

Church Commitments by His Grace and for His Glory (Romans 12)

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Please turn one more week to the book of Romans, today ch 11. Last week we ended in the indescribable and incredible high note at the end of Rom 8 with the love of God in Christ. But that isn't actually the climax of the book. There's something even higher, and Paul's building to it for 11 chapters of gospel meditations and celebration, and he's about to launch. I could argue this is the highest point of the Bible and should be the ultimate point of life. This is the turning point of the gospel, from depths of mercies to this apex.

11:33 *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* ³⁴ *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”* ³⁵ *“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”* ³⁶ **For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.**

¹ *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* ² *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* ³ *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* ⁴ *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,* ⁵ *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* ⁶ *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.* ⁹ *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.* ¹⁰ *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

Today will build on last week and a body life message I started 2020 with. As a church body what is God's will for us? For you? These truths can change your life. v. 2 says this is for us to *be transformed*.

Last week in ch 8 we saw Paul erupt in praise for the love of God in Christ. Ch 11 ends at the peak and from it the red-hot love of God overflows and runs down to the people all around. Nothing can separate us from His love, and nothing should stop us loving others. Therefore, in view of His mercies, this calls us to do acts of mercy. We exist by His grace, v. 3, and we live for His glory, end of ch 11. The church as a body offers our bodies in worship. All gifts are from Him, all we do is through Him and all things to Him, SDG

God's glorification is for our transformation lived out in a church body. So today let's renew our minds as we review our church purpose statement and church commitments, or covenant statements we affirm with new members. Rom 12 reminds us why we do what we do as church members in body life. You'll notice the language of members in v. 4-5, what they're to commit to do in the body in v. 6ff, but it all starts by His grace and for His glory first.

Purpose Statement: This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities [11:36]

This church shall seek to glorify God by:

- The worship of God (praise, preaching, prayer, etc.) [12:1-2]
- Loving God and obeying His commands [12:3-10]
- Equipping, edifying exhorting, discipleship, fellowship [12:11-18]

There's others in our statement: the gospel (last week and chapters 1-11) but I want to start with these 3 in the order of our church purpose statement. It's good to keep reminding ourselves why and also how we're to glorify God. Glorious gospel -> Good works; Belief -> Behavior; Doctrine -> Duty

The key application questions from last week: how and when?

We started the year in Acts 20:20, where Paul describes his ministry as '*in public and house to house*,' he was living and giving the gospel. I talked in the first message of 2020 about a biblical 2020 vision for body life, envision frames of glasses or lenses to help us see clearly what God calls us to do. As we gather in public and scatter to our homes, both are ministries. In God's house and in our own houses we need a view of grace in action, to His glory

Be Thou my vision, Lord of my heart...King of heaven my treasure Thou art

If your vision is blurry, it's hard to see where you're going or what may trip you up on the way. 2020 vision is perfect, v. 2 uses language of the perfect will of God. I memorized v. 1 with this wording: '*in view of God's mercies ...*' So think vision in the sense of a grace-informed view of our calling, or a set of gospel lenses to help visualize God's will that we can't naturally see.

I said as we started 2020, by 'vision' I don't mean a business-plan-style goal beyond scripture. This isn't leadership's program for the next several years. But God's perfect will is here in His Word, and in view of His mercy, this is for us this year, today. God's sovereign will determines numerical growth, but let's be determined to pursue spiritual growth. This isn't my mission, or man's plan, it's from Him, through Him, to Him. Heb 10:24-25 commands considering stirring love and good deeds, build up, life on life relationships.

That passage commands us not to forsake assembling as a church, because we need to encourage one another (that's part of commitments at the end).

Messages: 2020 vision for body life (can use some more like this)

... stirring love and encouragement ...
 redeemed roles of men and women
 ... growing in communication (PM, big one for me)
 ... Gospel as motivation (last week)
 ... Church commitment, by His grace, for His glory

I mentioned last week this church series will include unity, purity, deacons, etc. After Easter we'll start a book study in Colossians I'm excited for. But before we do something new, it's good to review why we do what we do as a church in these things. All things are from God, through God, and to God. Church commitment as a member to scripture together is part of that, giving God glory. At the end of this service we'll welcome new members and it's good for us to see this in scripture and even say these affirmations together.

Rom 12 will show us why we do what we do in membership vows

So rather than come up with my own outline for Rom 12, I'm taking GCBC covenant commitments as my outline in Rom 12, what those who come up later will say. If you believe and see this in scripture and this is your church, join us if you haven't. As elders and existing members, we'll reaffirm these pledges, too, and I hope it will be with greater understanding and meaning.

