

ROMANS

12:1-21

Romans 12:1-21

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 14th January 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Romans 12:1-21

Introduction

The world is telling us to be the 'most authentic version of ourselves' but really, that's just another way of saying live how you want. But the *Bible* says *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

And just a couple of verse later, in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we read:

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him .

That is, the Bible says come as you are, but not *stay* as you are. And as we'll read this morning, we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, and not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. How can that happen? Well, as Paul has explained in the prior chapters, we're no longer slaves to sin, but led by the Holy Spirit. And as the Holy Spirit lives in us, and *works* in us, we should see the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

How does that happen? Paul, writing to the Ephesians about the responsibility of husbands, holds up Christ as their example to follow, saying:

Ephesians 5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with **the washing of water by the word**, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

That is, it is the Word of God that washes us, that purifies us, that sanctifies us. If you think you can live a life that pleases God without reading your Bible, you're wrong. You see, it's not what you do to your Bible, but what your Bible does to you through the power of the Holy Spirit that is important. Both in your daily, personal study and application of it, and in our times of corporate study such as this morning.

Today we are going to study Romans chapter 12. It's one of the shorter chapters in this letter, but one that is so rich in it's content that I have no doubt we could spend an entire year studying it. But, we'll be quicker than that. In fact I'm sure you'll be home in time for a quick cuppa before our evening service today!

In seriousness though, given that this passage deals directly with how we live, there's potentially something to upset everyone here this morning. So let me say up front - I love you all. You're my church family, my friends. But as your pastor, I must speak the Word of God faithfully as the Lord directs this morning - not in my own strength, but in all the strength God gives me.

Thinking on this, I recalled this comment from CS Lewis:

If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity.
CS Lewis

And so, while I hope you're sitting comfortably in the physical sense. I hope that none of us leave this morning entirely comfortable given all that this passage says.

Chapter overview of Romans

Chapter overview of Romans

- **Chapters 1-8:** Christian doctrine
 - Sin (1-3), Salvation (4-5), Sanctification (6-8)
- **Chapters 9-11:** Israel
 - Israel - Past (9), Present (10), Future (11)
- **Chapters 12-16:** Practical Christian living
 - Practical Christianity

As a quick recap of the letter to the Romans so far, Paul spent the first 8 chapters of this letter talking about Christian *doctrine* – that is, what we believe. But that raised questions, and in chapters 9–11 he wrote about *dispensation* – that is, the historical progression of Israel, and how God’s faithfulness to them assures us of His faithfulness to *us*, even when, like Israel, we are fickle.

And now, as we enter these final 5 chapters Paul will write about *duty*. That is, in light of all that God has done for us, how should we act? And we’ll read some of the most practical instruction in the whole Bible. Don’t get me wrong though, this is not about rule keeping. It’s about our response to the gospel. Grace is opposed to earning, but it’s not opposed to effort.

Wayne Taylor, in his short book *Practical Christian living* writes:

Christianity is not a “spectator sport.” It’s being involved with Christ, being active, and giving Him 100 percent. I find this is where many Christians miss out. They love to hear about the riches of Christ, but they don’t experience His riches in their daily lives. They are not presenting themselves each day to God, nor are they submitting their lives to Him. They are missing out on the awesome pleasure that can be found through putting themselves in His hands.

Wayne Taylor

Overview of chapter twelve

Overview of chapter twelve

- **v1-2** — Our whole selves
- **v3-8** — Serving like a Christian
- **v9-21** — Behaving like a Christian

So as we dig into this chapter, we’ll see three key points made by Paul. First, that we should give our whole selves to Christ. Second, we should serve Him. And third, we should behave like a Christian. And Paul will show what serving and behaving like a Christian looks like.

Chapter twelve

So, let’s get into this chapter that Lucy read for us a moment ago.

There are a lot of *therefore*’s in Romans, and as I’ve said before, when we read the word *therefore* we ought to understand what *therefore* is there for. Therefore, let’s recap quickly on what some of the *therefore*’s have been in this letter so far, so that we might understand better what the *therefore* at the beginning of chapter 12 is there for. Still with me? Here’s the important bit...

- In chapter 3, Paul wrote *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* And later, *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*
- In chapter 5 he wrote *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

- In chapter 6; *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*
- In chapter 7; *Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.*
- Before concluding in chapter 8; *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...*
- But he goes on to say; *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

And now, in chapter 12 we read:

Romans 12:1

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.

So Paul asks us urgently and fervently, in light of all he has written so far in this letter, given the abundance of God's mercy toward us, to present our bodies as a living sacrifice.

