

ADDRESSES ON ROMANS

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

RIGHTEOUSNESS REPRODUCED

Romans 12:1—15:7

I. THE WILL OF GOD FOR THE CHRISTIAN

WE ARE now to consider the sixth and last great division of Paul's Epistle to the Romans; and in our last study we shall look briefly at the apostle's concluding remarks, of a more or less personal nature.

We have seen that the first eight chapters are doctrinal; and that nine, ten, and eleven are dispensational; we shall see today that 12:1-15:7 is the practical portion of the book; while the closing message is personal. Therefore, this last division is as important, in its place, as are the other two main divisions of the epistle. In other words, it is vital that we know what it means to be justified by faith; it is important that we know God's purpose for Israel; and it is also necessary that we put into practical experience God's plan and purpose for our own lives.

To state it in the language of Paul, it is not enough for us to know the gift of God's righteousness in a doctrinal way; it is not enough for us to be familiar with the prophetic Word of God as it outlines Israel's past, present, and future; it is important also that we know and obey **“that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”**

- How else shall we enjoy now our redemption in Christ Jesus?
- How else shall we make Him known in a godless world?
- How else shall we please Him,
- How else shall we accomplish His purpose for us in bearing testimony to the eternal truth, which is the theme of this great epistle?
- How else shall we be able to say, with Paul,

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16, 17).

I trust, my friend, that you will show just as much interest in Romans 12-16 as you have shown in the doctrinal and dispensational portions of the book. And may it be the prayer of every Christian that the righteousness of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, shall be reproduced in his life as he serves “**the living and true God**” and waits “**for his Son from heaven**” (I Thessalonians 1:9, 10).

God has been so good to us! He is holy, and His holiness requires righteousness. He has brought us into the courtroom, as it were, where He found us all guilty, with no righteousness of our own. But instead of banishing us from His presence forever, as we deserved, He revealed His own righteousness in the Person of His Son, gave it to us as a free gift, enabled us to receive it by giving us the faith to believe Him and receive His salvation, which is all of grace.

Moreover, He put His own Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we might realize in our daily experience the mighty power of His gift of righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, because of all these “**mercies of God**”—set forth in chapters one to eight—“**therefore**” He beseeches us, through His servant Paul, to know and obey His will in this present life.

Thus we see that chapter twelve follows immediately after chapter eight—we have already noted that nine, ten, and eleven are parenthetical. Because we have been foreknown, predestinated, called, justified; because we have been eternally linked with Christ, adopted into the family of God; because we have been told the family secrets now and promised glory forever— “**therefore,**” God tells us to put into practical experience His “**good, and acceptable, and perfect, will.**”

My Christian friend, I want us to see that, in these chapters which we are to consider today, God has made known to us His will for every walk of life, for every emergency, for every joy or sorrow. We shall not attempt here an analytical study of every verse. That is not necessary, as the inspired record speaks plainly, simply, and far more powerfully than could any human expositor or teacher. We shall attempt only to outline and summarize the thoughts presented here by the Spirit of God, as He tells us what His will for us is in our relationship:

- (1) To God;
- (2) to the Body of Christ;
- (3) to the world;
- (4) to governments in the world;
- (5) to “**him that is weak in the faith.**”

(1) The Christian's Responsibility to God, 12:1, 2

Keeping in mind all “**the mercies of God,**” as presented in chapters one to eight, let us consider 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. 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.**”

If you are ever to know the will of God, my Christian friend, you must present your body “**a living sacrifice**” unto Him.

“But,” you may ask, “do I have to do that, in order to know God’s will?” Yes; that is His Word.

You know what making a sacrifice means. It is giving up something infinitely precious to you. In Old Testament times Israel made dead sacrifices. As believer-priests, we are to make living sacrifices. Do you recognize the fact that your body is “**the temple of the Holy Spirit**”?

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, saying:

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).

God is not dwelling in temples made of brick and stone and mortar today. The only temple He has in this age is our bodies.

Often people ask me: “Is it right for Christians to smoke cigarettes? Is it right to do this or that?” And my answer is, “Would you smoke a cigarette in your church?” Most people, even the unsaved, would reply, “No; of course not; that is the house of God.” And He tells us that our bodies are His temple. Shall we keep His dwelling place less clean, less free from defilement, than we would the house of worship made of brick and stone? God wants our hearts; and that includes the whole personality; it includes every member of the body. He wants these temples of His Holy Spirit—once for all.

