

In view of God's mercies, live holy lives!

Lesson Four +++ Romans 12

BACKGROUND

St. Paul closed chapter 11 with a summary of God's mercies to both Gentiles and Jews, and then he wrote a hymn of praise. "Who has known the mind of the Lord," Paul asked, that he or she could anticipate or explain such a plan to rescue sinners?

Before reading further, make a short list of the things that God has done in mercy to save you.

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INTRODUCTION

- How does God direct you to express your thanks for his many amazing mercies?

12:1

1. The Greek word οὖν (translated "therefore") is the first word in the next section of Romans (chapters 12-15). Paul is drawing a conclusion on the basis of what he wrote earlier. In short, all the encouragements that are coming up in chapters 12-15 will find their basis in the mercies of God expressed in chapters 1-11.
2. God has called for sacrifices from his Old Testament believers and from his New Testament believers. But what are the differences between the sacrifices God commanded *before* Christ and those that he commands *after* Christ?
 1. *NT doesn't expiate, it is in response to Christ's expiation (The most important distinction.)*
 2. *NT is living, not dead*
 3. *NT doesn't include or involve animals (usually--you could live in South Dakota and give your pastor a whole cow still I suppose) (of elk, buffalo, etc.)*
 4. *NT isn't commanded but flows naturally as a fruit of faith*
 5. *NT types are adiaphora and as many as faith's imagination could conjure vs. specifically commanded types in OT*
3. NIV84 translation issue: "this is your spiritual act of worship." Literally – *reasonable act of worship*
 - *Reasonable to whom? In the context of this verse the apostle goes on to explain that in the renewing of our minds we pattern our thoughts, actions, words after God's will and not*

according to what the world or our sinful flesh believes is reasonable. “Reasonable” because in our new self our reason is held captive by the logos of God.

4. True or false? “True spiritual (reasonable) worship takes place when we go to church.”

12:2

Greek: *pattern of this world* – the word for *pattern* was used for the act of laying a pattern over a piece of cloth and cutting the cloth to conform to the pattern.

1. Sinners cannot show their approval of God’s will unless the Holy Spirit changes and renews their “way of thinking” (νοῦς).
2. Explain: Every decision we make is a choice between two patterns. (see also Ephesians 4:23; Philippians 2:13)

12:1-2 MAJOR POINT # 1. God wants me to thank him in my everyday decisions:

- By always choosing that which ...
- Rather than that which ...
- He wants me to make such holy decisions on the basis of ...

TAKE NOTE!

- A. In the matter of JUSTIFICATION, avoid completely any talk about your decisions, your choices, or your commitment.
- B. In the matter of SANCTIFICATION, speak boldly about the decisions, choices, and commitment that you and every believer will make.

- *PaulH - I agree with the first statement regarding justification. We must avoid completely any talk that involves any work that I do. Justification is entirely God’s work from start to finish. He justified me on the basis on Christ’s work, and made that justification mine by creating in me faith which receives that judiciary announcement. In regards to sanctification, we do speak about the decisions, choices and commitments we will make. For example, that concept is found in our youth and adult confirmation vows. However, those promises we make at confirmation are followed up by saying, “...with the help of God.” I think that we have to be careful to include the fact that I cannot by my own power or thinking or choosing do what God wills for me to do, even as a believer. He must work his power and his will in me through Word and Sacrament. My sinful flesh is too weak and unwilling to do anything*

that pleases God. God has to work that will in me - again, like justification - apart from my works.

- *Zell: But don't you think the acknowledgement that the good we do is "with the help of God" could be overdone? Paul, for instance, doesn't repeat that phrase every time he urges his readers to live lives that are pleasing to God (εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ). Yes, he will say that "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Php 2:13). Yet he also counts on the fact that the new man is alive and well and fully capable of decisions and actions that glorify the Savior.*
- *I don't hesitate to urge my listeners, "Act ... pray ... serve ... speak the truth ... obey ... submit ... love ... give yourself up ... etc." as long as the gospel that frees and empowers them for such service is kept in view. In fact, I'd prefer to have a gospel statement in view rather than have to add, "with God's help."*
- *Following Colossians 1-2, there are 30 imperatives in Colossians 3-4. Always thought that was instructive.*

12:3 NIV84 translation issue: literally - "Keep thinking in a self-controlled manner, as God distributes for each of you the measure that faith uses" (ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως).

The NIV84 translation, "in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" makes it sound like God has given some more saving faith than others – nowhere is that found in the Bible. Saving faith saves, whether you have grown in your faith or not, one person is not more saved because they have more saving faith.

- To explain: If I use the measure, or standard, that my God-given faith uses, there is no room for arrogance. Instead I will humbly trust that every gift that I have comes from God and is to be used in concert with the gifts he has given my fellow believers. Then I will not compete with other believers for honor and attention. Instead I will recognize that we all work together as the body of Christ, giving our Savior all the honor and praise.
- "All people are soloists by nature. They must learn the art of playing in God's orchestra." (Romans: Franzmann, pg.220)

12:4-6 A gathering of believers is like a body with its many different members.

1. True or false? Some believers do not have a gift from God that they can use to serve others.
2. What does Scripture usually mean by the word "prophecy"? (compare your answer with 1Corinthians 14:3,24-25,31)
3. Looking at the Greek: In v 6 Paul urges the believer who "prophesies" (that is, speaks from God) to do so κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως -- meaning "in right proportion to the faith." Frequently Paul uses the expression "the faith" to refer to the objective truth written in Scripture and believed by all believers. In other words, the preacher should preach the Word of God, and nothing else.

