

Romans Part 2

How to be a Christian without Being Religious!

Lesson 7: A Living Sacrifice! (Romans 12)

REVIEW:

In Romans 1-11, Paul provides a theological treatise for the Christian faith. The foundation of his treatise is that salvation comes by faith alone through grace alone in Christ alone! In these chapters, Paul puts forth a systematic theological set of biblical truths and doctrines. Below are some of these:

1. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (1:16).
2. God's righteousness is imputed (transferred) to men and women by faith alone (1:17).
3. God's wrath is being revealed against sin (1:18-32).
4. God's judgment will be based upon the "light" (truth) one has received (2:12-16).
5. A man becomes a member of God's family by the Spirit, not by the Law (2:28-29).
6. All are sinners. There is no one righteous (3:10-18, 23).

Key Passage—Romans 3:21-25

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

7. Justification (a legal declaration of righteousness) comes freely by God's grace through the price Jesus paid at the cross to redeem (pay a price to set a slave free) mankind from his sins.
8. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice in that His death appeased the wrath of God and satisfied His justice.
9. Mankind's salvation is made possible only through faith in Jesus's shed blood
10. Abraham serves as an example that OT men and women were saved by faith, not by works (4:1-25).
11. Peace with God is available to all, by God's grace, through faith (5:1-2).
12. Just as death came to all through one man's sin, so life came to all through one Man's death (5:12-21).
13. By faith, through man's union with Christ in his death and resurrection, he is set free from the power and penalty of sin (6:5-7).

14. Even though a man is saved, a battle still rages in his soul to do what is right and pure (7:14-25).
15. There is no condemnation for those who have been saved (8:1).
16. Victory in the internal battle is won to the extent the believer yields to the Spirit living within him (8:5-11).
17. The believer's hope is in the coming glory that will be revealed at the time of Christ's return when both mankind and creation will be liberated from death (8:18-25).

THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL—Romans 9, 10, 11

18. God is not finished with Israel. His promises to Abraham concerning his physical descendants will be fulfilled (9:1-9).
19. The remnant of Jews who truly believe in Jesus do so because of divine election and God's mercy (9:10-18).
20. Most Jews have not embraced God's grace because they pursue it through works (as do most Gentiles) and not by true faith (9:30-33).
21. Salvation is available to anyone who simply calls out to the Lord (10:9-10, 13).
22. God has not rejected Israel. However, He has given faith to many Gentiles to make Jews envious that they might call on the name of the Lord (10:16-11:10).
23. In the coming future, salvation will come to the Jews when God declares that the full number of Gentiles has been saved (11:25-32).
24. God's ways are beyond human comprehension (11:33-36).

CHAPTER 12: RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD AND OTHERS

This chapter begins with the word “therefore!” *Therefore* points the reader back to the prior eleven chapters. Paul states that when a man realizes all that God has done for him to save him from hell, he should willingly offer his life back to God. Verses 1-2 are critical instructions on how to live this new life in Christ. Paul writes,

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. 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.

Consider these two verses carefully. Do you completely understand the mercy of God? No one really does because no one really grasps the depravity of his or her own sin. Isaiah 64:6 states, “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” Therefore, when you begin to see how the Lord has worked mercifully in your life to save you from His wrath, then you should be willing to offer your life back to Him. A sacrificial life

to God is the only true form of worship and this is both holy and pleasing to Him. The question is: “How do we truly sacrifice our lives for God?” Verse 2 provides the answer. By God’s power provided by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8), a man chooses not to follow the ways of the world (1 John 2:15-17). Instead, he chooses to have his mind renewed by spending much, much time in the word of God (the Bible). Understanding that the battleground for his soul is his mind, the believer reads the word of God so that he begins to take on the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:16 states, “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” As one’s mind becomes full of God’s Word, he begins to think like God and take on God’s wisdom. Then he can make judgments about all things (1 Corinthians 2:15). He begins to see and understand more fully God’s will for his life (verse 2). This is the essence of the Christian life—knowing the will of God and then living according to God’s will by the power of the Spirit.

