

CLASS 12: BEING A CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD (Romans 12-13)

VI. Practical Christian living, ch. 12 - 15:13

The practical section of Romans begins with 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.” This new attitude will reveal itself in the various relationships the Christian will have. In this epistle Paul emphasizes the relationships with each other in the church and in the state.

1. Personal associations, ch. 12

One of the first areas of Christian transformation will be one’s attitude toward others. Paul warns us to think of ourselves as members of the body, with certain gifts, in need of the gifts of others as well. We must show love to others, even to those who persecute us. We thus can overcome evil with good.

Living sacrifices

12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Motive of sacrifice: “I beseech you . . . therefore, brothers”

- Redemption (3:21-24)
- Promises (4:13)
- Peace with God (5:1)
- Holy Spirit (8:9)
- Resurrection (8:11)
- Eternal inheritance (8:17)
- Complete salvation (8:28-30)
- Eternal love (8:38-39)

Means of sacrifice: “through the mercies of God”

God’s gifts of our creation and our salvation due to his “mercies” (Ps 145:9; 25:5-6; 51:1)

Matter of sacrifice: “your bodies”

The body expresses what is in the heart (Jas 2)

Method of sacrifice: “to present . . . a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God”

“Sacrifice” = *thusia*

Paul like a sacrifice (Phil 2:17; poured out over their sacrifice in Rom 15:16)

Meaning of sacrifice: “which is your spiritual worship”

“Spiritual worship” = *logikos latreia*

“Sacrifice” same as “worship, service” (*leitourgia*) by Granville Sharp Rule in Phil 2:17

Mental metamorphosis

² *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

The danger of conformity to this age

“Be conformed” (*suschematizo*, “mold form”; here and 1 Pet 1:14)

Josephus speaks of a king who changed his kingly clothes for sackcloth and took the form of a beggar.

This age (*aion*)

We have been delivered from this age (Gal 1:4; Titus 2:12-14)

The command to be transformed

“Be transformed” (*metamorpho-omai*)

Outwardly used for Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt 17:2 = Mark 9:2; cf. Luke 9:29, “his appearance became other”)

Inward transformation here and in 2 Cor 3:18

The method of transformation

Dative of means, “by the renewal of your mind (*nous*)”

Noun “renewal” (*anakainosis*) used here and in Titus 3:5

Verb “renew” used in 2 Cor 4:16; Col 3:10; Heb 6:6

“Mind” the same as the heart, the inner man, the affections

The result of transformation: spiritual strength

Able to test or prove what is good, well-pleasing, complete of the will of God

Similar to Heb 5:12-14, “their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (opposite of Adam and Eve, whose senses were polluted)

Individual responsibility

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Responsibility to know our gifts (v. 3)

Not “overestimate” yourself (*hyperphroneo*)

Think “soberly” (as in 2 Cor 5:13; Titus 2:6)

Responsibility to share our gifts (vv. 4-5)

Responsibility to the body as a whole (for Christ the head, and the church the body)

Responsibility to the other members individually (v. 5b)

Responsibility to develop our gifts (vv. 6-8)

- Prophecy—in proportion to faith, or in agreement (*analogia*) with “the faith”
- Ministry—“serving” (*diakonia*)
- Teaching—in the doctrine (*didaskalia*)
- Exhorting—or encouraging, in the exhortation (*paraklesis*)
- Giving—sharing with generosity (*haplotēs*, also in 2 Cor 8:2; 9:11, 13)
- Ruling—presiding, leading (*proistemi*, in 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12)
- Showing mercy—helping those in need (*eleon*), with cheerfulness (*hilaroteti*, as in 2 Cor 9:7)

Living as Christians

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

This section emphasizes how we live with each other, “living among brethren.” Our duty is to uplift each other.

Uplifting love (vv. 9-10)

Love is to be sincere, directed, brotherly, and honoring

Uplifting zeal (vv. 11-12)

Fervent service for Christ (v. 11)

With diligence, not lazy

Not “lazy” (*okneros*, Phil 3:1; cf. verses in Proverbs— 6:6-11; 10:4-5; 12:11, 24; 13:4; 20:4, 13; 22:13; 24:30-34; 26:13-16)

Fervent in spirit (*zeo*, “boil, seethe”; Apollos in Acts 18:25)

Serving the Lord (as a slave), Col 3:24

Alive to spiritual things (v. 12)

“The hope,” “the tribulation,” “the prayer”

Uplifting generosity (v. 13)

Generosity in sending out (15:25-28)

Generosity in bringing in (Phlm 5-7, 22; 3 John 5-8)

The Christian in various situations

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited.

Christian forbearance (v. 14)

- Toward non-Christian persecutors (Matt 5:11-12; 1 Cor 15:9)
- Even toward professing Christian persecutors (Luke 11:48-50; Gal 4:29)

Christian sympathy (vv. 15-16a)

True sympathy or empathy (Job 2:11-13; Prov 25:20; Eccl. 3:4; real comfort, 2 Cor 1:4-6)

Christian humility (v. 16b)

Not “thinking high things” (*hupsela*; Rom 11:20)

Accommodating selves to humble ways or associating with humble people (*sunapagomai*)

The Christian among his enemies

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This section refers to personal relations, not to civil crimes, which are to be punished by the magistrate (13:4).