One day I was in the house of a member of my church, talking to the parents of the family. Their little girl was playing on the floor with her doll. It was an old, ragged, soiled doll, but the child loved it. During my visit in the home, however, she walked over to me and said, “Mr. Talbot, I want to give you my dolly.” I took her gift, and went on talking to her parents. When I was about to leave, forgetting that the doll was still in my hand, I started toward the door. At once I felt a tug at my coat. I looked down and saw the little girl standing there with tears streaming down her face. When I asked her what the trouble was, she said, “I want my dolly. I did not mean for you to keep it.”

My friend, do not yield yourself to God in this manner. When you give yourself to Him, make the transaction final. We often sing:

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.

Yet we really do not mean what we say; nor do we live accordingly. This is not yielding our bodies unto God, “**a living sacrifice.**” Let us deal with Him in finality.

In verse 2 Paul tells what is involved in this sacrificial offering. It is not some sentimental thing; it is both practical and real. It has a negative and a positive side. The negative is, “**Be ye not conformed to this world**”; the positive, “**Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.**”

Being “**conformed to this world**” means being untrue to God.

- It means finding satisfaction in things that are displeasing to Him and dishonoring to His name.
- It means failing to give a good testimony before the God-dishonoring, Christ-rejecting, Spirit-resisting world.
- It means missing the peace and joy of a life approved of God.

Shall we be untrue to Him who died for us?

Now the word “**transformed**” means “*transfigured*.” When Christ was transfigured before the three disciples, the Shekinah Glory did not shine on Him; it shone through Him. He is Himself light and glory; and what the disciples saw was just a glimpse of His uncreated glory, shining from within His whole being.

In heaven “**we shall be like him**,” but in this earthly life our bodies have not been redeemed. Yet, even in this life, we do have the power of the risen Christ; for our bodies are “**the temple of the Holy Spirit.**” And He is able to transform the vilest sinner into “**a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use**” (II Timothy 2:21).

Christ wants to control your whole body, my friend. If you let Him, He will not only keep you from being conformed to the world; He will also transform you, so that you will be conformed to His image.

There is a marvelous analogy between the transfiguration of our Lord and the reflected glory that shines from the face of a Christian who is yielded to God. That person’s face shines with the love of God.

There is a man in St. Louis who is called “Glory-face,” because his very countenance beams with the joy of the Lord. Your manner of living will be transfigured with the glory of God if you present your body to Him. And even as Moses’ face shone when he came down from the mount after talking with Jehovah, so your very life will radiate the love of God; for “**we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord**” (II Corinthians 3:18).

This is to experience “**the renewing**” of our minds, to be so occupied with Christ that we have no time or interest for the things that dishonor Him. By the reading of His Word and by fellowship with Him through prayer, our minds and hearts will be quick to discern “**what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**”

This, my friend, is our responsibility to Him.

(2) *The Christian's Responsibility to the Body of Christ, 12:3-16*

As we obey the will of God for our lives, we must come in contact with fellow-Christians and with the unsaved. And nothing will so manifest our relationship to God as our behavior toward our fellow-men.

In Romans 12:3—15:7 God speaks plainly to our hearts about this very thing. It is not easy to divide these verses into groups, applying some to our attitude toward Christians; others, to our relationship to the unsaved world; for often the same verse might well apply to our manner of life, both toward the saved and toward the unsaved. Yet for the sake of convenience, we shall group these words of the inspired writer into these two classes; and 12:3-16 has to do primarily with our responsibility to the members of the Body of Christ, which is His church.

Here we see what the will of God is in regard to the church collectively.

The individual believer is looked upon as a member of a great company of born-again souls. **“Many members in one body,”** we are (v. 4), even as Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, saying:

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many” (I Corinthians 12:12-14).

Turn to this twelfth chapter of I Corinthians and read every word of it prayerfully. There the apostle is telling us the same thing which he wrote to the Roman Christians in that portion of the epistle which we are now considering. He is saying to all Christians that just as the ear, the eye, and the foot need one another in the physical body, so also the strong and the weak, the high and the low, need one another in the Body of Christ.

