



tProvided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

New Testament Survey

Lesson 30 – Romans – Giving Our Lives to God

Doctrine and Practice

Many of the apostle Paul's letters are divided into two parts: the first part is doctrine, and the second part is practice. In other words, in the first part Paul presents the doctrinal principles; in the second part, he shows how to put those teachings into practice in our daily lives. This is also the pattern in Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul was writing to a congregation he had not yet visited so he was careful to lay out the doctrinal principles in depth in the first section (Romans 1-11). He follows that with the "practical" section that applies the doctrine to our lives (Romans 12-16).

In the first eleven chapters Paul presents the doctrine of the law, which shows us our sins, and then the Gospel, which gives us the forgiveness of sins in Christ. Next, he presents the Christian doctrine of sanctification, that is, the fight against sin and the old Adam until our dying days. Finally, he deals with the tragedy of the people of Israel and the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles.

Read each of the sections below. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask them.

Chapters 12:1-15:13: How Believers Ought to Conduct Themselves

Chapter 12: Christians Are Living Sacrifices

Now that our sins are forgiven through Christ's sacrifice and God has made us His dear children by giving us faith in Christ, how should we behave? How can we show our appreciation for God's grace in our daily thoughts, words, and actions? Notice very carefully that we do not do good works in order to be saved, but *because* we have already been saved by Jesus Christ. We do good works not to get to heaven, but to thank God for having already given us heaven as a gift in Jesus Christ. Our whole Christian life is to be a life of gratitude to God for His gifts to us.

The best way to show our appreciation to God is to give Him our bodies and all that we have. **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice" (v. 1).**

In the Old Testament the Israelites brought dead animals to God for sacrifices. In the New Testament we are asked to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God – not as sacrifices to take away sin, but as sacrifices of thanksgiving.

Frances Havergal, a woman in England, wrote these words:

“Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, all, for Thee.”

Each one of us has different gifts through which we can serve God. Christ’s Church is compared to a human body; each member of the body has its own function. The ear hears; the eye sees; the nose smells, etc.

“We, being many, are one body in Christ, ... having then gifts differing” (v. 5-6).

Such as: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, showing mercy.

All these gifts are to be used for the benefit of others according to the law of love.

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love” (v. 10).

“Bless those who persecute you” (v. 14).

“Do not avenge yourselves. ... ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (v. 19).

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him” (v. 20).

Chapter 13: Christians Are Good Citizens and Good Neighbors

Paul teaches us that we are to obey worldly governments. It is our Christian duty to obey all those whom God has placed over us in this life, such as the ruling authorities in the country in which we live, as well as all the local authorities and lesser officials. We should never disobey the laws of the land unless the government forbids obedience to one of God’s commands. Our obedience to worldly governments includes the payment of taxes and proper respect for government officials. When Paul wrote these words, the Roman Emperor was Nero, who was one of the most incompetent rulers this world has ever known, yet the Christians were to honor him as a representative of God.

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities” (v. 1).

“He is God’s minister to you for good” (v. 4).

“He is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (v. 4).

“Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due” (v. 7). Jesus taught this also.

As we live in this world, we should be good neighbors to all, always keeping in mind the second table of the law.

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 9).

“Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (v. 10).

“Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (v. 12).

“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (v. 14).

Chapters 14-15:13: Christians Show Consideration for One Another (the strong and the weak)

By weak Christians Paul means those who feel it is wrong to do something that is really not wrong in itself. Some Christians in Rome felt that eating meat was wrong. Others felt it was their moral duty to observe certain religious festivals. The strong Christians knew that these rules were not required for New Testament Christians. Paul says that the weak should not impose their scruples on the strong, and the strong should not do anything to lead the weak to sin against their conscience. If someone does something that is not really wrong, but he thinks it is wrong, he is sinning against his conscience and therefore it is wrong for him to do it.

“Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat” (v. 3). (A word to strong Christians)

“Let not him who does not eat judge him who eats” (v. 3). (A word to weak Christians)

“None of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself” (v. 7).

“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (v. 10).

“There is nothing unclean of itself” (v. 14).

“The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (v. 17).

“Let us pursue the things which make for peace and by which one may edify another” (v. 19).

(Romans 15:1-13)

“Receive one another, just as also Christ received us, to the glory of God” (v. 7).

Chapters 15:14 – 16:27: Conclusion: Paul’s Plans, Greetings, and Last Warnings

In this last part of the letter Paul discusses his future plans and sends greetings to his friends in Rome from himself and his friends in Corinth. He also warns the Christians against those who introduce false teaching and thus cause divisions among Christians.

“Whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you” (v. 15:24).

“Now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints” (v. 15:25). (presenting the offering to the poor).

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila” (v. 16:3) and many others. **“Greet one another with a holy kiss” (v. 16:16).**

“Note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. ... By smooth words and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the simple” (v. 16:17-18).

Note: Every Christian should be careful to participate with and support only those religious groups that teach what God’s Word teaches. If a group teaches *anything* contrary to God’s Word, he should not participate with it or support it.

Questions

1. Why is it so important that Chapter 12 begins with the words **“therefore”** and **“by the mercies of God”**?
2. What is the best thing we can give to God out of appreciation for His gifts?
3. In what way is the human body a picture of Christ’s Church?
4. What is God’s will for every Christian with respect to the government?
5. When would it be God’s will to disobey the government?
6. How can God’s law be summarized in two sentences? In one word?
7. What is the difference between a strong Christian and a weak Christian?
8. What warnings does Paul give to the strong Christian?
9. What warnings does Paul give to the weak Christian?
10. What was Paul planning to do when he wrote this letter?
11. When should a Christian cease to have fellowship with other persons and groups, even if they are called Christians?