

An Introduction to Romans 12 – A Call to Christian Living

Rom 12:1-21 ¹ 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. 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. 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.

As we continue our series of messages from the Epistle of Romans I will only have time to introduce the subject matter of Romans Chapter 12 for I believe a review of the previous chapters of Romans is necessary if we are to properly understand Paul's instruction here on the principles of Christians living.

Since so many in the church today make an issue in separating doctrine from what they call practical teaching, that is, guidelines for Christian living this quote from Ligon Duncan caught my attention. "For Paul, Christian living is a theological matter". We do need to be aware that Paul here in the 12th chapter of Romans does provide a short Christian proposal on living the Christian life. What is of interest is that Paul is both practical and theological in his approach to instruction in Christian living. I would propose that if one is not sound in their doctrines of grace they will err in their instruction on Christian living, on the requirements for holiness and obedience in the Christian's walk. This we will more fully develop in the introduction this morning.

By way of introduction then I want us to consider the following; 1. Christian Living is a Theological Matter. 2. The importance of being grounded in the doctrines of Grace as a basis for the Christian life. 3. The that takes place in Paul's teaching between Romans 1 through 11 and chapter 12.

A. Christian living is a "Theological Matter"

1. It is far too common in the Evangelical church world to separate "Theology" from what is (wrongly) called "Practical Christian Living".
 - a. This is a serious error in the church
 - b. It removes the very foundation of the reasons for Christian living.
2. When one understands that Christian living is a "Theological Matter" it makes it both "practical and theological"
3. If you do not understand the truth of grace, you will not be able to live the life of grace.
4. Because the life of grace is grounded in the truth of grace.

B. The importance of being grounded in the doctrines of Grace as a basis for the Christian life.

1. It is of interest to note that Paul has made use of 11 chapters to ground his readers in the truth of God's sovereign grace and will make use of only 1 chapter to instruct the church in the principles of Christian living.
2. We teach that the Heidelberg Catechism follows the outline of Romans which is summed up for us in the 2nd question of the Catechism.

2. How many things are necessary for you to know, that in this comfort you may live and die happily?

Three things: First, the greatness of my sin and misery. Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery. Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.

3. A careful consideration of epistle to the Romans contains the following outline.
 - a. It begins with the sin and misery of man.
 - b. Then instructs one in the means of redemption from that sin and misery.
 - c. Finally instructs the believer in the principles of Christian living.

4. Thus far in the epistle of Romans we have examined as it were, the first 2 parts of the HC answer to question 2, 1st) "our sin and misery, 2nd) "how we are redeemed from our sins and misery", beginning here in chapter 12 we shall examine the 3rd part. "How I am to be thankful to God for such redemption."

- a. Chapters 1-3 – Speak of man's misery, his lost condition before God.

Rom 3:10-12 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."

- b. Chapters. 4-7 – The means of ones Justification – One is justified through the instrument of faith **alone** by means of the atoning sacrifice of and the imputed righteousness of **Christ alone**.

*Rom 4:3-5 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to **him who works**, the wages are not counted as grace **but as debt**. But to him who does not work but **believes on Him who justifies the ungodly**, his faith is accounted for righteousness.*

Rom 5:18-19 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

- c. Chapter 8 – We learned of the assurance of our salvation – nothing can separate you
- d. Chapters 9-11 We were warned of the foolishness of attempting to merit favor with God by ones own righteousness.
 - (1) We learned that salvation comes through the electing grace of God alone.
 - (2) God has purposed to redeem His people by His sovereign grace alone
 - (3) Elect Jews and elect Gentiles will be saved not one will be lost – all Israel

C. The change that takes place in Paul's teaching between Romans 1 through 11 and chapter 12

1. Rom 1-11 Has been in the indicative, that is, the stating the facts, all this has been done.
2. Rom 12 begins what is called the imperative or the command. Because of what has been done I exhort you to present your bodies a living sacrifice.
3. The indicative has declared that the grace of God is absolute and sovereign in our salvation.
 - a. Our hope and comfort is founded on the mercy of God not our efforts.
 - b. We have been justified freely by God by grace alone, through faith alone in the merit of Christ's perfect obedience alone.
4. This important to understand lest one becomes tempted to think that by your Christian life you can obtain merit and acceptance before God.
 - a. We need to be aware that much of the teaching in the church today presses one to do good works in order to gain acceptance before God.
 - b. Or presses one to do good works in order to feel good about themselves.
 - c. But this was the very error of the Jews in Paul's day who were busy producing works of righteous in and of themselves and yet were eternally lost.
5. Let me remind you again, Romans 1-11 is in the indicative,
 - a. This has been done for you, you have been redeemed, justified, sanctified and made secured in Christ
 - b. Romans 12 "Therefore" – now comes the imperative.
6. **Not do this and live**, rather, this has been done in your behalf, **therefore now do this**.
 - a. Modern day evangelicals want to jump to the imperatives and ignore the indicatives
 - b. They want to ignore the doctrine and jump to the practical which is not practical at all.
 - c. What they call cold dead theology
 - d. But in reality that "theology" is the very basis for Christina living
7. We should want to "love Jesus" and keep His commandments.
8. But we must remember "We love Him because He first loved us" – don't turn it around.

CONCLUSION: As we come to the instruction of Romans 12

Keep in mind - Without the indicatives, without the theology of soteriology/salvation, Without the saving grace of Jesus Christ – your works are useless. Why? – God demands PERFECT OBEDIENCE Now we understand the foundational chapters 1-11 properly brings us to the final part of God's redeeming grace summed up for us in our catechism. How I am to be thankful to God for such redemption

So when we take a firm stand on doctrine and are thereby accused that we are not being practical?

We need to simply ask - What is more practical than knowing you have been redeemed, by **grace alone** through **faith alone** by the merit of Jesus **Christ alone** to the **glory of God alone**?