1. Commit to church worship, teaching, discipline, and submission

v. 1 starts with loving language of family members '*I appeal to you brothers ...*' Don't think of membership so formally, think 'this is *my family* I want to grow with. I want the help of church family members to follow God.' We all need leaders and mature believers to lovingly admonish and appeal to us like Paul does in v. 1 (literally coming alongside). 1 Thess 2:12 '*as a father ...encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God...*'¹

As parents, our church also commits to raise up in the Lord kids in our care. Church family discipline is church exhortation with the goal of restoration. Sometimes loving intervention, but caring correction in private first, then if needed, asking 1 or 2 to help restore, then church (Mt 18, Gal 6). At YAG, we used Paul Tripp's definition of the walk of faith in community: 'Christ-centered, intentionally intrusive, grace driven, and redemptive' relationships

In a family there's loving discipline and duties, there's teaching, but Paul in v. 1 appeals by the mercies of God that we present our bodies sacrificially to God. To be holy and pleasing to Him. That's not casual, that's commitment.

End of v. 1 says this is *spiritual worship*. Not worship in the sense of style of music for me, it's the living sacrifice of me. Worship is all of life, laying what I want on the altar to burn up. It's offering our bodies to be holy, and renewing minds by the Word that transforms, not the world that conforms. v. 1 has bodies in the plural but it's not plural living sacrifices (NIV), in Grk it's a singular sacrifice. We come together as one, not for what I get out of it (and v. 3 says by grace given, we're not to think of ourselves more highly).

All things are from Him, through Him, and to Him, not me

Turn to Heb 13. Sacrifice isn't just for OT worship, it's in the NT. Sacrifice language includes submission. It's not about my will, Paul says it's about His will. Heb 13:15: *Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. 17 Obey your leaders [just pause to see this is in context of v. 7, as the Word is preached truly, it's to be obeyed] and submit to them...*

2nd part is additional command: besides what God's Word commands, this is putting yourself under. Ex: wives submit to husbands, you discuss with him, but then ultimately support his decision and position. Greeks used this word for soldiers subject to discipline. We're all subject to, and are to come under leaders (us leaders, too). Why? v. 17 goes on '*...for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.*' I need that. We're all sheep needing shepherds. In v. 20 Jesus is the Great Shepherd. We need v. 21, God to equip '*everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom **be glory forever and ever. Amen.***'

That takes us back to our purpose statement and end of Rom 11. For God's glory, commit #1. To church worship, teaching, discipline, and submission.

2. To contribute cheerfully and willingly to the support of its ministry.

Rom 12:5 *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*⁶ *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

God loves a cheerful giver. We're to give willingly, not under compulsion. Ron will teach more about that in the stewardship class starting next week, but Paul starts in v. 4 with language of members with different functions, as a body has different members or body parts. It's no casual loose association, being a member in this context is close connection, you're joined together by the same lifeblood (Christ's). Being a member in a local body is saying 'I belong to you and you belong to me, I want to stay connected for my life and growth.' End of v. 5 says we're *members of one another, having gifts...*

In other words, each member is to contribute, use gifts to serve and support one another. It's not like being a member at Sam's Club, church isn't a club or hobby, you're actually '*members of one another.*' You're part of a body and have a part to play and the rest of the body suffers if you don't do that.

In v. 7 there's serving gifts and there's speaking gifts, or teaching gifts, and both are essential. Some define prophecy as preaching, a spiritual insight to apply God's Word to situations, but not necessarily foretelling future events like in Bible times. I'm not sure how that would differ from exhorting in v. 8, but if God has gifted you with words or ways you serve, use it for others.

Maybe you think you're not worthy to serve? Get over that, none of us are, but Christ is worthy of your service. Maybe you feel unqualified? So do I (and inadequate). Don't think all roles are taken (WM, CM, AV, Security).

v. 8 goes on, in terms of giving, be generous. We need to talk about money when it comes up in the text we're teaching through, and here, God gifts us to be givers financially, regularly and generously. Most of you know we have our offering box in the lobby and missions box at back wall. I didn't know till recently you can also give by auto bill pay in your banking app.

However you do it, do you see it as an act of worship? Everything in Rom 12 flows out of worship in v. 1 and God's glory in the verse right before. If you only think of tithing (10% of a paycheck) you miss the NT focus on our generous grace giving of time, talent, and treasure. This text says 100% of what we have is God's, 11:36 all things are from Him, through Him, to Him I shared a few months ago Treasure Principle #1: God owns everything; we're His money manager, stewards of assets God's entrusted—not given—to us. Randy Alcon says giving is a joyful surrender to God's greater agenda²

We sang 'my worth is not in what we own...my soul is satisfied in Him alone
I will not boast in wealth or might...But I will boast in knowing Christ...
Two wonders here that I confess, My worth and my unworthiness
My value fixed - my ransom paid, At the cross
I rejoice in my Redeemer, Greatest Treasure...' ³ [Is He Yours? GOSPEL HERE]

v. 8 goes on, '*...those who lead, with zeal* (some versions *diligence*). This goes beyond willingness to earnestness and eagerness, opposite of laziness.

