

# The WildBranch Ministry

*...thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Romans 11:18*

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## Be Ye Transformed

### Romans 12:1-2

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I found it no coincidence that having just finished the needed but frustrating subject of the divisive issue of the Messiah's divinity, my wife points me to one of the definitive chapters of service. In doing research for the Deity of Messiah series, I found myself confronted with a variety of teachings on this issue that colorfully displayed a number of predictable demonstrations of arrogance, divisive arguments, and little hospitality and love. Romans chapter twelve is designed by Sha'ul to remind all of Israel what our priorities of ministry are, and that only by the mercies of our God do we stand before a lost and confused world.

I would like to take the next several teachings to study this short chapter in some detail. I have read this section, especially verses one and two, dozens of times. It is only of late that the words "mercies of God" leaped off the page, blinked on and off and waved to me like an unfurled VFW United States flag. I went back to the 8th chapter of this book and slowly read back to chapter 12. YHVH contextually reminded me that those of us who are in Messiah Yeshua' are to walk in the Spirit, and that the righteousness of Torah is to be fulfilled in us who do indeed walk after the Spirit. Yeshua' taught us in Yochanan 14:26 that the purpose of the Spirit was to teach us all things, and to bring all things to remembrance that the Messiah had said. This statement logically led my mind (that is supposed to be renewed) to the 1st chapter of Yochanan's gospel that taught us that Messiah is from the beginning and was in the beginning with God and was God. In this same gospel we were taught that if we loved Yeshua', then we were to keep his commandments. According to the testimony of scripture, it is the Messiah, before He took upon flesh as the Word of God, that wrote all the commandments. My pea brain soon began to race back to the prophecies in the Tenakh in which YHVH foretold that His people Israel would forsake His ways and be scattered throughout the nations. That except for a remnant, these people would be declared 'not a people' and would soon have 'not the mercies of God' (Hoshea 1:1-11). However, these same prophecies in Hoshea would also reveal that there would come a day known only by YHVH, that

He would make a covenant with the people of these same two groups that would believe on Him, that He would once again make them a people of His own and have mercy on them.

Romans chapter 9 and 10 once again reminded me that YHVH has not cast away His people, and all peoples are saved by grace through faith, and whosoever calls upon the name of YHVH will be saved. It became abundantly obvious that these chapters were not revealing a new plan of God, but rather a fulfillment of a foretold people that would bring God's word to fruition because it is set in stone and eternally trustworthy. Romans chapters 9-11 are the foundation of commitment by a God of truth. All Israel would be saved when all of Israel was complete, and all of Israel could not be complete until the mystery of Messiah was complete.

Ephesians 3:4-7

*"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Messiah which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Messiah by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power."*

I was reminded once again in Romans 11, that the promises, gifts, and callings to the house of Israel and the house of Yehudah were without repentance. Those of us who are scattered and wild are to stand by the same faith that all of God's true people have stood. We are all to remember WHO the root and the fatness are, and that all of this tree comes from one seed, the seed of the woman, the Word of God. Romans 11:30 reminded all of us grafted into this ancient tree that we are there because we obtained mercy from God, that same mercy our Creator promised would be given to us in the 1st and 2nd chapters of Hoshea. "Oh!, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! His mercy endureth forever!"

Romans 12:1-2

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

I have heard a dozen or more sermons in my life in which the speaker pointed out that when a text uses the word 'therefore' one should stop and find out what it is 'there for'! This chapter begins with "I beseech you therefore". It is as if Sha'ul, by the inspiration of God, knows full well that chapter 11 will be misunderstood. It is as if he anticipates that many will not really capture the prophetic reality of who constitutes all of Israel. It is as if no sooner that he uttered the words that we should not be wise in our own conceits, that many would take upon the cloak of pride and arrogantly separate themselves from their own brethren seemingly motivated by the gentiles coming in. With this in mind, Sha'ul shifts his emphasis to redirect our priorities and remind us what is most important. He begins this readjustment by placing three little words in the initial verse to reintroduce us to the prophecy of Hoshea 2:23:

