

Dead & Alive – Romans, Part 9

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

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

Although there is a lot of "overlap" in this last section of Paul's practical teaching, we've chosen to divide it into two parts ...

- In chapters 12-13, Paul shows us how a Christian should act if they are **ALIVE UNTO GOD**.
- In chapters 14-16, Paul shows us how a Christian should act if they are **ALIVE UNTO OTHERS**.

Remember that Paul was never able to go to Rome until near the end of his life. That "delay" is why we have the book of Romans, written in advance to a group of believers, most of whom he had never met. But though he doesn't know THEM, he knows exactly what they NEED – because we ALL need the power of the GOSPEL in our lives. **Without it, we are hopelessly DEAD ... but with it, we are gloriously ALIVE.**

As he concludes the book of Romans, Paul gives this group of believers some crucial teaching about their relationships within the church. He shows them, in practical terms, that if we are ALIVE UNTO GOD we will also be ALIVE UNTO OTHERS – that is, we will be sensitive to their needs and be concerned about them. If we as God's people are not living the principles of God's Word in our relationships, we certainly can't expect our Christianity to be attractive to anyone outside the church!

Be sure to notice that Paul directs his comments to MATURE believers, not IMMATURE believers ... because it is the MATURE believers that should be the ones to adapt, for the sake of the IMMATURE believers!

Please also notice that, though some of Paul's EXAMPLES apply only to the first century, the PRINCIPLES he is teaching still apply to us today!

Romans 14:1-4 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. **Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.** Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

God's family is not a dysfunctional family – He loves ALL of His children, at whatever stage of maturity they are, and we should too! We should receive those who are weak in the faith, and let them grow at their own pace. It doesn't help anyone to ARGUE over personal (or even Bible) convictions! We must let people know they can BELONG to the church family, even before they BELIEVE everything they need to believe.

Paul's first illustration concerns **EATING MEAT**. There were two sources of meat in the ancient world – the regular market where prices were higher, and the local pagan temples where meat from the sacrifices was always available for a lower price. The more mature members of the church realized that idols weren't real and couldn't contaminate food, so they saved money by purchasing the cheaper meat. Furthermore, if unconverted friends invited them to a feast at which this sacrificial meat was served, these strong Christians might attend. All of this offended the weaker Christians. Many of them had been recently saved out of pagan idolatry, and they could not understand why their fellow believers would want to have anything to do with meat sacrificed to idols!

Paul told mature believers not to judge immature believers, because judging them is not our place! They are GOD'S servants, and it is HIS job to judge them. OUR job is simply to teach them and to MODEL maturity!

This tension between stronger and weaker believers can bring division to a church, OR create a place for us to exercise GRACE!

Romans 14:5-6 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. **Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.** He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Paul's second illustration concerns **SABBATH KEEPING**. Because many believers were converted from Judaism in the early years of the church, they were used to worshipping on the Sabbath (Saturday). However, when Gentiles began to experience conversion, they had no such cultural background. Furthermore, the early church in general had begun to worship on the first day of the week (Sunday), because that's the day Jesus rose from the dead. Some who insisted that "their day was the only right way" were causing controversy. Paul emphasizes that it doesn't matter what day someone observes, only that they observe "their day" as unto the Lord, and that they are faithful in gathering together.

BOTH of Paul's examples concern the Jewish CEREMONIAL law in the first century; they are NOT issues of God's MORAL law, which is eternal. So what is the principle that we should apply today?

Romans 14:7-12 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For 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. **But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.** For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then **every one of us shall give account of himself to God.**

The church is not just a collection of individuals – it is a BODY. So none of us have a right to say, “I’ll do what I want – mind your own business!” NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF. So even in our “personal convictions,” we need to always be conscious of our impact on others in the family of God. It is not our place to judge each other, because someday we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Each one of us will give account of how we treated others – and you don’t want to stand before the Judge having usurped His role by judging others! We will all need mercy at the Judgment Seat, so show others mercy now!

