

The Christian Manual: Study 15, Romans 12

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: God has revealed so much about the gospel. He has shown us how all have fallen short of God's glory. He showed us that God had created a way to Him through faith. He revealed the mystery that the Jews were hardened to let the Gentiles into the Kingdom. Now the question is, what should our reaction to these things be?

Christian Life

Section 1: Romans 12:1-2 Our Response: Immolation

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. ²Do 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.

There are some who see chapters 9-11 as a parenthesis. They believe that Paul was talking about salvation in chapters 1-8 and then he took a detour and spoke about the Jews, but now he is back to his main theme. They connect this first word, "Therefore", with chapters 1-8. But, in Paul's mind, the Jews are not a parenthesis. Remember, these are the people for which he would give up his own salvation. We need to remember the context. Paul is writing to the Roman church. The Jews had been kicked out of Rome because of their constant attacks on the Christians. In their absence, the Gentiles in the church took leadership. In time, they shaped the church in their image, made it comfortable. Then the Jews returned to Rome, including the Jewish Christians. Most likely there was some tension and confusion when they came back into the church and found things had changed. Paul is writing into this tension.

Paul's explanation in chapter 11 is that the Jews were hardened by God to secure the salvation of the Gentiles. For all eternity, God had His eye on us and orchestrated all of history, including setting aside His own people, to bring us into His family.

What should our response be to these marvelous things? We should give our bodies to God as we would a living sacrifice. When God has our bodies—our hands, feet, eyes, and ears, we only do things that are holy and that please Him. In the Old Testament, the priests were

anointed with blood painted on their hands, feet, and ears (Exodus 29:20). Now, understand this, our bodies are not ours. We've been bought with a price, therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:20). Our eyes are not ours. So don't use them to satisfy lust, sexual immorality or the compulsive pursuit of possessions. You get the picture.

The image Paul utilizes is one of offering a sacrifice. When a Jew brought a sacrifice, it had to be perfect, pure and without blemish. Paul says we need to also be pure when we offer ourselves to God.

Giving our bodies to God is the sensible thing to do. If God gave His body for us, if He pushed aside His own people to graft us in, if He graciously poured out His Spirit upon us, then it is only reasonable that we should present all we are to Him.

This is the positive response, now for the negative. Do not be conformed to this world. This is horribly hard in our plugged-in media-rich society. We are bombarded with messages from music, TV, videos, and social media. For some, not being conformed might mean pulling the plug. Imagine shutting down all these influences for a month: Spending all your spare time worshipping God, praying, reading the Bible, and fellowshiping with Christian friends. How might this affect your spiritual life? How might it transform your consciousness? How might it shift your reality? One of the big complaints against Christians these days is that we are no different from the world. When we are immersed in the same media, how

could we not be? As God's people we need to recognize that being members of the world will destroy our faith. James 4:4 says:

⁴Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

The choice is clear, we are either friends of the world and enemies of God, or we are enemies of the world and friends of God. We can't have it both ways.

Section 2: Romans 12:3-8 Body Life

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

Paul is speaking of the organizational reality of the church. It is opposite to the way the world thinks. In the world, people try to climb the ladder to the top. The world's organizational chart is a great pyramid—wide at the bottom, where the lower workers are, and narrow at the top, where the more esteemed and powerful reside. This is seen in the difference of pay. In America, those at the top can make three hundred times the average worker. Pyramids are about the haves and the have nots.

In the church, the pyramid is reversed. The greatest among the church is the servant of all. Each member functions as to how the Spirit has gifted them. The church is to be organized according to the gifts present in the body. Each is to serve with all the faith and strength the Spirit gives them. But it is all to be done with humility and graciousness. We can't take any pride in the gifts because they are not from us.

Section 3: Romans 12:9-21 Love like Jesus

⁹Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹²Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in

prayer. ¹³Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹Do 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. ²⁰On 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."

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

This sounds a lot like Jesus. Try this. Read this section again, but insert the name of Jesus and you will see what I mean. "Jesus was sincere, Jesus hated what was evil; he clung to what was good." So, what Paul is saying here is be like Jesus.

We live in a world devoid of acceptable role models. The people held up by our society—musicians, movie stars, and athletes—are often the worst possible role models. Even popular Christians can let us down. We are to have one role model, and one alone—Jesus. We are to pattern our life and attitudes after His. We are to constantly compare our performance to His. We are not to compare ourselves to ourselves, to pat ourselves on the back and say, “I am so much better than I was a year ago. I’m such a good Christian.” Progressive goodness is not Biblical. God calls us to follow the pattern found in this chapter: Die to yourself (present your body as a living sacrifice), be holy and acceptable to God; then humbly serve as a body-part of the church, and live as Jesus in the midst of a world that hates and mistreats you.

This is an authentic Christian life. It is impossible to live this way in the flesh, the power of the old life. To live this way, we need the Holy Spirit living through us. We need to resist the temptation to reduce Christianity to a label pasted on people who follow a set of teachings. Christianity is not just being good or friendly. Christianity is nothing less than Jesus expressing Himself through His body, the church, by the power of the Holy Spirit. When this takes place, the church is a powerful force in the world and a real threat to the principalities and powers that rule here.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Jesus died for our sins. We can now come to God through faith and not by works. God has set aside His own people to make a way for us, the Gentiles, to come to Him. What is our sensible response to these things? **Immolation:** To present ourselves as holy living sacrifices to God. He gave all for us, it is only reasonable that we now give all we are to Him.