In the remaining chapters of Romans, Paul provides a picture of how the Christian life should look. How should the believer relate to unbelievers? How about to other believers? How should he relate to rulers and authorities? What about enemies? As one begins to live according to the will and by the power of God, his life should line up more and more with God’s Word. Thus, his life will become a holy and pleasing sacrifice to God.

Tim Keller writes,

To be a “living sacrifice” is to be fully at God’s disposal. It means, actively, to be willing to obey God in anything he says in any area of life; and, passively, to be willing to thank God for anything he sends in any area of life...The word “living” may mean that the sacrifice is a constant thing. The word “sacrifice” actually means “to kill.” That makes it a “living killing!” It means we must continually renew our position as wholly obedient and at God’s disposal. It is what Jesus meant when he said that a follower of his “must deny himself and take up his cross daily and ... [lose] his life” (Luke 9:23-24). This is what a “holy” life looks like (Romans 12:1). To be holy is to be utterly pure and completely set apart. The Christian life is to be a daily giving over of our lives and our bodies in obedience to God, motivated by the view of God’s mercy that we have as we stand at the foot of the cross and see his Son dying there for us.²⁰

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:

Paul writes in verses 3-8:

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. Just as each of us has one body and many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form

²⁰ Keller, 103-104.

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.

The Christian life begins and continues with an inward observation. We are to examine ourselves constantly “with sober (reasonable, serious, accurate) judgment.” We are not to view ourselves as too high (pride, conceit) or too low (self-pity, low self-esteem). Both of these views are self-centered. The Christian is really not to think of himself much at all, because he is supposed to die to self. In other words, the Christian is to be selfless and, therefore, to direct any attention given him towards the One who created him and also died for him.

The Christian should examine himself to discern the spiritual gifts God has given him. He is to recognize the body of Christ, the world-wide church, as many members with many different gifts. Everyone who is in Christ is to serve God with the gifts he has, recognizing that these gifts come from God according to His grace. Thus, there should be no boasting within the body of Christ.

In verses 6-8, Paul lists some of these gifts. Keller writes,

This list is not complete (and neither are the following other lists in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28, or Ephesians 4:11). Generally speaking, spiritual gifts break into three categories:

- *Speaking gifts (eg: prophecy, teaching, exhorting, knowledge)*
- *Leading gifts (government, administration, wisdom)*
- *Serving gifts (giving, mercy, hospitality, miracles, tongues and their interpretation, healing—some people put these latter three in a separate category as ‘sign gifts’)*

These gifts are given so that they can be expressed through ministries, particular channels of service that focus on people's needs. A particular ministry may require one specific gift, or a combination of gifts (consider what it takes to teach the Bible to children).²¹

Paul's list of specific gifts:

Prophesying: Prophesying can include both foretelling and forth-telling. In the Old Testament we are given numerous examples of prophets who, while under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, foretold events to come (David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.). 2 Peter 1:21

²¹ Ibid., 111-112.

states, “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Since the Word of God was completed, there has not been much, if any, need for foretelling. What God intended to be foretold has already been written. Thus, in Romans 12 Paul probably has in mind forth-telling, or the proclamation (preaching), of the Word of God.

Serving: The Greek word translated service is *diakonia*, means “practical service.” Believers who have been gifted to serve others should use this gift to do so. Deacons in the church should be gifted to serve the practical needs of others and to take care of the administrative needs of the church or of a particular ministry.

Teaching: The believer who is gifted in this area should be able to take the truths revealed in Scripture and explain them in a way that is clear and understandable.

Encouraging: This is a wonderful gift to possess. Everyone enjoys the company of someone who is always lifting up others with a word of encouragement. Furthermore, the Greek word translated encouragement is *parakaleo*, which means to “come alongside of.” One who comes alongside another person who is in need does so to offer counsel and encouragement.

Giving: All believers should be generous givers. Again, it goes back to recognizing the mercy of God and how generous He has been with us in giving us His Son. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:7, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Leadership: Certain believers are gifted to lead. They are able to motivate others to follow them with their passion for certain causes. They tend to be visionaries who can challenge people to “catch their vision.”

