

Dead & Alive – Romans, Part 8

The book of Romans is basically divided into THREE major sections, and we're beginning the final section today.

To say the least, Paul was not at all appreciated by the Jews after his conversion. He had been a devout Pharisee and a zealous defender of their traditions, but now is more despised than a pagan Gentile. To them, he is now the Judas of Judaism. But actually, Paul's heart breaks for the Jewish people – he is one of them, and although he is an Apostle to the Gentiles, he always preaches the gospel to the Jews first in every city. He is genuinely, passionately concerned for Israel's spiritual condition. And that's why he takes a "DETOUR" in chapters 9-11 ...

"But what about the JEWS?" They were chosen by God, and yet Paul is teaching that now they are set aside and God is building His church. Did God fail to keep His promises to Israel? Did He just let the Gentiles cut in line ahead of them unfairly? In other words, the very character of God is at stake. If God has not been faithful to the Jews, how do we know He will be faithful to the church?

That is why Romans 9-11 is so important. It refutes the notion that God didn't keep His promise to the Jews; in fact, it shows exactly HOW He kept His promise! It was not Abraham's PHYSICAL descendants that received the promise, but his SPIRITUAL descendants (i.e. Isaac was the son of promise, Ishmael was the son of the flesh). What is so ironic in these chapters is that the message of salvation came **THROUGH** the Jews (Jesus was Jewish!) and was first given **TO** the Jews, but they rejected their own Messiah because tradition and legalism blinded them.

John 1:11-12 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Romans 9-11 is not just an EXPLANATION concerning Jewish believers; it is an EXHORTATION to Gentile believers. If Israel, God's chosen people, could forfeit their position and their promises, then WE must constantly be on guard lest the devil deceives us as well.

Romans 11:19-22 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of **unbelief** they were broken off, and thou standest by **faith**. Be not **highminded**, but **fear**: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the **goodness and severity of God**: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou **continue** in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

And this brings us to the **THEREFORE** that begins the last section ...

Romans 1-8 ... **Theological Explanation** ... What we should BELIEVE
Romans 9-11 ... **Israel Interlude** ... But what about the JEWS?
Romans 12-16 ... **Practical Exhortation** ... How we should BEHAVE

Romans 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.

In light of all the blessings of salvation ("mercies of God") that Paul has explained thus far, he pleads with us to respond with CONSECRATION to God – not a vain attempt to merit salvation, but a heartfelt attempt to express our APPRECIATION for it! Consecration doesn't grow out of condemnation (8:1); it grows out of appreciation (12:1).

Israel offered ANIMALS as a DEAD sacrifice. We offer our BODIES as a LIVING sacrifice. The problem with a "living sacrifice" is that it can crawl down off of the altar! You have to put it back on the altar constantly.

- The cure for every spiritual problem is to STAY ON THE ALTAR!
- The cure for backsliding is to STAY ON THE ALTAR!
- The cure for worldliness is to STAY ON THE ALTAR!
- The way to walk in the will of God is to STAY ON THE ALTAR!

CONFORMED ("schematizo"): This word means "in union with, resembling, fashioned according to, in the same pattern of, appearing like." It has the sense of someone remaking himself to "fit in," or being "squeezed into the mold" of another. This is the WORLD'S PROCESS.

TRANSFORMED ("metamorphoo"): This word is the root of our English word "metamorphosis." It signifies dramatic change in nature. It is also translated "transfigured" (in Matthew 17:2) when Jesus' divine nature manifested itself outwardly. In the same way, our inner redeemed nature is to show itself outwardly through our bodies! This is GOD'S PROCESS.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 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.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the **grace given** unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to **think soberly**, according as God hath dealt to every man the **measure of faith**.

Paul is still talking about APPRECIATION for “grace given,” because when we truly realize that GOD was the initiator of our salvation we will “think soberly” (“continual carefulness”) about ourselves. GOD gave us the “measure of faith” – now WE have to choose how we will respond.

How does a Christian act when they are “ALIVE UNTO GOD”?

COORDINATION: They work in unity with others in the Body.

Romans 12:4-5 For as we have **many members in one body**, and all members have not the same office: So we, **being many**, are **one body** in Christ, and every one **members one of another**.

The church displays God’s power to bring together very different people in genuine unity to change the world. Of course, Satan works on man’s unredeemed flesh to try and create division and threaten that unity. The Body of Christ (as seen in the local church) is like your body – it is **POWERFUL** when it is coordinated and **AWKWARD** when it is not!

The different members of the church have different gifts, just as different body parts have different functions. But ALL members and ALL gifts are to work for the benefit of the BODY as a whole. The Greek word for “GIFTS” in Romans 12:6 is the same as the word used for the nine spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Neither one of these passages is an exhaustive list of the many giftings in the Body; rather, they are representative lists.

Romans 12:6-8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether **prophecy**, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or **ministry**, let us wait on our ministering: or he that **teacheth**, on teaching; Or he that **exhorteth**, on exhortation: he that **giveth**, let him do it with simplicity; he that **ruleth**, with diligence; he that sheweth **mercy**, with cheerfulness.

AFFECTION: They genuinely care for others in the Body.

Once he has established our relationships and responsibilities to each other within the Body of Christ, Paul begins to give a list of practical principles to govern the way Christians should interact with each other ...

