

Romans

Romans Chapter Twelve

Romans 12:9-21

June 19, 2011

This is lesson number 93 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: The Will of God for Believers in All Situations.

The method of the Apostle Paul in his letters is to first give the doctrine [teaching] and then he tells us what to do with the teaching.

At the end of the age at the judgment it will not matter at all how correct our belief system is, we will be judged by our works.

Not saved by works but judged by works.

“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” [James 2:17]

Genuine saving faith will bear fruit.

It really does matter how we live and whether we are being led by the Holy Spirit or by the sinful nature.

Any sane reading of Romans 1-11 will convince an honest reader that salvation is by grace through faith alone.

Works, which includes how we live our lives day-by-day, has absolutely nothing to do with the cause of being justified or being declared not guilty.

Grace and works are never confused in the Scripture. Works do not save a sinner but every saved person will have a life characterized by good works.

Christianity is a life lived for Jesus Christ.

We are only guilty sinners saved by grace and if God has indeed shown us mercy it is only because God Himself chose to do so.

Romans

Some of the ways that we can know that we have been saved is by how thankful we are to God for saving us. Has our attitude toward other people been changed? Do I still want what I think is best for me or do I really try to put the other person's interest first?

After doctrine in 1-11, Paul is going to tell us what to do with it. That is what we have beginning at Chapter 12.

Romans 12:1-2 is the introduction to the rest of the letter.

Romans 12:1-2

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

Am I thankful for the mercies of God?
Then how do I express my thankfulness?

Very simple, I worship God by presenting my body as a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable service of worship. If I am not willing to do that then it is very likely that I am only a religious person who is not saved.

Starting at verse 3 we are told how to present our bodies as a living sacrifice of acceptable worship.

Verses 3-8 teach us the **will of God for believers as they exercise their gifts in the church.**

We saw that there are two great principles.

The first principle is **humility.**

The second principle is that **we are all members of one body, the church.**

Every member of the body is important and no member is some higher class of Christian. We each have spiritual gifts and we are to exercise them for the good of the entire body.

Romans

Listen for these two great principles as I read verses 3-8.

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

That is the perfect will of God for believers as they exercise their gifts for the good of the body of Christ, which is the church.

But being a Christian involves more than meeting with the church. We must not be one thing when we meet with the church and something else when we are away from the church. So today we will continue with the will of God:

Verses 9-21 are The Will of God for Believers in All Situations.

If you will allow me a personal illustration, I am the perfect example of what Paul is writing about here in verse 9-11. Before I was saved I was religious but practiced none of these Christian graces.

Before God saved me He began to draw me to Himself and out of curiosity I began to attend a local church. I went to church to hear a certain preacher but it was surely not because I believed what he preached.

As time went on I became a part of this local church and helped with maintenance projects like painting and even took on the job of cataloging the sermons on audiotape. This was back in the days of reel-to-reel tapes.

After a time I was called on to offer public prayer. I was faithful to attend church on Sunday, but the rest of the week I continued to live my life with my mind set on the things of the flesh. I was thoroughly carnally minded.

I was religious but I was not saved!

Romans

That life of a hypocrite lasted for nine months before the Holy Spirit convicted me of sin and guilt. God in sovereign mercy revealed to me from the Word of God the beauty and perfection of Jesus Christ as a sufficient Substitute for sinners.

God in mercy saved another ungodly and guilty sinner.

That was over 42 years ago and I am still learning how to be a Christian.

Christianity is more than a profession of faith and being baptized. Christianity is a life sacrificed to God. **Lives must be changed.**

So when we leave this assembly of believers today will we take off our Christian “coat” and hang it on the coat hanger at the door as we go out and not put it back on until we come back to meet with the church? If Paul is telling the truth we must practice Christian graces all the time.

No one is ever going to be perfect and live a life without sin. But if we make excuses for our sins and continue in unrepented sin after we profess faith in Christ we will only show that we are deceived.

What happens when I knowingly sin? Do I repent or do I make excuses?

The NT has many passages on how to live as a believer.

A man once argued with me that the Bible did not say anything about how a Christian is supposed to live.

At the time he was living in adultery and I doubt if he spent much time actually reading the Bible but he was very comfortable in the false notion that he was the final judge on how he could live his life.

I told him that the Bible had a great deal to say about how a Christian was supposed to live. He allowed me to read Colossians Chapter 3 to him. He had to admit that the Bible had something to say about how a Christian is supposed to live. I told him the Gospel and left the results up to God.