*"And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."*

One cannot ignore the parallel of these two verses. Ten times in chapters 9-12 (Romans 9:15 (2x), 16, 18, 23, 11:30, 31 (2x), 12:1, 8), we are reminded of God's restored mercy when He began to reunite the two houses of Israel He prophesied of so many times in the Tenakh. In Romans chapter 11 we are given the image of a tree and branches to illustrate the New Covenant, agriculturally, and told once again that we who believe are the ones who are the partakers of those who have now 'obtained mercy'. We are told that it is by these 'mercies' that we can present our bodies a living sacrifice. The word 'beseech' is the Greek word *parakaleo*, which means to 'encourage'. This word is translated in the Septuagint from the Hebrew word *nacham*, from which Noach gets his name. In the Hebrew text, this word employs the idea of 'comfort'. Sha'ul tells his readers that he is there to give comfort by encouraging all the brethren that it is by those prophesied 'mercies' of God that we are to present our selves wholly. There is a Hebrew play on words here as Sha'ul, so typical of the Hebrew grammar of the scriptures, uses words that have meter and flow, musically, by rhyming. Sha'ul does not employ the typical Hebrew word for 'mercy' - *chesed*. but instead, uses the Hebrew word *racham*. This word combines the idea of 'compassion' along with 'lovingkindness'. The word 'present', taken from the Greek *paristemi*, is used in harmony with the living sacrifice. This word would be better translated as 'offering' or 'providing'. It is quite notable that Sha'ul exhorts us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. This statement, more than

likely, is an intentional comment leveled at the popular gnostic beliefs of the time. Gnostic and Hellenistic thinkings elevated the soul and denegated the physical. Man was dual with the inner soul being all that was good, and the body was evil. This pseudo-Greek thought process was deliberately aimed at Torah. Torah was looked upon as commands for the outward man, the physical and fleshy demonstration of life. It was correct thoughts and right doctrine that guided man's soul in the eyes of the gnostic believers that dominated much of the religious scene outside of Judaism in Rome. So with this in mind, Sha'ul responds with a statement that includes the outward man in service and offering. He makes it a point that the inclusion of the outward man in this sacrifice is both holy, acceptable, and our reasonable service.

Two other words are most noteworthy in this opening verse. The word 'acceptable' used here is from the Greek *euarestos*. This word is taken from the Hebrew word *halak*. In his very typical Yehudimic way (I made that word up) Sha'ul points out that this service is our *halakhah*. It is how we are to walk. This offering of our bodies is a natural result of our minds being transformed. It is how we humans are designed. Sha'ul is saying that the giving of ourselves over to God as a response to His mercy is not only holy, but is our *halakah* or walk. We are then told that this is our 'reasonable' service. What in the world does that mean? What exactly is reasonable? Well, in my opinion, this is a very misleading translation. The Greek word behind 'reasonable' is *logikos*. The Greek word behind 'service' is *latreia*. Both of these words are taken from the Hebrew words *davar* and '*avodah*'. This statement would be better understood as 'your work or service in the word', or 'from your thinking'. This fits the context of the next verse. The Brit Chadashah is clear in many other places that the growth, maturity, and service of the believer is a direct result of being fed from the Word of God. The word *logikos* is translated in English versions as 'spiritual service'. It is very thought provoking that some New Testament translators make a distinct connection between the application of the word of God and serving in the spirit. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament teaching of the blessing that comes from obeying the word of God is also associated with tasting that Adonai is gracious

1 Kefa 2:1-3

*"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that Adonai is gracious."*

Looking at this verse closely should reveal the same admonishing context that we are reading in our Romans text. The word *logikos* is translated in several English versions such as the New American Standard and the New International Version as the 'pure spiritual milk', the Darby translation has the 'pure mental milk, and the Douray-Rheims translates it as 'the rational milk'. The point here is that these translators associated the word of God with the words 'spiritual', 'mental' (mind) and 'rational'. The bottom line of verse one, after defining many of the terms used here, is that Sha'ul is encouraging us that because of the foretold mercies of our God, we can offer our entire lives to God as our halakah, or acceptable walk, which is our work found in His word. As we grow in the word of God we will begin to change our lives, to transform them because of His mercies.

Romans one verse two begins with Sha'uls usual methodology. He begins with a conjunction so typical of Hebrew and many times so unnecessary if it were originally written in Greek. Sha'ul proclaims, "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed." Sha'ul uses two very interesting contrasts of terms here. He states that we should first not be conformed. Notice Sha'ul does not simply say, "be ye transformed", but rather asks that we "be not conformed" first. This is always the pattern in scripture for the new believer. It also happens to be the way our minds work, and the conclusion of the judgment of Ya'aqov and the council of Acts 15. In order to begin to practice a radical change of thinking, one must purge themselves of previous erroneous thinking. Turning away from our own ways must precede taking upon God's ways. This was the same conclusion in Acts 15. These new believers were first exhorted to abstain from those practices that typified their pagan lifestyles, and then were told that they would learn God's ways in the synagogue every Shabbat (Acts 15:14-21).

