

Lessons from Romans Book 8
Truth in Sequence
Living Sacrifices—
Under Orders to God



Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

A year ago I began to put our study in Romans into written form during a short writing sabbatical. A year later, with the help of this inspiring view from behind my laptop, I am looking forward to a similar break with the hope I might complete the series.



What a privilege it has been to teach this series to the saints of Vistoso Community Church. Might the Lord use our humble efforts to unfold the wonders of His grace in written form, to exalt the name of Jesus, and at the same time edify all those who undertake the study of His Word.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig'. The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'K' and a long, sweeping underline.

Kevin Redig

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1982 edition).

Romans 12:1-2— Applied Spirituality

In our study of the Book of Romans, we have dealt at length with the subjects of justification and sanctification. We have also delved just deep enough into our future glorification to be greatly encouraged! What could possibly be left to cover? This booklet will tell you, because it is something essential!

It is something we dare not miss simply because it is the practical outworking of all that we have covered. We have not become the people God has called us to be, as His ambassadors to a lost and desperately needy world, unless the final truth in sequence is found in our fellowship. This final truth is stated in Romans 12:1-2 and developed in Romans Chapters 12-14. This truth is essential for every fellowship that seeks to glorify God and make inroads against the spiritual darkness of this lost world.

The Key Verses in Context

I hope I have whet your appetite for this final area of truth. Let's begin by focusing upon the first two verses of Romans Chapter 12.

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. 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.

Romans 12:1-2

Before we begin a careful analysis of these two verses, I must grab your attention in order to avoid a crucial mistake. These two verses are so well known, and so often

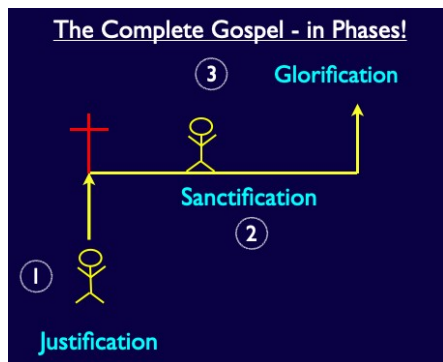
quoted, that if we are not extremely careful we are going to divorce them from their context. That would be a crucial mistake.

We dare not attempt to interpret these two verses until we have the flow of the Book of Romans firmly in mind:

- Justification—by faith in Christ (Romans 3-5).
- Sanctification—by means of our identification with the death and resurrection of Christ.
- Implementation—learning to live by the *Law of the Spirit of Life* (Romans 6-8).
- Demonstration—the crucial point of what New Testament spirituality looks like when it is put into practice. (Romans 12:1-2) As we will discover, that means being *Living Sacrifices, Under Orders to God!*

This means that no matter how doctrinally savvy we might become with respect to the truths of justification, sanctification, and glorification, if we are not living in light of Romans 12:1-2, we are not in compliance with New Testament spirituality. This simple principle, that comes from carefully studying God's progressive development of Truth in the Book of Romans, is really going to challenge us as a church fellowship. Application of truth is almost always the most challenging part.

Further, Romans 12:1-2 is a great truth of practical spirituality that acts as an umbrella to cover Romans Chapters 12-14. There is tremendously concentrated doctrine in Romans 3-8, and now we are on the cusp of a section of equally important practical application!



Building Our Understanding

We are ready to begin building a thorough understanding of these two verses.

Paul is pleading.

I beseech you therefore, brethren ... Romans 12:1

The word *therefore* is a conjunction that makes clear what follows depends on what has come before. What is coming is application from the previous content, in particular the spirituality of Romans Chapters 3-8.

The word translated *beseech* has a range of meanings including to exhort someone to action. That is exactly what Paul is doing: He is pleading for a certain kind of response on the part of his audience. Take note that this is the first time he has done such a thing in the Book of Romans. In short, applied spirituality is something we are going to have to choose to do in response to all that God has provided!

By the Mercies of God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God ... Romans 12:1

Paul is pleading with us based upon the *mercies of God*. At this point, I need to correct what is likely a deficiency in our thinking. You hear me speak regularly of the *grace of God*, but how often do I refer to His *mercy*? God's grace is His abundant answer to our ever-changing need, but what is His mercy? Let me suggest that you understand His mercy as both His lovingkindness to us and His restraint in not giving us what we deserve!

Then, let me suggest a wonderful aspect of God's interaction with us that we simply don't want to miss.

God's grace and mercy work together. If we have received one, we have received them both!

A simple proof of this can be found in Ephesians 2:4-5:

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:4-5

Our salvation involves both the mercy of God and His grace. In His *mercy* He hasn't responded to our *dead in trespasses and sin* condition. (Ephesians 2:1-3) In *grace*, He has provided what we could never earn or deserve—a way of salvation!

In order to consider this concept more deeply, consider a further illustration of God's grace and mercy working in concert. Mark Chapter 5 describes a demon-possessed man, whom no chain could bind, living naked among the tombs in the region of the Gadarenes. Jesus casts out his demons, and, I believe, brings him into relationship with Himself.

Consider now the following:

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with Him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. Mark 5:18-20

The redeemed man begs to follow Jesus. However, Jesus gives him a mission to his family to tell them how much the Lord had "*done for him*" (that would be grace) and how the Lord "*had mercy on him*". In the loving-kindness of God, this demon-possessed individual did not receive what he deserved. Instead through the grace of God he was redeemed from the dominion of darkness and brought into the Kingdom of the Son!

That's both grace and mercy! What's more, the man took the message of God's grace and mercy to heart—taking it not just to his own family, but also to the people of the ten cities, for that's what Decapolis means. Truly, this man was transformed by mercy and grace.

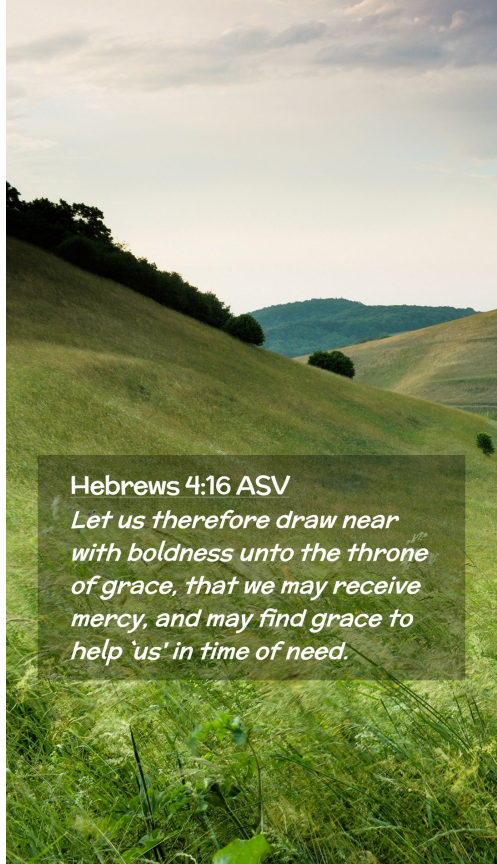
Paul seeks a response.

Let me suggest that, as we ponder God's mercy and grace to us, the fact that He has not given us what our failures deserve but in grace has blessed us out of all proportion in the heavenly realms, should cause us to respond similarly! We are going to have a chance to do so shortly as we continue with our text.