“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (I Corinthians 12:26).

To every member is not given the same gift. God calls some to prophesy; that is, *to tell forth His Word*—not to foretell in this age, when we have the complete revelation of the Holy Scriptures, which proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Now that He has already come and suffered and died and risen again; now that He has sent His Spirit into our hearts to teach us of Himself, we need only tell forth this message of salvation. This is the meaning of **“prophesying”** in this present age.

God calls others to minister, or to teach His Word, or to exhort and encourage fellow-Christians in the faith. To others He entrusts money to be used for His service. And to yet others He gives authority over the local assembly. To all He commits the sacred trust of showing **“mercy, with cheerfulness.”**

You see, my friend, being a member of the Body of Christ carries with it a grave responsibility. It impels us not to act independently of other members. It obligates us to use the gift entrusted to us for **“the furtherance of the gospel,”** not with envy or strife, but seeking the edification of the whole Body. Just as I need your gift, so you need mine. Just as my body needs my little finger, so we need the least member of the Body of Christ. I would not part with my little finger for many thousands of dollars. Neither could we part with the most humble member of the Body of Christ.

Would it not be wonderful if every Christian exercised his gifts in grace and humility, without hypocrisy, in brotherly love? There was never a time in the history of the church when the exhortation of verse 10 was needed more than it is now. There are many who know much about the Bible, who teach prophecy, who have wonderful gifts, yet who do not exercise their gifts in love. Some of these have tongues as sharp as razor blades. Let us be careful as to how we criticize our brothers. Let us be **“kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another”** (v. 10).

It may help us to apply this message to our own hearts and lives if we take a pencil and make a list of the Christian graces which we are admonished here to manifest toward our fellow-Christians: Love without hypocrisy; kindness; unselfishness; diligence, industry, and zeal in service; joy in hope; patience in tribulation; unceasing prayer; benevolence; hospitality; forgiveness; sympathy; humility.

My! what an array of virtues!

You say that no human being can attain these things? No; not without the indwelling, all-powerful Spirit of God. But by His grace we may and we should become more and more like Him who is the very embodiment of all that is true and honest and pure and righteous. **“Yea, he is altogether lovely”** (Song of Solomon 5:16). And when we rejoice **“in hope”** (v. 12)—**“that blessed hope”** of His sure return, we seek more and more to be like Him; for **“every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”** (I John 3:3).

Are you hoping for the return of the Lord, my friend? Are you rejoicing in that hope? Are you looking forward to the time when Christ is coming back to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

If you rejoice in this hope, you will be able to endure trials with patience and to pray without ceasing. I once heard of a woman who was asked what praying without ceasing meant, and this is what she said: “Well, when I am sweeping, I ask the Lord to keep my life clean. When I polish the door knobs, I ask the Lord to keep my life polished. When I wash dishes, I ask the Lord to wash me **‘whiter than snow’** in His precious blood.” That woman knew the meaning of these words.

My fellow-Christian, whatever your station in life, would you obey **“that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** in your relationship to the Body of Christ?

Whether you be a minister of the gospel or a Sunday-school teacher; employer or employee; a busy man of affairs or a quiet mother in the home—whoever you are, whatever your task, let the Holy Spirit of whom we read in Romans eight fill your life, and you will be a testimony for God in this sin-darkened world. As you “**serve the living and true God**” and “**wait for his Son from heaven,**” you will become more and more like Him, “**whom having not seen, ye love**” (I Peter 1:8).

(3) *The Christian's Responsibility to the World, 12:17—13:14*

The will of God for the Christian has to do with all his behavior toward the world, as well as toward the Body of Christ. It has to do with his relationship to friend, to foe, to governmental powers, and to the business world. Our fellowman is our “**neighbor**”; and Romans 12:17—13:14 reminds us that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

First let us look briefly at this passage as a whole; then we shall consider in some detail the verses which have to do with the Christian's responsibility to governments.