And what does giving ourselves completely to God look like. This immolation takes two forms, one in the church and one in the world. When we are in the church, we are to be humble members of the body, serving passionately according to the gifting of the Spirit. We are not to sit back in the church. It is so ridiculous that we have organized the church to be a spectator sport. Millions of Christians come to church Sunday after Sunday and sit passively, doing nothing but listening. It is vital we hear the Word of God and receive teaching. But it is also vital that we function in the church. Every healthy church will have many opportunities for the gifts of the body to be manifest. There will be times where prophecy is needed, or service, or teaching, or leadership. There must be times for body life. Some fulfill this need in small home groups where the members of the body minister to each other. Some fulfill it in men’s and women’s groups. The point is that this body life must be exercised if the church is not to fall into something different than God intended.

To the world, the Christian is to be like Jesus. We are to show His love and patience and forgiveness. We are to overcome evil with Good, even as Jesus did. We do this by the power of His Spirit.



CONNECT: Groups of 3 or 4

Consider the following set of numbers:

$3x + 2$, $6x + 4$, $12x + 8$, $24x + 16$, $48x + 32$

Try to find the pattern.

Once you know the pattern, it is easy to understand the set of numbers and to predict what comes next. You have a grid to see through.

What are role models? They are people we know about, and kind we wish we could be like. To some, they're sports stars; to others, movie stars or musicians. Everyone has people they watch and like to know about—just look at all the magazines. These role models provide their followers with a grid to see through.

Faithful Christians have one role model—Jesus.

Jesus is the cornerstone who was rejected by His own people, but who became the template for the whole structure. He is the pattern we follow. He is the key that makes sense of how we live our lives.

In your group, discuss some of the things you admire about Jesus and the ways you want to become more like Him.

Take the Spiritual Gifts assessment found at:

http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF_PDF_Discover_Your_Spiritual_Gifts.pdf



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 12:1-2

This is where Paul brings the message home. It is where he arrives at his destination. He has explained that all are under sin (Chapters 1-3). He has shown faith as the key (Chapter 4). He has explained the two humanities (Chapter 5). He has shown that we are to walk in holiness (Chapter 6). He has shown that this is often difficult (Chapter 7). He has shown the hope we have in Christ (Chapter 8). And, lastly, he has shown that God set aside His own people to save us (Chapters 9-11). So what is our reasonable response? To present our bodies to God as living sacrifices. We are to reject the influences of the world and its attempt to form us into its image. This means that Christians will be out of step with the world. Our speech, dress, use of time, style, etc. will be different from those who are worldly.

Section 2 Romans 12:3-8

We need to see ourselves as members of the body of Christ. We are no longer simply individuals. We are parts of the body where Jesus chooses to reveal himself. When the church is functioning properly, Jesus inhabits it like he inhabited his physical body when He walked among us. We need to have the right attitude in the body. We are not to seek to exalt ourselves, or to have positions of power or esteem. We are here to serve others, to share our gifts with them, and to utilize the faith God gives us.

Section 3 Romans 12:9-21

Lastly, we are to be like Jesus. Paul spells out what this will look like.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Romans 12:1-2

1. Paul says that it is reasonable for us to present our bodies to Christ as living sacrifices. This means giving Jesus everything—our eyes, ears, hands, everything. This is so much to ask! What makes this reasonable? What will this mean for your life?
2. Paul talks about not being conformed to the world. What do you think he means by this? Do you think it is possible to be a Christian and go to movies? Can we listen to non-Christian music? Can we dress like non-Christians? Can we mimic their speech patterns? What do you think?

Section 2 Romans 12:3-8

1. Read over the list of Spiritual Gifts listed in this chapter and in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. What gifts has Jesus manifested through you? How does this gift fit into the functioning of the Body?

Section 3 Romans 12:9-21

1. Read over this list, inserting the name of Jesus. For instance, Jesus' love was sincere. He hated what was evil and clung to what is good. Paul saw Jesus as the only role model for Christians. What do you think about this? Who are your role models?
2. Read over this list again. Which directives hit you? Why? How will this affect how you respond to situations in your life?

HOW DOES IT APPLY?

We have been saved for a purpose. It is to be the overriding purpose of our lives. We are called to show Jesus in our personal lives and our corporate lives with other believers—in the church.

What an amazing honor! We are to be the vehicles where God is revealed to a fallen world. He has honored us far beyond comprehension.

How can this happen? What is our part to bring this about? We're to do two things, one positive and one negative. We are to present our bodies to God as living sacrifices. This means exactly what it says. We're to give ourselves to God completely. We're to disown our bodies—our eyes, ears, hands, feet, and every other part. We're to give God the deeds to our lives.

Someone once said that the problem with living sacrifices is that they tend to crawl off the altar. This is so true. This is why we need to give our bodies over and over again to God. The flesh will reassert itself. We will gradually reclaim our bodies and follow our desires and lusts. When this happens, we will need to repent and again present our bodies to God.

Negatively, we are not to be conformed to the world. There should be no stench of the world on us. Have you ever been with a smoker? After you leave them, everyone can smell the smoke on your clothes and in your hair. It's the same way with the world. When you embrace the world's culture, when you allow yourself to be influenced by it, you will lessen your ability to hear from God, be filled with His Spirit, and to present Christ to that fallen world.