**I beseech you
therefore, brethren,
by the mercies of
God, that you
present ...**

Romans 12:1

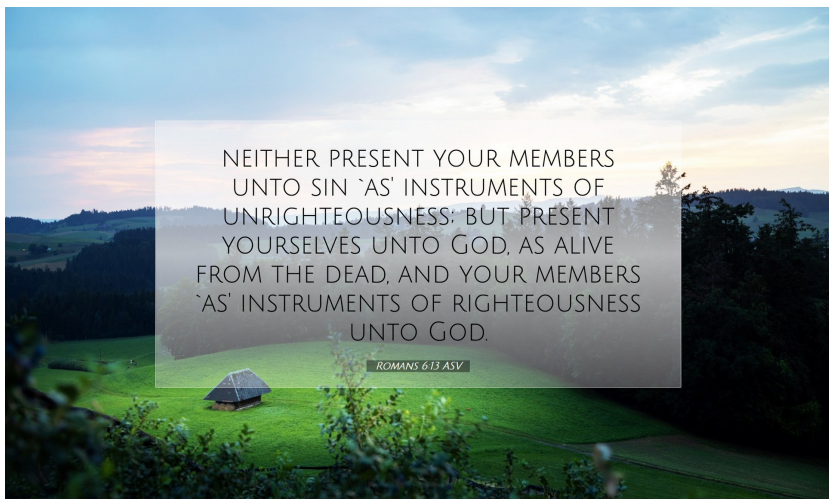
The meaning of the word translated *present* simply cannot be adequately communicated in English with just one word. Of the possible range of meanings, I believe the most suitable to the context is the idea of *putting oneself at another's disposal*, or to *put oneself under orders to another*. As we will see, this is a call to put ourselves under orders to our great God—



put ourselves at His disposal! You may not remember, but we are already very familiar with this word from our study of Romans Chapter 6:

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God ... Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? Romans 6:13,16

The same word from Romans 12:1 is used three times in the passage above. I hope you can see how looking at the fuller meaning of this word adds to our understanding. For, in Romans 6, we are admonished not to put ourselves under orders to sin, but rather to put ourselves under orders to God as those alive from the dead—in Christ! What's more, this includes every single thing we do, right down to the very *members* of our body: hands, mouth, mind, and so on. For every moment of every day, we either put ourselves at the disposal of our sin nature or of our heavenly Father!



What do you mean—a living Sacrifice?

In the same way that Paul wanted us under orders to God in Romans 6, right down to the very members of our body, he again refers to the body in Romans 12.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice ...

Romans 12:1

That's because there have always been those who erroneously try to distinguish between the spiritual and physical aspects of man. This allows them to ignore the debauchery of the body while maintaining a claim to being spiritual. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our spirit, soul, and body are all to be kept blameless until the day of Christ! (I Thessalonians 5:23)

Now, for the biggest shocker in Verse 1. It is not the idea of calling for a sacrifice—for Jews and Romans alike were very familiar with sacrifices. What makes it such an attention-grabber is the idea of a *living sacrifice*! There is nothing like this to be found in the religious practices of Paul's day—or ours! This requires some further consideration:

- Every day, for centuries, Israel offered a burnt offering, twice a day, morning and late afternoon. But the context of these sacrifices was always death!
- The call upon the spiritual Christian is unique! God wants the life of the saved child of God at His disposal—under orders to Him!
- The body is mentioned, not to exclude the soul or spirit, but in recognition of the truth that if we are going to act—the body is almost certainly involved. Think about it! Nearly every area of ministry you can think of involves the body: preaching, witnessing, service, music, and even prayer!

- This is the great and crucial transition from the tremendous doctrinal wealth of Romans 3-8 to the application that God desires. Take a peek at the verses to come, and you will see that it matters the way in which we put into practice the spirituality that God provides. It matters deeply.

So allow me to formally state what I mentioned earlier as a point of application:

Based upon the text of Romans 12:1-2, I think it is accurate to claim that God does not care how doctrinally savvy we might become, because if we are not in obedience to Romans 12:1-2 we are not yet living in the truth of New Testament spirituality.

Not only a *living sacrifice*.

If a living sacrifice were not enough, there is more:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God ... Romans 12:1

What kind of living sacrifice does God want? Could it be a sacrifice as we decide to define it? How about being a sacrifice when we find it to be convenient to our schedules? Neither one of these is consistent with what the text defines as the right kind of sacrifice. This wonderful and powerful verse makes that clear!

First, God desires a sacrifice that is going to be consistent with His nature! That means a sacrifice that is holy—set apart unto Him in terms of purity, character, and purpose. Second, there is no way around this—the only kind of living sacrifice that matters is one that is going to be pleasing to God. For He alone is the arbiter of the sacrifice's acceptability.

Let me suggest that this is something that we are going to have to take up with Him on a regular basis! Do not

doubt the reality of this issue. There are going to be too many believers who experience their life's work going up in smoke as wood, hay, and stubble burned in the flames! Why might that be the case? It is because the works that they claimed to be done for God were not acceptable to Him! And, why might that be? For starters, nothing from the source of self, what the Bible calls *the flesh*, can please God. (Romans 8:8)

One final piece.

The final phrase in Romans 12:1 adds one more key piece:

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.

Romans 12:1

Can you recall a verse so packed with information? Even these last two words are very significant.

- The word translated *reasonable* means that which is rational or agreeable to reason.
- The word translated *service*, however, is quite a challenge. It does indeed mean service, but it typically applies to the kinds of service done as part of worship. For example, it would be used for the kinds of things that a priest would do at the temple or for any kind of religious practice.



- In our case, this is what a Christian would do because of the mercies and grace of God. I find the following interpretation from Knox to be helpful:

This is the worship due from you as rational creatures.

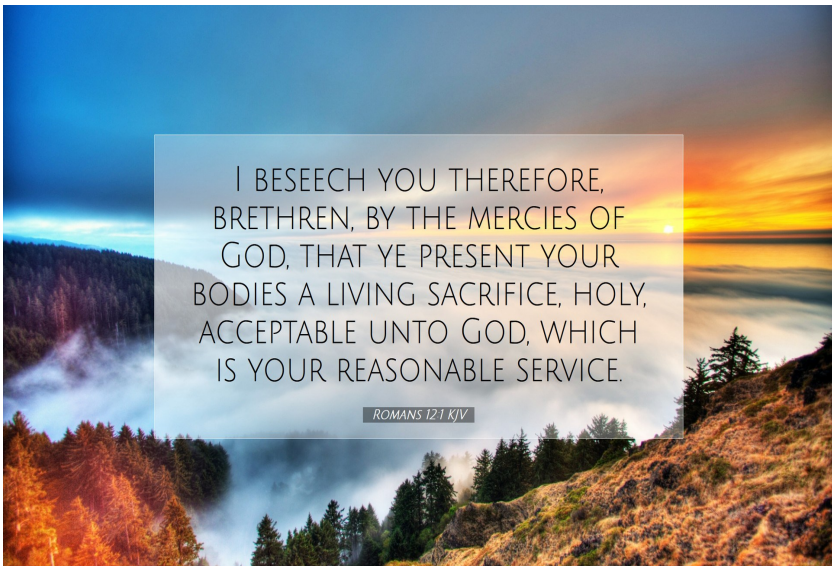
What Paul is saying is that the worship of a *thinking* Christian is to put his or her mind, body, and soul at his Lord's disposal!

A summary of the meaning.

I have found it to be helpful to try to restate Romans 12:1 in such a way that it encapsulates what we have discovered. I do not claim it to be a translation, but rather a summary understanding.

I am pleading with you brothers, by the mercies of God, that you put yourselves under orders to God, as living sacrifices that would be holy as He is holy, and fully acceptable to Him, which is how we rightly worship!

Synopsis of Romans 12:1



Understanding Romans 12:1

Let's consolidate what we have learned.

1. Paul has begun a new line of discussion in an amazingly powerful way. In effect, he is saying:

In light of all that you have learned about your hopelessly lost position, God's provision of justification, and His provision of sanctification via the Spirit-filled life, now it is time for me to plead with you to put it into practice in a God-honoring manner!

2. We must recognize, in light of the culture of the time, the uniqueness of being called to be a *living* sacrifice! There would have been nothing else like it in the day that Romans was written. Truth be told, in our self-absorbed culture, you are not going to find anything like it in our day either.
 - To be a *living* sacrifice is not the kind of thing that can be put on *autopilot*. Rather, it is a choice we must make on a daily basis.
 - The body is prominently mentioned so that we avoid the error of separating the physical from the spiritual. For what we *do in the body* is part of our spirituality!

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you ... Therefore honor God with your body.

I Corinthians 6:19-20

- Have you realized that your tendency and mine is to offer *dead* sacrifices? What might be an example of that? Writing a check to support the church, considering that your good deed for the day, and then going back to the status quo. I am not against you providing financial support for the church you attend, but, if you are honest, you will

have to admit it is a lot easier to write that check than it is to be a living sacrifice!

You see, like every other aspect of the Christian Life, the standards are very high. After all, they are God's standards. As one theologian has quipped:

*Do you know the problem with living sacrifices?
They keep deciding to get off the altar! (Unknown)*

3. How humbling and convicting is the fact that God has brought this issue under the umbrella of worship! There are a lot of things about worship that we enjoy—singing, fellowship, and hearing a good message. But this verse is telling us that we have not entered into the fullness of worship unless there is the placement of ourselves under orders to God in a way that would be acceptable to Him!
4. The *living sacrifice* we are to become is not something that is possible to do on our own terms. You see, it is a call to respond to God on His terms. And, He is calling for us to respond with an attitude of, "*Here is my life Lord—You use it as You will!*" Then we settle in to trust Him with the goal of one day hearing, "Well done my son (or daughter)!"