Our passage this morning is Romans 12:9-21. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has twelve sermons on these verses but I think we can distill the nectar of the sweet Word of God into one lesson.

Romans

The Will of God for Believers in All Situations.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore

**"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."**

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Most of these phrases speak for themselves but we can find many applications to everyday life.

Now if you feel a little bit squeezed by some of these things that is exactly what should happen. It gets a little tight for me every time I read it.

The absolute worse response to these things is for you to sit there and think of other people that you just know Paul is writing about.

There is the story of a man who told the preacher after every service, "You sure gave it to them today." One Sunday it snowed and only the preacher and this man got to church. The preacher went ahead and preached his message and as the man was leaving he told the preacher, "If they'd been here you would have sure give it to them."

Sisters and brothers this lesson is for all of us, especially this poor sinner who is talking to you now. It is not my objective to scold anyone. My goal is that each one of us will try to be more pleasing to God

There are certain patterns of behavior that are addressed in these verses. All of us fail at some point from time to time. The question is do I really care?

Romans

Do I repent of my sin?

These twelve points are like twelve arrows aimed at the heart of the child of God to teach us the way to worship Him.

**9 Let love be without hypocrisy.
Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.**

In Greek culture a hypocrite was someone who put on a false face. In the Greek dramas an actor would hold a mask in front of his face that was painted with a frown or with a smile. The actor behind the false face was a hypocrite. So the word came to mean someone who is false.

The thing that Jesus condemned the Pharisees for more than anything else was for their **hypocrisy**.

Personal example; If you don't like me please don't tell me otherwise.

There was a retirement party for a man who worked in my department. When he felt safe to say so, he said to me, "Jim I didn't like you when I liked you."

What he apparently didn't understand was that I didn't need for him to like me; I just expected him to do his job.

**Let love be without hypocrisy.
Abhor what is evil.**

To abhor something means to hate it and turn from it in disgust. We should be learning to hate evil and not be experimenting on how much evil God will tolerate before He chastens us. Turn from evil in disgust.

Cling to what is good.

Never be ashamed of your love for what is good and pure and right.

Young people take your profession of faith seriously. Think more of God's approval than the approval of some of your peers who may make fun of you for not doing dope and experimenting with sex.

Romans

Cling to what is good.

NLT **9 Don't just pretend that you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good.**

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

If you have a healthy functional family you will have natural affection for the members of your family.

What Paul is saying is that this is the kind of relationship we should have with other people.

In honor giving preference to one another;

The model for church life is mutual submission. When the church has agreed on something and you did not get your way you don't get upset. The church is a body and all the members must work together.

Speak your mind and listen to others but if you do not prevail then submit to the body. **In honor giving preference to one another.**

This is not about the Gospel. We are not going to vote on the Gospel we already have the final authority of God's Word. The function of the elders is to guard the church from false doctrine and to exercise spiritual leadership.

Elders are not to lord it over the church but to serve under Christ as the Head of the body. An elder is as much obliged to submit to the body as any other member of the body.

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

NLT **Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.**

Use your zeal to serve the Lord.

Be complete strangers to idleness, time wasting, and boredom.

Romans

A Christian is a good employee that does not steal time from his employer. I knew a man that boasted about how little actual work he did for his employer. I was not impressed.

12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

Never lose sight of your eternal destiny, your hope. Learn to be patient and to endure tribulation.

And the way to do that is to never lose contact with Jesus Christ in prayer.

Continuing steadfastly in prayer

Again the NLT gives us a good idea of what this verse says

**Be glad for all God is planning for you.
Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful.**

13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Many people are in need. Do what you can to relieve them. Seek opportunities to be hospitable.

NLT **When God's children are in need, be the one to help them out.**

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Peter instructed us not to think it strange when some fiery trial comes on us.

Christians will be persecuted. But how do we react to persecution? Do not curse but rather bless our persecutors.

What they are doing is sin and we do not excuse it or condone it. But we must not sin in the way we react to persecution.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

When something good happens to a member of the body act as though it has happened to you. Why? Because you are part of the body.

Romans

In the same way when a member of the body is hurting you suffer with them. If you stub that toe you wiggled last week you will feel the pain all over. The reason is that the toe is not independent of the rest of the body.

16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Strive for unity in the church by avoiding all kinds of favoritism and partiality. Be especially careful not to think more highly of yourself than you ought. The way to avoid being high-minded is to cultivate friends among those who are not the so-called “high society” but rather just ordinary people.