The tendency of the flesh

Recompense evil for evil (v. 17)

Avenge oneself (v. 19)

As Lamech (Gen 4:23-24)

Be overcome by evil (v. 21)

As King Saul

The teaching of the Spirit

We are to be guided, not by our fleshly reactions, but by the Spirit, the “wisdom from above” (Jas 3:13-18).

Do what is right in the sight of all (v. 17)

As in Paul's collection (2 Cor 9:19-21)

Live peaceably with all, as far as possible (v. 18)

Give place for wrath (v. 19; "leave room for God's wrath" in NIV; cf. 2:5, 8; 3:5; 5:9; 9:22)

ESV "the wrath of God" – "of God" is added by the translators

Alludes to Lev 19:18, "Do not take vengeance"

Overcome evil with good (v. 21)

As Jesus did with the centurion at the Crucifixion

The testimony of the Word

The law of Moses (v. 19b; Deut 32:35-43), "Vengeance is mine"

The Proverbs of Solomon (v. 20; Prov 25:21-22)

"Coals of fire" are a symbol in the Proverbs and in Egyptian literature of a change of mind and heart.

Other Scriptures – Prov 16:32; Luke 6:27-36; 1 Pet 3:8-12

2. The Christian and the state, 13:1-7

Since rulers are established by God for the proper ordering of society, and are ministers of God's laws, they are entitled to the respect, taxes, and dues of the Christians. On the other hand, they are responsible to praise the good and bring God's vengeance on the wicked.

The responsibility of government

13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

The government must recognize the authority of God (vv. 1-2)

- Example of Pontius Pilate (John 18:33-38a; 19:8-12)
- Example of King Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-3, 19, 20-23)

The government must uphold the law of God (vv. 3-4)

General government, uphold the Second Table of the Law

“Terror to the evil . . . praise for the good”

The Theocracy, uphold the First and Second Tables of the Law

Both deal with external lives

No theocracy now; need the return of the theocratic King, Jesus Christ

The government must enforce the justice of God (vv. 3-4)

- “Terror” (v. 3)
- “Bears the sword” (v. 4)
- A “servant of God” (v. 4)
- An “avenger unto wrath” (v. 4, *ekdikos*)

Most important duties:

- Warfare (as David, 1 Kgs 15:5)
- Criminal justice (Gen 9:6; Num 35:16-33; Acts 25:11)

Under Christ’s future kingdom:

- Perfect recognition of God (Ps 16:8; 1 Cor 15:28)
- Perfect upholding of the law of God (Isa 11:1-4a)
- Perfect enforcement of the law of God (Ps 110; Isa 11:4b)

Our responsibility to the government

⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Recognition of the government

- Its authority (vv. 1, 5)
- Its place as a servant or minister of God (vv. 4, 6)
- Its right to our respect and honor (v. 7)

Similar to 1 Pet 2:13-17

Obedience to the government

- Be subject (vv. 1, 5)
- Don't resist (v. 2)
- Do good (obey laws) (v. 3)

Extent of obedience:

- Obey good laws (Prov 25:2-5)
- Obey neutral laws (Acts 25:7-8)
- Disobey wicked laws; obey God first (Acts 4:17-20; 24:14-16)

Support the government (vv. 6-7)

Jesus (Matt 17:24-27)

3. Love and God's commandments, 13:8-14

Some put a difference between keeping God's commandments and loving one's fellow men. Paul shows that love is the fulfilling of the law, and that the law defines what love is. The Christian life is a life of love, ordered by God's Ten Commandments (summarized by Christ in the two Great Commandments).

Love and the law

⁸ *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.* ⁹ *The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* ¹⁰ *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

The law demands love (vv. 8-9)

No debt (unpaid obligation)

We owe love

Our obligation to the moral law requires love to others

Especially for Commandments 6-10

Love demands the law (vv. 9-10)

Love is shown in the commandments (v. 9)

- #6—preserve life
- #7—preserve chastity and marriage (cf. false love of Amnon in 2 Sam 13:1, 4, 15)
- #8—preserve property
- #9—preserve reputation (Jas 3)
- #10—preserve goodwill

The syllogism (v. 10):

- Love works no ill.
- Love prevents ill.
- Therefore, love works to fulfill the law.

Christ said this (John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 1 John 5:1-3; 2 John 6)

Paul: true love rejoices not in iniquity, but in the truth (1 Cor 13:6)

No provision for the flesh

¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As the sounding of the clock alarm causes us to know that it's time to get up, so the coming of Christ causes us to live the transformed life.

The time (vv. 11-12a)

Knowing the time (*kairos*)

Awake out of sleep (*hupnos*, as in Acts 20:9)

Salvation nearer, glorification

The night progresses; day has come near

Signs of the times—Matt 16:1-4

The command (vv. 12b-13)

Let us put off works of darkness

Let us put on clothing, the armor of light

Let us walk

Honestly, as in the day (*euschemonos*)

As in 1 Cor 14:40; 1 Thess 4:11-12 (walking honestly toward unbelievers)

1 Thess 5:1-10, works of the day and of the night

Not as the unbelievers, works of the night

- Rioting, orgies
- Drunkenness (cf. Luke 21:34)
- Sexual immorality
- Debauchery
- Dissention
- Envy, jealousy

The provision (v. 14)

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ

“Put on” – same term as in v. 12 (*enduo*)

Do not make provision

“Make provision” (*pronoia*, plan ahead of time, used for Felix in Acts 24:2, “foresight”)

For the flesh

Especially for its lusts, desires

Testimony of Augustine, *Confessions* 164-178