In order to accomplish this, we are going to need guidance. And, it should come as no surprise that this guidance isn't going to originate with us, but with God. If I had a list for you, I would give it to you right now. Instead, I am going to take you to Verse 2 of this surprising twelfth chapter of Romans.

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.

Romans 12:2

What Is the Good, Acceptable, and Perfect Will of God?

What a good question! What you and I need to realize is that God has just told us. His will is that, as His children, we put ourselves under orders to Him as living sacrifices!

Not the world. Are we going to learn the details of what it means to be God-pleasing living sacrifices from worldly sources? Absolutely not! The first thing we need to know is *be not conformed to this world!* There needs to be no confusion, the world is not the friend of the Christian! Perhaps you think I am overstating this principle. Let's see what the Word of God has to say:

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. ...

I Corinthians 3:19

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?

James 4:4

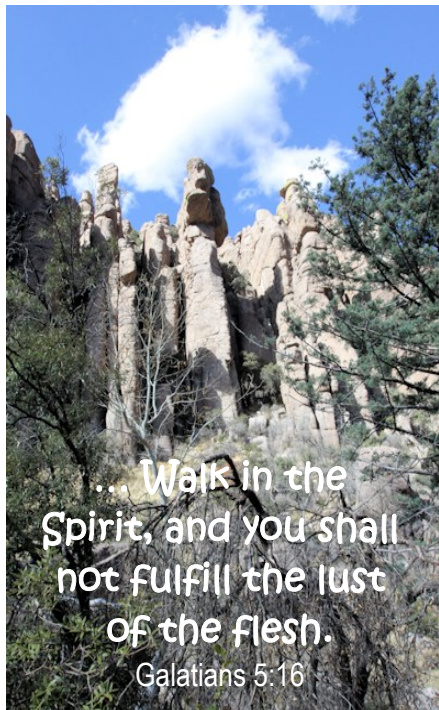
Choose the world and what you get is foolishness and the status of being an enemy of God. Again I say, there is nothing for us in the world—especially when it comes to being spiritually mature Christians living out our faith as an act of worship that, in turn, leads to putting ourselves under orders to our Lord and Savior!



Now, let me ask you if you have the same problem with the following situation as I do? Despite the fact we are not going to please God by allowing the world to transform us, I see the church in America borrowing methods of entertainment from the world, marketing approaches from the world, and taking up causes espoused by our culture. Doesn't it sometimes seem as if you cannot tell where the world stops and the church begins? My brothers and sisters in Christ, that should most certainly not be the case!

By renewing our minds. If not the world, then to what should we turn?

Why, we are to be *transformed by the renewing of our minds!* The Word of God as ministered by the Spirit of God is the one and only thing that has the inherent power to transform us! Perhaps you are thinking, "Where did that come from? I don't see the Word of God mentioned anywhere in Verse 2." Agreed, but we do have transformation and renewing the mind already established as the pattern elsewhere in scripture. Consider the following:



But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

II Corinthians 3:18

As we behold the Lord Jesus, with a steadfast gaze, we will become like Him as the Spirit acts in our lives. But how do we behold the Lord?

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

II Timothy 3:16-17

We behold Him in His Word! For it is the Scriptures that bear witness to Christ. (John 5:39). He is the *Living Word* that stands behind the written Word. So, as we daily renew our minds with the Word of God under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, we will be steadily transformed into the object of our affections—the image and likeness of our Savior. Of course, He was the perfect prototype of a *living sacrifice*—an example we are called to follow!

Putting ourselves under orders. As a final item in Verse 2, we are told to:

... prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God ...

As I have already mentioned, the will of God in context is that we put our lives under orders to Him—that's what qualifies it to be a *living sacrifice*. Follow carefully, we are not proving what God's will is; rather, our lives are *proof-testing* or putting on display His will. How do I know that? Because the Greek word translated *prove* means to prove the worth of something by testing it.

I am sure you have wandered through a retail display where they *prove* the quality of their kitchen knives to you by showing you how easily they slice through vegetables, or the quality of a blender by showing you what a smooth and creamy fruit smoothie it makes. They are trying to *prove* the quality of their product.

God wants us to *prove* our spirituality each and every day. We do that by rejecting the things of this world and being transformed by the Word of God into the kind of *living sacrifice* our God desires—by putting ourselves under orders to Him. Remember, God is the arbiter of what is successful while the world is meant to be the audience for what Spirit-filled believers look like.

Where Do We Start?

There you have it! Two of the most powerful and challenging verses of Scripture in all the Bible. Let me suggest something I think we could do at the end of most every day. We could sit down, devote a few minutes to the Lord in prayer, and ask:

Father, examine my life—proof-test it! Today, was it lived as sacrifice to You such that You are pleased? Did I follow the example of my Savior in putting my life under orders to You in preference to self? Did my understanding of the Word lead to application that was in keeping with Your will?

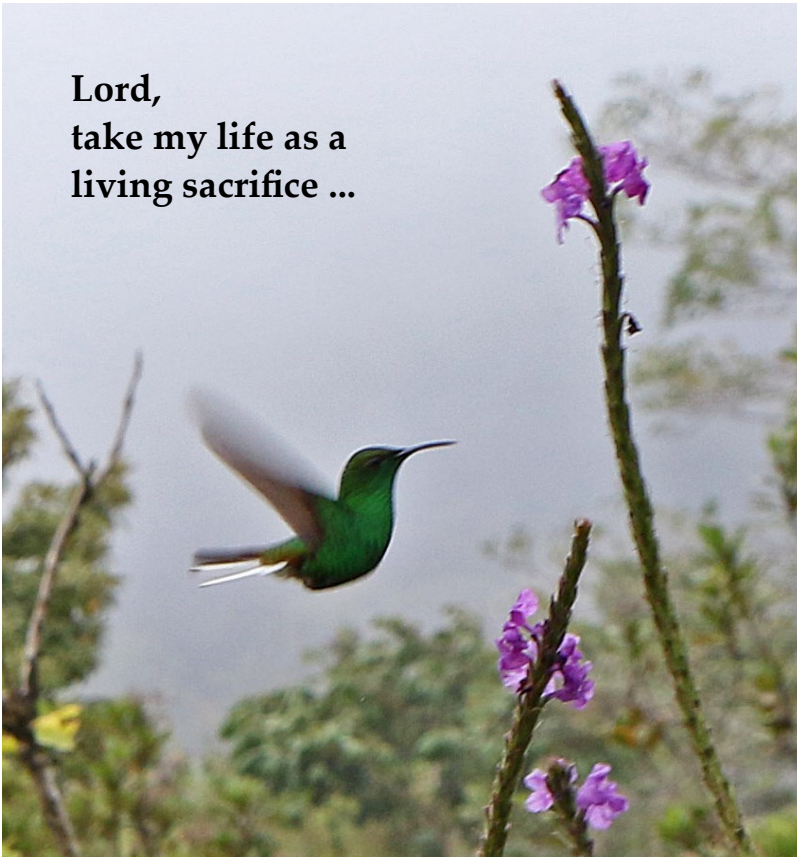
Then just pause and allow the Lord to answer. What a blessing it would be, even if the days are few and far between, to hear, “*Well done My son! Well done My daughter!*”

Can you imagine what it would be like if 5% of a fellowship put themselves under orders to God and lived a quality of life that was sacrificial in nature? How about 10%? How about if the entire fellowship sought to respond? Why, we would impact our community for Christ, our extended families, and even those on the street on which we live! How gloriously pleasing to our heavenly Father that would be! Although, initially, many find the idea of being a *living sacrifice* unappealing, at

this point, you are beginning to understand the compelling nature of God's call. I hope it is beginning to be compelling for you.

For it is far better to be a living sacrifice in the family of God, with an eternal home in heaven and living under the mercies of God, than to go our own way in this fallen world. By going our own way, we are trying to save our lives while in reality we are losing them and we are living in a spiritual wilderness of our own making. This would be squandering the abundant life that could be ours!