Paul said in another place **“not many mighty, not many noble are called.”**

NLT Live in harmony with each other. Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

**17 Repay no one evil for evil.
Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.**

A popular saying is, “I don’t get mad, I get even.” That may sound macho but it is exactly opposite from what the Bible teaches.

Do not ever try to get even when you are wronged, whoever it is that did it.

And keep your life free from any cause to be criticized.

**18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you,
live peaceably with all men.**

Paul is realistic. There are people with whom you will not be able to get along. Our job is not to change them but to try to live peaceably with them.

E.g., You may be called on to tell the truth in a situation that will cause another person to hate you for it. Tell the truth.

In all situations try to be at peace. Don’t look for ways to get your feelings hurt. Give others the benefit of the doubt.

Romans

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Above all, do not try to take vengeance .
Do not take God's role and try to avenge a wrong.

Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 32:35 and the verse says,

"Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot will slip in due time. For the day of their calamity is at hand, All the things to come hasten upon them."

It is God's prerogative to get justice – not ours – and He has promised that He will. Get out of the way and God will do what is right in His own good time. God has all the facts and we don't.

Another wrong idea is to hope that God's punishment will be more severe than anything we could do. The idea is to not wish for any bad thing to happen to another person.

That is one of the great differences in Christianity and other religions.

There is to be no personal vengeance.

Chapter 13 will deal with Justice for wrongdoers.

20 Therefore

**"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."**

Romans

The “therefore” in verse 20 sums up this section on Christian behavior.

Be real instead of being a hypocrite.
Love one another as member of your family.
Be zealous in your work as unto the Lord.
Suffer tribulation and continue to pray.
Give to the needs of others.
Bless and do not curse.
Be part of the body in joy and in sorrow.
Don't be high-minded but rather associate with humble people.
Behave yourself and don't give anyone a cause to blame you.
Don't try to get even. That is God's job.

And finally a “THEREFORE”.

Above all else repay evil with kindness.

Some writers say that verse 20 is a very difficult verse to understand.

Some writers try to make this a way of getting even by making the person who wrongs you to feel bad. The idea is that you will get some perverse pleasure in causing the other person to feel bad.

That is entirely at odds with the context of this section.

Paul is quoting Proverbs 25:21-22 and again he shows us that the teaching of the **NT is found in the OT.**

Proverbs 25:21-22

**21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;
22 For so you will heap coals of fire on his head,
And the LORD will reward you.**

This is obviously a metaphor. Literal coals of fire on one's head would cause severe pain. Rewarding evil with kindness is designed to cause remorse on the part of the wrongdoer.

Romans

But the idea is not for us to take pleasure in another's discomfort. The act of kindness may cause your enemy to repent and see how wrong he has been.

Now let's put this in focus.

When God had mercy on you were you His friend or His enemy?

“For when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son...” [5:10]

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance? [2:4]

Do not live your life in bitterness and anger and trying to get even and holding grudges. Those feelings will only make you physically ill.

Be satisfied that God is as sovereign over your enemies as He is over you and that He may be pleased to show them mercy the same way that He had mercy on you.

Remember the mercies of God and worship Him in the manner given to us here in Chapter 12 and in many other places in the Bible.

Notice how this section begins and ends.

Verse 9 Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Verse 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If we do not turn away from evil in disgust evil will overcome us.

This is the reasonable life of worship of the thankful Christian whose only desire is to please God. He no longer has to protect his “rights” because God will do a much better job of that than he can.

We have seen in Chapter 12 how to prove the perfect will of God in the **Exercise of Spiritual Gifts in the Body of Christ** and **The Will of God for Believers in All Situations.**

This chapter is an excellent measuring stick of our commitment to Christ. I sincerely hope that you measured up better than me.

Romans

I will close on a lighter but very profound note.

A woman was asked by a coworker, "What is it like to be a Christian?" The woman replied, "It is like being a pumpkin. God picks you from the patch, brings you in, and washes all the dirt off of you. Then he cuts off the top and scoops out all the yucky stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, greed, etc., and then He carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside of you to shine for all the world to see."

That is pretty close to what Paul is telling us. Being a Christian means something. Acceptable worship of God means what Chapter 12 says it means.

A while ago as I was doing my devotional reading in First Thessalonians. I was struck by the consistency of the Apostle Paul as he writes first to the Galatians, then to the Thessalonians and then to the church at Rome.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Our next study in Romans will be Chapter 13 and we will look at God's will for believers as we relate to those in authority over us and to our neighbors.