Romans 14:13-17 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but **judge this rather**, that no man put a **stumblingblock** or an **occasion to fall** in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if **thy brother be grieved with thy meat**, now walkest thou not charitably. **Destroy not him with thy meat**, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: **For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink**; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Rather than judging each other, judge this! Don't be guilty of putting a stumblingblock in your brother's way by your actions. How horrible if your actions give him an occasion to fall! Paul teaches that, although eating meat is morally “neutral,” if it's going to hurt someone else it should be avoided. **We'll come back to this idea of “meat” in a moment ...**

Romans 14:18-23 For he that in these things serveth Christ is **acceptable to God**, and **approved of men**. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for **peace**, and things wherewith one may **edify** another. **For meat destroy not the work of God.** All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. **Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.** And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: **for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.**

Just like our earthly families are in our hearts and minds all the time, so we should be thinking about our spiritual family as we live our daily lives. If we get it right in the area of personal convictions, we are both “acceptable to God” AND “approved of men.” So, in these “neutral” areas, follow two principles: (1) be sure your actions keep “peace” in God’s family, and (2) be sure your actions “edify” God’s family. We never want our actions to encourage a brother to violate his own convictions, or to cause him to lose confidence in our own Christian example.

Paul's statements about “MEAT” in Romans 14:

- if thy brother be grieved with thy **MEAT** ...
- destroy not him with thy **MEAT** ...
- the kingdom of God is not **MEAT** ...
- for **MEAT** destroy not the work of God ...

Here's the principle that we should apply today:

- if thy brother be grieved with thy **PREFERENCE** ...
- destroy not him with thy **PREFERENCE** ...
- the kingdom of God is not **PREFERENCE** ...
- for **PREFERENCE** destroy not the work of God ...

Cultivate your own relationship with God, but don't impose your personal convictions on others. If you've ever had an ARGUMENT with someone over preference, over prophecy, over doctrine, over standards, over church, etc. then you're not doing this right! **Your job is not to WIN WITH AN ARGUMENT, but to WITNESS WITH A LIFESTYLE.** Show them how wonderful Christian maturity is BY BEING MATURE!

STRONG BELIEVERS: If you have any question about the IMPACT of an activity on yourself or on others, ABSTAIN from it, or you will cause yourself or others to experience condemnation.

WEAK BELIEVERS: If an activity isn't consistent with what you believe, then that activity is WRONG for you, regardless of who else is doing it. ABSTAIN from it, or you will experience condemnation.

Romans 15:1-6 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 neighbour **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. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be **likeminded one toward another** according to Christ Jesus: That ye may **with one mind and one mouth** glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our spiritual maturity is revealed by our willingness to GIVE UP OUR RIGHTS so others can be helped. Like loving parents make sacrifices for their children, mature believers sacrifice to help younger Christians grow in the faith. Real Christians are willing to even “carry” younger believers, in order to help them in their spiritual development.

WITH ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH: The church needs to be like a spiritual “choir” – glorifying God TOGETHER through our lives!

Romans 15:7-12 Wherefore **receive ye one another, as Christ also received us** to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: **And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy;** as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

RECEIVE ONE ANOTHER! If God was willing to bring SINNERS into His family, how much more should CHRISTIANS accept each other!

Because the church started among the Jews, many of these “Jewish Christians” had a head start on maturity. It stands to reason that many of the “immature believers” in the first century were the Gentiles who came into the church later. That’s why Paul again reminds them that it was always God’s will to include the Gentiles in the New Testament church.

Verse 9 quotes Psalm 18:49.

Verse 10 quotes Deuteronomy 32:43.

Verse 11 quotes Psalm 117:1.

Verse 12 quotes Isaiah 11:10.

These verses are from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms – God’s New Testament purpose can be seen throughout the Old Testament!

Romans 15:13-16 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are **full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.** Nevertheless, brethren, **I have written the more boldly unto you** in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the **minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles**, ministering the gospel of God, that the **offering up of the Gentiles** might be **acceptable**, being **sanctified** by the Holy Ghost.