**Lord,
take my life as a
living sacrifice ...**



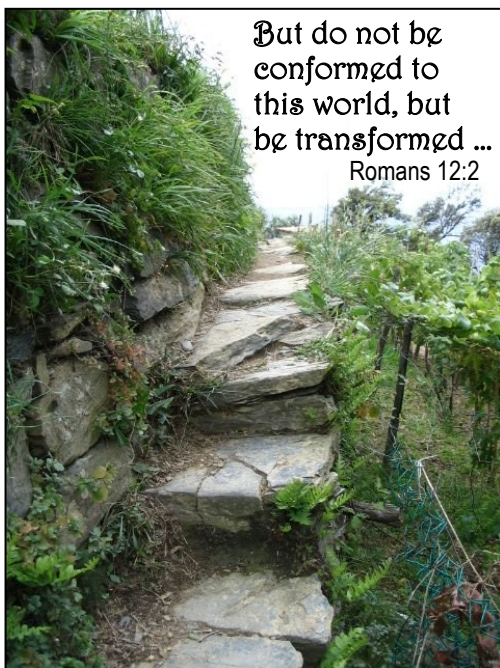
Four Chapters Worth of Illustrations

At this point, after working our way through the text of Romans 12:1-2, I trust it has taken on a new richness for you that you will never forget. Allow me to give you my summary version of both verses:

I am pleading with you brothers, by the mercies of God, that you put yourselves under orders to God, as living sacrifices that would be holy as He is holy, and fully acceptable to Him, which is how we rightly worship! And of this you can be sure—the world will never help you with this. Instead, turn to the Word daily, allow it to re-new your mind and guide your thinking that it might transform you so that you can prove—put on display to the watching world and your heavenly Father—what it

But do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed ...

Romans 12:2



means to be a living sacrifice under orders to Him!

Synopsis of Romans 12:1-2

Now, as the Book of Romans continues, we are not going to move on from Romans 12:1-2. Instead, we are going to find that these two verses act as a defining concept that governs the next four chapters! If we really

grasped the fullness of Romans 12:1-2, we wouldn't need the next four chapters. But these two verses are much more challenging to implement than we realize.

So, the final chapters in Romans will be very helpful in challenging our thinking, developing sensitivity to the many areas of application when it comes to practical worship, and *proving* the will of the Lord in our daily lives. To demonstrate what I am talking about, allow me to briefly introduce four broad areas of practical application, all of which fall under the *umbrella* of what it means to be a living sacrifice at the Lord's disposal:

1. Our view of self and gifting
2. Love—within and without
3. Interaction with secular authority
4. Treatment of the spiritually weak

The rest of this booklet discusses these four topics.

1. Our View of Self and Gifting

Let me introduce our first area of practical application with a question: If we comprehend the spirituality of Romans Chapters 3-8 and are seeking to put it into practice as a living sacrifices, how should we view ourselves? Any of us—from pastor to the newest convert—should we be *proud* or *humble*? Should we be seeking to *serve* or *gain recognition*, seeking *advantage* or to *contribute* at personal cost? I think we would pass the test as long as I ask the questions in this manner, but Romans 12:3 is going to take this even further.

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.

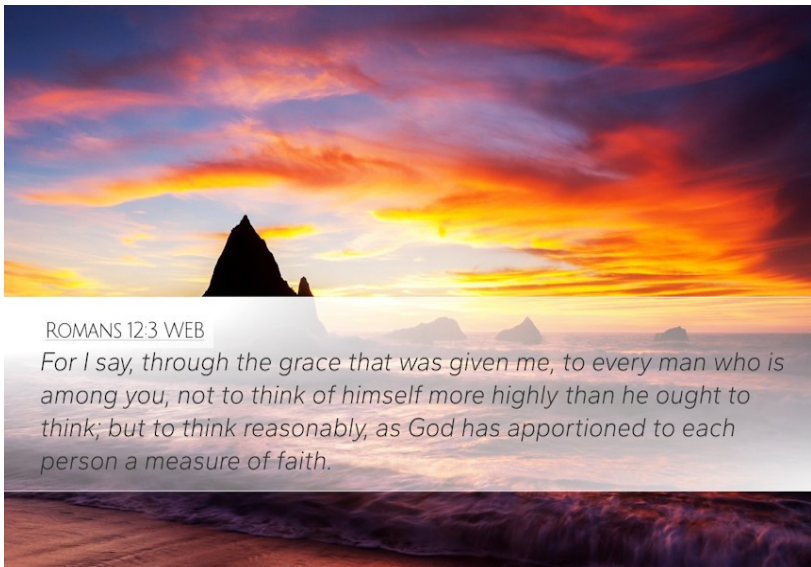
Romans 12:3

Verse 3 provides pretty straight-forward guidance: Don't think too highly of yourself! Let me further reinforce this message with a help from the Greek language. You may not catch it in English, but, in the Greek, the same root word is used four times in the above verse. It is meant to be a play on words for the purpose of emphasis. Here is how Romans 12:3 reads if I translate it giving the same meaning to the root word each time.

For I say, through the (apostolic) grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to be estimating himself more highly than he ought to estimate, but to estimate with a realistic estimate, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Romans 12:3

As I ponder this verse, I cannot help but reach the conclusion that God thoroughly knows us inside and out. Even among Christians, thinking more highly of ourselves than is warranted is exceedingly common!

... the overestimation of one's importance among the saints is a fundamental temptation. Newell



The sticking point. Is it possible to simultaneously have an inflated view of self and be a living sacrifice? Absolutely not! That is why God starts right here—with the need to have a correct view of ourselves! If we don't get this right, there is no *living sacrifice* acceptable to God. Let me pick on pastors for a minute. Because of their study, they tend to know their Bibles better than most, and because of their public gift of teaching they may often receive commendation from others in the exercise of their God-given gifting. So then, here is the *real story* as to how pastors should view themselves from the standpoint of the sense of Romans 12:1-3:

I am a clay pot with a great treasure inside—the same treasure that is inside every other believer. If I ever accomplish anything of value in the Lord's sight, it will be because I have done so under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and as a living sacrifice to Him. End of story!

Here are two passages of Scripture I have found very helpful in maintaining the right perspective.

For this is what the high and lofty One says ... "I live in a high and holy place, but also with Him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Isaiah 57:15

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God ... made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant ...

Philippians 2:3-8

Humble and contrite, following the example of Jesus in taking on the nature of a servant. That's the way in

which the Spirit seeks to manifest the new life within. And, it will only happen if we rightly see ourselves as living sacrifices under orders to God.

Spiritual gifts. Let's continue with a closely related concept. Right along with our view of self is how we view whatever spiritual gifts God has imparted to us, and that's the subject as we continue on into Romans Chapter 12.

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.

Romans 12:4-6

The above verses start with a physical reality very familiar to all of us—our physical bodies have many different parts suited to all kinds of different roles. What we may be less familiar with is the spiritual analog to our physical bodies. The Church is said to be the body of Christ—and He is its head.

And He is the head of the body, the Church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.

Colossians 1:18

Every single believer in Christ is a part of that body.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one Body
...

I Corinthians 12:13

Part of our placement in the body, the church, is the impartation of one or more spiritual gifts.

... God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be.

I Corinthians 12:18

We have different gifts according to the grace given us.

Romans 12:6

When we believe, we become part of His Church, which is wonderfully seen as a body—a living organism where each part has the enablement of the Holy Spirit, is placed just as God desires, and given a spiritual gift. All of these are to be under the headship of Christ.

Two possibilities. Let me suggest two possibilities:

- Option #1: My spiritual gift is to give me status, material gain, elevate me above others, create a class structure, and so on.
- Option #2: No matter what my gift is, it is to be used for the good of others at a sacrifice to myself.

The Scripture is so very clear on this point:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit ... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit ... I Corinthians 12:4,8

By now we should have been able to predict that Option #2 above is the correct one, as it is completely in sync with following after Christ as a living sacrifice under orders to God! But, if that is the case, why do we so often see Option #1 on full display in our churches? By now you should know the answer—a lack of practical spirituality which reflects so negatively upon the Church.



Everyone has a gift. While we are on the subject of gifting, allow me to address one more item that I think is of particular note for our fellowship and its aging saints! I so often hear comments such as:

"I don't know if I have a gift." I'm not as capable as I once was." "There's not much I can contribute now ..."