Paul could have *commanded* us to present our bodies as living sacrifice, but instead he chooses to *ask* us, to beseech or beg us. That is, in the same way he wrote to Philemon saying "*Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you*" — so he appeals to us. The Greek word he uses in both letters — **parakaleo** — implies to call aside; to make an appeal in view of certain facts.

And as we consider what he says, we must keep the facts of God's mercy and grace in sight that we may be motivated by them, rather than working to earn them.

And he says, *present your **bodies** a living sacrifice, acceptable to God.* So, Paul starts with our bodies. And says we are to present or yield them. To relinquish our rights to them. That means that sexual immorality has no place in the life of a Christian. Paul writes to the church in Corinth, one of the most promiscuous cities of the day, and says:

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The Bible makes it abundantly clear in multiple places that we should have no part in any sexual activity outside of a heterosexual monogamous marriage — one man, one woman, joined together for life. They are the boundaries God gives us for our protection and His blessing on us. And here in Romans chapter 12 Paul says our bodies are to be holy - that is, they are to be set apart for His will and His way. We read in 1 Thessalonians 4...

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

So, we are to be set apart from this world unto God. And not just regarding our sexual conduct, but as he writes to the Ephesians; "*do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit...*". So we must not be drunk, but under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, we should not be taking illicit drugs, or being gluttons — that is, we shouldn't be stuffing our faces until we can't move. Neither should we love sleep unreasonably and waste our days. Those things are not appropriate behaviour for a Christian.

Elisabeth Elliot put it well:

We cannot give our hearts to God and keep our bodies for ourselves.

Elisabeth Elliot

Indeed, we are to give our *whole* bodies - we're to give our eyes (choosing carefully what we see, watch and read), we're to give our ears (what we listen to - from the radio to podcasts to music), we're to give our hands (in all that we put them to), we're to give our feet (pleasing God in where we choose to go), and we're to give our tongues (taking great care in all we say, to honour Him).

And so our *bodies* are to be a living sacrifice. First, a *living* sacrifice. That is, this is to be ongoing and active (not "over my dead body"). Second, it is to be a living *sacrifice*. That is, yielding your body to God will cost you something. It will cost you relationships, as you refuse to have sex with your boyfriend or girlfriend outside of marriage. It will cost you friends, as you refuse to get drunk or take drugs with them. It will cost you favour with colleagues, as you refuse to participate in their coarse joking. It will cost you, because you can't have one foot in the world *and* give your body as a living sacrifice. Why does God ask this? Because if he has your body, he has who is inside it.

"But I think it's OK to do this" you might say. Well, it's not about what you think. We read right here, that we are to *present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, **acceptable to God***. It doesn't matter if *you* find it acceptable, or *your friends* find it acceptable, or *Netflix* finds it acceptable. It matters whether God finds it acceptable.

"Oh, but this is all a bit legalistic!" you say. No it's not. For this isn't to earn your salvation, but in response to it. Charles Spurgeon notes:

He has done all this for you, has bled away His precious life, has died in agonies most exquisite upon the cross. What have you done for Him?

Charles Spurgeon

Again, Paul asks us urgently and fervently, in light of all he has written so far in this letter, given the abundance of God's mercy toward us, to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. And he continues...

Romans 12:2

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.

So first our bodies, now our *minds*. The very way we think, our worldview, is to be different to the world around us. As such, we should think carefully about what influences us. What we *read* here, is that rather than follow all the trends, lusts and obsessions of the world, fitting in with the crowd, we're to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. *Not conforming ourselves to our former lusts*, as Peter puts it in his first letter. How? By the Word of God — that is, the Bible, *of which and in which* we read:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

One comment I read recently said *"Don't expect to grow in holiness if you spend little time alone with God and don't take His Word seriously."* That's a point well made.

But as we do spend time in the Word, this transformation — this metamorphosis — will take place, and we'll be as radically different as a butterfly is from the caterpillar from which it came, not merely a *bit* different by going to church on Sunday's.

So then, we should be completely transformed in every single part of our lives. We should be all in for Christ, as He was all in for us. And since we're not doing this to earn our salvation, but in response to it, there is no room for pride, thinking we're somehow better than others whom God has shown the same mercy to as He did to us. We read in verse 3:

Romans 12:3

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.

So, as Paul begins these next 6 verses on the subject of Christian service, he starts by noting the importance of humility. Why? First, because when we are puffed up in pride, we start considering that certain tasks, or callings or types of serving are beneath us — and neglect them. And second, we start seeking status that others may serve us, rather than us serve them. And in doing so we get everything back to front. This is not how it should be in a church.