Same word in v. 11: *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit...* NIV

'*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*'

How does all this connect with our purpose in Rom 11:36? 1 Peter 4:11 says

'*whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...*'⁴

Commit to cheerfully and willingly serve is #2, and

#3. To watch over other believers in brotherly love, through prayer, and giving aid in times of need.

⁹ *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.* ¹⁰ *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. NASB 'give preference to one another in honor.'* We all have preferences in church and how things should be, but this calls us to honor and defer in love. The NKJV starts v. 10 with *'Be kindly affectionate to one another...'*

I need to move more quickly on these last points, but how is your affection and kindness coming across? Is your love genuine? Are you devoted to one another in family love? Are you honoring and preferring others above you? 1 Cor 12 *'those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor... God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.'* Church members in Rom 12:12 *'rejoice in hope,'* it says *'be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.'* ¹³ *Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.'*

Are you praying for your church? If you're struggling, are you patient? Who have you shown hospitality to recently? Who can you seek to? What needs of the body are you contributing to? Who do you watch over in brotherly love? If you're not in other's lives, you're disobeying God. How? When?

Commitment #4. To maintain a clear conscience by seeking forgiveness, and forgiving others according to the teachings of our Lord Jesus

¹⁶ *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty [or 'proud'], but associate with the lowly [humble]. Never be wise in your own sight.* ¹⁷ *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.* ¹⁸ *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*

If someone has offended or hurt you, don't tell others, don't tell an elder, in scripture your options are 1) cover it in love, or 2) come to the person 1 on 1 and share the fault in private, just between the 2 of you, wanting to win your brother or sister back (Mt 18:15). That chapter goes on to talk about how we should forgive because God has forgiven us an infinitely greater debt of sin. That's not for a group setting and not something to wait, fester; keep current

When there's asking and granting forgiveness, commit not to bring that up again to them or others. That's deadly and devastating to relationship. If it comes up in your mind, remember the gospel. If someone brings up to you an offense they haven't talked to the offender about, call it. Don't add fuel to a fire or take a side (often misunderstanding). To badmouth believers or leaders is sin. If you have, repent. Pursue peace, harmony, as far as you can.

Scriptures: Mt 5:23-24, Mk 11:25, Lk 17:4, Col 3:12: *clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.*⁵

Commit #5. To walk circumspectly to maintain a strong Christian testimony

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them... 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. We're about to go out into a world with evil people who do evil things, they need the good news that can overcome sin. How is your testimony? Who are you trying to a witness to? How and when will you apply this? With whom?

Hear the call of the Kingdom, To reach out to the lost With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross, Bringing peace and forgiveness And a hope yet to come
Let the nations put their trust in Him, King of Heaven we will answer the call
We will follow bringing hope to the world, Filled with passion,
filled with power to proclaim Salvation in Jesus' name⁶

Philosophy of Ministry ends with: Our prayer is that in GCBC, a passion for the Supremacy of God and Sufficiency of His Word would be shared within our members, would spread to our community and to the nations through us, and that we might further magnify King Jesus, to the praise of the glory of God's grace... We hope and pray we will together always seek by God's grace to work towards a biblical ministry that is Scripture-saturated, Spirit-sensitive, Christ-compelled, God-centered, and that from Him and through Him and to Him would be all things, to God be the Glory (Rom. 11:36).

PRAY THEN WALK DOWN

WORDS TO WELCOME NEW MEMBERS AT END OF SERVICE

... This morning as we go, we welcome 5 new members as a church family. I would invite up to join me Tammy, Garrett and Grace, Eli and Whitney [NAMES STAND TO ONE SIDE]

Today's outline is what these believers have put their name on the line to and they want to live out with your help. Just to review, they're covenanting and committing to church worship, teaching, discipline, and submission, to contribute cheerfully and willingly to the support of its ministry, to watch over other believers in brotherly love, through prayer, and giving aid in times of need, to maintain a clear conscience by seeking forgiveness, and forgiving others according to the teachings of our Lord Jesus, and also to walk circumspectly to maintain a strong Christian testimony, to God's glory

_____, if you commit to follow those biblical commands with this church family under its elders say "I will"

Elders of this church, please stand: Do you commit to shepherd and watch over these souls? If so say "I will"

For the members of this church who have affirm these commitments in the past like this -- do you reaffirm these commitments to these on stage and to your church? If so, say "I will"

AFTER THE SERVICE THESE NEW MEMBERS WILL STAY UP FRONT AND TO EXTEND THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP PLEASE COME UP AND GREET THEM AND WELCOME THEM AS YOUR FAMILY

LET'S ALL STAND AND SING DOXOLOGY (JOIN HANDS)

¹ NIV.

² Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle: Unlocking the Secret of Joyful Giving* (LifeChange books, 2005).

³ Getty Music, "My Worth is Not in What I Own."

⁴ NASB.

⁵ NIV.

⁶ Getty Music, "Hear the Call of the Kingdom."