

What Makes You Tick?

Becoming a Non-Conformist – Part II

Romans 12:1b

Introduction

A few years ago, a magazine carried a true story of something that happened in a football game between the great rivals Alabama and Auburn. It happened in the days when Bear Bryant was still living and drove his football program toward legendary accomplishments.

Alabama was ahead by five points, leading Auburn with two minutes to go. The first-string quarterback was injured on a play and Bryant had to use his second-string quarterback. The pressure was unbelievable and the crowd was going wild.

They were on Auburn's twenty yard line and it was first down for Alabama. Bear Bryant yelled into the helmet of the second-string quarterback, "Whatever you do, do not pass the ball. Run the ball all four plays. And then, if we have to hold them, our defense will get us through . . . listen to me boy, whatever you do, do not throw the ball."

The quarterback ran in, full of zeal and determination. First down, they were stopped at the line. Second down, held again. Third down, they gained a yard. The fourth down came and the crowd was hysterical. The hand-off to the running back was somehow muffled and the quarterback wound up with the ball. Running around in the backfield, he looked in the end zone and spotted his split end wide open. He passed the ball.

What the quarterback failed to see was the fastest man on the field, the safety for Auburn, read his eyes and saw the pass coming. He ran in front of the receiver, intercepted the ball, and started racing down the field. The quarterback was the only one with the

field advantage to catch him. He was not that fast, but he raced down the field, with the time clock expiring. He caught up to the player, tackled him, and Alabama won the game.

The opposing coach, Coach Dye, said to Bear Bryant, "I've read the scouting reports, and that second-string quarterback was slow. How in the world did he catch up to the fastest man on the field?"

Bear Bryant replied, "It's simple. Your player was running for a touchdown. My player was running for his life."ⁱ

That is a pretty powerful motivator, isn't it?!

Have you ever been motivated by that kind of fear?

I can remember as a nine or ten year old, getting into an argument with a older boy in the neighborhood who was quite a bit bigger than me. I do not know what possessed me, but I balled up my little fist and punched him. His black eye would last two weeks. The only problem was, after I punched him, he was still alive. He began to chase me and I knew that if he caught me, I would not be alive for long. I can remember clearing the back yard fence without ever touching it, while he had to stop and climb over it. And I lived to tell the story and become your pastor.

Have you ever been motivated by fear? How about the motivation of revenge? You can learn that one in the early years too.

I read a funny story this week in "Bits and Pieces". The story told of Jeremy's mother running

into his bedroom when she heard her six year old crying out in pain. She found Jeremy's two year old sister pulling his hair. Mom gently released each finger of the little girl's grip and said to Jeremy, "Honey, she doesn't understand what she's doing; she doesn't know it hurts . . . don't be upset with her; she doesn't know how much that hurts."

Mom was barely out of the room and down the hallway when the little girl screamed out. Rushing back in, she said, "What happened?"

Jeremy explained, "She knows now."ⁱⁱ

Most of us grew up with the common motivation to eat what was on our plates because . . . why? Because it is good for us, right?

"Eat those peas, they're good for you." Or, "Eat that squash, there are hungry children in the world."

I would be happy to box it up and mail it to them.

As you grow older, incentives and motivations change.

Napoleon once quipped that his soldiers were motivated to risk their lives for trinkets. He was referring to medals that gained status and recognition for them among their peers.

The world is moved by any number of motivations – motivations such as: fame, power, pleasure, money, popularity, security, status, or comfort. That is the kind of stuff that fuels the engine of the world system.

Ladies and gentlemen, the tragedy facing the world is not that it fails, but that it succeeds at getting something that really does not matter. It really does not matter!

Jesus Christ asked, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 16, verse 26,

. . . what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? . . .

What separates a Christian from the world, is not the fact that a Christian never achieves fame, or fortune, or power, or comfort.

I am reading the biography of S. Truett Cathy, the founder of Chic-fil-A Corporation, who, by all accounts of his story, is a committed Christian. And who also happens to be incredibly wealthy.

I have helped make him that way!

The apostle Paul said he knew how to experience abundance as well as poverty (Philippians 4:12).

Spirituality is not synonymous with either wealth or poverty. Anyone who teaches either view is a false teacher.

The difference between the believer and the rest of the world is not external possessions, but internal motivation! What makes you tick?!

In *Rediscovering Holiness*, J. I. Packer wrote,

*The secular world never understands Christian motivation. Faced with the question of what makes Christians tick, unbelievers maintain that Christianity is practiced out of self-serving purposes, or the need for a crutch of support, or for social identity. No doubt all these motivations can be found among the membership of churches. But the driving force in authentic Christian living is, and ever must be, not the hope of gain, but the heart of gratitude.*ⁱⁱⁱ

That is exactly the point of the apostle Paul. In the first eleven chapters of Romans, he has defined Christianity. Now, he will describe Christianity.