Now, having a desire to serve in a particular way is not necessarily wrong — indeed God *will* lay on our hearts to serve in various ways — but the desire should be to *serve*, and not *be served*. When writing to Timothy about elders, Paul would later state *"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work."* but just a few verses later, having laid out the qualifications of that particular ministry, he warns against appointing those young in the faith, saying *"not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil."*

Let me put it plainly - unless you're willing to put your hand down the toilet and clean it, you're not ready to stand here and teach. Unless you're willing to put your hands in the gutters and clean them, you're not ready to stand here and lead the band. And there are many more unglamorous or simple things that we should *all* be willing to do that require no skill, but a willing heart. Humility is key to Christian service.

Romans 12:4-5

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

That is, nothing we do in service to the Lord is done in isolation — for as Christians we are all part of the body of Christ, and we need each other. Paul notes in his first letter to the Christians in Corinth *“And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.”* and separately in his letter to the Ephesians he says that every part should do its share.

While we may have different roles, and sometimes one part of the body does more than one thing, and others do one (even simple but important) thing, no part of the body should do *nothing*. To turn up as a consumer, to only take, and not serve in any way is to be a parasite, and ultimately ignorant of Jesus example and His Word. And Paul continues here...

Romans 12:6-8

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

We are each then to use the gift or gifts that Jesus has given us, for the purpose He has given them, to the best of the ability He has given us, with the energy He has given us, in the time He has given us, in the place He has put us.

And Paul gives some examples for us to consider — though not an exhaustive list, for he'll talk about different gifts each time he addresses this topic in other letters he writes in scripture.

And here he first notes the gift of prophecy, which is more than *foretelling* (that is, revealing the future in advance) — for it is also, and I dare say primarily so, *forth-telling* (that is, proclaiming truth). We read in Revelation 19:10 *“Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* And he is saying if you have this gift, this burden to speak about Jesus, who He is, what He has done, to anyone and everyone, then you had better use that gift!

Second, he notes the gift of ministry, which is translated from the word **diakonia** where we get our word deacon from. This is the gift of administration, of practical help such as seen in Acts 6 for the purpose of both undertaking that work so that it gets done, and also allowing those called to pastor & teach the necessary focus on the Word and prayer — and in that we see how one gift helps another, as the next one he mentions is teaching and instructing others in the faith (something that is distinct from the gift of prophecy that may be more sporadic in nature).

Fourth, he notes the gift of exhortation, which is being willing to take someone to the side, encourage them in their walk with the Lord, hold them to account (Biblically so), and spurring them on. This is much needed, and I believe neglected in the church at large today - I'm sure in part because we're too worried about upsetting others, and we're too easily upset. If you have the gift of exhorting, get on and do it! For we read in Hebrews that we should exhort one another daily. Daily!

Fifth, Paul writes that he who gives should do so with liberality. Have you ever considered that God blesses you with your salary precisely so you can give it away?! "Oh, but I have nothing left over at the end of the month, all my money just seems to go into a bag with holes!" you might say. Well, maybe you have nothing left because God is blowing it away. That's exactly the situation the Jews found themselves in back in the Old Testament book of Haggai, which we'd each do well to read.

We also read in 2 Corinthians 9...

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Next, here in Romans 12, Paul notes the gift of leading — and says if God has given you that gift that you should use it diligently, carefully, not making quick judgements and answering matters before you have heard them, as Proverbs 18 warns about.

And then the final gift he notes here is that of showing mercy — that is compassion, visiting the sick or those in the midst of deep trials. Or sending a card, or even a simple text message to encourage someone that you are praying for them. Or picking shopping up for someone. Or giving them a lift to a hospital appointment. Or simply having a cup of tea and saying nothing, but listening to someone pour their heart out, and weeping with them.

If you have any such gifts - use them! But similar to what Paul later wrote to the Corinthians saying *"earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way."* and then go on to his remarkable chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13, so *here* he moves from the topic of Christian service, to Christian behaviour, which *begins* with love. That is, there are some things that require no gifting, no skill, no certificates — but simply a heart that is willing to love the Lord and love others.

We read...

Romans 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

We can't say one thing and then do another. We can't say we want a really close and intimate church family and then do nothing that builds that. There should be nothing in the way we live that contradicts what we say we believe. Indeed, we should never give non-Christians an excuse to reject Christ because of our attitude and example. If you're a Christian, you should love as you have been loved by Jesus. That is sacrificially.

