

The Epistle of Paul to the *Romans*

Before we go any farther, we must recognize we are at the intersection of faith/works. Up to this section ^{Romans 1-11}, Paul has expounded on Christian doctrine by highlighting Condemnation ^{1:18-3:20}, Justification ^{3:21-5:21}, Sanctification ^{6:1-8:39}, and Restoration ^{9:1-11:36}. Paul passionately emphasized that a person must do 3 things in order to be justified: they must accept (1) they are a sinner in need of help (law) (2) Jesus Christ is The Helper (faith), (3) Christ will change their life (trust). And Jesus gave us the perfect illustration ^{Mark 10:17-23}. God does not ask for any change prior to coming to Jesus ^{Mark 1:17} to be "Born Again" ^{John 3:1-8}. Next, Paul's main emphasis in the earlier discussion on being sanctified was not the specifics of what to change but on: (1) the process will always have an inevitable struggle between the spirit and the unredeemed flesh and (2) the only way to win the struggle is by depending on the power of the Holy Spirit. Finally, Paul revealed God's restoration plan for justifying and sanctifying all people: first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. And in Romans 9-11, he described how many of the Jews and Gentiles will resist following His plan for salvation and attempt to gain it through their own means and their own power, but sadly, they will fail.

Now we're at the crossroads, because everything Paul presented in the first 11 chapters was founded and focused on "faith" ^{Ephesians 2:8-9}. And, from here forward, he will explain in detail how genuine believers are to live out the rich theological truths in their "works" ^{Ephesians 2:10}.

Application: The Behavior of God's Righteousness (12:1 - 15:13)

Paul chose to use the upcoming four chapters of Romans as the section of Application.

12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Paul fervently exhorted his readers to respond appropriately to the the previous verse of sovereign praise ("To him be the glory forever! Amen." ^{Romans 11:36}). Paul used the phrase "God's mercy" to summarize the many blessings from God he had been detailing (grace ^{1:7, 3:24, 5:2,20-21, 6:15}, love ^{1:7, 5:5, 8:35,39}, righteousness ^{1:17, 3:21-22, 4:5-6, 22-24, 5:17}, faith ^{1:5,17, 3:22-26, 4:5,13, 5:1, 10:17}). Under the Old Covenant, the sacrifices of dead animals were acceptable to God; however, those temporary efforts were replaced when Jesus Christ offered the ultimate sacrifice of His own life ^{Hebrews 9:11-14}. In response to all God has done for mankind, Paul concluded the only

Romans Q Chapter 12

appropriate response is for His followers to be a “holy ^{1 Peter 2:5} and royal ^{1 Peter 2:9} priesthood”, who will offer their “bodies” ^{1 Corinthians 6:19-20} (lives) totally in service and worship to Him.

The Greek word translated “urge” (*parakaleō*: counsel) has the same root as the word translated “counselor” (*paraklētos*) that always refers to the Holy Spirit ^{John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:7}.

The Greek word translated “mercy” (*oiktirmos*) can also mean “compassion” ^{2 Corinthians 1:3}.

12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. Paul told believers that having been justified, it was time for a

distinct change in their thoughts and actions. It is no longer appropriate for their lives to “conform” to society (no more ‘political correctness’, etc), because now they have a worldview governed by the principles of God, instead of one defined by Satan’s perspective ^{Ephesians 2:1-3}.

The only way a mind can be truly ‘renewed’ is through the power of the Holy Spirit working through studying and meditating on the Word of God and by Bible-based sermons, writings and teachings by Godly Christian pastors/scholars ^{Psalms 119:11, Philippians 4:8-9, Colossians 1:25-29, 3:16}.

Therefore, a “renewed mind” is one that is filled, guided, controlled by the Word/Spirit of God. A mind governed in this way will be able to discern right and wrong in life, which will allow the Christian to be a morally and spiritually spotless “living sacrifice” before God ^{Leviticus 22:17-25}.

The Greek word (*aiōn*) translated “world” actually means “age” ^{2 Corinthians 4:4} or “time period”.

The Greek word rendered “transformed” (*metamorphoō*) is the same word for the change in Jesus at the Transfiguration ^{Mark 9:2} and in a Christian becoming Christ-like ^{2 Corinthians 3:18}.

12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. In light of Paul’s apostolic authority (which was a gift of

God’s grace ^{Romans 1:1-5, 1 Corinthians 3:10}), the first characteristic of behavior he mentioned was humility ^{Proverbs 22:4}. A Christian’s foundation for service to God’s Kingdom must consist of

a humble heart and “sober judgement” (clear thinking) that have been tested ^{Deuteronomy 8:1-5}.

A key part of this is the willingness to submit to authority: in heaven and on earth ^{1 Peter 5:5-6}.

The “measure of faith” is an indication of the type (gift) and amount (ability) of responsibility assigned to each saint by the Holy Spirit to fulfill their role in Christ’s body ^{1 Corinthians 12:7}.

