

Romans 14 - Our Walk in the Service of the Lord (Part 1)

We have considered two basic issues regarding the Law as we have been working our way through the book of Romans. The first is that the Law is not directly related to salvation. There *is* an alternate purpose for the Law, which is to help us see that we are sinners in *need* for salvation.

This led to the second issue regarding the Law. If the Law is not relevant immediately for salvation, are the people of the Law, the Jews, no longer relevant? Just as the Law has an alternate purpose in salvation, there is a second purpose for the people of the Law. Israel has been blinded in part because they have stumbled at the Law, but they will be used again in the future Tribulation.

Rom 11:9-27 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:

10Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

11I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

...

23And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.

...

25For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

26And so all Israel shall be saved [**in the Tribulation, the Jewish remnant will be delivered from the Antichrist**]: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

We now come to the third part of the book of Romans and the third issue regarding the Law. The Law is not immediately effective for salvation but it leads to salvation. The people of the Law are not used now but will be used later. Now, in this third part, the Law does not make us righteous, but it guides our sanctification. When it comes to true righteousness, we walk by faith.

2Cor 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

We might walk by faith, but our steps are guided by the Law.

Ps 37:31 The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Ps 119:133 Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

False righteousness is based on guiding our steps by the Law as a matter of ritual without our heart being in it. It's like the child who is told to go and apologize. They might utter the words "I'm sorry" and apologize as they were commanded to do but they are not sorry in their heart. Paul does

not draw from the text of the Law, but from the spirit of the Law. This was also one of the problems Jesus had with the Pharisees.

Matt 23:27-29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness.

28Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

29Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

Assuming our heart is in the right place we can consider the question, "How shall we live?" The answer will be consistent with the Law, God's Word. We are told to walk with wisdom in Col 4:5.

Col 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

There is a lot of time wasted on the world that we need to reclaim for the Lord. Chapters 12 to 16 will cover various ways aspects of our Christian walk. In chapter 12, Paul starts with our personal Christian walk as we serve God.

1. Total service to God is reasonable -

Paul starts off the chapter pointing out that totally giving ourselves to God's service is the reasonable thing to do.

Rom 12:1-2 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.

2And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Too many people think they are doing the pastor a favor, or worse, doing God a favor when they attend church, or get involved with Christian work or ministry. Such an attitude makes you susceptible to serving God grudgingly. It suggests that it is something out of the ordinary, requiring something extra from you. What people consider extra should actually be the norm. It prepares you to be offended if you are not properly appreciated for how you had to really put out extra effort. There is a conditioning in our culture that if you are not properly compensated for all you do then you are being taken advantage of, especially if it is not something that is explicitly part of your job description. If followed too minutely, this can lead to doing just barely enough. Needless to say, this accompanies a me-first, me-me-me attitude.

In the interest of giving everyone a chance to serve the Lord and not burning anyone out, we might spread the work around as much as possible. But when we consider how much God has done for us, Who, in his mercies has taken our eternal punishment and paying for us with His blood, God has every right to expect *more* than that. He calls on us to make ourselves a living sacrifice. This is our *reasonable* service. If we do a little more than we are hired to do, an expression of appreciation

is nice. But, after a little while it could be a little weird if we expected to be told thank you for every little thing we do. Working with a Christian attitude should be the norm. Selflessness is the normal Christian attitude. Self-sacrificing is our reasonable service. I am not saying we should not express our appreciation for what people do. Neither is there anything wrong with enjoying people's appreciation. But if we are even totally forgotten by the world, we should be entirely satisfied with the knowledge that our service was to God.

Col 3:23-24 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;
24Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

2. Total service to God is possible -

How this life is possible is because of what we find in vs. 2.

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

It is so interesting watching babies as they learn by imitation. As they get older, they still learn by imitation. Learning by people's positive examples is helpful, but we can also get into trouble from their negative examples. We can be lead to just do things because everyone else is, or even have peer-pressure trying to manipulate you. Copying the world to be able to fit in is what is meant by being conformed to the world. Churches suffer from such chameleon Christianity.

Spiritual maturity is based on being transformed by the renewing of your mind. To be very specific, this means to be born again.

2Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

To think with such a mind is impossible without reckoning with the fact that you are a sinner who needs to not only shed unprofitable behaviors, but also to be miraculously transformed by Christ with a new spirit. It is not different in that you are replaced by a new being, but that it is transformed from being a dead spirit unconnected to God to a spirit with a new vitality and one with Christ. That happens in being born again. It is then that you will begin to see and understand.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

The very word for *see* does not mean to visualize. It refers to understanding as in "Do you see what I mean?"

John 16:13-15 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

15All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

1Cor 2:9-10 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

But God does not expect you to get everything all at once. He calls upon us in Rom 12:2 to *prove* the good and acceptable will of God. To prove means to put to the test. As you grow in the Law and Word of God, you will find that you actually can live for God.