Paul again addresses the mature (typically Jewish) believers at this point – “I know you have the maturity to be admonishing each other, but I have written boldly to you because God called me to reach the Gentiles!” His words in verse 16 echo Romans 12:1 – “holy, acceptable unto God.” He wants to present to God a church full of formerly sinful Gentiles who have been made holy – “sanctified by the Holy Ghost.”

Romans 15:17-21 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, **I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.** Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation: But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Paul COULD boast about the wonderful things that God has done through his ministry, but he WON’T boast – except in the Lord! Paul was a true missionary Apostle – his ministry was to open up new churches and reach new people. (Verse 21 quotes Isaiah 52:15.)

Romans 15:22-29 For which cause also I have been **much hindered** from coming to you. But now having **no more place** in these parts, and having a great desire these **many years** to come unto you; Whensoever I take my journey into **Spain**, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and **their debtors they are.** For if the Gentiles have been made **partakers of their spiritual things**, their duty is also to **minister unto them in carnal things.** When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into **Spain.** And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Because he has been so occupied with his ministry in other places, Paul has been delayed in coming to Rome for “many years.” He has spread the Gospel so effectively that there is “no more place” to start a church in the territory east of Rome, so he wants to travel westward to Spain and stop in Rome on the way. History indicates that he never got to Spain because he went to Rome as a prisoner and was martyred there. He is presently traveling to Jerusalem because the Gentile churches had been taking up an offering for the “mother church” there, now destitute. Paul saw this as both an obligation and an opportunity to promote unity.

Romans 15:30-33 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye **strive together with me in your prayers** to God for me; **That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea**; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be **accepted of the saints**; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

“STRIVE TOGETHER” = “agonize” (Greek “agonidzo”). This word pictures an athlete giving his best in a contest, and could be better expressed “wrestling together.” PRAYER is not a casual activity when we are doing the work of God, it must be FERVENT in order to avail much!

Paul's worst enemies are the Jews in Judea, and yet he is going there to deliver an offering to Jewish Christians! Although this prayer request is certainly not answered in the way Paul desired (he was arrested in Jerusalem, and went to Rome as a prisoner!), the circumstances that eventually unfolded were all part of God's sovereign will. His “jail ministry” is why we have much of the New Testament today!

Chapter 16 is like a personal postscript at the end of Romans – nowhere else in the New Testament does Paul name so many people who are dear to his heart and valuable to the church. To paraphrase the old hymn, this list of his relatively unknown fellow-labourers could be called, **“When the Roll is Called DOWN HERE, I'll be there!”**

Romans 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

People were BEHEADED in Paul's day for being Christians! These people “risked their necks” and “stuck their necks out” for Paul and for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do we have the same dedication today?

Romans 16:17-18 Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them**. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Paul says to do two things with those that damage the church's unity:

- MARK THEM – take note of who they are
- AVOID THEM – turn away from them (“lean away” from their spirit)

WHY? Because they lead people away from DOCTRINE, because they serve their own DESIRES (“belly”), and because their LOGIC (“good words”) and ELOQUENCE (“fair speeches”) mask a deceptive spirit!

Romans 16:19-20 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you **wise unto that which is good**, and **simple concerning evil**. And the God of peace shall **bruise Satan under your feet shortly**. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

“SIMPLE” (Greek “akeraios”) = “harmless, free from guile, innocent, like a little child,” literally “unmixed” (used of wines or metals)

To be INNOCENT of evil is not to be IGNORANT of evil. The only way to recognize the counterfeit is to be completely familiar with the genuine! We could also say that God wants us to live our lives in such a way that we are **DEAD TO EVIL**, and **ALIVE TO GOOD**. That's the way to keep ourselves ready for the Rapture at all times!

“SHORTLY” (Greek “en tachei”) – not “soon” in the sense of time; primary meaning is “speedily, quickly,” also can mean “unexpectedly”

This word is used three times in the last chapter of the Bible ...

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come **quickly**: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:12 And, behold, I come **quickly**; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Revelation 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come **quickly**. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

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