Here is a quote that I believe to be a very good answer to thoughts like the above:

We must not be faint-hearted because we are consciously poor instruments. The main question is the mastery of Him who uses the instruments ... It would be a poor violin, indeed, out of which Paganini could not bring music; a poor pencil with which Raphael could not create a masterpiece; and the power of the Spirit behind the least gifted one can work to glorious issues. ... Are you discouraged because there is so little strength, no ability you can call your own? Are you dejected because you have no resources? Think, then, what this may mean: one hour, one talent -- and God! Let me put myself wholly at God's service, whatever I may be: greatness is not required, but meekness for the Master's use. Unknown

That pretty much settles it, doesn't it? That's because:

God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

I Corinthians 1:27

We don't have to worry about the political and academic elites of the world *proving* the will of God. They think too highly of themselves to do so! As those under orders to Him and willing to make sacrifices to Him through whom He has chosen to work, it is our job to get over ourselves—our over estimations as well as our under estimations!

2. Love—Within and Without!

This next section of Chapter 12 speaks to the character of the *living sacrifice* both within the fellowship of believers and without. So much of what follows is exactly the kind of thing that we should by now be able to predict as we build an understanding of how the spirituality of Romans 6-8 is put into practice. Romans 12:9 is a powerful place to start.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil.

Cling to what is good.

Romans 12:9

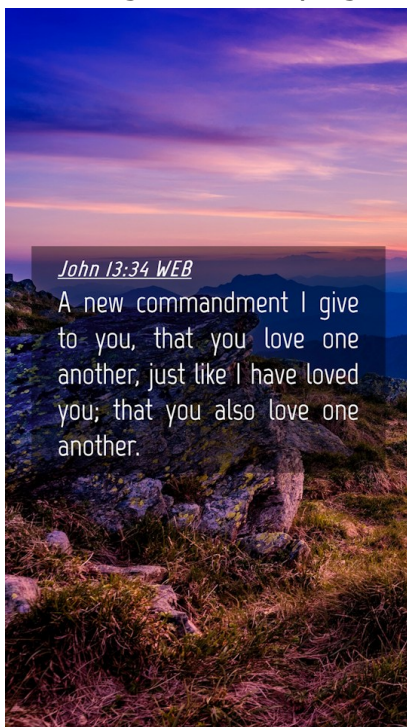
Agape love. The love spoken of throughout the rest of this chapter is the *agape* love of I Corinthians 13. It is patient, kind, without envy or boasting, never keeping score, and so on. This kind of love seeks to maintain a godly mental attitude towards others while sacrificially working for their best interests.

Jesus has *raised the bar* on this kind of love so high!

“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.”

John 13:34-35

Love as He Loved us—as a signifying mark of who



John 13:34 WEB

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just like I have loved you; that you also love one another.

is really following after Him! Furthermore, our love is to be without hypocrisy! This word in the Greek of the New Testament referred to an actor, and the actors of New Testament times wore large masks to convey whether they were happy, angry, or sad. In other words, actors projected one thing externally, while being something else altogether on the inside.

As Christians, we are not to be that way. What people see on the outside should be a manifestation of what we are on the inside. Hopefully, they see the life of Jesus manifest externally, because we are caught up with abiding in Him on the inside! The passage continues with an exhortation to hate what God hates!

You that love the Lord, hate evil. Psalm 97:10

There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

Proverbs 6:16-19

There is so much to hate in our culture right now. Our fallenness and need of salvation are on full display.



Here is the challenge: To maintain the mental attitude of the love of I Corinthians 13, while never accommodating what God hates in our midst. Let me explain what I mean by maintaining a mental attitude of love. It means that:

- We don't react to external stimuli.
- We maintain our poise without getting angry in the face of all kinds of unpleasantness.
- We don't lose the filling of the Spirit in response to the evil in the world around us.
- We do all of this while not allowing even a minuscule amount of worldliness into our walk with the Lord!

What this really amounts to is *having the mind of Christ!*

**Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours
in Christ Jesus ...**

Philippians 2:5

Point of Application. A believer has *the mind of Christ* when—in the midst of the evil of this world and the failings of others, he or she—with eyes fixed on Jesus—is able to maintain vertical fellowship. This means maintaining a focus on priorities and holding sin at arms length while refusing to engage in the sin of others! Only then can we rightly love our brothers and sisters in the fellowship while at the same time love the lost enough to reach out with the Gospel.

Cling to what is good. The word translated *cling* in Romans 9 means to fasten yourself—think of glue or Velcro.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

Philippians 4:8

As a word of advice: Clinging to what is good is harder in our day than it might sound. It is relatively easy to cling to what is good during our morning devotionals. But, as soon as we start letting the world in via the news, internet, or the like, it gets much more difficult.

As we continue, note the call to love within the fellowship:

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves ... Share with God's people who are in need ... Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another ...

Romans 12:10,13, 13:8

Then consider the call regarding those outside in the world around us:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse ... 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.

Roman 12:14, 17-18

There are portions of Romans 12:9-21 where it is hard to tell if the object of application is the saved or the lost. That's okay, because here is the point: Part of what it means to be a *living sacrifice* under orders to the Lord is to manifest His love to those around us—believer and unbeliever. To be sure, the love manifest inside the family is going to be different than that outside. Those in the fellowship are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Those outside are in rebellion against their Creator and share an entirely different destiny than we do! But the love of Christ compels us to look for ways to be used of God to change their eternal destiny, to bring them into the family of God, and to interact with them in such a way that we attract them to Christ rather than drive them further away!

Understanding Romans 12:21. That brings us to the closing verse of this section:

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21

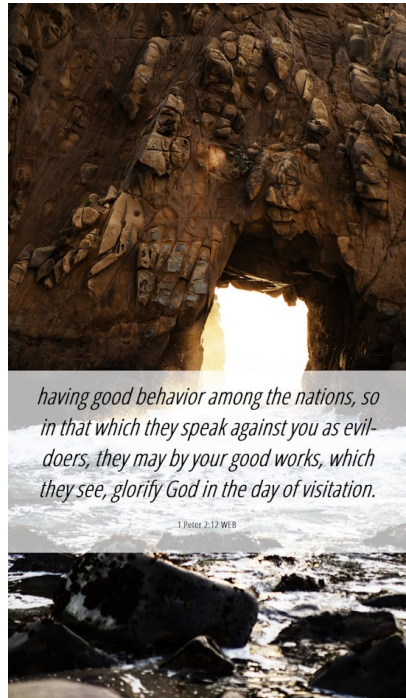
The first question is: How would a believer be overcome by evil? Consider two things:

1. By allowing the evil of this world to find its way into the fellowship. Let me suggest to you this is exactly what is happening in many of the churches in America as the sins of the culture find their way into the pew. When they do, the church loses its witness and the power of the Spirit!
2. By responding to the world in like manner. Should we respond to the ugliness of the world toward spiritual things with our own form of ugliness in return? That is certainly not the instruction we found in Romans 12:14.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Let me demonstrate how Peter sets up our calling in I Peter 2:12:

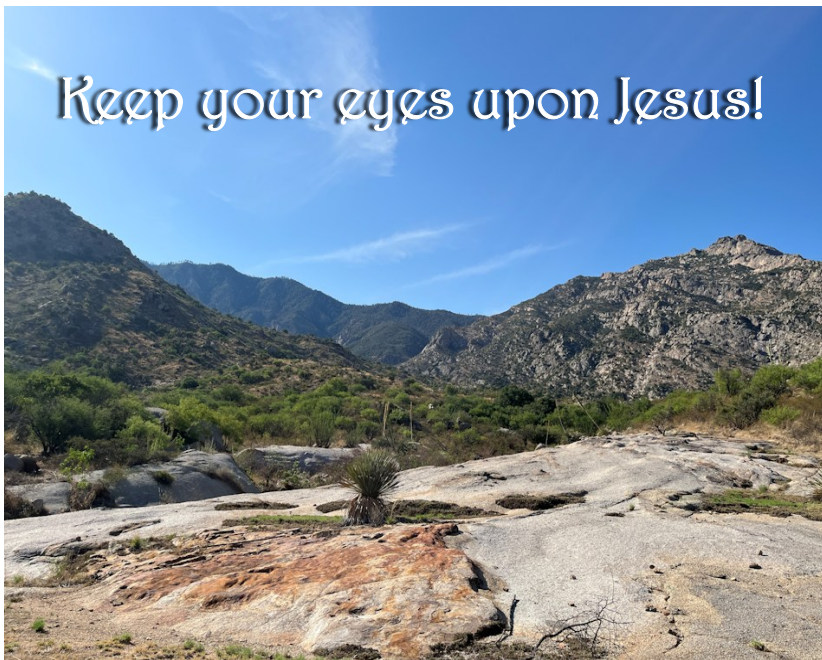
Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.



