

Romans: The Good News According to Paul #72
“Godly Living in a Godless World” (Part 2) Romans 12:10-11
 Heather Bible Chapel (June 16, 2019) Pastor Larry Nelson

Introduction:

1. Please open your Bibles again this morning to Romans Chapter 12, where I want to continue the message that I began last Sunday, which I have entitled, *“Godly Living in a Godless World.”*
2. Just about the time when we think that the world’s lack of love and decency can’t get any worse, then we turn on the TV, only to see again that when it comes to godless behavior, there is no bottom to the barrel.
3. And so, at this time in North American history, Christians have a great opportunity to shine brightly for the glory of God, as we seek to bring the light of Christ’s hope, healing, and salvation to a lost and sinful world.
4. Paul began *Romans 12:1-8* with an exhortation to worship, where as Christians, we are called, *“... to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God ...”*, and then he urges us to use our Spiritual Gifts for the glory of God and the good of others in the church.
5. The fulfillment of these God-ordained privileges and obligations, does not happen in a moment, but over a lifetime of faithful relationship and service, to our worthy Master and Savior, who gave His all for us, and who calls us to give our all for Him.
6. And as we study these texts of Scripture, it is vitally important for us to remember that without a personal relationship of love and devotion to God, service for Him will be little more than a hollow and joyless religious duty.
7. However, the reality and vitality of our devotion to God will always be reflected in the way we treat one another in the family of God.
 - a. In other words, when our relationship with God is healthy and growing, then there will be a deep desire to love and minister to another in the church.
 - b. Putting it another way, if we are struggling with unresolved conflicts with those in the church, then it is likely that we are not walking as closely with God as we should be.

TRANS> From your sermon outlines, you will see that last Sunday we studied:

I. The Virtues of Personal Godliness (Romans 12:9)

Romans 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

- A. You will remember that the greatest virtue of the Christian life is *agape* “love”, which by definition focuses on the welfare and needs of others, and that without any expectation of what we may receive in return.
 1. Simply put, love is not primarily an emotion., Love is action, and even the youngest of Christian children need to learn how to live and give it.

1 Peter 1:22 “... fervently love one another from the heart.”

1 John 3:18 “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”

2. So let me say again, although the unbelieving world usually defines love by emotional feelings, the Bible defines agape love by selfless actions.

B. Continuing in this context, Paul goes on to exhort, “Let Love be without hypocrisy ...”, which means that pure agape love is not polluted with self-centeredness, or a “What’s in it for me?” motive of the heart.

TRANS> Last Sunday, we only had time to begin Point #2

II. The Value of God’s Forever Family (Rom. 12:10)

A. And by way of review, we saw that as Christians, we are to:

Romans 12:10a “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love ...”

1. As you will hopefully recall, “*Brotherly love*” is made up of two Greek words <philos> and <adelphos>, which when you put them together you get <philadelphia>
2. And it is also important to remember that, *Agape* love and *brotherly love* are by no means contradictory, but rather they compliment one another.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

9 Now as to the love of the brethren <philadelphia>, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love <agapao> one another;
10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren ... But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,

3. All Christians know intuitively that they should have a strong familial affection and loyalty to one another, because of our common love and devotion for our Savior, Jesus Christ.
4. In fact, this is so important and so basic to the Christian life that the Apostle John used it as an absolute test for the genuineness of a person’s faith.

1 John 2:9-10

9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.
10 The one who loves <agapao> his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

1 John 3:10 “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love <agapao> his brother.”

5. And as I mentioned last week, love for our fellow brethren in Christ is so important that Paul warned all of us as Christians, in *1 Corinthians 11:28-32*, that we should not partake of the Lord’s Supper without first examining ourselves with regard to our present love for God, and for one another.

6. “*Brotherly love*,” is not just something that we do when we are in the mood, or when it is easy.
- a. Paul says that we are to be “*devoted*” to it, which means that we must work at it every day.

Ephesians 4:1-3

- 1 *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,*
- 2 *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,*
- 3 *being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

- b. One of the very interesting things about this passage is that Christians are not exhorted here to make unity.
- c. We are already unified by our common faith in Christ.
- d. Consider again Ephesians 4:3, where Paul commands every Christian to be, “... diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
- e. Again, we do not make unity.
- f. All we can do is to either preserve unity or destroy it.
- g. Preserving the unity that Christ has already created, is often hard work, but this is what it looks like to be “*devoted to one another in brotherly love ...*”

TRANS> Paul continues this theme of “*brotherly love*” in his next phrase of:

Romans 12:10 “... give preference to one another in honor;”

- B. In this phrase, Paul is harkening back a few verses to *Romans 12:3*, where he says “... *I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think ...*”
1. As we studied last week, to “*give preference*” means that we are to put others’ needs and feelings before our own.
2. And to “*honor*” means that we are to give honest appreciation and praise to others when they make Christ-honoring decisions.

TRANS> Next, *Romans 12:11* says: “*not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*;”

- C. In this case, Paul is exhorting the church to not become lazy or complacent in our love and service for our Lord.
1. There is an old saying, “*If something is worth doing, it is worth doing well*.”
2. And never was this more true when it comes to loving God and others.

3. Because we live in cursed bodies, and in a cursed world, it is easy to get lazy, even in the Lord's work.
4. So here is a very important truth:, If you are a Christian, then you are a full-time Christian, and therefore you are in full-time Christian work for the Lord.
5. And therefore, as the devoted slaves of Christ, we need to remember that there is no such thing as "secular work."