3. Total service to God is normal -

Many people will recognize total devotion to God is spiritually ideal and therefor in the realm of possibility. This doesn't mean you have to live as a hermit monk. When you are not fasting, you live on bread and water that people who are impressed with your devotion bring to you so you can pursue such a lofty goal. It is common to hear someone object because they have so many "fun" things they would have to give up. Usually, all those "fun" things are destroying their lives bit by bit. You can't really enjoy all the wonderful things of life like art and science if your brain is not fully operating...even if you think it is. Relationships that accommodate cheating are not really relationships. Piling up material wealth is quickly unfulfilling.

Fortunately, neither being a monk in a cave or carrying around a 50 lb Bible and dragging a 10 ft cross behind you as you shout "I love Jesus" is not anything that God would expect. The totally devoted life is able to be lived in our normal everyday walk. In the Great Commission Jesus explains how He has authority over our total life, but notice the phrase "Go ye."

Matt 28:18-19 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Go ye" is understood in the verb tense as, "As you go." On your way to whatever you are doing, the objective will be to bring the Gospel. Being a missions minded church is certainly covered here, but so is your trip to the grocery store or going to work each day.

Rom 12:3-8 cover our gifts for serving God and explains some of the ways that God will fit you to His work. We will cover those verses next week. Vs. 9-21 describe how our service to God is blended in with our everyday lives.

Rom 12:9-21 *Let* love be without dissimulation. **[Our love for others should not be fake, but genuine, patiently spending time with each other]** Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. **[Maintain a hatred for evil, seek out goodness]**

10*Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; **[There should be a tenderness**

when dealing with each other] in honour preferring one another; [Living a selfless life seeking to bless others over our own interests will keep us from being focused inward on self and self-interest. Ask, "How can I be a blessing?"]

11Not slothful in business; **[Not shirking our responsibilities or avoiding having responsibilities is a manifestation of selfless love]** fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; **[Not only not avoiding responsibilities, but really putting ourselves into our work demonstrates our care for others. Grudgingly serving is a demonstration of self-centeredness]**

12Rejoicing in hope; **[One of the ways that we show a lack of faith is by being glad that something failed. Perhaps if we don't think that something is possible in the Lord causes us to hold back.]** patient in tribulation; **[Very often our true lack of faith shows up when we quit church or each other when tribulation arises.]** continuing instant in prayer; **[normal Christianity is keeping in touch with God looking for His will and His blessing]**

13Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. **[Normal Christianity involves accomodating people in your life and spending time with them.]**

14Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. **[We need to seek ways to help someone along to know God, not getting even with them.]**

15Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. **[This is part of Christian service requires that we show genuine interest in someone and concern for their concerns.]**

16Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. **[Don't be high and mighty. Work with people even if you think they are "less than."]**

17Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. **[Don't hold back just because someone has offended you. Make an *honest* effort with them.]**

18If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. **[It is interesting that there is a candid recognition that living with others does have limitations, but living peaceably as much as possible is the default. We should automatically try to live blessing others until it is just not actually possible.]**

19Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. **[Living a selfless life does not mean that others get off free. It just means that we are willing to let God deal with them.]**

20Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. **[Living the Christian life is best lived by generally exercising goodness.]**

All of these things are very easily within the realm of real life possibility. They are also very normal. They are things we generally do, until we feel extra hurt, inconvenienced, or want to force our way to getting ahead. When living a life of blessing others becomes a *consistent* way of living, then we are walking in service to God. Service in general brings meaning, but never so much as service to God.

One of the saddest things that we have seen over the years is how people who have left off serving God point back to the happiest times of their lives when they *were* serving God faithfully. There are also times when people make an effort to follow Godly advice and notice how things are better, only to quickly give up and be miserable again.

Behind the scenes of every backslidden Christian is an unread Bible, an unvisited prayer closet, and a forgetful mind of the goodness of God in their lives.

– Pastor Guy Beaumont

Instead of living according to our lusts, what if we desired God and to belong to Him? What would happen to racism if people actually lived these values? What would happen to turmoil in the home? What would happen to addiction if instead of chasing a high you tried to live, not just practice, these values? There are limited ways that people in social settings stumble into some of these values. But, what if people lived by the Romans 12 values *genuinely* out of respect for God's authority? Remember, to be genuine, you actually have to *be* a Christian. Specifically, you have to have the new nature that comes from being born again. You have to *actually* humble yourself and admit that you are sinful loser before God. You have to admit that, compared to God, you deserve His wrath and that your only hope is the moment you are honest with yourself, shut up, look into the loving face of the Savior and just say thank you, please save me.

For those who are saved, hasn't your spirit been strengthened in the moments when you lived these principles? What would your life be like if you consciously sought to practice them? Each week, take one, write it out on a card, and put it in a place where you can see it all through the day. Look for ways to put it into practice. If nothing comes up, create situations where you can practice it. The Bible guarantees that this walk of service for the Lord will change your life and the way you see the whole world.

Rom 11:9-27, 2Cor 5:7, Ps 37:31, Ps 119:133, Matt 23:27-29, Col 4:5

1. Total service to God is reasonable - Rom 12:1-2, Col 3:23-24
2. Total service to God is possible - Rom 12:2, 2Cor 5:17, John 3:3, John 16:13-15, 1Cor 2:9-10
3. Total service to God is normal - Matt 28:18-19, Rom 12:9-21