Naturally, should the lost see our bad deeds in response to theirs, they are not likely to ever be receptive to the Gospel.

The second question is: How do we overcome evil with good? On the personal level, we overcome it one person at a time from among those whom the Lord brings into our *circles of concern*, whether that be a neighbor, those we recreate with, or extended family. And, of course, it is not about us or our persuasive words. We rest in the power of the Gospel of Christ to save and the inherent ability of the Word of God to transform the mind.

An important third question is: How can we go wrong? We can easily go wrong by shifting our focus from the personal to the *world*. I can't tell you how many people tell me how angry and upset they are with what is going



on in our nation. Their concern is to the point they are losing sleep and thinking and talking about almost nothing else. We want this evil to be overcome and we are upset that it is not.

Listen! We are never going to overcome the evil of this world because the world is under Satan's dominion. What we can do is to deploy the Gospel of Christ and the Word of God to overcome the lostness and associated evil thinking of the person living next door or a friend we encounter on the golf course.

The important point is that we, as the saying goes, have to *stay in our lane*. In the context of current events: Hamas is never going to be overcome by good, but an angry Palestinian man can be overcome with the grace of God as shared by a Christian who loves him enough to share the Gospel of Christ.

This is not to simply tolerate evil. When Jesus returns, He will overcome evil with good—the good of His perfect holiness, sovereignty, and omnipotence! And, I suspect we are going to have a front row seat when this occurs!

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:4

Let me close this section by making an observation. You are never, never going to find anything in the world like: family love within the fellowship of believers, the *mind of Christ* kind of love toward the lost, blessing those who persecute, and being *joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer*. I can't think of anything that would be a more compelling witness to the lost, and a blessing to be a part of, than a fellowship of believers putting their spirituality in practice as *living sacrifices* under orders to their God and Savior!

3. A Living Sacrifice's Interaction with Secular Authority

Next we consider how the Christian seeking to comply with Romans 12:1-2 is to interact with secular authority in the midst of which we minister. Our text in Romans 13:1-7 provides some very direct guidance. I have reproduced a part of it below, but I encourage you to carefully read through the entire text several times.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established ... Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment upon themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right ... But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience ... Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Romans 13:1-7

Response to Civil Authority. First and foremost, do not think we have moved on to a different subject. The verse preceding the seven verses of Romans 13:1-7 speaks of overcoming evil with good, and the verse immediately following speaks of having just one outstanding debt—the obligation to love one another! The overall subject remains the same. So what we have in these verses is how a spiritually-mature person is to respond to civil authority.

God has taken the guess work out of this and made it very simple. Whether good or bad, God has allowed the

ones in civil authority to hold their positions, so respond to them as you would respond to God. That's how a *living sacrifice* would handle it!

Now I can hear your response: "But, but, but" Listen, being witnesses for Christ in our fallen world, we have much bigger things that should occupy our thinking than the state of affairs in our civil government. Yet, especially in this day and age, the failings of our government leaders occupies our thinking above almost anything else—and certainly above our focus on reaching the lost!

This isn't new teaching, and Paul isn't saying anything controversial. Jesus has already given us the short version of this exact same teaching:

"... Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Matthew 22:21

This verse came at the end of a fascinating dialogue where the religious and political zealots of the day sought



to trap Jesus by questioning Him on the issue of taxation. Jesus simply refused to engage on the ills or abuses of the day by responding as He did. And, through it all, there is not a single blemish on His witness. Can we say the same? If not, let me suggest we consider changing our approach!

Understanding our responsibility. Here is another way to view our response to civil authority: *Christians should be the absolutely best citizens of whatever country in which they live and represent Christ!* For that matter, I can't imagine Christians doing anything other than voting their conscience, running for office, and so on. Failure in citizenship is a failure in our witness!

Are there any exceptions to this? Of course there are, and we have Biblical examples to help us act wisely. Let me summarize the exception to Romans 13:1-7 as follows:

There is a special case when, as a matter of a conscience aligned with God's Word, we choose to obey God rather than man! This will require not only the guidance of the Word, but the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, when faced with two contradictory expressions of will—one from God's Word and the other from civil authority—we still submit to authority, but to the infinitely higher of the two!

Let me give you several examples from God's Word. First, remember Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. In Daniel Chapter 3, they were faced with the following from the civil authorities of Babylon:

"... This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples ... you must fall down and worship the image of gold that king Nebuchadnezzar has set up."
Daniel 3:4-5

Now these three young men had already shown their compliance to the civil authorities in many ways. But this was too much as it would directly violate God's Law as revealed in the Ten Commandments. Further, idolatry in the nation was one of the chief reasons they were in exile in a foreign land. So, their response:

"... we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold ..."

Daniel 3:18

What did their defiance of civil authority cost them? As you know, they were thrown alive into a fiery furnace! Thankfully, God preserved them through this trial, leaving a powerful testimony for us.

There are many other Biblical examples, but let's add at least one from the New Testament. Peter and John were given the following command by the Jewish religious/political leadership of their day (they were one and the same).



Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:18

If Romans 13 were all we had to go by, then they should have stopped preaching the Gospel. But instead, here was their response:

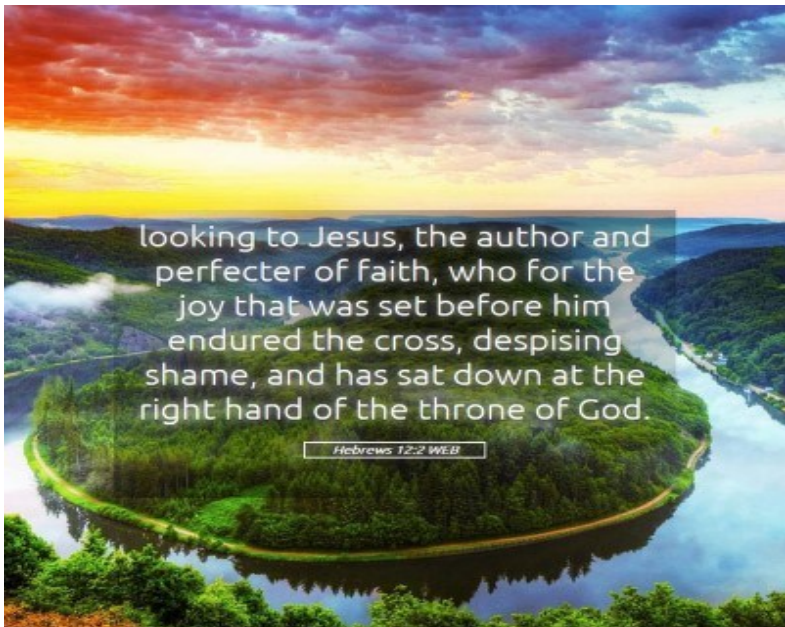
But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God."

Acts 4:19

Get it right. If we find ourselves in a situation where we are considering *obeying God rather than man*, let me give you two things to consider:

1. First, do we really have a call to obey God in some way, or is it a matter of our preferences, political affiliation, or some other worldly reason? We must be very careful to *get it right* when we decide to take a stand on Christian conscience.
2. Second, we must *get it right* because to obey God rather than man can have some challenging outcomes. Hananiah and company were thrown into a fiery furnace, Daniel into the lion's den, Peter arrested, and James put to the sword.

This kind of decision cannot be taken up lightly, and once convicted, should be followed through with eyes on the Lord!



4. Towards the Spiritually Weak

I find Romans Chapters 12-15 to be very convicting. For it makes clear that the Christian's justification and sanctification have a very specific outcome if they are in keeping with our Heavenly Father's intent. The outcome reveals itself in the quality of our worship, when worship is understood to be putting ourselves under orders to God as *living sacrifices*. As living sacrifices, we are to stand out to the world as followers of Jesus Christ by:

- Our love for one another in the fellowship
- Our poise and love toward the unlovely outside the fellowship
- The way in which we navigate living as Christ's ambassadors in a fallen world

The practical issue these closing chapters bring for all of us can be summarized as:

Can the world tell we are followers of Jesus?

