



A Study of Romans

Advent 1: Romans Chapter 12 – Romans 13 (1-7)



Overview

Romans Chapter 12 is the beginning of Paul's shift from a theological explanation of Christianity to pastoral advice and recommendations about behavior and the moral consequences of the Christian life. In other words, this is Paul's shift from writing about Christian *belief* to Christian *behavior*, and this exhortation continues through to verse 13 of Chapter 15. It is this Christian behavior on Earth that we call *sanctification*.

The 2 halves of the letter are bound together by the first word Paul writes in the chapter "therefore", which does not only look back to the last point he made, but to the whole of the preceding portion of the letter. Both parts of the letter work in tandem; neither part can be isolated from the other because Christian living is inseparably connected with Christian believing.

Romans Chapter 13 is Paul's continuation of practical instruction on daily Christian living. In the seven first verses of this chapter, the apostle discusses the subject of the duty which Christians owe to civil government; a subject which is extremely important, and at the same time exceedingly difficult. You must either follow your Christian conscience or obey your government. However, Paul based his teachings on belief that the Roman Empire was, in a sense, God-given. At the time of his writing, Nero was a new, fresh emperor in the throne and Paul concluded that the church should trust the new Roman leader, live within its world, and submit to civil authorities and their laws just as they submit to God and his laws by the exercise of love.

Chapter 12: A New Way of Worship and Life in Christ

1. An Offering of Body and Mind (12:1-2)

- 1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*
- 2 *Do not conform 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.*

Key Points:

- In times past dead sacrifices of other bodies were offered, but now our own bodies with the spirit of life must be offered to God.
- Paul warns against conforming to this vain and sinful world, and renewing your mind to God's will.
- God's glory is the utmost goal of everything we do.

Questions:

1. What does it mean to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice”?
2. What does it mean to “test and approve what God's will is”?

2. The Body of Christ (12:3-8)

- 3 *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 faith God has distributed to each of you.*
- 4 *For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,*
- 5 *so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*
- 6 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;*
- 7 *if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;*
- 8 *if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

Key Points:

- Paul cautions against the prideful judgment of ourselves by our talents, wealth, or function
- We are to form another standard of judging of ourselves... by our Christian character.
- Paul teaches us that we are to use each of our gifts which we have been blessed with a view towards service.

Questions:

1. What does Paul mean by saying many Christians “*form one body*”?
2. What is meant by “differing gifts” if Christians are of one body?

3. The Primacy of Love and Peace (12:9-21)

- 9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*
- 10 *Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*
- 11 *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*
- 12 *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*
- 13 *Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*
- 14 *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*
- 15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*
- 16 *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*
- 17 *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.*
- 18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*
- 19 *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.*
- 20 *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.”*
- 21 *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Key Points:

- Paul teaches the ultimate goal of our labors is love and peace.
- Love must be accompanied with sincerity, zeal, and service if it is to be effective.
- Peace with one’s enemies is found through love, thoughtfulness, and letting God’s wrath, not one’s own, to avenge wrongdoings.

Questions:

1. How do you “*honor one another above yourselves*”?
2. How does one express love with zeal and being fervent in spirit?

Chapter 13: Faithful Citizenship and Fulfillment of the Law

1. Submission to Ruling Authorities (13:1-7)

- 1 *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which is from God. The authorities that exist have been appointed by God.*
- 2 *Consequently, whoever resists authority is opposing what God has set in place, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*
- 3 *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Then do what is right, and you will have his approval.*
- 4 *For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not carry the sword in vain. He is God's servant, an agent of retribution to the wrongdoer.*
- 5 *Therefore it is necessary to submit to authority, not only to avoid punishment, but also as a matter of conscience.*
- 6 *This is also why you pay taxes. For the authorities are God's servants, who devote themselves to their work.*
- 7 *Pay everyone what you owe him: taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.*

Key Points:

- Governing authorities can rule the body, but not one's soul.
- If earthly law cannot be kept, heavenly law will not be kept either
- Earthly rulers are God's servants as agents of retribution to the wrongdoers

Questions:

3. How does Paul justify that we must obey civil authority, but at the same time proclaim there is no authority except that of God?
4. Why is it necessary to submit to authority "as a matter of conscience"?
5. How does Paul's writings about paying taxes mimic Jesus with the Pharisees and Herodians in Mark 12:14-17?

----- END OF LESSON -----

NEXT WEEK– read Romans (13:8-14 and 14:1-23)

Covering: Love as Fulfillment of the Law; Putting on Christ; Welcoming the Weak; Loving the Weak