

**Review of Rom #5**  
**Rom 12-16**  
**ABC 3/4/18**

Today we conclude our study of Romans which began back in Sept of 2013. We wrap up with a review of chpts 12-16. These chpts apply the deep doctrines of chpts 1-11. There Paul explained the gospel. Now in chapters 12-16 he gives practical advice on how a Christian should live in the world. He takes up our duties toward other believers, toward the community, toward our enemies, toward the government, & toward our weaker brothers. Finally, he writes about his work as an apostle & his plans & his requests for prayer (15:14-33). Paul then closes his letter by giving recognition to others. It took 49 sermons to get through these 5 chpts, so today we're skimming the surface. You can find those sermons on the church website. For now, we're surveying the big picture, the whole forest of trees. In chpts 12-16, we find commands for personal life, for life & relationships in the church, for relationships with enemies, with the government & with every one we encounter. We must be obedient to these commands, not to make something true of us, but because of what is already true because we've placed our faith in Jesus. We must base the commands of what to do in the statements of what has been done & what is already true. Before we can respond to what God wants us to do, we need to rest in what God already has done. PRAY

Paul makes the transition in **12:1**.

Before we talk about what this says to do, let's be absolutely clear about why we do it & how we do it. The why behind our sacrificial obedience is grounded in all that comes before this verse. We know that because it begins with **therefore**. Chpts 1-11 give the foundation & motivation for what comes next. Why should we give our lives in obedience to God? Why should we lay ourselves on God's altar? Because of everything explained in Rom 1-11. We do it because we've seen the wisdom & knowledge of God in all the previous chpts. We respond to God's commands because we know He's revealed Himself & He's just & clear in all He's said. We respond because of the good news that Jesus is God who became man & lived perfectly, died sacrificially, & rose victoriously. We respond because Jesus achieved the standard we all fail to achieve. But He

grants us the righteous status He earned & the inheritance He deserves all by His grace when we put our faith in Him. We respond because Jesus' death fully satisfied God's eternal wrath for every person who trusts Christ so we are free from sin's penalty. We respond because Jesus' work for us secures us in His love forever so that even trials become triumphs of grace. We respond because our old self has died with Christ & we have new life in Him with new power & freedom. We respond in that new relationship by the Spirit in awe at His sovereign glory & global plans. Therefore, because of all those truths held together by the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, we desire to be obedient to God's commands. Since we're already accepted & don't need to obey to gain acceptance & since we're already loved & don't need to merit God's favor by our works, therefore we joyfully serve Him. That's the motive behind putting your body on God's altar to die to yourself as a living sacrifice set apart as holy & devoted to please God. Because of all those gospel foundations, the only reasonable response is worship entrusting everything to God. We obey because we see & trust the God of Rom 1-11. That's the *why* of our response to God's commands. Obedience can only happen by means of God's mercies in the gospel & its many promises. You won't be able to obey God if you're relying on your own strength or anything except God's mercies. Only because God has purchased us out of death & slavery into new life by His Spirit can we depend on those mercies so that we can obey. That's the *how* of obedience. It's by faith in God's mercies, it's by the promises & power & purpose that have been purchased by God's mercy to us in Jesus. Vs 2 gets more practical on how change happens for the Christian, it starts inside & works its way outward. 2

Since God is so worthy of praise & trust, it only makes sense to stop absorbing this world's ways & enjoy God's ways instead. That transformation starts in the mind as we treasure God's Word. As the mind is changed, the Spirit enables the Christian to act by faith to test & prove how good & complete God's will is. So 3 keys for living the Christian life are a yielded body, a separated life, & a transformed mind. Where do we live out God's perfect will? Everywhere, but especially within the body of believers known as the church (3-13). This is where you use your gifts. The church is where you practice the one-another commands to love & pray for & serve & give to &

