

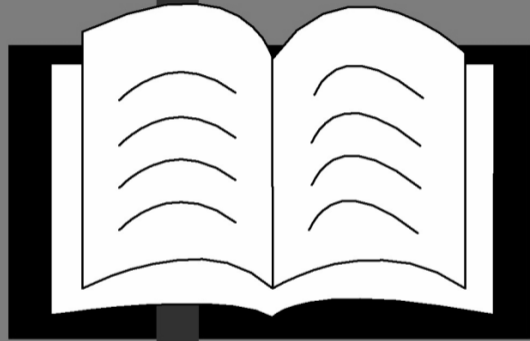


Welcome to Faith

The Letter of Paul to the Romans

Romans 12 & 13

Romans, Chapter 12



Summary

Paul has described the significance of Jesus' death on the cross in terms of:

1. Justification - the law model.
2. Redemption - buying back a family member from slavery.
3. Atonement - the place/means by which sins are forgiven.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul revisits the atonement metaphor.

Romans 12:1-2

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable** to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

These two verses summarize the theme for 12:1 through 15:13: **duty necessarily follows belief.**

The Body (verse 1)

Romans: respect for the body came close to worship, indulgence. They were pampered, gorged, satiated.

Greeks: denied the body. What mattered was the spirit; the body is "the prison" – much shame and embarrassment surrounding the body.

Hebrews: body is a "temple of God." God created us and created us good (in His image).

Paul: real worship is to offer your bodies to God—one worships God with heart and soul and body.

The Church as a Body - verses 3-8

³ For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ **so we, though many, are one body in Christ**, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Summary

In this section (verses 1-8), Paul places Christian morality in the context of sacrificial living, defined in verse 1 as "sacrificial worship."

Christian morality does not equal the world's morality (verse 2a).

Christian morality is rational (verse 2b).

Christian morality is "charismatic"—that is, genuine love is expressed in ways that utilize the special gifts (charis) we possess—all our gifts/talents have an ethical basis (verses 3-8).

Christian Life is about Duties, not Rights Romans 12:9-13

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

The activity of prayer opens Christians to the pain of the world around them.

Love in Relationships Must Include

Empathy: learn to identify with one another (world's morality is apathetic).

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Harmony: identify with the lowly and vulnerable (world's morality is to be exclusive).

¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited.

Love in Relationships Must Include

Peaceful spirit: resolve conflicts (world's morality is competitive).

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.

Chapter 12 outlines benchmarks/guidelines/standards—gives "shape" to Christian love.

Absolute morality = love one another

True morality = love your sister-in-law who has a drinking problem.

Responding to Enemies

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

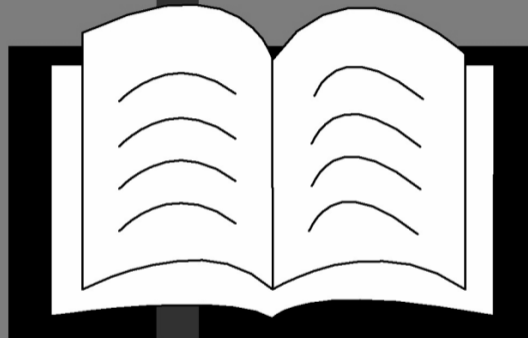
"Burning coals"—the fires of remorse, inner shame—will lead your enemy to reflection, repentance, and change.

Reinhold Niebuhr
1892-1971

Personal Ethic = Love
my next door neighbor

National/International Ethic = Justice
U.S.A. - N. Korea

Romans, Chapter 13



Nero

Shortly before Paul wrote Romans, the emperor Claudius had been murdered (he was promptly deified by the Roman Senate), an act that brought Nero to the throne.

The Problem

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For **there is no authority except from God**, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval.

The Context

¹¹ Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For **salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed**; ¹² the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The Advent of Christ

Jesus (Matthew 24) taught that he would someday return. The early church believed it, and the apostles wrote about it frequently.

Three key words in the New Testament explain what they anticipated:

1. **parousia** means arrival or presence and was used by the Greeks to describe the visit of a Ruler/King. They looked forward to Jesus again visiting the earth, this time as a King arriving in great power and glory.

2. **epiphaneia** (the English word is epiphany). A term used by Greeks to describe the appearance of a god or the ascent to the throne by a king.

3. **apokalypsis** (the English word is apocalypse). This word means "unveiling" or a "revelation"—that which is invisible will be made visible.

Context Explains Everything

Context: "the urgency of the time" (13:11), Paul believes that Christ is coming soon. "We shall not all sleep;" if you have not planted crops, don't. If you haven't taken a wife, don't. The church lives in exile waiting for the Kingdom to come.

Therefore, because Christ is coming almost immediately, do not be concerned about opposing your government. Be submissive to the government officials as they are from God.

