



“Word on Wednesday Bible Study”

“THE KEYS TO CHRISTIAN UNITY”

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Bible Features:

“The Righteousness of God”

12 Therefore I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, ^[a]acceptable to God, *which is* your ^[b]spiritual service of worship. **2** And do not be conformed to this ^[c]world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may ^[d]prove what the will of God is, that which is good and ^[e]acceptable and perfect. -**Romans 12:1-2**

3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you ***not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think***; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. **4** For just as we have many parts in one body and all ^[f]the body’s parts do not have the same function, **5** so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another. -**Romans 12:3-5**

THE KEYS TO CHRISTIAN UNITY

The doctrine of Christian unity originates from the Messiah himself. Jesus in anticipation of His crucifixion, prayed to the Father. He knew the Disciples would face persecution and internal conflict. He knew the church would be made up of different cultures, different languages, different ages, different education, different philosophies and gifts. His intention was for God to use these differences not to tear up the church but to bring us together. John records this prayer in **John 17:20-21**. Jesus said:

20 *“I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, **21** that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may ^[g]believe that You sent Me.*

Paul picks up on this mindset in Romans 12. Jesus wants his disciples to be unified. It had been last then 30 years between Jesus prayer and the writing of Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome.

The reason for this letter stems from bigotry rooted in racism. The Jewish Christians were upset because the Gentiles had now been grafted into the body of Christ (Romans 11:11-31). Paul reminded them that despite the inclusion of the Gentiles, God had not forgotten them. There was still a place for the Jews. On the other hand, Paul cautioned the Gentiles about provoking the Jewish Christians. Some of the Gentile Christians were bragging about their salvation as if God no longer welcome Jewish Christians (Romans 11:17-18).

17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the ^[d]rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you

This is the back drop of Chapter 12. Paul desires unity among the church.

Therefore I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, ^[a]acceptable to God, *which is your* ^[b]spiritual service of worship.-verse 1

I. **The Appeal** (verse 1)

- A. The idea of giving God a sacrifice was not foreign to those who lived in the first century. They were familiar with animal sacrifices. The animal had to be selected, prepared in some cases cooked and then offered to their gods. Paul takes the imagery and ritual of offering animals and apply it to believers. He teaches the church that God is not just asking for the giving of material things. God wants you. He is not just asking dead animals; God wants a living sacrifice.
- B. Paul urges the church to present themselves as a living and holy sacrifice that is acceptable unto God (verse 1). The way we treat one another is a form of worship. When we engage in arrogant and prideful behavior it will not be accepted by God. Jealousy will not be accepted. The fact is God does not accept ALL sacrifice. He only accepts the sacrifice that is holy and useful for worship.

II. **The Admonishment**

² And do not be conformed to this ^[c]world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may ^[d]prove what the will of God is, that which is good and ^[e]acceptable and perfect.

A. **Do not Conform.** We are called to be different.

Paul tells the church what to do in verse 1 but in verse 2, he tells them what not to do. He admonishes them to not behave like the world. God had been merciful towards them as Gentiles. It was God who saved them so they could not take credit for their position. The world is boastful, arrogant, clique-ish, partisan, mean, unforgiven, greedy and hypocritical. This should not be proven true in the body of Christ.

Let us not follow the patterns of the flesh which leads to disunity.

Giving in to worldliness produces disunity. This disunity dishonors Christ:

- Fights during business meetings.
- Fallout over carpet color.
- Boycott over song selection.
- Anger over seat assignment during worship. James substantiates this type of church schism when he writes:

My brothers *and sisters*, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your [Ⓐ]assembly with a gold ring *and is dressed* in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, ³ and you [Ⓑ]pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good *place*," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil [Ⓒ]motives? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers *and sisters*: did God not choose the poor [Ⓓ]of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and [Ⓔ]personally drag you into [Ⓕ]court? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme the good name [Ⓖ]by which you have been called?

⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the [Ⓗ]royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the Law as violators.- James 2:1-8

It is only when we do not conform, that we are able to prove God's will. According to Paul we fulfill God's law by doing what is good, acceptable and perfect.

- B. Transform by the renewal of your mind. Don't conform but transform.
If we are going to be unified, it has to start with our mind. Our thinking must become spiritual. Changes start with a made-up mind. A mind willing to let go of bad traditions and creating new traditions rooted in Scripture.

III. The Acknowledgement

God has allotted to each a measure of faith. If we are going to accomplish great things we have to come together. Using the prescription and keys of unity as prescribed by the Scriptures will allow the church to impact our communities. Awesome things happen when the church comes together.

- Banks can be built.
- Housing for seniors.
- Drug counseling programs can be established.
- Money Management classes can be offered.
- Food Banks for the community.
- Community Centers can be built when the church come together.

They will know we are Christians by our love. Love for Jesus produces love for others.

The words of this gospel song reinforces this doctrine of unity:

Together we'll keep the fire burning

We will teach the word without compromise

We will preach the word and testify of your wondrous love

We will shake the world's foundation until your return

Together, love keep us together

We need each other, Lord keep us together