These searching words speak for themselves; for they were penned by the Holy Spirit of God whose quickening power drives the message home to our hearts. And again we see the Christian virtues set before us as God's will for us in an ungodly world: Kindness, honesty, longsuffering, patience, benevolence, purity, truthfulness, love. In fact, all these graces may be summed up in the one word “**love**”; for “**love is the fulfilling of the law**”; it is “**the law of Christ.**”

The reference to the Ten Commandments takes us back to what we considered in chapter seven, and reminds us that the truly born-again soul will want to please his Lord by letting “**the love of Christ**” constrain him to love his neighbor as himself.

There were two tables of stone; on one was written man's responsibility to God; on the other, his responsibility to his brother. The quotations from the Decalogue found in the passage before us are taken from the second table of stone. And we shall be able to fulfill “**the law of Christ**” in heeding these admonitions if we heed also the instruction which tells us to present our bodies as “**a living sacrifice**” unto God. Then in our relationship to Him and to our neighbors we shall, indeed, obey “**that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**”

Let us note the words “**if it be possible**” in verse 18. It is absolutely impossible to live at peace with some people. If a man denies the virgin birth of our Lord, His deity, His atoning work on the cross, and His bodily resurrection, then we must defend the faith. To compromise in such matters is to deny Him. But let us remember to hold the truth in love. How else shall we win those to Christ with whom we contend for the faith?

We want to remember also in this connection that verse 19 refers to the Christian's attitude toward *individuals*, not toward *governments*. We shall consider this more fully as we look at 13:1-7 and see what God says about “**the powers that be.**” Some would make 12:19 refer to capital punishment, making this fundamental, governmental law contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures.

But Paul in 12:19 is not talking about governments; he is telling us, as individuals, what the Lord Jesus also said, “**Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also**” (Matthew 5:39).

In the world of commerce we should “**owe no man anything**” but our debt of love. And this debt we are to pay as long as we live in this world, loving the unlovely, as well as those whose friendship is a thing to be desired. “**While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!**” Is this not very practical, my friend? It touches us in every human relationship. It touches our grocery bill, and it touches our undesirable neighbors. This is “**the law of Christ.**”

Verses 11-14 of chapter thirteen put before us the incentive to let the Holy Spirit empower us for this testimony in a sinful world. And that incentive is none other than the return of Christ Jesus, our Lord. And what an incentive to holiness, whether in relation to government or family or neighbors!

“**Our salvation**” is the goal ever before us, and it is “**nearer than when we believed.**”

We have seen in our former studies that “**our salvation**” is past, present, and future. It is past, spiritually; it is present in its outworking; and it is future in the changing of our bodies from mortality to immortality at the coming of the Lord. If you were saved ten years ago, my friends, you are ten years nearer this salvation than when you first believed. Every day you are getting closer to that great day when Christ shall call His church home. I have a calendar on my desk on which I record dates for engagements which are ahead. If we could look into God’s calendar, we should see this great date, which He has not seen fit to reveal to us, but which is sure to come to pass because He said so in His Word. “**The night is far spent, the day is at hand.**” Let us therefore be ready to meet Him at His coming.

Nearly two thousand years ago Christ, who is the Light of the world, went back to heaven. The night of sin and darkness is “**far spent.**” But day dawns when the sun rises; and He will come in all His glory, as the “**Sun of righteousness . . . with healing in his wings**” (Malachi 4:2).

Before the morning star and the sunrise there is the darkest period of the night. Christ is the Morning Star to the church. He will come to take her away just before the great tribulation, the darkest period of the world’s history, comes upon the earth. But the black darkness will speedily be dispelled by the brilliance of His glory, when He comes with His church to rule and reign.

“**The night is far spent, the day is at hand.**” Let us therefore “**put . . . on the Lord Jesus Christ.**”

As a garment of light in a sin-darkened world, let us reproduce in our lives His righteousness. This is to know Him and to make Him known.

(4) The Christian’s Responsibility to Governments, 13:1-7

As we have already stated, our attitude toward governmental powers is included in our relationship to the world.

But because Romans 13:1-7 is often misunderstood, and because it speaks to us of a vital part of our Christian responsibility; therefore, we are devoting a separate topic to it here. Let us read these verses carefully. We need to remember that as Christians we are citizens of another world. **“Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven”** (Philippians 3:20). Consequently we are passing as strangers through the enemy’s territory; for Satan is the archenemy of our souls, and he is **“the god of this world.”** We must walk circumspectly; and in order that we may know what our conduct should be, the Holy Spirit caused Paul to write these words.