And next, as Paul begins this paragraph on Christian conduct, on behaving as Christian, he says we should abhor what is evil. That is, we should regard evil things with the disgust they deserve - whether that is the evil acts that are reported on the evening news, or the same type of things dressed up as entertainment on Netflix, Prime or YouTube. I fear we are far too desensitised to wickedness in our world today. I fear we are far too comfortable with it on our TV screens.

But, Paul writes, we are to act altogether differently to what is good — that is we are to cling to it, heeding to what we read in Philippians chapter 4...

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

We read on...

Romans 12:10-13

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

As Christian brothers and sisters there should be nothing that comes between us. We should not cause offence, or unnecessarily take umbrage at others — we should love our siblings in the faith as if they were siblings in blood. And the way to start that, we read, is to put others first. That means putting others needs before your own. It means letting others share their needs, difficulties and distresses with you in conversation, even if you don't get to share yours with them. It means helping others practically without them having to ask. And it means bringing others needs before the Lord in prayer, before we bring our own to Him.

We are to be diligent — that is, there is no place for the Christian to say "I can't be bothered". Everything we do, we should do for the glory of God — whether in our homes, our church, our school or our workplace. Indeed, if we cannot serve God in the small things, why should he enlist us to serve Him in the bigger things?

When it comes to the things of the Lord, we should be fervent — we should be boiling over, cooking all the time. We should be on fire for Him, and allowing the Lord to use us — for we are to serve Him. That's not an optional extra for the Christian. As Spurgeon said, the very motto of a Christian should be "*I serve*". "But I don't know what my gifting is!" you say. Well, if when you sing you sound like a drowning cat — then that's probably not your gifting. But seriously, one of the best ways to know your calling or gifting is to just get serving, and the Lord will show you! But whatever you do, serve! There is no specific gift of emptying bins, or making tea & coffee, or picking up empty water bottles after a church service. Simply put, we are to serve the Lord. No excuses. We shouldn't need words of encouragement, or pats on the back. We should just serve.

Paul also urges us here to rejoice in hope and to be patient in tribulation; something we can only do if we know where our hope comes from. And we need to be in the Word for that, including noting what he said previously in this letter that "*the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*"

And then he says we are to continue steadfastly in prayer. The Greek word behind this indicating perseverance, diligence, and giving oneself continually. And I wonder, do we? Let me share my honest thought - we don't pray enough. I can't speak for each of you as individuals, though I know I need to spend more time with the Lord in prayer. But what I'm certain of is that we need to spend more time in prayer as a church family. It's not uncommon for church prayer meetings to be poorly attended in any church, but that's not an excuse — it's an indictment on how casually as Christians we treat this great privilege and responsibility.

Here's how to gauge if you go to enough of our prayer meetings. If it would be a surprise that you're *absent*, then you're coming enough. If it would be a surprise that you *turned up*, then you're not coming enough. There are some of you who are faithful with this. But there are those of you that have never been to a Thursday night prayer meeting, Sunday morning prayer meeting, men's prayer breakfast or any other prayer event. Not once. How can that be? I'm not talking about being at every one of those things. Though there are those who pretty much are. But how can you have never gone to a church prayer meeting? If Thursdays are the issue, we'll move it. Or we'll have 2 prayer meetings. Are evenings the issue? Again, we'll have one during the daytime. But I don't think the time of week or day is the issue.

Next, Paul says that this outpouring of love toward God and toward others — all in response to what God has already done — should result in distributing to the needs of the saints. That is, providing for each others material needs. Are we willing to do that? We're pretty affluent as a church. Sure, I'm not aware of any millionaires, but few if any of us *really* struggle. If you do though, come and see myself or any of the elders, for if you can't afford to put a meal on a table, or heat your home, we'd like to help in whatever way we can. But if you can turn the heating up to 30 degrees and eat like a king, then know that you can and should help others in need. Some of that can be coordinated through a church, and indeed as a church we have helped individuals who have struggled in the past. But this should happen naturally between us also, and Paul is saying we shouldn't even need an organisation for this - it should just happen.

And furthermore, we should be given to hospitality. That is we should chase down opportunities to be hospitable. What does that look like? Well, it can take several forms. We should be welcoming as a church - talking to visitors and newcomers as they come through the door. But it also means talking to those outside our friendship groups after a service. And so take a look around - I want you to count how many people you've never had a conversation with. That number should be zero. If it's any higher, then start after the service today by talking to someone you don't usually talk to. The next challenge... how many people have you invited round to your home? Don't get this confused with entertaining — it doesn't need to be fussy, or grand. It's not to make a good impression of your home. It could just be a simple cuppa in an untidy room.