Immediately, Paul reveals the motivation of Christian conduct. Look at Romans 12:1a.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, . . .

Let me amplify and paraphrase this phrase in order to emphasize the tenses and nuances of Paul's vocabulary. Paul writes,

I beg of you and plead with you, brethren, in view of; on account of; because you have become the recipients of the great mercies of God, make a bold, ongoing, daily and decisive gift of yourselves to God.

By the way, in case you missed it, before God asks us to do anything for Him, He asks us to give ourselves to Him.

Remember, Paul is writing to the brethren. In other words, he is challenging the believer to a life of surrender.

Daily decide to behave what you believe. Do not just declare your Christianity, demonstrate it.

Four Words That Describe a Life of Sacrifice to God

There are four words that I have pondered as I have meditated on and studied this Romans, chapter 12, verse 1, text in the past week. There are four

words that categorically describe Paul's request to the believer to live a life of sacrifice to God. These are:

1. availability;
2. expendability;
3. acceptability;
4. advisability.

Availability and Expendability

"Availability" is in the verb "present,"

... present [to God] ... a living ... sacrifice .
..

"Expendability" is in the fact that Paul is not asking us to just make a verbal presentation, Paul writes,

... present your bodies [to God] a living ... sacrifice ...

Why is he so specific? Because the Holy Spirit knows that every one of us has the same problem; that is, we struggle with giving our bodies to God.

Now remember from our last discussion, the term "bodies" is an exhaustive term that encompasses everything about us.

- Our emotions are inside our bodies – we struggle to give God control of our emotions.
- Our plans are inside our minds – we struggle to yield our plans to God.
- Our wills are inside our spirits – we struggle to surrender our will to God.

God says, "Give Me everything about you."

We say, "Lord I'll give You something from me."

It is easier to give God some things than to give ourselves to God.

It is easier to volunteer a few hours a week to charitable work than to give God control of our calendar.

When the offering plate comes, we think, "I'll give Him some money; maybe that will take care of it."

The average Christian has somehow bought into the misconception that it is possible to buy your way out of the great commission.

In Romans, chapter 12, verse 1, God is not calling an institution, He is calling an individual to a life passion of surrender to God.

Paul uses the word "living sacrifice". That conjured up for the Roman believer – Jew or Gentile – the practice of the Old Testament system of sacrifice.

In the Old Covenant, the temple system was one of blood and death. Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and on special occasions, the altars of the temple ran with blood from the sacrifices of beasts and birds. The temple was one vast slaughterhouse.^{iv}

When the priest went off duty, his robe would be splattered with blood. It would be on his face, in his beard, on his hands, arms, and feet. His sandals would be oiled and red with blood.

No animal experienced a half-hearted sacrifice. They did not receive an assurance from the priest, "Listen, don't worry about it, when this is over, I'll take your ears and put them back in the pasture; I'll keep your four legs off the altar and prop them up by the fence where you used to graze."

The expendability of the sacrifice was entire.

Now Paul uses that kind of language to speak of the New Testament believer. However, in this analogy, you no longer bring a sacrifice to God, you become the sacrifice to God. You become a living sacrifice – your eyes, ears, hands, feet, and every other part and function of your body; your mind, emotions, and will, which feels, dreams, rejoices, suffers, plans.

Are we available? Then, are we truly expendable?

Our singles pastor, Brad Harbaugh, wrote in his recent letter to the singles, an interesting and somewhat humorous truth this past week. He wrote, "Most Christians only want to serve God in an advisory capacity."

The Lord has yet to create an advisory board and invite any of us to sit there. As Paul wrote in Romans, chapter 11, verse 34,

... who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

Acceptability

In addition to availability and expendability, the next word is "acceptability".

What kind of sacrifice does God want of us? Paul describes it with the words,

... living and holy ...

That kind of sacrifice is acceptable to God.

- A living sacrifice has to do with the totality of life.
- A holy sacrifice has to do with the purity of life.

This is the acceptable sacrifice to God, Paul writes in verse 1.

Would a bride on the way to the altar care about her hair? Would she walk through a mud puddle; would she care about the cleanliness of her dress?

Will we bring a blemished lamb to the altar? Will we present to God rotten fruit and maggot infested flour?

What does God care?

Will we, the bride of Christ, walk through life toward the marriage supper of the Lamb, sloshing through the mud puddles of sin? Will we care?

The motivation for holy living is gratitude. Look who our Bridegroom is! Look who He is!

Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.

Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.

Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,

And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

That is not a song that begins up there; that is a song that begins down here.

Crown Him the Lord of love; behold His hands and side,

Those wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified. . . .

All hail, Redeemer, hail! For Thou hast died for me;

Thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.

Can we be anything other than grateful? And to think that we are both the bride and the wedding present – offering up out of passionate gratitude, everything we have and everything we are to our Kinsman Redeemer.

