

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Lesson 17 – Study Questions

Romans 12:9-13:14

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE

Read Romans 12:9-14

1. With today's lesson, Paul begins a section which describes the qualities of a true Christian. In verses 9 and 10 he says: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor." Why might Paul highlight these specific directives for the Christians in the church of Rome?

NOTE: The prerequisite to fulfillment of the commandment to love is accurately to define what is good and what is evil according to the wisdom of God. This requires a constant vigil of watching over our hearts in order to discern and reject any definition of good and evil that comes from the world and not from God. Paul is thus saying, "Be people of conscience." *Cameron*

2. Paul continues to enumerate the virtues which should be present in the life of a Christian, issuing three more directives in verse 11: "Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord." Paul is acknowledging that Christians have and will encounter challenges, just as he did. Through it all, he discovered a law of God's ways. Read and record 1 Corinthians 15:58.

3a. What three things does Paul tell Christians to do according to verse 12? (Good memory verse)

b. Of these three, to which would you give the highest priority in your life and why?

THINK: Trial, persecution, suffering, routine, the sheer length of the race – these can cause the original purity of purpose, intensity of dedication, and exuberance of new life in Christ to wane. Hope is the answer, supernatural hope that in times of affliction clings to God’s promises and keeps the heart open to him in prayer. It is only through him, with him, and in him that we can endure. *Cameron*

4. In verse 13 Paul describes two ways we are to reach out to others: We are to contribute to the needs of the saints and pursue hospitality to strangers. Hospitality can mean opening your home to another. In what other ways can hospitality be offered?

NOTE: In the New Testament, when Paul calls on the early Christians to show hospitality to strangers, he links hospitality to Christ’s commandment to love, which is the New Law. Paul, perhaps thinking of Abraham, writes, “Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Heb. 13:1–2) *Hospitality is Biblical – And It’s Not Optional, Catholic Answers*

5a. In verse 14 Paul asks us to do something that is very difficult. What is it and why is this such a challenge for most of us?

b. Matthew 5:43-45 is part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. In your own words, how do Jesus’ words relate to verse 14?

6. CONNECTION: In today's verses there are 10 directives from Paul concerning Christian behavior. These could be called "Paul's Code of Christian Conduct." Re-read these verses and choose one of the directives you may have followed this week or recently. Describe the situation. Do you think your actions had an effect on any who were involved or affected an outcome in any way?

Read Proverbs 16:7. Aware that the way you acted in the situation you described above was pleasing to God, begin your prayer.

DAY TWO

Read Romans 12:15-18

7. In today's verses Paul indicates what is necessary for harmony in human relationships. Have you had a recent occasion to do what Paul is talking about in verse 15? Describe the experience.

8a. Paul's first directive in verse 16 is for us to live in harmony with one another. He goes on in verse 16 to give two more directives. What one word could you use to describe what he is warning against in these two commands?

b. Why do you think Paul presented the three directives in verse 16 together?

9. In verse 17 Paul speaks of revenge. Why is revenge such a disruptive force in the Christian community or in any community?

10. Read and record verse 18, which is a general summary of Paul's message regarding how we should live as members of Christ's Body, the Church.

11. Life would be so much more pleasant if we could live in peace with everyone, but many of Paul's directives are counter-cultural to the way we are told we should live in the secular world. Record a familiar modern-day saying, slogan or advertising message that illustrates this "me-first" mindset.

12. CONNECTION: Choose a person you know who you believe lives according to Paul's guidelines for Christian living given in verses 15-18. Cite a specific instance when you witnessed him or her living out one of Paul's directives and describe the effect it had on you and others.

Re-read verse 18 and begin your prayer today asking for God's grace to live your life giving "flesh" to Paul's words.

DAY THREE

Read Romans 12:19-21

13. As today's lesson begins, Paul exhorts the Beloved Roman Christians to "never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God." What reason does Paul give for this?

NOTE: Paul's reference to God's wrath, as we have seen earlier, does not mean God's personal anger at sinners but the doom that befalls them. God's "vengeance" is not a mean-spirited infliction of pain but an exercise of his supreme authority to bring justice. *Perrotta*

14. Verse 20 contains a quotation from Proverbs. Briefly state what are we instructed to do.

15. Read Proverbs 25:21-22. What do these verses say will happen to us if we treat our enemies in this way?

16. While the ending phrase of verse 20 is enigmatic, perhaps 1 Thessalonians 5:15 will help clarify Paul's teaching here, "See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all." Why is this easier said than done?

17. Record the last verse of chapter 12. (Good memory verse)

18. CONNECTION: Today's passage continues the thought Paul expressed in verse 14. He calls us to go beyond our own hurt feelings and desire for revenge, and to embrace love and serve the very people who have been "our enemies." This does not mean we are to ever allow ourselves to be victimized or abused. If you have been able to forgive and love, share how you think that occurred. If you can't see how to do it – pray that God will help you find a way.

Read Hebrews 12:14-15. Aware that even a tiny root of bitterness can poison a whole family, neighborhood, church or community, begin your prayer of hope and forgiveness.

DAY FOUR

Read Romans 13:1-7

NOTE: With today's lesson we begin Chapter 13, in which Paul turns his thought to the relationship between the Christian and civil society. The Church then, as now, was faced with the complex question of its relationship with a state that on the one hand is ordained by God to keep order; and yet on the other hand, sometimes makes claims upon our obedience...For Paul, love and law are not opposites; they are complements. *Hahn & Shea*

19. The verses for today pertain to the respect which is due to civil authority. According to verse 1, God is the source of all authority. As Msgr. Mikesch notes in the Commentary, Paul is working out of the traditional Jewish premise that God causes everything. What are the reasons, found in verses 1-2, Paul uses to support his premise that if you resist authority you resist God?

