

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

August 9, 2023

Series - The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

The Letter to the Romans

The Righteousness of God

The Duty Section (Chapters 12 – 16)

Text – Romans 12 – *Living for God – Your Reasonable Service*

Introduction

Having concluded the doctrinal section in chapters 1 – 8, and the dispensational section in chapters 9 – 11, we will now examine the section that deals with our duty as believers. This is the practical section of Romans. The former part of the Letter told us what to believe and now this section will help with how to behave. Notice that God spent eleven chapters teaching us about belief before he shows us what we need to do.

Dr. McGee states: “In the first part of Romans the reader saw displayed the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith. But in this last section, the feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. We are to *stand* in the battle; we are to *walk* in our life; we are to *run* in the race.”¹

Some parts of this portion of Scripture almost read like Proverbs. Much of what we will read in this section is not hard to believe or understand, it is just sometimes hard to do.

I. Our Duty to God (vs. 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." (Romans 12:1)

Wiersbe makes this observation about the “therefore” in this verse: “This is the fourth “therefore” in the letter. Romans 3:20 is the “therefore” of condemnation, declaring that the whole world is guilty before God. Romans 5:1 is the “therefore” of justification, and Romans 8:1 the “therefore” of assurance. In Romans 12:1, we have the “therefore” of dedication, and

¹ McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Epistles (Romans 9-16)* (electronic ed., Vol. 43, pp. 66–67). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

it is this dedication that is the basis for the other relationships that Paul discussed in this section.”²

The old Mosaic system demanded a lot of dead sacrifices, but here Paul says that we are to present ourselves as living sacrifices – lives that are consecrated unto God. Notice that Paul says that this is reasonable. Jesus said that His yolk was easy, and His burden was light. The Christian life is not at all unreasonable.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Again, quoting Wiersbe:

There are two “living sacrifices” in the Bible and they help us understand what this really means. The first is Isaac (Gen. 22); the second is our Lord Jesus Christ. Isaac willingly put himself on the altar and would have died in obedience to God’s will, but the Lord sent a ram to take his place. Isaac “died” just the same—he died to self and willingly yielded himself to the will of God. When he got off that altar, Isaac was a “living sacrifice” to the glory of God.

Of course, our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect illustration of a “living sacrifice,” because He actually died as a sacrifice, in obedience to His Father’s will. But He arose again. And today He is in heaven as a “living sacrifice,” bearing in His body the wounds of Calvary. He is our High Priest (Heb. 4:14–16) and our Advocate (1 John 2:1) before the throne of God.³

"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."

(Romans 12:2)

Here we see the great doctrine of separation. Some folks almost take the position that Romans teaches us that since we are no longer under the Law that we can live any way we want to live, but that is certainly not what is being taught here. God wants us to be separate and distinct from this world. Jesus said that we are in the world, but not of the world.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 554). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Wiersbe, p. 554

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

To be separated, we need to renew our minds, we need to think differently:

*"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."
(Colossians 3:1-2)*

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." (Philippians 4:8-9)

Our minds control our will. If we think differently, we will behave differently.

II. Our Duty to the Church (vs. 3 – 8)

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:3)

Notice here that it is grace that taught Paul about this. As we said in the last chapter, grace and works are mutually exclusive when it comes to getting saved, but grace will bring you to a place of good works after you are saved:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" (Titus 2:11-12)

In this section, Paul will explain the ministry gifts that various people have within the church. These are not the same as the sign gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12. You will notice that every person plays a part, but no person is to have a place of preeminence, for that spot is reserved for the Lord alone. Paul rebuked the Church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 12 because they elevated some gifts over others.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:"
(Romans 12:4)

That is, we are not all equipped to do the same things. God has uniquely equipped each of us to perform different tasks within the body.

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."
(Romans 12:5)

The body should act as one. There should be harmony. Every member has a part to play that helps every other part, and the body as a whole.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;" (Romans 12:6)

God is awesome! He has provided everything we need within the church for us to be able to do all the things that he has commanded us to do. Some are gifted in teaching, some work better behind the scenes, but everybody has something that God has given them, that they can then give back to the Lord through service within the body.

Prophecy (προφητεία – *prophēteia*) – According to Vines: a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproof and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events.

Prophecy in Paul's day would have meant the divine proclamation of the Word of God as given by God through an individual believer. Today we have the complete canon of Scripture, and God is not giving us any new truth apart from His Word, but we are, in a sense, prophesying when we are proclaiming the Word of God.

"Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;" (Romans 12:7)

Ministry (διακονία – *diakonia*) – this is the word that is translated deacon, though it refers to being a servant here, and not limited to those who hold the office of a deacon. We are all supposed to serve each other, but each of us is equipped in different ways. We have some folks at our church who are gifted with their hands, and they use those talents to serve the church.

Teaching (διδασκαλία - *didaskalia*) – obviously refers to those who are gifted in communicating the truth of the Word of God, but some may be particularly gifted to teach one on one, while others may be better suited for teaching a Sunday School class.

"Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:8)

Exhorting (παρακαλέω - *parakaleō*) – this has to do with comforting and encouraging. Unfortunately, we have many within our churches that are discouragers, but we also have a few that are great encouragers, and they look for people who are going through a tough time and try to help lift their spirits up. These folks see their cups half full instead of half empty, and they are the cheerleaders that motivate the rest of the body.

Giving (μεταδίδωμι – *metadidōmi*) – I wish more people had this gift. Everybody needs to be a giver, but there will be some who are uniquely equipped by God to give to His work.

Ruling (προϊστέμι – *proistēmi*) These folks know how to organize, budget, and administer. They are very necessary.

Mercy (ἐλεέω – *eleeō*) these folks specifically look for people who are afflicted. They like to visit the hospitals, shut-ins, and the nursing homes.

III. Our Duty to Those Within the Church (vs. 12 – 16)

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."
(Romans 12:9)

“*without dissimulation*” means that our love should be genuine or sincere.

Notice here that we are supposed to stay completely away from evil. There is a lot of evil out there in this world, and unfortunately many Christians are participating in it.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;" (Romans 12:10)

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3)

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;" (Romans 12:11)

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;" (Colossians 3:23)

Whether we are working at our secular job or laboring for the Lord, we need to give 110% effort to our performance. There is no place for laziness or lack of enthusiasm in the Lord's work.

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;" (Romans 12:12)

This verse has the idea that we should patiently endure the temporary trials and sufferings that we may experience on this earth, without complaining, because we know we have a wonderful hope for the future.

"Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." (Romans 12:13)

We are to freely give to others the things that God has given to us. Our lives should be conduits of blessing toward others.

Hospitality here has the idea of opening our homes to people. It literally means being a lover of strangers.

"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." (Romans 12:14)

This applies to those within and without of the body.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" (Matthew 5:44)

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." (Romans 12:15)

We sometimes have a difficult time rejoicing with another brother when God is blessing them, and unfortunately, we also sometimes take pleasure in the fact that someone else is suffering. This ought not be. We need to learn to genuinely identify with the feelings of other believers.

"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." (Romans 12:16)

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;" (Philippians 1:27)

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:" (1 Peter 3:8)

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
(Acts 2:42-47)

If we are going to succeed as a church, we are going to have to learn to play together as a team. We don't all get our way, but we labor together to fulfill Christ's way.

IV. Our Duty to Those Without the Body (vs. 17 – 21)

"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."
(Romans 12:17)

Our rules are very different from others in the world. The world says that it is OK to do back to someone that they have done to him, but that is not an option for the Christian. The world also doesn't have any problem with "fudging" a little bit in their business dealings, but God says that the Christian is to be completely honest and ethical.

"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight." (Proverbs 11:1)

I love what McGee said about this:

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men." There is nothing that can hurt the cause of Christ more than a dishonest Christian. The non-Christian is not concerned about the doctrine you hold—whether you are a premillennialist or whether you believe in election or free will. However, he does want to know if you are truthful or not, and he does want to know if you pay your honest debts. Are you a person that a man can depend upon? Providing things honest in the sight of all men is a lot better than giving out tracts, my friend. Let me illustrate this. Some years ago in Memphis, Tennessee, a Christian handed a man a tract. "What is this?" asked the man. The Christian replied, "It

is a tract and I want you to read it.” “I don’t read,” the man replied, “but I will tell you what I will do—I will watch your tracks!” Oh, how accurate that is! The world is watching the tracks that you make, not the tracts you give out. Don’t misunderstand me; giving out gospel tracts is important. But you had better have a life that will back them up when you give out tracts.⁴

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18)

We are to do everything in our power to get along with the lost world around us, but we must do that without compromising our convictions.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

Christians don’t need to take matters into their own hands. Our job is to forgive and love people. It is God’s job to settle the score.

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." (Romans 12:20)

By acting like a Christian to the world around us we are glorifying Christ and showing the lost world His love. This is much better than mere words.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

The only way to defeat evil is through good. Never let evil be a part of your life. You are God’s ambassador.

⁴ McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Epistles (Romans 9-16)* (electronic ed., Vol. 43, p. 79). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.