

# Romans 12 – 1 -13 How to live together in the Messiah - as the church

ROMANS 12 :1 -13, guides us, almost like a series of cats eyes on an unlit, dark road towards the content of Kingdom living – and , of course, what Paul is saying here reflects the Sermon on the Mount.

Based on this link alone we know these 12 verses contain treasures, treasures which, are filled with power to change us , others and the world around us BUT only if we allow them to filter into our thinking and influence our actions,

# Romans 12 – 1 -13 How to live together in the Messiah - as the church

We are going to look at just two verses in this passage

– the first deals with how we think and the second deals with how we act .

“...2. Don’t let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age” ...( THINKING )

“...9. Love must be real. Hate what is evil , stick fast to what is good”(ACTING)

# What do we look like?

The question we need to ask and answer is whether or not these verses - and the rest of this passage and remainder of the letter are just “new rules” Paul is “laying down”? Are these some “do’s and don’ts” by which we must be seen to be living? Is this Paul’s attempt to try to ensure that Christianity is in some way “distinctive”?

NO, Paul is really saying, because of what God has done for us, is doing in us and will complete in us, we need to live consciously in that new creation. And if we do that the surrounding World will see what God is at work and doing.

Paul has ended the previous chapter with ringing praise. Read the closing verses of the chapter for yourself. Paul is saying that the project for God’s new creation is under construction, the design is unfolding, the foundation is securely laid - and the final completion is not in doubt. This is not a time for a cool nod of approval from us – it’s a time for you and I to be amazed at its sheer glory and scope- and remember that we are a privileged part of this.

# A revolutionary group

It's difficult for most of us today to grasp how foreign to the surrounding world the local church was when it suddenly appeared in the 1<sup>st</sup> century - who it was made up of, what it *taught and represented*, what *happened* in it, what it *did for others on the outside who were not part of it*.

Clearly – the church was “different” – and the differences were highly visible to the watching world.

What does it mean , therefore, for us to avoid being “squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age”?

Look at a jelly for the answer. As we all know jelly takes on the shape of the container its been poured into.

And this is the point – the container shapes the jelly. If you turn the jelly out – it retains the shape of the container.

# Lives sacrificed

we already know – there is **pressure** on Christians from the surrounding world to conform.

Because the WORLD ( the “present age”) is all pervading – invading virtually every human AND social interaction, it “shapes” what people say and do – with its way of seeing things, its habits, its values. And Its impact is that God’s truth is veiled.

But this is where we have the exciting opportunity to be someone different – VISIBLY reflected to the watching world in what we think and what that thinking leads to in our actions. In 1 Cor 5 .9-10 Paul makes it quite clear that it is not possible to withdraw from the World.

But this living in the WORLD BUT NOT BEING DOMINATED BY ITS THINKING IS made easier because we don’t have to “work it out in our heads”- we just have to be sacrifices – and as you know a sacrifice – as Paul’s readers would have known, doesn’t spend a lot of time debating what it should or should not be doing- it is under another’s control..

# “The present age and what actually moulds our thinking and lives?”

- Let’s spend a little while longer on this jelly illustration.
- Paul’s Jewish readers would clearly understand – “the present age” – is the ordering of the World we live in. It is neither subject to nor does it reflect the rule of God.
- Paul in 2 Corinthians 4: 4 talks about “...the God of this world who has *blinded the minds of unbelievers* so that they won’t see the light of the gospel of the glory of the Messiah, who is God’s image.”
- The Kingdom of God is where God reigns – a World that is subject to God’s rule. While in Jewish thinking it’s “the age to come”, Paul is telling us here that the Kingdom *is already present and visible in the lives of* Christians. It is being extended through the Church fulfilling its mission.

# We are talking “dramatic change” here

- The Greek word in the sentence following for “Instead, be “transformed” – is the same word used in the Gospel for “transfiguration” and in 2 Cor. 3 :18 “and so are being changed into the same image”
- One thing is clear, people cannot see love in action if you withdraw from the World.
- So , while we know the Kingdom will only become fully present when Jesus returns, the question remains, how visible is the Kingdom NOW in our lives - to our fellow believers as well as to the people we come into contact with?

# Love is visible

- If you look at the verses preceding verse 9 its clear that they all involve serving others – culminating in this statement that love must be real.
- If you look at the Acts of the Apostles and the letters – you keep seeing practical acts of love being talked about , its clear that Paul is stressing that love actually involves what people do- not what they feel.
- Love is about the heart in action
- WHAT we need to give away is only what God has placed in each one of us. Let's do it.