Sha'ul has a distinct reason for using these two contrasting terms. The Greek word for conform is *suschematizo*. Say that fast five times. This word comes from the Greek word *schema*, which means an 'outward expression' or 'form'. Then Sha'ul follows this word with the word transformed or *metamorphoo*. This word is used to reflect an inner change or transformation. Kefa also challenges us to keep from being conformed to our old ways of thinking and behaving.

1 Kefa 1:13-15

*"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua"; as*

*obedient children, not FASHIONING yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;"*

Kefa uses the same word here translated in the English as 'fashioning' ourselves. The conclusion is the same. We must deal with our minds in order to purge ourselves of the former lusts of our ignorance. I have stated many times in our audio teachings that what you are about to hear will be contrary to what you previously naturally thought. Sha'ul uses this same teaching in the chapter that preceded the one we are studying. (Romans 11:24). Sha'ul teaches us elsewhere what we are to be transformed into.

2 Corinthians 3:18

*"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."*

The word 'change' in this verse is the same word and concept that Sha'ul is teaching in Romans 12:2. We are to be 'transformed' into the image of the Messiah. When Yeshua' lived upon the earth, He obeyed all the commandments of His Father, observed the seventh day, attended and observed all the biblical feasts and ate foods ordained as clean by the scriptures. Sha'ul taught us in 1 Corinthians 11:1 to follow him (Sha'ul) as he followed the Messiah. It is pretty clear what image we are to be transformed into. This is one of the obvious reasons why YHVH took upon flesh and dwelt among us.

Transforming ourselves begins with turning away from our own ways and not conforming to the way the world outside of YHVH views matters of how to live and serve the Creator. The actual transformation process must begin in what is called the 'mind' here in English. This is one of those places where it is imperative to search the meaning out in the scriptures. There are two primary terms used in the Greek to express the area of the mind. The one used in our text is *nous*. This word is used quite extensively in the Old Testament. However, in the Hebrew language and culture, what we call 'the mind' is most often understood as the 'heart'. Of the less than 25 times it is used in the LXX, 17 times it is translated from the Hebrew word *levav*, the Hebrew word for heart. Three times it is translated from the Hebrew word for ears, *ozen*, and one time it is translated from the Hebrew *ruach*, or spirit. I find it more than fascinating to see all the connections the words used in these first two verses have with the word of God and our service to Him. The bottom line to

me is that when anyone has indeed the Creator of the universe dwelling in them, their mind will change, they will NOT conform to this world, and they cannot help but seek to prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Sha'ul states that we are transformed, not just by the mind, but by the 'renewing' of our minds. There seems to be a whole lot of changing going on here. Renewing is the Greek word *anakainosis*. The middle of that word should look familiar to many of us. You guessed it. The essence of renewing is the Hebrew word *chadash*. This is the heart of the New Testament, or the Brit Chadashah. You mean the fundamental teaching of the New Testament is renewing? There is not just a one time membership renewal here, either. The Greek word used here is not just *kainos*, the Greek word for newness of quality', but *anakainosis*. The prefix 'ana' adds constant repetition to this renewal, as to cause something that is going up, to go even further. Here is a sample of how it is used in the Tenakh.

Mizmor 104:30

*"Thy sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou RENEWEST the face of the earth."*

YHVH has consistently throughout history, renewed all of His creation by introducing His commandments and precepts to sustain, and in some cases, reverse entropy and the self destruction of man. YHVH, our Creator knows full well that unless His people are transformed into His image, all of creation will melt away with a fervent heat. This is not just a case of suggesting that we renew our way of thinking, but it is imperative for the plans of our God. This renewing and constant transforming through His word is the only way to prove what is His good, acceptable, and perfect will. The act of renewal presupposes that at one time His people were following His ways and were serving God and obeying His commandments. It also assumes a turning away or rejection of God's ways. This, not by coincidence, is the history of the only peoples that are part of the New Covenant, the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In the Sh'ma God's people are called to service by giving themselves to Him with all their heart, all their soul, and all their might. After centuries of being scattered in the midst of the nations, God is once again calling His reunited people to serve Him with all their heart, soul, mind and body. However, centuries of mixing with the culture and religions of the gentiles has produced a people who must take their root downward in order to produce fruit upward (M'lakhim Bet 19:30). In order for us to be a living sacrifice, we must wholly transform ourselves by the renewing of our minds.

I believe that this chapter is specifically written to those who fully or at least partially understand, that being a child of God is directly tied to returning to the ancient paths of the one true God. In the rest of this chapter, Sha'ul, under the inspiration and prophetic guidance of the God who is reuniting His people, will warn believers everywhere, what is and shall be our priorities.

Shalom Alecheim!

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