Why do I think that is so important? Because it is possible to undertake service and do good works and call them fruit, but ...

If you were to tie half a dozen bunches of grapes on your old umbrella, that would not make a vine. You may tie them on very carefully, but they will not grow. But that is just what multitudes of people are trying to do.

Canon Wilberforce

The applied holiness we are learning about in this final section of Romans is not about things we do, it is about what we are becoming and how the *Spirit of Christ* puts on display the *Life of Christ* to a watching world and the Father's glory!

This requires that believers grow to the point they are dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus. These are believers who are living out their worship by daily putting themselves under orders to God, with humble and contrite hearts, making regular payments on their debt to love others, becoming all things to all men that they might win some to Christ. Wow! This is something to aspire to while, at the same time, recognizing that we are not up to the task. As we believe, we must trust God to do through us what only He can do!

Weak and Strong Believers. We continue with one final challenge, one more way to test our spirituality, and one more pitfall to avoid. Romans 14 introduces us to the *weak* believer and Romans 15 to the *strong* believer:

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. Romans 14:1

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Romans 15:1

This, of course, begs the question: What is a weak believer or a strong believer? Since the weak and strong believers are the focus for the next chapter and a half, we need to understand to what they refer. Let me give you definitions built from a review of Scripture:

The weak believer is a child of God who, by virtue of being newly saved or untaught, is not yet able to look at circumstances from Divine Viewpoint, which is the view of the Scriptures. This can lead to:

- *Bringing worldly practices into the church*
- *Seeking to prohibit anything associated with past worldly practices*
- *Bringing a large number of unbiblical rules and practices into the Christian Life (religious legalism)*

Conversely, the strong believer is a more spiritually mature child of God by virtue of having a reservoir of Truth in the soul. The mature believer can live in the world, but remain apart from it, making application as one who is free in Christ—not to indulge the flesh, but to serve the Lord!

Romans 14:1 is directing the mature believer to accept the immature believer without condemnation for his or her immaturity.

Initial Considerations.

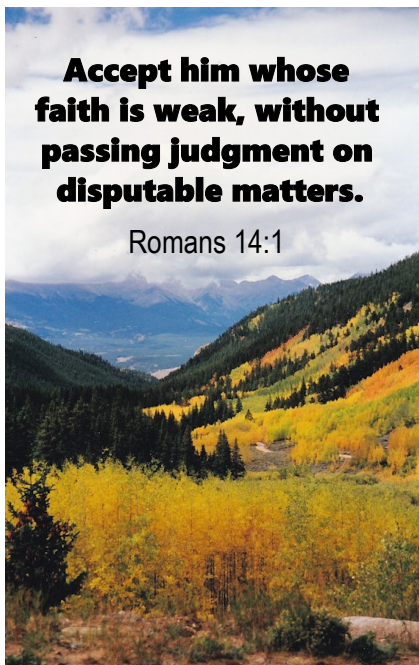
The first thing we should realize is that nearly every church has weak and strong believers because nearly every church has believers in all stages of spiritual growth. Further, weak and strong represent the two extremes.

The point is that differences in spiritual maturity should never be cause for division in the church or a compromised witness to the watching world! The verses to come are not an indictment of one's level of spiritual growth per se. It certainly is a problem if the weak believer chooses not to grow or the strong abuses his or her spiritual advantage, but that is not really what this lengthy section is about. Nor does it provide justification to accommodate error!

Instead, it is simply a call for the more spiritually mature believer to have compassion when dealing with a new, untaught, or confused believer, and to be prepared to

**Accept him whose
faith is weak, without
passing judgment on
disputable matters.**

Romans 14:1

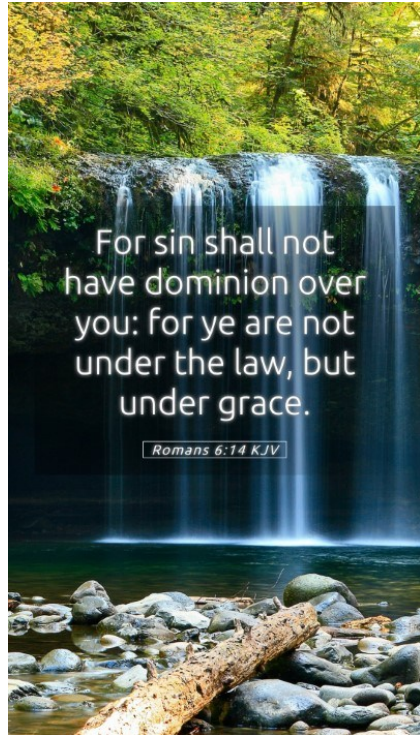


administer thoughtful triage! What I mean is: The mature believer is to come alongside and help the immature believer, dealing with the most critical thing first.

Just to be clear: Who has the burden for making this work? Why naturally, the responsibility falls to the more spiritually mature (strong) believer! In fact, wasn't Jesus the ultimate *strong believer* who spent His entire earthly ministry seeking to reach the lost and dealing with the failings of newly-saved *weak* believers? Of course!

Biblical examples. At this point, it might help to have some examples of what might make for a *weak* believer, and what might lead to potential conflict. Thankfully, we have a number of Biblical examples.

- The *weak* believer who has come out of Judaism might feel obligated to continue to adhere to Jewish dietary practices, Sabbath regulations, and to continue to live under the Law. Problems begin in the church when a weak believer with this background believes everyone else in the church should also live under the Law.
- The *weak* believer who has come out of Gentile pagan idolatry seeks to distance himself from every aspect of his or her former life—and once again, insists you follow his lead.



The above situations are what prompted the following guidance from Paul to the church:

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but One ... But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. I Corinthians 8:4,7

... if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Romans 14:14-15

For the kingdom of heaven is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ... Romans 14:17

In the ancient world, the best place to buy butchered meat was at the pagan temple, because of all of the sacrifices offered there. The new believer coming out of such idolatry, would be loath to eat such meat. Paul, as an example of a mature believer, would have had no such trouble. But if his doing so would cause too much stress for his less mature friend, or cause that friend to think it was okay to go back to pagan practices, then he is quite adamant:

... if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall. I Corinthians 8:13

Application. Now after understanding the Biblical examples, the question that comes to our minds is: "*How does this apply in our day?*" The answer is going to be somewhat dependent on your religious background and the part of the country in which you were raised. But, the short answer is the weak believer is anyone who

associates spirituality with the things we do, rather than a walk of faith by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit! In our day, we have developed all kinds of false spiritualities built around no dancing, no drinking, no card-playing! Others insist that there should be no musical instruments in the church, no mixed bathing, and no slacks for women in church.

You get the idea. The truth is, given time, we will always come up with things by which we can establish our superiority over others because we are *more spiritual*. Romans 14 is teaching us to avoid such false spirituality. Right in the middle of this section in Romans, we find some guidance that, if taken to heart, makes it very easy to navigate this whole *strong-weak* issue.



Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls ... You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat ... each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:4,10,12

Do you see the beauty of the advice? The *weak* have no business tearing down the strong by judging them for their freedom in Christ. Conversely, the *strong* have no business looking down on the less spiritually mature. The reason is that we stand or fall before the Lord rather than the less-than-perfect judgments of others!

The Lord will judge His own! He is our master, and no one should seek to put himself between the Master and His *living sacrifice*! That is a way to bring the Lord's discipline! In short, new Christians need time to grow. As they do, their ability to navigate life in the Devil's world will develop as their walk of faith develops.

In fact, we all need room to develop and mature!

A Caveat. Now, let me be quick to add, this is not a justification to tolerate sin in the fellowship. This is where it becomes important to be part of a fellowship of believers with discerning spiritual leadership. It is the job of the leadership to both protect the fragile new believer from the bullying of others, as well as to draw clear boundary lines as to what will be tolerated in the fellowship and what will not.

The church must always identify and purge evil from its midst!