The gift of God’s righteousness, which we receive as a result of our faith in the finished work of our Lord on the cross, should be reproduced in our relation to governmental powers.

Believers cannot be anarchists, or communists, or terrorists.

Neither must they flaunt governmental authority. Of course, if governmental authority opposes the commands of our God, which will be the case during the great tribulation, then our behavior should be like that of the early Christians. We must **“obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29).

My friends, we may be called upon to do this before this age is over. We are not going through the tribulation, but great events are nearly always foreshadowed, and we may have a taste of what the people will suffer during that terrible time. However, unless governmental commands oppose those of God, we must be in subjection to them, even though the men who administer the laws of government may be unrighteous.

Have you ever thought that as Paul wrote these words, possibly the most bloodthirsty monster that has ever lived in this world was exercising control over the Roman Empire? The cruel Nero not only washed his hands in the blood of Christian martyrs, but he murdered his own mother. That is the kind of man who was on the throne in the Roman Empire, and God allowed Nero to rule over the destiny of men.

Now you may ask: “Why does God permit men like Nero, Augustus, and Titus to rule over their fellows? Why does He let cruel monarchs like Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar hold in their hands the power of life and death? Why has He allowed such men as Lenin and Stalin and Hitler to exercise dictatorships? Why will He permit such a man as the Antichrist to reign?”

The Antichrist will be the most bloodthirsty of them all. He will set up his image and will force people to worship him or starve. He will be the head of the revived Roman Empire. The Antichrist will rule because Christ Jesus, the Lord, will permit him to do so. Why does our Saviour, whose name is **“Love,”** allow these things?

These are questions that readily arise in the minds of thoughtful people when they read Romans 13:1. And the answer is this God sometimes sets up the basest of men to rule over the destiny of their fellow-creatures *as punishment of the wickedness of the people.*

We have an illustration of this in the opening words of Daniel.

God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to seize Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar was a bloodthirsty tyrant, and yet God permitted him to lead Israel captive, even as we read in Daniel 1:1, 2, “**And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.**”

Why? Because Israel had apostatized from God. He had sent Isaiah and Jeremiah to warn them that, if they did not turn from their idols, He would allow them to be taken into captivity and their city to be destroyed. But Israel would not listen; therefore, the hour struck, and God allowed the Gentiles to reign over them. The same thing applies to the future, when the Antichrist will rule. God will allow that bloodthirsty Caesar of the revived Roman Empire to wash his hands in the blood of people just because of their apostasy and gross wickedness.

God put human government in the world after the flood. During the age of innocence there was no need for it. Then during the age of conscience every man did just as he wished, according to what he thought he should do. The result was that the human race sank to such terrible depths of degradation that “**every imagination of the thoughts**” of man’s “**heart was only evil continually**” (Genesis 6:5). Therefore God sent the flood in judgment. Yet today there are people who would do away with government! They want free love and communism.

Yes; God put government in the world to restrain the wickedness of man. Conscience revealed the need of government. And God laid down the foundation law of human government, saying, “**Whosoever sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man**” (Genesis 9:6). Thus Jehovah instituted capital punishment as the foundation law of human government, to restrain the wickedness of man.

Let us remember that this is not a part of the Mosaic Law, and has not been done away. It was given hundreds of years before the Law of Moses was given. It is necessary to keep this in mind in order to understand Romans 13:1-7.

This is the sense in which “**the powers that be are ordained of God.**” And “**the powers that be**” refer only to *human governments*, not to the powers of darkness, as some cults teach, thus denying the existence of a personal devil.

Paul is writing here of human governments and human rulers on the earth. And he tells us *God’s will* in our relationship to these in verse 2: “**Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation** [condemnation]”, in the sense of judgment by the magistrate or civil power. God may judge a Christian, but He does not condemn him. He may permit a Christian to suffer discipline at the hands of a civil power for insubordination. This is what Paul means here. And if we are not to fear “**the powers that be,**” then we must obey them (v. 3).

Three things are said concerning the civil ruler, in verse 4:

- (1) He is “the minister of God”;
- (2) God intends that he exercise authority for our “good”;
- (3) “**he beareth not the sword in vain**”; that is, he must exercise the powers of the civil law.