20a. From verses 3-4 why does Paul encourage his readers to show good conduct?

b. And who should fear rulers?

21. In verse 5 Paul gives two reasons for obeying authority that apply to both verse 5 and verse 6. One is a practical reason; the other is a moral reason. The practical reason is to avoid the consequences. For the moral reason, you may wish to refer to the Commentary.

NOTE: Civil government is not a product of human ingenuity. It is a divine institution with a divine origin. God ordered the world in this way. He intends that human society operate according to this hierarchical arrangement. It is nothing short of remarkable – not to mention a measure of how much Paul means what he says – that he should counsel believers to obey their government officials during the reign of Nero (AD 54-68), the “Caesar” when Romans was being written. Even though Nero had not yet become openly hostile toward Christians he was by all accounts one of the most disturbed and depraved men to ever hold this high office. *Hahn & Mitch*

22. No one likes to pay taxes, but according to verse 6 this is part of a Christian’s duty. Read Matthew 22:15-21. How do Jesus’ words reflect on this verse?

23. Complete Paul’s reminder, in verse 7, of our civil responsibilities. Pay to all what is due them:

Taxes to

Revenue to

Respect to

Honor to

24. CONNECTION: While we are directed to obey the government, there may be times when obeying certain laws would cause us to sin. How then are we to follow Paul’s directives? Paul’s comments are directed specifically to the Roman Christian community of his time with similar application today. We know that God has established commandments for human conduct. If those precepts are ignored, what are some appropriate ways for a Christian to “obey God rather than men?” (Acts 5:29)

Read and record 1 Peter 2:16. Pray that we all live as servants of God, first and foremost.

NOTE: *CCC 2239* states, "It is the *duty of citizens* to contribute along with the civil authorities to the good of society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom. The love and service of *one's country* follow from the duty of gratitude and belong to the order of charity.

DAY FIVE

Read Romans 13:8-10

25. As today's lesson begins, Paul centers his readers' attention on love of neighbor. According to verse 8 what is the only debt which should be owed to another person?

26. According to the end of verse 8 what do you think the law of Moses was supposed to accomplish?

27. Read John 13:34. According to this passage, what is the norm we are to use to determine if we are acting in love toward one another?

28. In verse 9, Paul addresses the following commandments: "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet." How does Paul say these and the other commandments are summed up?

THINK: Msgr. Mikesch in his Commentary makes an extremely important point; that is, we must love ourselves. When we are commanded to “love your neighbor as yourself,” God is emphasizing that point. Spend some time today being grateful to our Creator because, as Psalm 139:14 says, “we are fearfully and wonderfully made.”

29. Record the premise and the conclusion Paul sets out in verse 10. (Good memory verse)

30. CONNECTION: In today’s readings Paul illustrates how love is the fulfillment of the

Commandments. This kind of love is not always easy to put into practice and often requires much prayer. Corrie Ten Boom, in her memoir, The Hiding Place, tells the story of meeting again the SS guard who had been most cruel to her and her sister in a Nazi prison camp during WWII. When she saw him, she felt that she absolutely could never forgive him. Then she prayed and God miraculously put love for him in her heart. Describe an instance when your attitude toward a “neighbor” turned from anger or dislike to love, or at least to a lessening of animosity, as the result of prayer.

Read and record 1 John 4:21. Write a prayer today for the patience and kindness required of us as Christians.

DAY SIX

Read Romans 13:11-14

NOTE: The final appeal of Romans 13 brings ethics and eschatology together. Paul summons believers to wakefulness in the midst of a world that revels in sin. Remember as you read these verses that the early Christians thought the second coming of Jesus was imminent; in fact, would be in their lifetime.

31. In today's verses Paul tries to motivate his readers to live a Christ-like life. What is the motivation he gives in verse 11?

32. In verse 12 we see the images of darkness versus light when Paul says that "the night is far gone; the day is near." He encourages his readers to "lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Read and record Jesus' words in John 8:12 to better understand who/what the armor of light represents.

33. Once again in verse 13 Paul employs the metaphor of "walking as in the day" and avoiding vices. Refer back to Romans 6:4 and note the correlation.

34. Paul tells us in verse 14 to "put on the Lord Jesus." Refer to the Commentary to describe the meaning of this phrase, then read Galatians 3:27. How do you see both of these verses relating to the "armor of light" in verse 12?

35. Paul concludes this section with a warning. What does he tell us “not to do?”

36. CONNECTION: Consider Paul’s exhortation to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Origen of Alexandria, an early Christian scholar, said: “We have said that Christ is at the same time wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, truth, and all the virtues. Assuredly the one who has received these is said to have put on Christ.” Choose one of following examples of human virtues that you feel you could practice for growth in your spiritual journey, and briefly note why you chose it and why it brings you close to our Lord.

Prudence (right judgement)

Justice

Fortitude (courage)

Temperance (self-control)

Read 2 Peter 1:5-7 and record your favorite phrase. Let these thoughts lead you into prayer.

Read pages 95-100 in the Commentary by Rev. Msgr. Gregory R. Mikesch, M.Div., M.A.

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