- too easy to pass from "What the will of God is, that I declare," to "What I declare, that is the will of God." A warning to the preacher not to think too highly of himself, and to constantly discover what the will of God is and preach that.

- *Translate: "Let prophecy be in keeping with that which is in right proportion to the faith." In other words, the preacher should keep his preaching right in line with the Christian faith, that is, the Word of God.*

- *Weak: “If prophecy, use it according to the standard of one’s faith” (Holman’s, HCSB).*
- *Excellent: “If your gift is speaking God’s word, make sure what you say agrees with the Christian faith.” (God’s Word).*

12:6-8

1. Write out Paul’s list of gifts one by one. Explain what a Christian with one of these gifts will be encouraged to do.
 - v 6: prophesy
 - v 7: serving
 - v 7: teaching
 - v 8: encouraging
 - v 8: giving generously
 - v 8: leadership
 - v 8: showing mercy
2. What additional gifts might Paul have listed if he were writing about believers today?
3. How can you determine the gifts that you have?

12:3-8 MAJOR POINT # 2. God wants me to thank him alongside other believers by:

12:9-21

1. Notice all the short sentences. Paul is encouraging believers to “be who they are in Christ.”

The Apostle Paul uses Present tense participles in the Greek verbs, which means that the action is continual or on-going. Our life of sanctification is one that is on-going. As Christians we are always despising evil, continually being joined to the good, always looking to outdo each other in honor. Agape love always strives to serve others.
2. “Genuine love” (Ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος) is the heading for this paragraph. Notice that it is not just a feeling or an emotion. “Genuine love” is very active. It will be “hating what is evil, clinging to what is good, being devoted to one another with brotherly love, etc.”
 - *I think that these first three words are a continuation of what the apostle has been writing from 12:1. He has just talked about faith and love expressing itself through the use of spiritual gifts in service to the body of Christ. Paul is going to continue the theme of “faith and love in service to others” in the remaining verses of the chapter. As a believer uses his/her gifts in the Church, it must be prompted by genuine love - agape love - love that is selfless and service-minded. Paul will go on to give examples of how agape love expresses itself. Both Luther and Franzmann agree that so much passes for “genuine love” but in reality it is not. Christians may display outward love, but inside conceal hatred. As Paul talks about how Christians deal with one another, this “false love” is exposed when a brother/sister in Christ says nothing to a fellow believer who has sinned. Luther points out this lack of genuine love in the way Christians abandon*

each other in times of trial or adversity. They thought they loved each other, but hardships test the genuineness of that love.

12:9-16 Which godly directive (Provide the verse #) applies to the following situations?

- v 14____ 1. A neighbor calls you a fool for the Christian faith that you confess.
- v 16____ 2. A poorly dressed family is ignored by everybody in your apartment building.
- v 10,15____ 3. A sister in the faith is saddened by her troubled marriage and family life.
- v 10,15____ 4. A fellow believer is making plans to be married.
- v 15____ 5. Friends of yours are grieving the death of a dear grandparent.
- v 10,11____ 6. You are trying to help a member of your congregation who is lazy and extremely critical of others.
- v 10,13____ 7. You learn that a member of the church is unemployed and cannot meet his living expenses.

Vs11 lacking in zeal = idle, lazy

o *Luther writes, “Those who snore and yawn and are lukewarm in all their efforts are the people who break this command, and they achieve nothing by their works but only dissipate them.” (LW Vol.25, pg.456, CPH) I think there’s a sermon illustration in there about nodding off during the sermon... If I am not zealous in serving my brothers and sisters in Christ, if I am lazy in works of sanctification, then I am most likely pursuing how I might serve myself, rather than the Lord. When I remember that all my works of service are done as to the Lord, then I will be on fire and eager to serve selflessly. My sinful nature needs to hear this regularly because I so often seek to pursue what I want to do and be lazy rather than be busy about the Lord’s work.*

Also, by referring to the One whom we are serving as τῷ κυρίῳ Paul is reminding us that this is our Savior-God, the One who has been faithful to the covenant of grace that he made with Abraham. The name of the One we serve also motivates the sort of loving service being described here in Rom 12.

12:13 Our merciful God emphasizes his command that we “show hospitality.” Read 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9

12:9-16 MAJOR POINT #3. God wants me to thank him as I deal with my neighbors by:

- ✓ Also important: What moves me to such thanksgiving?

12:17 It is important that we “make plans to do what is right in the eyes of all people,” even unbelievers. Why?

12:18

1. Sometimes conflict with the world is inevitable. See John 16:33. So before we compromise God’s Word in order to maintain peace, such peace may have to be abandoned. See also Matthew 10:34-36; Luke 12:51-53.
2. Yet the Holy Spirit does not want believers to use this as an excuse to make conflicts with others worse.

12:19 “‘I will carry out justice,’ says the Lord.”

1. How is that a warning to us when others have harmed us?
2. Why is that a comfort to us?

12:20 Paul is quoting from the 25th chapter of Proverbs.

1. Read Matthew 5:43-45.
2. Each child of the heavenly Father has been set free to feed his enemy, to give him something to drink, to grant him one unexpected blessing after another. In so doing, he prompts his enemy to feel the heat of his conscience, possibly as never before. Because of his godly behavior, his enemy’s thought process burns with the rebuke of God’s law.

12:21 Who is the champion of such noble actions?

12:17-21 MAJOR POINT #4. God wants me to thank him as I deal with those who persecute me by:

CONCLUSION

In view of God’s mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices. This is your spiritual act of worship!

- In your daily life decisions.
- In your use of your God-given gifts.
- In your dealing with all your neighbors.
- In your response to those who are unkind.