rejoice & weep with. That's why the normal pattern of the NT after conversion was baptism & commitment to the membership of a local church. It was in that family of believers where their faith was tested & proven & where they were encouraged & prayed for & disciplined & counseled & cared for & held accountable & protected. Vs 3 starts all this with faith rooted in God's grace. We obey because of all He's accomplished & provided in Christ. He gave commands for love to be real & not fake. He gave commands for valuing different gifts & people because He knew we'd irritate each other. He gave reminders of humility & diligence in service & generosity in giving & perseverance in trials & persistence in prayer. & living new life in the church is what also equips us for ministry outside of the church where opposition can get hostile. In vss 14-21 we see the move to God's commands that go beyond the church. The world is both puzzled & impressed by commands like these that follow Jesus' injunction to love your enemies. But the world usually misses the essential link to God here. Since God is the final Judge, He can be trusted to handle vengeance & retribution far better than any of us. But because God is the perfect Judge, He won't act with wrong perspective or mixed motives or a lack of evidence. So we can trust Him when we bow to His rightful rule. God is just & He'll handle each individual perfectly. Every sin of every unbeliever will be rightly punished by God. So we can leave justice to God. & think of this: Every sin of every believer has already been punished. It was done when Christ died for those sins on the cross. So we can forgive others within the church because God did. The gospel frees us to let God be God. We can let go of revenge & respond with grace because that's how God treated us. All of this flows from who God is & what He's done in Christ so we see God as He is & trust Him. Yet even imperfect human authorities deserve respect because God put them in their positions. Rom 13 transitions to the right response to government. **13:1-2**

Everyone is to be in subjection to their governing authorities. & as with everything in life, this command has a link to God, a reason that's rooted in who God is & what He's done. Here that reason is God's sovereign rule over earthly rulers. God has placed government leaders into their positions of power & authority. Nowhere does this passage state that all governing authorities are Christians or good or moral. The only ideal government is a beneficent dictatorship with Jesus

as King. In this life to oppose people who have authority over us is to oppose God Himself. Of course, we shouldn't sin if we're commanded to do so by the government. It would be sin to stop proclaiming the gospel because we're all commanded to do so. In almost all cases, even when laws don't make sense or we don't like or agree with them, our duty is to be obedient. Paul makes this an issue of obeying God because God established the authorities. So even a bad government is usually better than no ruler at all because sinful human nature needs to be restrained from evil. Therefore submission is a matter of conscience & honor of God as the One who calls the authorities His ministers or deacons for good. Vss 3-5 continue to explain our response to governing authority. Governments have a duty to punish those who are wicked & good citizens have no reason to be afraid of them. Our default response to government needs to be honor & obedience. That starts in the home with kids under their parents authority & it flows into all the authority structures of life (school, church, work, etc). But Paul was clearly explaining here that government exists to praise good & punish evil. Vss 6-7 talk about taxes & our duty to pay them. Remember that this letter was written to the church at Rome where the government & the rulers were corrupt & ungodly. But Paul says to submit to them. After telling us to pay our taxes he talks about another debt we owe. **8, 10**

Jesus summed up the law in 2 commandments: Loving God & loving your neighbor (Mt 22:36-40). Here Paul uses that 2<sup>nd</sup> summary command to draw the diverse areas he was addressing together. It's amazing to realize that love really is the fulfillment of the law (Gal 5:14; 6:2; Js 2:8). Again, we need all of these commands, but when we dig down to the basic motive behind each of them, we find love. Biblical change always starts in the heart. & that means it starts with responding to God in the gospel & then having the gospel define love for us & direct love from us. So after reaching to the realm of government that can seem far from our personal experience of salvation, we see the connection come back to the theme of the whole letter. & since that theme of salvation looks forward to the end of time when we'll be free from sin's presence, Paul brings that up next. Yes, government always has issues in this fallen world & yes, paying taxes isn't fun, & yes, applying God's Word to our motives can be hard. But life is short & the end is

near, so live in light of what's coming. With final salvation ever nearer in Paul's time & more so now, it only makes sense to live in holiness with heavenly priorities. 11-14

When you know Jesus is coming back, it only makes sense to prepare. To **put on the Lord Jesus Christ** is to get dressed in Jesus. We're to adopt His lifestyle, live as He lived, & accept Him as our Guide & Example. It's to view yourself as wearing Christ's righteousness in relationship with God so you are welcome to come to Him in prayer & be assured of His love. It's to hate your sins because your Savior has died for them & you want to put them off & give the flesh no opportunity to tempt you. It's to treasure forgiveness & want to grow in holiness because you trust God's ways as so much better because He is so good. It's to pursue obedience by yielding yourself to God because of God's mercies to you in Christ. It's to rehearse & re-apply the gospel because that's our theme for life just as it is the theme of this letter. It just makes sense to live that way when you know all God has done for us in Christ.

