. Scriptural Allusions and Foundations

1. Verse 34 quotes the Greek translation of Isaiah 40:13: "Who has known the mind of the Lord?"

- a. Prepares for the renewed mind of Romans 12:2.
- b. Links divine wisdom to our historical and theological perspective.

2. Verse 35 quotes Job 41:11.

C. Declaration of God's Absolute Sovereignty (Verse 36)

- 1. "From Him, through Him, and to Him are all things".
- 2. Ancient causation categories:
 - a. God is the source ("from Him").
 - b. God is the mediating agency ("through Him").
 - c. God is the final purpose or teleological end ("to Him").

II. The Transition to Practical Application (Romans 12:1-2)

A. Shift from Theological Foundations to Moral Duty

- 1. Transition typical of Pauline letters (e.g., Galatians 5–6, 1 Thessalonians 4–5).
- 2. Christian ethics are motivated by a new identity in Christ, not fear of punishment.
- 3. Moves from fear-based deterrents to advanced, altruistic moral development.

B. Offering the Body as a "Living Sacrifice" (Romans 12:1)

- 1. Believers as priests who offer themselves as the sacrifice.
- 2. Three primary descriptors of the sacrifice:
 - a. Holy: Consecrated and set apart solely for God.
 - b. Acceptable/Pleasing: Corresponding to the pleasing sweet-smelling aroma of Old Testament offerings.
 - c. Living: A rhetorical oxymoron; the sacrifice is offered daily through active, lived behavior.
- 3. A "Rational" or "Logical" Sacrifice (Logikos)
 - a. Refers to a sacrifice of the mind and reason.
 - b. Links directly to the renewing of the mind in verse 2.

c. Contradicts unthinking popular superstition, aligning with Stoic ideals of reasonable devotion.

d. Our physical bodies are offered to God to be used in service of His corporate body.

C. Non-Conformity and Mind Transformation (Romans 12:2)

1. Non-conformity to "this age" (aion)

a. Contrast between the present evil age and the promised age to come.

b. Already-not-yet framework: living in the present world with the perspective of eternity.

c. Stewarding time and resources for the kingdom rather than selfish amusement.

2. Mind Transformation

a. "Be transformed" is a passive imperative, indicating that the transformation is God's work.

b. Reorientation of worldview to evaluate and judge matters in light of eternity.

3. Contrast between the Renewed Mind (Rom 12) and the Corrupted Mind (Rom 1)

a. Rom 1: Humanity failed to thank God; Rom 12: Believers dedicate themselves in worship.

b. Rom 1: Corrupted bodies; Rom 12: Offering bodies to serve Christ's body.

c. Rom 1: Mind handed over to disapproval; Rom 12: Mind renewed to approve God's will.

d. Rom 1: Yielded selfish vices; Rom 12: Yields acts of humble service.

4. Discerning God's Will

a. "Good, pleasing, and perfect" are evaluative criteria used by ancient philosophers and orators.

b. Not three separate levels of God's will, but descriptions of His unified will.

c. Wisdom and rational evaluation as primary means of divine guidance, operating alongside spiritual intuition.

III. Humble Service within the Corporate Body (Romans 12:3-8)

A. The Mind Directed Toward the Community

1. Direct link between the transformed mind (v. 2) and corporate thinking (v. 3).
2. "Don't think of yourself inappropriately, but think soundly".
3. Overcoming both self-boasting and self-waste (undervaluing oneself).

B. The Measure of Faith and Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:3, 6)

1. Faith is apportioned specifically for the execution of individual spiritual gifts.
2. Gifts are designed for corporate contribution, not personal pride.
3. We must respect the diversity of gifts in others:
 - a. Teaching
 - b. Tongues
 - c. Prophecy
4. Actively seeking gifts for the upbuilding and edification of the body.
5. Meeting corporate needs: Where our gifts and the body's needs coincide, we find God's path.

IV. Ethical Guidelines for Life in the World (Romans 12:9-21)

A. Inclusive Structure (Inclusio) of Good versus Evil

1. Set up in verse 9.
2. Concluded in verse 21.

B. How to Treat Fellow Believers (Romans 12:9-13)

1. Sincere love and brotherly affection (Philadelphia).
2. Honoring others above oneself (countering the competitive honor-and-shame dynamic of Roman culture).
3. Rejoicing in hope and enduring tribulation (recalling Rom 5:3-5).
4. Caring for the needy:
 - a. A deep-rooted Jewish value.
 - b. Contrasts with self-aggrandizing Gentile civic patronage.

5. Hospitality (Philoxenia):

- a. Highly valued practice in the early church.
- b. Providing lodging and using letters of recommendation for travelers.

C. How to Treat Outsiders and Enemies (Romans 12:14-21)

1. Empathy:

- a. Rejoicing with those who rejoice.
- b. Weeping with those who weep.

2. Associating with the lowly (Tapeinos):

- a. Choosing humbleness over powerful social connections.
- b. Divine presence is found among the broken and low-class (Luke 2 parallel: Caesar Augustus vs. Christ in the manger revealed to shepherds).

3. Overcoming Evil with Good:

- a. Blessing persecutors and refusing to return evil for evil.
- b. Refusing personal vengeance and leaving room for God's righteous wrath.
- c. Transforming enemies into friends.