



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

Transformation

I urge you therefore, 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. (Romans 12:1)

Like many beginners in the game, I wanted distance.

For the longest time, “practice” was nothing more than swinging the driver as hard as I could. The irons drew my attention, but only reluctantly. Putting was sort of... “Meh. Where’s the next tee box?”

Eventually, TV commentators stressing the importance of putting got my attention. Watching professionals experience putter meltdowns opened my eyes. Greg Norman’s 1996 Masters collapse, when he began Sunday with a six-shot lead, taught me a lesson every golfer eventually learns: you can’t win without the short stick.

A couple of years ago, I had another wake-up call. Someone in my Bible study suggested a commentary on Romans by Kent Hughes.

Since I had studied Romans before, I decided to give Hughes a test drive. I went straight to his chapter on Romans 9, one of the most difficult chapters in the Bible and one many writers tend to avoid. I was curious to see how he would handle some of its more challenging passages.

I was, rather smugly, very surprised and impressed by Hughes’s coverage. So, I read through the rest of his book.

The point of this entire devotional is to confess that Hughes wiped the smug grin off my face — hopefully for good.

Romans 1–11 is filled with wonderful truth, but the section Hughes used to give me a wake-up call was Romans 12–16. That section includes this piercing command: “Do not be wise in your own estimation.”

Ouch.

The great eleventh chapter ends with Paul’s breathtaking doxology:

“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!”

Then Romans 12:2 says:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

It is so important to see the full context of Romans 12:1. But Hughes helped me see that stopping short of chapters 13–16 is like playing without your putter.

Those last five chapters warn us not to get cocky. They exposed how wrong I had been about this important section of Romans. I began to see in these chapters the practical response of the mature Christian to the glorious truths of chapters 1–11.

What had at times seemed to me like a somewhat tedious call to works became, instead, a manifesto of true Christian worship and living.

Romans 12–16 is not simply a stock list of desirable good deeds. It is a dramatic change in our form of worship: to offer ourselves as living sacrifices.

The various forms of self-denial Paul calls for throughout the remainder of his letter are forms of sacrifice to God. Our bodies are to become living sacrifices, offered in response to what God has done for us and in us.

The “other part” of Romans sprang to life for me. At one point, I was sobbing as I thanked God for correcting me.

John Owen once said:

“In the divine Scriptures there are shallows and deeps; shallows where the lamb may wade, and deeps where the elephant may swim.”

I still marvel at the theology of Paul. I am not really an elephant anyway — just a wannabe. What I need to focus on is my response, recognizing that, as Dr. Don Campbell once said, “The problem with living sacrifices is that they sometimes try to crawl off the altar.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the blessing of your word and the correction it provides. Thank you for opening my heart and the renewing of my mind.

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Rod Clark

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