

# AMITY BIBLE CHURCH

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*"To Know God and To Make Him Known"*

## SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— April 8, 2018 —

*Pastor Les Smith*

**SERIES: Amity Stewardship Commitments**  
**SERMON: A Fresh Perspective on Stewardship**  
**TEXT: Romans 12:1-2**

### Central Message:

Stewardship is a word that many church members have come to loathe because it is often a code word that preachers use when they are trying to “pick pockets”. But, when we consider the task of making disciples that has been entrusted to us by Christ, Himself, and in view of His sacrificial death on the cross, stewardship is more of a privilege than it is an obligation.

Our lesson this week has very little to do with money, so if you have already put chains and locks on your wallets and purses, you can feel free to remove them. Stewardship has very little to do with money and everything to do with commitment. Here at Amity, we ask those who choose to be stewards to make three simple commitments... to give of their financial resources as God has blessed, share their gifts and talents in service to the body, and attend church on a frequent, regular basis. Over the next few weeks, we will be looking at each of these commitments from a biblical perspective.

Over the last year of Amity’s existence, we have talked very little about giving because we realize that giving is not something that we do...giving is more of a reflection of who we are. Consequently, our focus has been on helping each other discover who we are in Christ and how we should respond to His sacrificial love for us.

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Our text for this week is a familiar passage from the book of Romans. This great New Testament book has been called the Magna Carta of Christian Liberty because it declares in clear and unambiguous language that the Gospel is not just facts to be believed, but it is a life to be lived.

Three questions will guide our study of Romans 12:1-2....are you committed to living a sacrificial life, are you carefully living a separated life, and are you completely living a surrendered life?

**Question #1: Are you committed to living a sacrificial life?** (Romans 12:1)

*“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”*

As always, when we see the word “therefore” in a biblical text, it is appropriate to ask the question, what is it “there for”? Paul spent the first eleven chapters of the book of Romans articulating the mercies that God had shown His people, beginning in chapter 1 and continuing through chapter 11. It is very difficult to understand the compelling nature of Paul’s request in chapter 12 without a clear picture of his argument in chapters 1-11.

## Romans 1

In chapter 1, Paul gives us his reason for writing the book ...to share the gospel and teach that our righteousness comes by faith in Jesus Christ and we can do nothing to earn it.

Key Verse(s) Romans 1:16-17

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”*

## Romans 2

In chapter 2, Paul admonishes the Jews that circumcision and living by the law does not make one righteous in God's eyes.

Key Verse(s) Romans 2:29

*"But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."*

## Romans 3

In chapter 3, Paul makes the irrefutable accusation that both Jews and Gentiles are guilty before God but, mercifully, Christ gave righteousness that the Law could not give.

Key Verse(s) Romans 3:23-24

*"for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."*

## Romans 4

In chapter 4, Paul uses Abraham to illustrate that righteousness has always been by faith, and he uses this illustration to show that the blessings of Abraham and grace and mercy of God are extended to every family on earth.

Key Verse(s) Romans 4:13

*"For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith."*

## Romans 5

In chapter 5, Paul helps us to fully comprehend that justification is by faith and that we are reconciled to God through the blood of His Son.

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Key Verse(s) Romans 5:6-8

*"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

## Romans 6

In chapter 6, we learn that *when we are born again, sin's power is broken in our lives*. Our sinful nature was crucified with Him when we were baptized into his death.

Key Verse(s) Romans 6:5-7

*"For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slave to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."*

## Romans 7

In chapter 7, we learn that despite the fact that we are no longer slaves to sin, we still struggle constantly with the temptation to sin.

Key Verse(s) Romans 7:18-20

*"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."*

## Romans 8

In chapter 8, we see how to live by the Spirit and let peace rule in our hearts. The Holy Spirit testifies to us that we are children of God and gives us assurance that nothing will ever separate us from His love.

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Key Verse(s) Romans 8:31; 31-37

*“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquers through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

## Romans 9-11

In chapters 9-11, Paul stops to recall the privileges Israel enjoyed, but how, through disobedience, she missed the fulfillment of the promises and the Lord turned to the Gentiles for the present time. But, Paul affirms that there is a glorious future for the covenant promises.

Key Verse(s) Romans 11:11

*“I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!”*

Paul devoted the first eleven chapters of the book of Romans to detail how God has mercifully dealt with both Jews and Gentiles. When the Jews rebelled and refused to accept the Messiah, God temporarily set them aside so that the Gentiles could be included in His redemptive plan. Gentiles were not an afterthought, but God chose to show them His mercies so that we all might be persuaded to live sacrificially for Christ.

We need to ask ourselves the question...have we given our bodies to God? Are we willing to give up the good things in this life so that we might be given the best things? The sacrificial life is not about preferences...it is about choices. God allows us to possess our bodies, but He retains the title. When we give our bodies to the

Lord, every experience is a worship experience.

**Question #2: Are you carefully living a separated life?** (Romans 12:2a)

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,”*

Paul is really asking the question, have we given God our minds? The body is controlled by the mind and, not surprisingly, Satan’s target is our mind. His focus is to shape our thinking according to the thinking of the world so that our behavior will be like that of the world. But God has given us the power through His Word to resist this effort by the world to shape us. If we have the right discipline, we can resist the devil and he will flee from us.

The world cannot *shape* your mind; it can only exert pressure from the outside. It cannot influence your behavior as long as it remains on the outside. You must give your *consent* to be shaped by the world. You can be enticed...you can even be coerced, but you get to decide. When we cooperate with God, He will cause a “metamorphosis”, where we are changed from the inside out. When we stop being shaped by the world and allow ourselves to be transformed from the inside out, we become the people God intended for us to be.

**Question #3: Are you completely living a surrendered life?** (Romans 12:2b)

*“so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

This final question focuses on the life we live after we have stopped allowing the world to shape our thinking and we have started allowing the word of God, working with His Spirit, to transform our lives from the inside out. The act of surrender is the act of exchanging your will for the will of God...His good, His perfect, and His acceptable will. When this happens, every act of our lives becomes an act of worship.

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Francis Fenelon has been quoted as saying, “How does our will become sanctified? By conforming itself, unreservedly, to that of God. We will all that He wills, and we will nothing that He does not will; we attach our feeble will to His all-powerful will which performs everything. Thus, nothing can ever come to pass against our will.” The key to the surrendered life is to become so obsessed with the will of God that His will becomes your will. When this happens, it is impossible to transgress His will because there is no distinction between His will and your will.