Chpts 14 & part of 15 tell us how to deal with non-essential differences among fellow Christians. As brothers & sisters in Christ's body, how do we handle people who have different convictions or preferences or who seem to live more freely than we do? For example, what music style do you listen to & like to sing? How do you spend your money & what entertainment choices do you make? Where do exercise & sports fit into your life? What about dancing or martial arts or yoga? What schooling choice is right for your kids? Are some things acceptable to do on Sundays & others not acceptable? What about holidays? Should we celebrate Halloween? Christmas? Easter? What role does the internet or Facebook or technology play in your life & family? Do you think you're holier because you don't do social media? Do you look down at those who don't & call them Luddites? Do you eat organic or does it not matter to you? Do you prefer alternative medicine or are you a traditional medicine person? Do you welcome or avoid medications & vaccines? Do you abstain from drinking alcohol or do you only guard against being drunk? What about caffeine? What about the way you dress? Define modest. How do you evaluate style & makeup & jewelry & clothing? What about your Bible translation, is that an issue? How about your ministry interests? When you plan an event, how do you view those who don't attend? How

do you view those who are devoted to a ministry or cause that just doesn't interest you? How do you relate to each other? What if they prefer drums & electric guitar & you prefer organ in church? Hymnals or projected, off the wall songs? Old hymns or new hymns? Pews or chairs? & where do you shop & do you participate in boycotts & how politically active are you? How do you handle weaknesses & immaturity? How do you handle disputes & disagreements & diversity? How do you handle all the messy or stuffy, strange or stressful, uncomfortable or oppressive differences that people bring? That's what Rom 14 addresses & helps us frame all these things in the light of God's priorities & His treatment of us in the gospel. Such perspectives from God awaken us to renewed views of our brothers & sisters in Christ & our collective testimony in taking the gospel to the world. **14:1-3**

It isn't good to be weak in the faith. We should all want to grow strong in faith. But when people come to faith, they're typically not strong. In contrast, we all bring our past customs or habits or practices or upbringing. We come to Jesus with our baggage, with our blindness to the ways we offend others, & to the ways we're easily offended. In Christ, we are accepted by God, but we have much to learn to set us free from old hang-ups or habits or from pendulum swings in reaction to past problems. & since we know all that to be true of one another also, we must know how to apply the gospel to our relationships with each other. So the 1<sup>st</sup> command of Rom 14 is to accept one another, to give them a warm welcome, to receive fellow Christians with the free, forgiving grace that God's already accepted us with. Do you do this with everyone you worship with? Or do you disobey by only welcoming some & giving others the cold shoulder or silent treatment? Remember that this command is grounded in God's acceptance in vs 3. Again the gospel is the root source for how to treat each other. When we consider God's acceptance of us in the gospel we can turn to practice that kind of acceptance toward others. That doesn't mean we skip repentance or fail to confront sin. It means we're patient & gracious & don't immediately demand understanding & change in non-essential areas. We must not be quick to judge someone with a different practice or preference than we have. Instead, start with gracious acceptance just like God does with us. & we do so realizing that each believer isn't saved to serve you or me, but

is saved to serve God in Christ. Each Christian is rescued from slavery to sin to serve God as their Lord & Master. So they answer to God & they live for Him & they may be practicing a different habit to thank Him & please Him. Vs 4-9 relate to what to eat & drink & what weekly or seasonal days to observe. Those coming to Christ from a Jewish background had practices that weren't easy to let go of even if they were fulfilled in Christ. & believers from Gentile backgrounds were often reacting to past pagan practices. But ultimately when they all came to Christ, they embraced Christ's Lordship to live for Him & to seek to please Him. Yet they were very different & often conflicting. & the point isn't that we should just be quiet about our differences & never ask questions or change any of them. We want to grow strong in faith & have rightly informed consciences. That requires being challenged as we study Scripture & examine ourselves & pursue transformation. Since our lives affect others, we want to be sensitive in how we live, that our own will doesn't overrule God's will. In the end, each one will face Christ as judge individually. That final exam before Jesus allows us to be patient & gracious. We will face the judgment seat of Christ where our lives are evaluated for good fruit that will be rewarded. This judgment has to do with a Christian's service not his sins (1 Cor 3:11-15). So even after accepting each other & potentially debating an issue, we can leave each person's conscience to be evaluated by & judged by God. In vs 10-12 notice how sharing one Lord where Jesus is the head of His church & the Master being served & the final Judge further frees us to accept one another. The gospel prepares us to accept one another. It also leads to sacrificial care with sensitivity to others so that we don't needlessly cause them to stumble (13). Paul moved from accepting & not judging fellow believers to sacrificing & not offending fellow believers. Since we're loved sacrificially by Christ & we know He loves other Christians in the same way, we should love them similarly. That kind of love doesn't put a stumbling block in their way. That means we don't do anything that may lead others into temptation. That doesn't mean we cower before every weakness or tiptoe on eggshells near the most overactive conscience. But it does mean we gladly sacrifice our rights so others will grow to a mature faith & strong conscience. We shouldn't allow these secondary things, which are perfectly permissible in themselves, to give