One of the best examples I've experienced of this was the first time I visited Calvary Chapel Portsmouth. First, I arrived early — as in an hour early because I wasn't quite sure how long the drive would be and I didn't want to be late — and the pastor at the time invited me in, made me a cup of tea so I could sit there rather than in my car. Then, secondly, talking to a dear couple after the service, they invited me back for lunch. Bear in mind that at that time I knew no-one at the church. They didn't know me. What generosity! What hospitality.

There is no end to the challenges in this chapter, for we read in verse 14...

Romans 12:14

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

There is no ambiguity here! Not just put up with, or don't retaliate. But actually bless them! Basically, love others, unless they persecute you, in which case you should love them. And Paul knew exactly what persecution was - he'd been one of those persecutors!

So why would Paul ask this of us? So that by the way we live, others will end up asking "why are you treating me this way?!" and we can then explain it is because of what Christ did for us (even though we didn't deserve it).

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

This means that when you're single, and a friend gets engaged, or married, that you are genuinely thrilled for them. And when you have no children, but desperately want them, and your friends have a baby, you rejoice with them. It means widows celebrate with their married friends as they reach a significant anniversary. It means that when you're out of work, and your friend gets a promotion, you're found congratulating them. It means when a friend passes their exam, and you don't - you're still really pleased for them, even if it appears they put in less effort! It means being pleased for a colleague who is promoted even if you were overlooked for the same role.

And it means we should have a compassionate attitude to others. And sometimes, sitting there weeping with them without questioning God's goodness in the process, is all we need to do. When Siân and I shared about our two miscarriages, it didn't make us happy that many of you had gone through it too - but it was a comfort to know that you were able to understand exactly how we felt, and as you wept with us, it drew us all closer. We are to come alongside others and point them to Jesus in their difficult times. That doesn't mean we glibly quote Romans 8:28 that all things work together for good, however.

Romans 12:16

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Again Paul says we should be humble. Finnis Dake paraphrased this as *"Associate with humble and godly people going through life with as little show and parade as possible."* I like that.

Romans 12:17

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

So first, do not retaliate. Whether at school, work, or home. A principle that should be evident in the life of every Christian. That we would turn the other cheek. And second, we should be honest and truthful in all things. We should not hurt the cause of Christ by being a dishonest Christian.

And then we read...

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

This hits us hard, right? Because Paul has removed any excuse we can make based on the actions of the other person, by saying *as much as depends on **you***. That is, you and I are not responsible for how others act. But rather, regardless of how you feel, you are **always** responsible for how **you** act. As indeed am I. Why is this important? Well, we don't know where it will lead - it could be someone is saved because of our attitude. They still need the gospel shared with them. But rather than being disqualified to share it because of a poor attitude, a peaceable attitude qualifies you and I to share the gospel with them.

Romans 12:19

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

There are certainly things we should be angry about. But we're to be very careful what we do with that, for we are to be angry and sin not. It is not our responsibility to carry out God's justice.

Paul next quotes from Proverbs 25:21-22...

Romans 12:20

Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

We might like the sound of heaping coals of fire on our enemies head, but it's hard to understand how providing for their needs will help achieve our less than noble goal. Well, Jon Courson helpfully explains this verse. He says: *In Paul's day, when a fire went out in a home, it was difficult to reignite it. Therefore, if someone's fire went out, the women would carry live coals in clay jars upon their heads to share with the person who had no fire. Thus, the implication here was not of burning one's enemy, but of warming him in order to ultimately win him to the kingdom.*

And in the final verse of this chapter, Paul writes:

Romans 12:21

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

This isn't passive. You have to be active in this. What does that look like? I suggest we need to head back to the opening verses of this chapter to be reminded that we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, and to not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We won't be able to do this on our own, but only through Christ in us.

Conclusion

So then, let me conclude with simply this. Since Christ gave His all for you, will you not give your all for Him? That, is your reasonable service.

Application questions

Here's a few questions to discuss over tea & coffee in a minute, perhaps with that person you've never really spoken to before.

- How might you each serve God this week?
 - How might you love your church family better?
 - What will it take for you to pray with your Christian brothers and sisters here?
-

For the audio recording of this Bible study, and for additional studies, please see the DCF web site:



Deal Christian Fellowship
Simply teaching the Bible, simply
<https://dcf.church>