Every king, every president, every civil officer is “the minister of God,” whether he be a Christian or not. Of course, he is not “**the minister of God**” in the sense that Paul was, or in the sense that the minister of the gospel always is. To Christians have been committed the ministry of reconciliation, in the spiritual realm. But to rulers God has given civil authority, whether they be saved or unsaved. This is what Daniel meant when he said to Nebuchadnezzar, “**The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory**” (Daniel 2:37).

And God will hold every civil officer responsible for the way in which he fulfills the trust committed unto him. The rulers of today who are encouraging the waves of Communism that are sweeping the world will one day have to give an account to “**the judge of all the earth.**” The unconverted ruler will stand before God condemned because he has rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour; and he will stand before God condemned for any failure to exercise the authority entrusted to him for the welfare of his fellowman.

As we have already observed, the second thing God tells us here about civil officers is that they are His “**ministers**” for our “**good.**”

This is as God intends it, though we well know that every ruler does not fulfill his obligation in this respect. Generally speaking, however, this is what government does for the people. From “**the powers that be**” we receive protection of life and property. Armies and navies, policemen and firemen, the courts of the land—these are all for our “**good**” when authority is exercised as a trust from God. Public schools and parks and all educational and recreational organizations, conducted for the best interests of the people, belong to this class. You see, my friend, how the higher powers can be and often are the “**ministers of God**” for our “**good.**”

And again, the civil ruler “**beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.**”

These words take us back to Genesis 9:6, which we read a few minutes ago.

We saw that God put government into the world after the flood, in order to restrain wickedness and violence in the earth. That is why He instituted capital punishment saying, “**Whosoever sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.**”

We find in our country today sentimental people who are leading a crusade against capital punishment, but let us remember that it is God’s fundamental, governmental law. And in those countries where this law is exercised there is less crime, less murder, less lawlessness than in those countries where the criminal can more easily escape the just penalty of his deed. When this law is set aside, human life becomes cheap and far more blood is shed than would be the case if men knew that if they shed man’s blood, by man their own blood would surely be shed.

The judge who ignores this law of God will have to give an account to Him, whether his action may be for bribe or favor or sentiment. He is “**the minister of God**” for the exercise of authority in the world. “**He beareth not the sword in vain.**”

Let us not forget that God's Word does not deny the murderer pardon. A man may be saved, even though he has taken life. Shedding human blood is an awful thing in the eyes of God; but He will pardon and save the murderer just as He saves us who do not commit murder. The only way any sinner can be redeemed is by the way of Calvary's cross. It is right that we should pray for every condemned man.

Probably you remember a certain governor of Pennsylvania who would not pardon a young man who had deliberately committed murder, but before the day set for the execution, the governor, as a Christian, went to the cell of the young boy and had the privilege of leading him to Christ. He told him that he must pay the penalty for his crime because there was no one to die for him, but that the Lord Jesus Christ had died for him, redeeming him from the penalty of eternal condemnation, if only he would accept the gift of His salvation. That young man took Christ as his Saviour, but was executed the next day. The governor bore not "**the sword in vain**," at the same time acting as a Christian in leading a never-dying soul to the only Saviour of sinners.

But let us remember that God has committed this power unto civil rulers, not to mobs. It is not mob-violence, it is civil authority Paul speaks of here. Moreover, we are to be subject to "**the powers that be**," not from fear, but "**for conscience sake**" (v. 5). We are not to obey the laws of the land just to keep out of jail, but because obedience is right and in accordance with *the will of God* for us.

For this reason also we are to pay taxes or tribute or custom. For this reason we are to be loyal to governmental authority, in the spirit of the law, as well as in the letter of the law. Our Lord Himself said, "**Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's**" (Matthew 22:21).

If that is not your attitude toward the United States of America, my friend, then you should be deported. If you are in sympathy with Russian Communism, then you should go to Russia and stay there. The righteousness of God will be reproduced in patriotism to one's country, as evidenced by obedience to the higher powers. Did you evade your income tax? Did you pay duty on those valuable articles you brought home from Canada or some other foreign country? Do not evade the collector when he asks you if you have anything in your possession which is taxable. Let the officer know that you are a Christian, and do it cheerfully. Then you will be executing the will of God for you in regard to civil powers. Do not do these things with a frown. Note the words "honour to whom honour." No matter who the officer may be, Republican or Democrat, good or bad, treat him as a Christian should. This is the will of God.