occasion for others to condemn us for our lovelessness. To be a member of God's kingdom is not about what we eat or drink (so don't make it that!) It's about being in a right relationship with God. Our mutual salvation by Christ & our mutual Lordship under Christ leads to a mutual love for each other in Christ. We all know that fellow Christians can have their issues, but we live for so much more than all those petty issues. We see that applied in 14-18. If you know that a person's conscience hang-up is wrong & you've tried to help them & are ready to explode or give up or write them off & avoid them, then reset your perspective. Our goal is to walk according to love for those for whom Christ died (15). So we don't want even good things to become bad by using them to tear down others. You don't want to do anything to tempt them to sin. The goal is to strengthen faith & inform the conscience, not to lead others to sin by going against their faith & conscience. Again, we should welcome discussions to refine & shape us by what is necessary & true, but we must do so with sensitivity (19-23). The idea of this mutual care for believers is that we're willing to sacrifice freedoms to keep from causing others to stumble. Our goal should be building up other Christians, not telling them their weaknesses are stupid & urging them to violate their consciences. To act against our conscience is a sin because a Christian must always act in faith (what we truly believe in our heart). The author of Hebrews says **without faith it is impossible to please God** (11:6).

Which brings us to chpt 15. In vss 1-3 Paul returns to the weak/strong language & addressed the same issue in view of Christ's sacrifice for us. The strong must remember that we live to please Christ, to be like Christ, & to do so by sacrificially loving His people. That means we die to ourselves to serve others. That mentality & lifestyle is what deepens & strengthens unity. **4-6**

The gospel is what draws believers together in unity even though we come from diverse backgrounds. God is glorified when people of all races & social standings & cultural differences unify in worshiping Christ. Jesus sacrificed His rights to serve those He would save (3). God's example is one of sacrifice, of serving to meet others' needs. That example is to be followed in seeking His goal of gathering worshippers from every tribe & tongue & people & nation. God's goal is for people from all across this planet throughout history to praise God through Jesus. No



matter how different we all may be, God is glorified as we come together under His grace in Christ. That unity in diversity is pursued by holding fast to the essentials & showing grace to each other on the non-essentials. & as unity in diversity is experienced, it fuels a greater testimony & outreach to further increase the gospel's outreach which Paul talks about in vss 7-13. Paul closes this section with a gracious benediction, praying that the God who gives hope through grace will fill all the saints with joy & peace as they believe in Him. Those who abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit have no time to quarrel over nonessentials. Our common hope as believers is a powerful unifying force in the Christian community. Again, it's the Holy Spirit who gives us hope, & that hope will encourage us in life because the hope that God gives does not disappoint. In the rest of chpt 15 Paul states his reason for writing to the Romans & his desire to visit them. Paul affectionately calls them his **brothers**. He then shows he appreciates their good qualities & praises them accordingly. He feels confident they'll understand his letter. They seem well able to teach the gospel. & they'll warn those who are doing wrong things. Then Paul offers further hope in the reminders that his readers are equipped to counsel one another & to serve in God's strength in ways we never thought possible (14-21). Again, the emphasis is upon the grace of God given to Paul to accomplish all he did. God empowers His people by grace to serve His Word in counseling or admonishing or warning or instructing one another as vs 14 says. Then, as Paul exemplified, God also empowers outreach to the lost among the nations where Christ's name is not yet known. Then to God alone belongs the praise & the boasting is all in who God is & what God has done. Knowing who God is & what He's done fuels faith for further pursuits of spreading the gospel. We dare not ever be satisfied with the unity in diversity we've attained or the outreach God has accomplished so far through us. Like Paul, we must be praying & seeking to reach more. Paul was connecting with the church at Rome both to help them & to get their help in moving on to reach Spain. He was always pressing onward with the gospel & he did so with confidence in God who is greater than his enemies (22-33). As Paul taught the Roman church in this letter, they would grow in truth that would also mature them in love. & as their faith was strengthened, so would be their prayer lives & their commitment to spread the gospel