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

6. If this verse is true, and it is, then our Heavenly Master expects us to glorify Him by the way that we work.

Ephesians 6:5-8

- 5 *Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;*
- 6 *not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.*
- 7 *With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,*
- 8 *knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.*

7. Whether you are serving the Lord by working in your home with the children, or you labor for pay in the outside world, no one should ever need to be looking over our shoulder to make sure that we are working.
8. As often as I have opportunity, I encourage those who are entering the workforce with the following advise, that was given to me by a godly man in my church almost 50 years ago.
 - a. He said, "*Larry, make it your business to make sure that your employer makes an honest prophet every day, because of your presence on the job!*" **<REPEAT>**
 - b. What a privilege it has been for me to pass Jerry's godly counsel along over these many years!
 - c. And whether you are working for a Christian or unbelieving boss, this rule still applies.

Galatians 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

- d. In *1 Thessalonians 1:3*, Paul told the church at Thessalonica that he never ceased giving thanks because of their "... work of faith and labor of love ..."
- e. Continuing in the faith, and loving the brethren are spoken of here as "work" and "labor."

9. In our *Romans 12:11* text, Paul speaks of being “*fervent in spirit*” which has nothing to do with fanaticism, but instead he is exhorting us all concerning our resolve and persistency, not just good intentions.
- Here’s a question:., *What do you have to do in order to grow weeds in this country?*
 - Absolutely nothing!!, But if you care about having a weed-free yard, then you have to be “*fervent in spirit*”, meaning that you have to keep at it. , You can’t coast, and you have to be persistent at pulling them.
 - And so it is, when it comes to our work for the Lord.
 - Allow me to give you another *Nelsonism*: “*God is not nearly as concerned with your ability, as He is with your availability, and stickability, or as I call it, “stick-to-it-iveness.”*

Galatians 6:9 “*Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”*

- One of the keys to the Christian life is knowing what to do in the will of God, and then doing it with all your heart.
- The secular world defines “success” by our accomplishments, but God measures “success” as fervent faithfulness to His will, regardless of the visible outcomes.
 - I have known missionaries, who have labored in difficult places, where there is little, or no interest in the gospel of Christ.
 - Some of these folks have labored for years, and according to the world’s standards, they don’t have much to show for it.
 - But we all need to remember that God judges success by diligent, fervent, and faithful obedience to His will, nothing more!

Colossians 3:23-24

23 *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,*

24 *knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

9 *Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.*

10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

- Paul is referring back to what he had taught them in *First Corinthians 3:11-15*, where he compared all of our works done as Christians, to “... *gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw.*”

- e. Each Christian will one day “... *appear before the judgment seat of Christ* ...”, which is different than the “*Great White Throne Judgment*”, which is only for unbelievers.
- f. At the “*judgment seat of Christ*”, each Christian will give an accounting of how we served our Lord and Master.
- g. At that time, our works will be thrown into the furnace of God’s judgment, and those which remain, the “*gold, silver, and precious stones*” will be praised and rewarded.
- h. But the “*hay, wood, and straw,*” will be burned up.
- i. So we should all be asking, “*What criteria will God use to determine that which is eternally rewardable, and that which is going to be burned up, having no value at all?*”
- j. Paul says that, “... *the fire itself will test the **quality** of each man's work*”, and as I read scripture, I believe that the **quality** is determined by our motives, namely, “*Why we did what we did?*”
- k. Two Christians might do the exact same good work, which had the outward appearance as being for the glory of God.
 - (1) For one, it was actually done for the glory of God and the good of others.
 - (2) But for the other, the motive was to receive the praise of men.
 - (3) Paul is saying that our motives will be sorted out in God’s furnace, where He determines, one to be eternally rewardable (*gold, silver, and precious stones*), while the other is utterly useless, (*hay, wood, and straw*).
 - (4) Remember, this is called “*The Judgment Seat of Christ.*”
 - (5) And although no one has the right to judge another persons motives for service, we would do well to regularly and honestly examine our own hearts.

1 Corinthians 4:5 “*Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.*”

12. Romans 12 uses three different words to describe the Christian’s service.

- (1) In verse 1, Paul speaks of the Christian’s individual and personal “*service of worship.*”
- (2) In verse 7, he speaks of the spiritual gift of practical “*service*” to fellow Christians.
- (3) And in verse 11, he speaks of “*servicing the Lord*” as seen in the slave/Master relationship.

- (4) However, in each usage, it is imperative for us to remember that if our service is to be of eternal quality and value (“*gold, silver, and precious stones*”), then whatever we do must be foundationed in the joy and devotion of our personal relationship with Christ.
- (5) Does the Bible speak about Christian’s duty to our Lord?, Absolutely!
- (6) But duty without devotion is just hollow, going through the joyless motions of religion, without the reality of the Holy Spirit’s empowering us to obey and honor God.
- (7) And this could happen to any of us.

13. The church at Ephesus was the most well taught and influential church in all of Asia Minor.

- a. Paul not only planted this church, but also he taught there for two years, and he later appointed Timothy to be their pastor.
- b. And yet, listen to Christ’s letter of sober warning to this once great church.

Revelation 2:2-5

- 2 *I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;*
- 3 *and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.*
- 4 *But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*
- 5 *Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent.*

- c. Many Christians misquote this passage saying that the church at Ephesus “Lost their first love.”
- d. But Jesus made it clear that they did not lose it, they left it, and this certainly did not happen over night.
- e. But over time, their white hot love – devotion – and fervency for Christ, had degenerated into a tiresome religious duty.

Conclusion:

- 1. So as we think about Christ’s final words to the church at Ephesus, I believe that it is the responsibility of every Christian to personally and regularly examine the motives behind what we do, so that our Holy Spirit-empowered diligent and fervent service will continue to give glory and honor to God, as we seek to bless others, both inside and outside the church.
- 2. So as I close this message,
- 3. I want to read our text just one more time.

Romans 12:9-11

11 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

4. Let's pray together.