Advisability

Now, Paul summarizes his analogy of sacrifice by making one more statement and giving one more key word. Availability, expendability, acceptability, and now, the word “advisability”.

Paul writes in verse 1,

. . . present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

The NIV (New International Version) translates it,

. . . this is your spiritual act of worship.

The King James Version renders it, which I prefer,

. . . which is your reasonable service.

Total sacrifice is most advisable!

Reasonable service

In the Greek language, there are only two words for this expression “reasonable service,” “logiken latreian” (λογικην λατρειαν).

Reasonable – logical; sensible

The first word, “logiken (λογικην),” gives us our transliterated word, “logical,” meaning, “sensible; reasonable”. To put it in crass terms, Paul is saying, “Use your heads.”

The most rational thing you, as a believer, can do, in light of what God has done for you; because of what God is doing for you; in view of what God is going to do for you; in light of His glory and splendor and grace and mercy and love and everything else you have learned about God in the first eleven chapters of this book of Romans – is to use your head!

“The wisest thing I can advise you to do,” Paul writes, “is to become a living, holy sacrifice to God.”

You can do nothing smarter, more intelligent, wiser, more intellectually brilliant than to say, “Here am I Lord, take me!”

Anything other than that for the believer is sheer idiocy. A halfway commitment is totally irrational. We know God; we know what is coming; we know where our future is ultimately bound.

So what makes you tick? What are you passionate about?

I was standing in the line at Cracker Barrel one day. It is worth it. Behind me was a man in his late 50’s or early 60’s. We were waiting to put our names on the waiting list. He volunteered to me how frustrating it was to have missed the supersonic rise of Cracker Barrel stock prices. He said, “Do you know that if I had bought stock in Cracker Barrel

when they went public, I'd be a very rich man today."

He then rattled off the stock prices when Cracker Barrel began and what it was that day, just a few years later. He was obviously disturbed. I could not help but think to myself, "Man, why does he come, if all it does is disturb him so much?"

When I go to Cracker Barrel, I have just a few things in mind. The chicken tenderloin sandwich on toasted sourdough bread, a big baked potato with butter and sour cream, and of course, hot blackberry cobbler with melting ice cream on top, to name several. When I think of Cracker Barrel, I think of unbridled sin. When that man thinks of Cracker Barrel, he can only think of lost opportunity – the fortune he could have made, if he had only known the future.

Paul says, "Let me give you some advice – availability, expendability, and acceptability to God is all the fortune you need."

John MacArthur's grandfather was a pastor, if I remember correctly, and he had, written in his Bible, a poem that was passed down from generation to generation. I wrote it down and have kept it myself for several years.

The poem speaks of the believer who stands at the Bema seat of Christ, which is the place of reward for a life of surrender. It says,

*When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ
And He shows me His plan for me,
The plan of my life as it might have been
And I see how I blocked Him here and checked
Him there
And would not yield my will;
Will there be grief in my Savior's eyes –
Grief though He loves me still?
He would have me rich, but I stand here poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing
Down a path I can't retrace.
Then my desolate heart will well nigh break
With tears I cannot shed;
I will cover my face with my empty hands;*

I will bow my uncrowned head.

How do you live a rewardable life? Paul gives his advice. In Romans, chapter 12, verse 1, he writes,
. . . *this is your reasonable, logical service of worship.*

Service – acts of worship

The first word means logical; the second word, "latreian (λατρείαν)," refers to a life of devotion and acts of worship.

What are acts of worship? Paul wrote, in I Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 31,

. . . whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

In other words, real worship is the offering of everyday life to God.

There is not a division between sacred and secular. It is all, every part and in every detail, your offering to God.

I read of a pastor who was listening to two of his church members talk about buying a house. One asked the other, "Who built that house?"

When he answered with the name of the builder, the man said to his friend, "Oh, then you don't have to worry about the quality of that construction . . . that builder is a Christian, and he builds his Christianity into every house he builds."

A. W. Tozer put it this way, "The work done by a worshiper of God will have eternity all over it."

No matter what it is, it is all an act of worship, born out of a heart of gratitude.

That is what makes us tick.

Availability

Expendability

Acceptability

Advisability

Therefore I urge you, brethren; I plead with you, brethren, in view of; because you have become the recipients of the great mercies of God, make a bold, ongoing, daily and decisive gift of yourselves to God.

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ⁱ Charles R. Swindoll, The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart (Word Publishing, 1998), p. 400.

ⁱⁱ Michael Hodgin, 1001 Humorous Illustrations (Zondervan, 1994), p. 306.

ⁱⁱⁱ James M. Boice, Romans: Volume 4 (Baker, 1995), p. 1509.

^{iv} The Pulpit Commentary (Funk & Wagnall's Company, 1800's), p. 375.