"Put on Christ"

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

In the summer of AD 386, Aurelius Augustine, Professor of Rhetoric at Milan University, sat weeping in a friend's garden, wanting to begin a new life but not knowing how. He heard a child chanting, "Take up and read! Take up and read!" whereupon he picked up his friend's copy of Romans and read verse 14—"No further could I read," he later wrote, "nor had I any need; instantly, at the end of the sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away." (from the Confessions)

"Put on Christ to be Protected from the Evils of verse 13"

v. 13 "**reveling**" - komos; komos was the band of friends that accompanied the winner home from games, singing and celebrating as they went. Later, a band of roisters (word is rout) in English. This group of people could be a real nuisance to others. Mardi Gras in New Orleans—komos is a band of revelers. (Sometimes translated as "orgies.")

v. 13 "**drunkenness**"—methe. Greeks drank wine. Even children, for breakfast, would dip a piece of bread in wine and eat it. Very poor quality water, so wine, diluted, was the common drink.

- v. 13 **debauchery/licentiousness** - aselgeia (English takes two words to describe). One of the ugliest words in the Greek language. It is a person of shame for whom honor, decency, and integrity mean nothing. This is a person in the grip of lust—a low-life.
- v. 13 "**quarreling**" - eris. Unbridled and unholy competition. One who doesn't strive to win as much as they want to have power and position ... always places himself first.
- v. 13 **jealousy** - zelos. Striving (zeal) can be a good thing, **but** when it is never content with what it has but always looks with envy at the gifts of others, it becomes zelos.

Classical Interpretations of Romans 13

1. **Literal:** Always be submissive.

Lutherans during the Nazi Germany years believed that the Christian should support the government. Luther was protected by Prince Frederick when Rome came after him. Later, when the peasants protested government corruption, Luther sided squarely with the state.

Contemporary Readings

"The Bible ... has a message for the governments and governed of the world. Thus we read in Romans 13 that every person be subject to the governing authorities. There is no authority except from God. Rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad conduct. Do what is good, and you will receive the approval of the ruler. He is God's servant for your good."

P. W. Botha, addressing the black denomination,
Zion Christian Church, April 7, 1985.

Classical Interpretations of Romans 13

2. **Interpretive reading:** World coming to an end soon in what may be chaos; the Roman government provides stability. Rome provided many benefits (good roads, justice system, communications, etc.) so live with Rome (even its imperfections) and continue to focus on the coming of Christ. Understand that Rome restrains evil (through force when necessary) thus allowing Christians to focus on the gospel.

Classical Interpretations of Romans 13

3. **Calvin:** The church must always prod, urge, challenge the state to be more justice-oriented. Since sin is universal, sin is also evident in all institutions including the government. Thus, a Christian cannot always go along with the government—higher loyalty is to God.

H. Richard Niebuhr The Church and State

I. **Christ Against Culture**

The church is called to stand against a fallen culture.

Christian values are not the values of the state.
12:2: "Do not be conformed to the world ..."

Christian faith opposes all the "isms" of the world—socialism, communism, capitalism, nationalism, etc.

Solution - Withdraw! Be ye separate.

I. Christ Against Culture

II. **Christ Of Culture**—accommodation to culture

Believe in progress—believe that culture is moving in the right direction and therefore Christians should be in agreement with the sweep of culture. Argument might be that as we progress we are less racist, less sexist, more tolerant of others, etc. This is "cultural Christianity."

The 19th century became entrenched in liberalism. This carried into the 20th century but was demolished by the Third Reich. How could the most sophisticated, most cultured, most educated society in the world do what it did? The reality of sin demolished idealism, Christian liberalism (as it was known), and accommodation to culture.



Some argue that this "Christ of Culture" made a comeback in America during the 1950s when it was suddenly "fashionable" and "middle class" to belong to the church.

I. Christ Against Culture

II. Christ Of Culture

III. **Christ Above Culture**

A third way of living as a Christian in society is to see the church as the center and develop a synthesis between Church and State.

Christ reaches to us from above culture and gives us values and morals.

This was the goal of the Holy Roman Empire.

III. Christ Above Culture

Might be argued (I think successfully) that this is the approach of radical Islam that has infected the world. They want to set up a **theocracy** where the mosque is above the culture and above the state, where the values of Mohammed rule the world.

I. Christ Against Culture

II. Christ Of Culture

III. Christ Above Culture

IV. **Duality:** Christ is above culture but God requires obedience to the institutions of culture.

As noted, Luther read Romans 13 this way.

I. Christ Against Culture

II. Christ of Culture

III. Christ Above Culture

IV. Duality

V. **Conversion—Christ the Transformer of Culture**

Cannot follow Christ and be satisfied with the way things are.

Must live with a "holy discontent," always seeking more ... more love, more justice in this fallen world.

The Reformed/Presbyterian Tradition
chooses this model.