Moreover, we should pray for governmental powers and policies. Prayer will change things. I remember that once when I was in Toronto, Canada, attending a meeting at the China Inland Mission, we were called together one morning to pray. The head of the mission told us that the British government was going to vote that day, deciding whether or not it should permit the selling of opium to China. This business would have netted the country millions of dollars a year. But we prayed, and even that day we received a cablegram saying that the government had voted not to sell this thing that is a curse to any people. "Prayer changes things!"

(5) *The Christian's Responsibility to "Him that is Weak in the Faith;" 14:1—15:7*

“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him” (14:1-3; compare 14:15-21).

With these words Paul introduces the last phase of the subject, *the will of God for the Christian*.

It has to do with the Christian's example and testimony before his fellow-believer in all the daily life. And the question concerning the eating of meat serves as an illustration of how all such matters should be settled. Let us read carefully 14:1— 15:7, noting the many references to our responsibility to **“him that is weak in the faith.”**

Let us bear in mind that in this passage Paul shows the strong believer his responsibility toward the immature Christian, untaught in the things of God. He does not discuss here the way of salvation. That he has done in the first eight chapters. In the matter of justification by faith there is no room for difference of opinion, no room for diversity of judgment, no room for toleration. Concerning the death and resurrection of Christ for the saving of the sinner's soul, there is only the **“Thus saith the Lord.”** In these things Paul took his stand, without the question of a doubt.

In Romans 14:1—15:7, however, he deals with certain matters, concerning which there is no room for toleration, for liberty of conscience.

In Rome there were some ultra-scrupulous Jews who were saved, yet who were untaught concerning the observance of certain matters touching the law. For example, they could not bring themselves to eat the foods forbidden by God in Leviticus 11:1-47. They were **“weak in the faith,”** and had a conscience about this thing, as well as about the observance of the feast days.

Their years of training in the letter of the law kept them in bondage; they had not apprehended the full light of the grace of God.

Yet they were born again. Evidently they were judging their brothers who were stronger in the faith, while the strong were looking with disdain upon the weak. Paul admonishes both classes to exercise Christian love and tolerance concerning “personal liberty in things not expressly forbidden in Scripture.” He urges the strong not to take the “holier than thou” attitude; and he urges the weak not to accuse the strong of inconsistency and insincerity. He urges each not to doubt the motives of his brother, but rather to give him credit for seeking to please his Lord.

A Sunday-school teacher once asked a class of boys the question, “What is conscience?” to which one lad promptly replied, “Conscience is that thing in us which tells us when the other fellow does wrong.” My Christian friend, let us not stand in judgment on our brother, for whom Christ died, whether he be strong or weak. By a word of encouragement and by prayer we may lead him on to increasing faith, to a more consecrated walk with God.

This exhortation of the apostle applied also to certain Gentiles who contended with their fellow-Christians regarding the eating of meat offered to idols. The Corinthians were in this class, and in writing to them Paul gave them similar instruction (See I Corinthians 8:1-13).

Some Gentile Christians said that meat offered to idols was like all other meat to them, since they put no faith in the idols to whom it was offered. It seems to have been the custom in Rome to sell such meat in the marketplace, and evidently in Corinth and in Rome there were Christians who bought it and ate it with a clear conscience, knowing that the meat was not any different from all other meat, as there was no virtue in offering it to a false god.

Others stumbled at this. Because they saw their stronger brothers eating this meat that had been offered to idols, they ate of it also, even though they felt that in so doing they were defiled, even though their consciences accused them in the matter. They believed the practice involved the recognition of the idols. Yet others abstained from all meat, and were vegetarians. And thus the controversy arose. One group ate it with a clear conscience; another, as desecrated meat, and to them it was “**sin**” (14:23); while yet others abstained altogether.

These weaker brothers had not grasped the truth of verse 17, that “**the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.**” While every Christian should abstain from all things harmful to the body, yet he is not to make a religion of abstinence.