12:4-8 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Just as in the human body, God has given the body of Christ a unified diversity of function ^{1 Corinthians 12:14-20}. The undeserved and unmerited (distributed by "grace") "gifts" of the HS mentioned here are: (1) prophecy, which has two manifestations – revelatory: predicting future events ^{Daniel 9:24-27, Acts 11:27-28} and nonrevelatory: speaking truth from God's Word for encouragement ^{Acts 15:32, 1 Corinthians 14:3}, (2) serving ^{Ephesians 6:7, 1 Peter 5:2}, (3) teaching ^{Titus 2:1, James 3:1}, (4) encouraging ^{1 Thessalonians 5:11}, (5) generosity ^{Proverbs 11:25}, (6) leadership ^{Hebrews 13:17}, (7) cheerful mercy ^{Matthew 5:7, James 2:12-13}. When members of the body do not exercise their spiritual gifts, the body suffers ^{1 Corinthians 12:21-26} (is less efficient).

This passage contains one of two lists of general categories of spiritual gifts ^{1 Corinthians 12:8-11}. The differences in these lists clearly indicate they are simply examples of the incredibly wide range of abilities the Holy Spirit has to bestow, and are only known by the HS and saint. A better translation of the phrase "in proportion to his faith" is "in proportion to the faith", indicating this "faith" refers to the general message of the Christian faith ^{Acts 6:7, Jude 1:3}.

The remainder of the chapter provides a mandatory list of behavioral traits characterizing the life of a Spirit-filled believer ^{Acts 2:4, Ephesians 5:18-20}. Paul discussed these in 4 categories: (1) personal duty ^{v.9}, (2) family duty ^{v.10-13}, (3) duty to others ^{v.14-16}, (4) duty to enemies ^{v.17-21}.

12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. The highest virtue of Christianity is "love" ^{Psalms 136, Matthew 22:37-40, 1 Corinthians 13:13, 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 4:16}, expressed sincerely (without hypocrisy) in a life focused on meeting the genuine needs of others ^{Acts 27:3}. As with all emotions God created, even hate is appropriate in the right context ^{Proverbs 8:13a}. Christian life exhibits a clear distinction between the two life choices: "good" and "evil" ^{Psalms 1}.

12:10-13 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. The devotion ^{Psalms 133:1}, love ^{1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 John 3:14-16} and humility ^{Philippians 2:3-5}

Romans Q Chapter 12

among believers provides a strong testimony to the world of the genuineness of the family of Jesus Christ ^{John 13:35, Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:19-22}. Paul continued by encouraging Christians to maintain a steady passion for God's Word ^{Jeremiah 20:9}, a perspective of joy ^{1 Thessalonians 5:16} & hope ^{Romans 8:20-25, Hebrews 6:19a}, a sense of calmness in trials ^{James 1:2-4}, to stay in close communication with God ^{1 Thessalonians 5:17}, share blessings and be kind to strangers ^{Hebrews 13:2}.

12:14-16 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Paul emphasized some behaviors that are relatively easy and some that are very difficult, because they are so counter to earthly wisdom and the learned behavior from the previous time of fallenness. The treatment of enemies as friends by the believer is simply a way of emulating the model of Jesus in His relationship with them ^{Romans 5:8}. He also reminded them to support others in their high and low points in life, to live in peace ^{v.18, Psalm 34:14, Matthew 5:9, Hebrews 12:14}, to not show favoritism ^{Deuteronomy 10:17, Acts 10:34-35} and to "not be conceited" ^{Romans 11:25, Philippians 2:3}.

12:17-21 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. The OT law of "eye for eye..." ^{Exodus 21:23-24} was intended to be applied by governments, not individuals. The purpose of Paul's urging to "do what is right in the eyes of everybody" ^{1 Corinthians 9:19-23} is designed to make sure anyone watching a Christian will not draw away from God because of bad behavior ^{1 Corinthians 10:31-33}. He repeated his appeal for "peace" and to not "repay...evil for evil", stating that in addition to what a government may do, God will respond appropriately to everyone's actions, including His "wrath" ^{Deuteronomy 32:35}. Paul then used an OT quote ^{Proverb 25:21-22} to describe the proper response to an enemy ^{Exodus 23:4, Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27-28} and then summarized the overarching principle (modeled by Jesus ^{Romans 5:8, 1 Peter 3:18}) "...overcome evil with good".

These responses to an enemy are applicable to a situation of spiritual aggression, and do not prohibit a person defending someone else or themselves if attacked by a physical aggressor.

Heaping "burning coals on his head" is an allusion to an ancient Egyptian custom in which a person who wanted to show public contrition carried a pan of burning coals on his head.

Please direct questions/concerns about the notes to ron price, ron@hopeinchristnm.com, 505-294-4743.