Romans 12:9-15 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Just doing the things on Paul’s list would eliminate the vast majority of problems between people in every church! But because we are human, issues still arise. So what do you do when a fellow believer hurts you?

REACTION: They let God handle the wrongs done against them.

Romans 12:16-21 Be of the **same mind** one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. **If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.** Dearly beloved, **avenge not yourselves**, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, **Vengeance is mine**; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. **Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

If it is POSSIBLE, as much as lies in YOU, don’t react or retaliate against those who hurt you. You can’t control the actions of others, but you can control yourself! Furthermore, if you defend yourself, the Lord will not defend you! Let GOD’S judgment handle it, because He is the only one who can judge motives anyway. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:35 to emphasize this, and then quotes Proverbs 25:21-22 to instruct us that the way to overcome is not to FIGHT our enemies, but to BLESS them! “Heaping coals of fire” refers to God’s eventual judgment, not your immediate judgment! Let GOD handle the wrongs done against you!

James 1:19-20 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

SUBMISSION: They willingly and cheerfully come under authority.

Romans 13:1-7 Let every soul be **subject** unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: **the powers that be are ordained of God.** Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: **For he is the minister of God to thee for good.** But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, **not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.** For this cause pay ye tribute also: for **they are God’s ministers**, attending continually upon this very thing. **Render therefore to all their dues:** tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

If you resist leadership – either spiritual or secular – you’re actually resisting God, because HE put that leadership in place over your life. Paul says, “They are God’s ministers to you FOR GOOD.” Even when they make mistakes. Even when you disagree. Even when you believe with all your heart they are wrong. Your job is not to argue with or work around their leadership, or to find another leader that agrees with your perspective! Your job is simply to SUBMIT.

“Sub-mission” means putting YOUR mission UNDER (“sub”) someone else and THEIR mission! And you will only know that you’re truly SUBMITTED when you DISAGREE with your leader.

Some Christian have the unbelievable capacity to see themselves as victims even when they are the ones doing wrong! If there is a conflict between you and the leaders God has put in your life, then you’re doing something wrong. “You can’t be right with the Master and wrong with the Pastor!” And this applies to secular leaders as well. Paul is exhorting first century Christians to be subject to pagan Roman leadership! Christians should be the best citizens, the best employees, the best neighbours! Finally, don’t SUBMIT just to avoid the consequences (“for wrath”), but SUBMIT because it is the right way to live (“for conscience sake”). You can respect the “office” even when you might not respect the “man” – so “render to all their dues” (respect their authority) regardless.

Romans 13:8-10 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

“Owe no many any thing” isn’t prohibiting loans, because both Jesus and the Old Testament look favorably on “lending” to others. Rather, Paul is making the point that the BIGGEST DEBT we should have as Christians is to LOVE one another. The Ten Commandments are not mentioned often in the New Testament (Paul quotes several here), and are never seen together as a complete list, because when we LOVE others we AUTOMATICALLY obey God’s Law. **LOVE FULFILLS THE LAW!**

EXPECTATION: They live with Christ’s return in mind.

One of our challenges in the 21st century is that there are so many “religious Christians” around. Their faith doesn’t impact their lifestyle in any practical, observable way. But if you are truly “ALIVE UNTO GOD,” that relationship will affect every moment of your daily life.

Romans 13:11-14 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to **awake** out of sleep: for now is our salvation **nearer than when we believed**. The **night** is far spent, the **day** is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of **darkness**, and let us put on the armour of **light**. Let us walk honestly, **as in the day**; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But **put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make not **provision** for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

It is time to be awake and alert to the signs of the times, because Christ’s return – and our ultimate salvation – is closer now than it has ever been! IT’S ALMOST MORNING – AND WHAT A MORNING THAT WILL BE! The elders preached it, but it’s nearer than when they preached. Some of us have been saved for years, but it’s nearer than when we first believed.

If we live with the expectation of His return, we will “cast off the works of darkness” and we will “put on the armour of light.” In other words, we will live as though every thought and deed was exposed to everyone in broad daylight (“as in the day”), and avoid the sinful activities of the “night.” **IF YOU HAVE TO HIDE IT FROM OTHERS, IT’S A SIN!**

Paul summarizes the idea of living a holy life in one powerful illustration – **“put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”** He uses the image of our outward clothing, which in Scripture represents our thoughts AND our behavior (i.e. you dressed differently if you were appearing before a King!).

Paul says to make no “provision” (Greek “pronoia” – “forethought, plans”) for the flesh. You have to **OUTSMART YOUR FLESH** by living an “expectant” life – expect the devil to attack, and expect Jesus to return!

Romans 1-3 ... The bad news is we are SPIRITUALLY DEAD
(1) Dead in Carnality, (2) Dead in Hypocrisy, (3) Dead Under the Law

Romans 4-5 ... The good news is we can be SPIRITUALLY ALIVE
(4) Alive Through Faith, (5) Alive Through Grace

Romans 6-7 ... The bottom line is ALIVE PEOPLE MUST BE DEAD!
(6) Dead to Sin, (7) Dead to the Law

Romans 8 ... The only hope is DEAD PEOPLE CAN BE ALIVE!

Romans 9-11 ... Israel Interlude: “What About the Jews?”

Romans 12-13 ... (PRACTICAL) We are ALIVE UNTO GOD

Romans 14-16 ... (PRACTICAL) We are ALIVE UNTO OTHERS