Mercy: Those entrusted with the gift of mercy have hearts that are easily stirred by those in need. Merciful believers love to pour their lives out for the poor, the afflicted, the sick, the weak, the elderly, the homeless, and the imprisoned.

THE GREATEST OF ALL GIFTS IS LOVE!!!

Paul defines love in verses 9-21:

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 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 the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

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.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 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.

It is impossible to live the Christian life without the empowerment of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Who can truly love his enemy? No one can, without the power of God. In Romans 5:5, Paul writes, "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us." Living in the power of the Spirit is the only way to live the Christian life. Zechariah 4:6 states, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty."

Let us now consider the love of God known as *agape* love. *Agape* love is best pictured by the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ as He shed His blood on the cross for the sake of mankind. Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." *Agape* love is sacrificial love!

LOVE IN THE FAMILY OF GOD:

- **Love** must be sincere. You cannot fake love, and it will be evidenced by action, not just words. A believer must not be a hypocrite.
- **Love** hates that which is evil because evil works to destroy that which is good. Love enables its possessor to discern between good and evil.
- **Love** enables its possessor to express brotherly affection toward other members of God's family. Furthermore, believers are to honor others above themselves. The world should be able to see the great love that believers have for one another. Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- **Love** enables its possessor to serve the Lord with great zeal and enthusiasm. Paul writes in Colossians 3:23-24, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."
- **Love** enables its possessor to be joyful, patient, and faithful. Believers should be the most joyful people on the face of the planet. Why? Because of the great hope that they possess in Christ. Hebrews 6:19 states, "We have this **hope** as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus,

who went before us, has entered on our behalf.” And Titus 2:12-13 states, “It [the grace of God] teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the **blessed hope**—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Believers possess eternal life and, no matter what happens, we have this hope of the blessed return of Jesus to rescue us from this sin-filled world. Therefore, we can persevere during times of affliction and spend time praying while we wait.

- **Love** enables its possessor to practice hospitality toward others by generously helping those in need, particularly widows, orphans, and those within the body of Christ who are struggling in many different ways.
- **Love** enables its possessor to do good to those who mean harm. Believers are to bless those who bring persecution. In so doing, perhaps they will be won over to Christ.
- **Love** enables its possessor to rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who are mourning. True godly love does not envy, but is glad at the success and favor others receive. Furthermore, when others are hurting due to some loss, believers should be the first to offer comfort. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the same comfort we ourselves have received from God.”
- **Love** enables its possessor to live in harmony with others. In Philippians 2:2, Paul states that believers should “[be] like-minded, have the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.”
- **Love** enables its possessor to be humble and to be willing to associate with people of low position. Jesus is our example in his association with drunks, prostitutes, and the poor.

LOVE TOWARD OUR ENEMIES:

In verses 14, and 17-21, Paul provides a picture of godly love towards our enemies. When Jesus died on the cross, he gave a perfect illustration of godly love toward enemies. As the chief priests and teachers of the law mocked and ridiculed Him, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” In these verses, Paul gives four negative commands:

- 1) Do not curse!
- 2) Do not repay anyone evil for evil!
- 3) Do not take revenge!
- 4) Do not be overcome by evil!

John Stott writes,

All four prohibitions say the same thing in different words. Retaliation and revenge are absolutely forbidden to the followers of Jesus. He himself never hit back in either word or deed. And in spite of our inborn retributive tendency [desire to punish], ranging from the child's tit for tat to the adult's more sophisticated determination to get even with an opponent, Jesus calls us instead to imitate him. To be sure, there is a place for punishment of evildoers in the law courts, and Paul will come to this in Romans 13.²²

In addition to these negative commands the believer is to show love toward his enemies in the following ways:

- Bless your enemies!
- Do what is right in the eyes of the public. Live above reproach!
- Live at peace with others (if it is possible)!
- Provide for the needs of your enemy!