Let me remind you again that here Paul is comparing Christian with Christian. He does not have in mind the question of regeneration. He calls “**him that is weak in the faith**” a “**brother,**” and that term can be applied only to a real Christian. Otherwise the man in question would have been a pagan of Rome, not a “**brother.**”

I repeat this just here because there are those in our own day who abstain from eating meat and observe the seventh-day Sabbath, seeking salvation by the works of the law; and there are others who argue that Paul in Romans 14:1—15:7 exhorts us to receive such as these as “*brothers,*” or fellow-Christians. But in the Church at Rome the weaker brother was not depending on the law for justification, whereas the legalists today do! And the person who holds that salvation depends on eating or worlds of any kind makes God a liar.

Moreover, Paul wrote to Timothy, saying that the “**doctrine of demons**” included the command “**to abstain from meats**” (I Timothy 4:1-3). When a man places such matters as this side by side with the finished work of Christ on the cross he is teaching the “**doctrine of demons.**”

The weaker “**brother**” in the church of Rome believed that the eating of these meats would interfere with his fellowship with God, not with his eternal salvation. Therefore, this controversy marred the unity of the assembly. Possibly the Roman Christians had even appealed to Paul to settle the question for them.

In any case, the Holy Spirit prompted the apostle to write these words.

And let me tell you this, my friend: What is recorded here should settle forever a thousand and one questions for the Christian of today. It should settle for us the question as to what to do, where we go, how we conduct ourselves in a wicked and perverse generation. If we do not want **“to put a stumblingblock”** in our **“brother’s way,”** then we must obey the will of God, as set forth for us here. **“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”**

Consciously and unconsciously, we are wielding an influence for good or bad, to the glory or to the dishonoring of His name. Let us remember at all times that **“whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living”** (14:8, 9).

Moreover, we must give an account of ourselves to God; for **“we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”** (See 14:10-12). As we saw in our study of *“God’s Plan of the Ages,”* only Christians will appear before **“the judgment seat of Christ,”** that their *works* in His name may be judged; and only the unsaved will stand before **“the great white throne.”**

Between these two judgments Christ will rule and reign for a thousand years upon the earth. The believer’s *sins have been judged at the cross*, and he **“shall not come into judgment”** for the guilt of sin. But his *works will be judged* at **“the judgment seat of Christ.”**

In Corinthians 3:9-15 we read that some Christians will be rewarded for the things done for the Lord in this life, whereas other Christians will barely get to heaven, **“so as by fire.”** And all the New Testament teaching bears out this truth. Some will receive crowns; others will **“suffer loss”**; but all who are washed in the blood of Christ will be saved.

Now Paul says in Romans 14:1—15:7 that, since **“every one of us shall give account of himself to God,”** it matters very much whether or not he puts **“a stumblingblock”** in the way of his weaker brothers, whether or not he stands in judgment upon his fellow-Christians. We must give account to God for every deed and every thought. These are heart-searching words, are they not?

Again, it is to our own blessing and comfort that, even in this life, we enjoy a clear conscience, not having to feel condemned by unchristian acts or thoughts (See 14:22, 23). That is the meaning of the word **“damned”** in verse 23 —*“condemned.”* The whole context makes it very clear that Paul does not have in mind here the salvation of the soul, but self-condemnation.

With what tenderness and patience the apostle closes the discussion of this matter in 15:1-7!

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.”

After all, our Lord Jesus is the One after whom we must pattern our lives. He **“pleased not himself.”** He became a reproach and a curse for us. He taught us to be patient and sympathetic and kind toward one another. He is **“the God of patience and consolation.”**

May He grant us **“to be like-minded one toward another,”** that we **“may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

“Wherefore,” Paul concludes, **“receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.”**

These words take us back to 14:1, the first verse in this passage, which admonishes us, saying, **“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.”** The Lord Jesus received us when we were **“yet sinners.”**

And how patient He is with us still!

He received the weaker brother; and who are we to refuse to have **“the same mind”**? If we love Him, we shall want to be like Him, patient and long-suffering with **“him that is weak in the faith.”**

This is His will for us. May **“the God of patience and consolation grant”** us **“to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.”** Then, whether we touch the lives of family or neighbor, friend or foe, ruler or fellow-Christian, we shall know and obey **“that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”**

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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