to the nations. Paul taught them for their own good & for the continued spread of God's glory through the gospel. The gospel brings people under Christ's Lordship & into relationships of mutual care as we saw in chpt 14. & the gospel leads us to treasure & follow Christ's sacrificially loving example with one another in a way that proclaims the unifying power of gospel. As Paul finishes this letter, he moved on to commend the letter carrier & share greetings & gratitude for his Christian family (16:1-16). That's a lot of people mentioned for a variety of reasons. & Paul did so because each member of the body matters & their contribution won't go unnoticed in heaven. Paul's example here reminds us of the value of God-centered gratitude & affirmation in our relationships in the home & the family of God. Life & ministry is about people. We must recognize the value of relationships with God's people & greet each other with a kiss (16)! This leads Paul to warn against attacks from within by false teaching being allowed. **17-20**

Paul had rebuked false teachers & he followed Jesus' example in calling for clear protection of the church. God is good to charge us to protect His people & to guard the unity & relationships we enjoy in His family. Guarding people from error & sin & false teachers & divisive meddlers is part of God's loving protection of His people. It's always good to be guarded against destruction, right? & we must practice God's plan for protecting His people from sin & error. We can do so with assured hope of final victory as vs 20 reminds us. God in Christ has conquered Satan & the outcome is never in doubt. So we can serve, pray, live, & enjoy God's goodness with the sure & certain hope that our God will win. He's able to do whatever He wants for His glory through His people. & we can be encouraged knowing that what He wants is simply to bring glory to Himself through His gospel. Read of that closing confidence in vss **25-27**.

The gospel of Jesus has roots in past promises through the OT prophets & it has future purposes for all nations. God is accomplishing His preordained purposes & nothing can stop Him. That's encouraging when we're surrounded by sad & negative news. When we pray to the omnipotent God & we live for the purpose of glorifying Him, we can always have hope. In God's mercy He's chosen to fulfill His purposes through people He saves along the way. He only & always saves by His grace to spread His glory in Christ. & He says that glorious salvation is received by faith. So

when we speed through biblical truths like those in Paul's letter to the Rom, it's easy to miss some of it & get lost at times. But it always comes back to this timeless truth that God sent His Son Jesus, just as He had promised in ages past. & Jesus lived perfectly, died sacrificially, & rose victoriously to open the way for God to view everyone who trusts Jesus as righteous. Through faith in Christ, sinners are forgiven, given new life now & for all eternity, & it's all free for those who repent of their sin & trust in Jesus. In this gospel transaction, God is glorified as the loving, gracious Giver who is the Source of all good now & forever. So the only fitting response is to trust Him. We've seen so many facets glimmering like an endless diamond of God throughout Romans. But it all flows from being right with God by faith in Christ. So that's where to start. Enter God's family by placing your faith in Jesus. Return to the gospel daily because we never leave our need for it as its applications flow throughout our lives. Let's pray, thanking God for this letter & the time we've been able to spend in it.

We're to be living sacrifices. Living sacrifice also describes Jesus, doesn't it? He was sacrificed for us & died in our place. His sacrifice was acceptable & sufficient & He rose from the dead never to die again. He is a living sacrifice.

In OT times the priests constantly killed bulls & goats & offered them to the Lord. If you took all the bulls & goats & lambs & rams & all the other animals that were offered in sacrifice to God, over a 1500 year period, it would be an ocean of blood. But, as the writer of Hebrews tells us, it is impossible for the blood of bulls & goats to take away sins (10:4). The sacrificial system of the OT was meant to prepare the Jews for the day when John the Baptist saw Jesus & exclaimed, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn 1:29). What an amazing statement. Jesus is God's Lamb sent from heaven. He is the perfect sacrifice. All those animals the priests put to death were meant to point directly to Him. The word translated takes away is used for the rolling away of the stone that sealed the tomb of Jesus. When our Lord died on the cross, He rolled away our sins once & for all. They are gone, removed, blotted out, & rolled away forever. Jesus' death on our behalf is so powerful that it's sufficient payment for the sins of the whole world. Anyone, anywhere, at any time can be forgiven through Christ. PRAY / PASS

#### ELEMENTS

**But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;**

**and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

**For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,**

**how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

We eat of the bread thanking God for His mercy given us through Jesus' death on our behalf.

We drink of the cup with gratitude toward God in that in His plan for our salvation, Jesus died in our place so that we might willingly be a living sacrifice for Him.