If we truly love our enemies by overcoming evil with good, perhaps they might come to a place of repentance and be won over to Jesus Christ (the “burning coals” is, according to Stott, not a form of revenge or punishment, but a sign of repentance). Repentance that leads to salvation is the ultimate goal, and this can only be accomplished by living the Christian life before the world in the power of the Holy Spirit!

DAY 1 Read chapter 9 pages 98-106 from *How to Be a Christian without Being Religious*.

1. Alan Redpath has described God's will as two-fold. Explain.

2. Before God wants your service, what does He first desire from you?

3. What does it mean to offer your body as a living sacrifice to God? Have you done this completely? If not, what areas of your “body” do you still need to surrender to the Lord?

4. How often should we offer our bodies to God as a living sacrifice? Why?

²² Stott, 334.

5. Why is it so important for God to work on your character before He can fulfill His purpose in and through you?

DAY 2 Re-read chapter 9 pages 98-106 from *How to Be a Christian without Being Religious*.

6. Ridenour writes, “A good test of a lot of your plans and activities is right in Romans 12:2: ‘Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world’ or as *The New Testament in Modern English* puts it: ‘Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.’”
 - a. Read 1 John 2:15-17. Explain how the world tries to squeeze us into its mold?
 - b. What question should you ask of yourself to see if something you are doing, watching, or listening to is appropriate for a follower of Christ?
7. Ridenour writes, “The trap that snares a lot of Christians is the old dual standard: one set of rules for outward behavior and another standard for the mind—the ‘thought life.’” Explain (Romans 8:5-8).
8. What are the three “navigation lights” that are available to the Christian for guidance? Explain how each of these serves to guide believers through the daily maze of choices.
9. According to Ridenour only one thing really counts when it comes to serving God. What is it (Hebrews 11:1)?

DAY 3 Read chapter 10 pages 108-113 from *How to Be a Christian without Being Religious*.

10. The title of this study is *How to Be a Christian without Being Religious*. At this stage in the study, you should have a good understanding of what it really means to be a Christian. Remember, it is not about what we do, it is all about what has already been done for us. So, how can you tell if your Christianity is real or counterfeit?

11. Ridenour writes, “To try to love others unselfishly and at the same time be concerned with standing up for your rights is a contradiction in terms. You cannot serve God and self. You cannot go around with the Bible in one hand while waving your personal Bill of Rights in the other.”
 - a. Explain.

 - b. Give an example of a time when you failed to show love towards someone who may have wronged you. Instead of “turning the other cheek” you pulled out your Bill of Rights.

 - c. How does God prove, test and temper your sincerity and unselfishness? Can you remember a time recently when God did this?

DAY 4 Read Romans 12:1-8

12. Explain how “offering your bodies as living sacrifices” is your spiritual act of worship to God?

13. Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. Is it possible to truly know God’s will for your life? (Before you answer this question, answer the questions below.)
 - a. (Challenge question): 1 Corinthians 2 is all about the wisdom of God. In verses 7-8, Paul writes, “No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”
 1. What do you think Paul’s means by “God’s secret wisdom?” (See Matthew 13:9-17; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

 2. Who knows the mind of God (verse 11)?

 3. Who is indwelt by the Spirit of God (verse 12; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13-14)?

 4. Verse 14 states, “The man without the Spirit of God does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Explain.

 5. Verse 16 states, “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have *the mind of Christ*! How does the believer take on the mind of Christ?

 6. Now, back to the first question. Is it possible to truly know God’s will for your life? If so, how? (See Romans 12:2)

14. Every believer has been given spiritual gifts. List the ones mentioned in this chapter.
 - a. What is your gift(s)?
 - b. How are you using it/them for the glory of God?

DAY 5 Read Romans 12:9-21

15. Jesus says in John 13:34-35, “A new command I give you: Love one another, as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” As you read through Paul’s list of characteristics of godly love, in what areas do you find yourself lacking?
16. How is a believer to treat his enemies?
17. Read Matthew 10:38-39. Explain how this verse reveals the key to loving others more than ourselves?
18. What is the greatest truth you have learned in this lesson and how do you plan on putting it into practice in your own life?