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Ephesians 5:3

In Closing

As we bring our study in the Book of Romans to a close, let me do so by reaching back to a short portion of text in Chapter 13. I consider this portion of text to be an admonition for the believer to develop what I call the *Christian's situational awareness!*

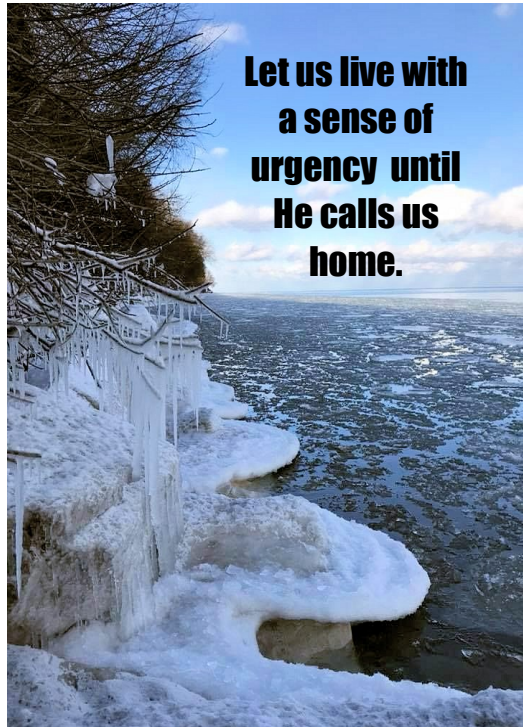
And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed ... So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light ... clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Romans 13:11-14

First, a question.

Are we to idle away the hours that God has given us as believers on this earth awaiting our future glory and, in the meantime, being as comfortable as possible in this world?

Of course, when I ask the question that way, you dare not say *yes* even if that sounds pretty good to you!



The Answer. May we instead, as *trophies of God's grace*, live with a sense of urgency until He calls us home or He gathers us to Himself. This certainly more compatible with being a *living sacrifice* under orders to Him!

Every day, our going home to be with the Lord, or His coming for us, is one day closer. Should we not make the most of each day? There is no future in joining in with the lost and pursuing what they do. We tried that in the past and received a mouth full of sawdust for it.

Our calling is to reckon ourselves dead to the desires of the flesh, alive unto God in Christ Jesus, and to move forward by means of a walk by the Holy Spirit. This is what it means to ... *clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and not even think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh!* Romans 13:14

We have the privilege of being part of the most dramatic rescue operation of all time. Satan has blinded the lost, but God can use us to shine the light of the Gospel into the darkest of recesses. He can do so because we have the *Life of Christ* and the *Spirit of Christ*, and we hold out the one message that has the power to save—the Gospel of Christ! Now is not the time to be found *snoozing*! Instead, let us be a purified people, living self-controlled, upright and godly lives while we wait for the *Blessed Hope*, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior—the Lord Jesus Christ!

May God continue to bless you as you read and re-read the wonderful truths in the Book of Romans, and might these eight booklets in the Romans series be a blessing to you in clarifying the truths of God's Word.

In His grace,

Kevin

A Brief Summary of The *Romans*' Theology

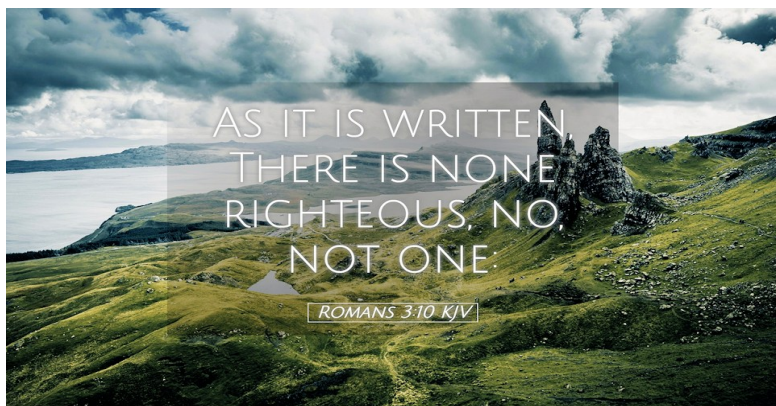
After I finished writing this eighth and final booklet in our Romans series, I felt led to include this brief addendum summarizing the truths found in Romans to remind and encourage!

1. **We are born Lost.** The human race is as lost as it can be from birth onward:

... there is none righteous, no, not one.

Romans 3:10

All are in need of spiritual birth—hopeless, helpless, and hell-bound!



2. **There is one remedy.** There is nothing man can do to change His desperate condition! You cannot create that which is righteous from an unrighteous source. If God had not planned, executed, and revealed His salvation, a salvation centered in the person and work of His Son, none would be saved. If He did not draw, none would come! Our God is the initiator of the salvation that He, in grace, has provided.

3. **God draws us.** And, God most certainly does draw, for He is not willing that any should perish! He draws all men by means of the cross and convicts the world of its sin of rejection by means of His Spirit. His salvation is a salvation available to all men. Whosoever will, like the thief on the cross, can come!

4. **Our requirement—faith.**

When God draws, we come apart from anything but faith. It is faith that at the cross our Savior bore our sins, tasted the penalty of sin (death) for all men, receiving upon Himself the wrath of God for a time, so that we would not have to suffer His wrath for an eternity.

Forgiveness for sins comes only as the result of faith in Christ's substitutionary atonement and resurrection from the dead.

5. **God blesses our faith.** Faith alone in Christ alone leads to the receipt of: the very righteousness of God, His eternal life, a heavenly home, the promise of a new body, the indwelling of His Spirit, and much, much more.



**The Lord is not ...
wanting anyone to
perish, but every-
one to come to
repentance.**

II Peter 3:9

6. **The Spirit enables the Christian life.** Not only is the cross the basis of our justification, it is every bit as much the basis of our sanctification. (Nowhere is this made more clear than in the Book of Romans!) We have no more hope of living a sanctified life in our own strength and by our own works than we did of justifying ourselves. Ours is to learn to separate from the old man and take up the very life of Christ, as enabled by His Spirit.
7. **We have a calling.** We know the work God desires to do in our lives, for our calling is to become a mature Son, conformed to the image and likeness of our Savior! It cannot be otherwise since we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.



Romans 8:17
KJV

And if children,
then heirs; heirs
of God, and joint-
heirs with Christ;
if so be that we
suffer with him,
that we may be
also glorified
together.

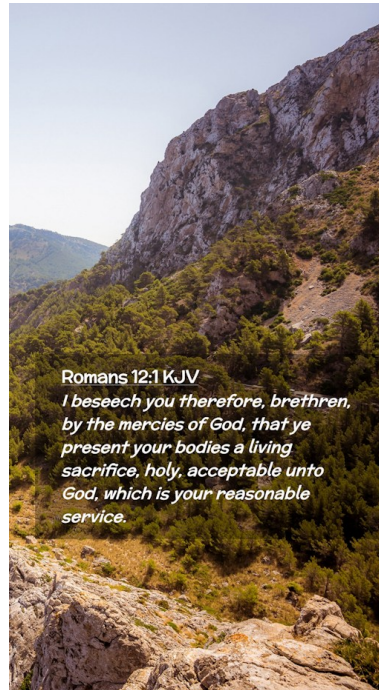
8. **We have assurances.** In our trials and tribulation we dare not forget: the Spirit and Son are interceding for us; the Father and Son are graciously providing all things for us; nothing can separate us from the love of our Savior; and our present sufferings are not remotely close to the eternal weight of glory to come.

9. **God desires living sacrifices.** How is this *fleshed out* in daily living? It is characterized by a people whose thinking is in conformity to the Word of God such that their lives would be under orders to Him, as living sacrifices. This is seen as a most practical expression of worship.

There you have it, as succinctly as I can write it, both what I have been teaching for many years and what we have been learning in our study of the Book of Romans. The Gospel centered in the person and work of Christ includes our justification, sanctification, and glorification. It is a work of God from first to last! Ours is to receive by faith what God has so graciously provided. If sanctification follows justification, it is only because God has accomplished it by means of the *Cross*, the *Life of Christ*, and the *Spirit of Christ*!

Ours is to continue as we started—in dependent trust! Are we experiencing the abundant life? We experience the abundant life only to the extent that we are abiding in Christ, being conformed to His image and likeness, and putting ourselves under orders to God as living sacrifices!

There is nothing as compelling and winsome as the so-great salvation provided in Jesus Christ! And all God's people said, "Amen!"



Romans 12:1 KJV
*I beseech you therefore, brethren,
by the mercies of God, that ye
present your bodies a living
sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto
God, which is your reasonable
service.*



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