

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to the book of Roman chapter 12

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this amazing letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to believers in Rome and to us today about Gospel of Grace.

The cornerstone of our faith

That it is all about grace –

That is the doctrine that Paul taught us in the first eleven chapters of Romans –

That we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone

It is all about Jesus – His life, death and resurrection

He did all the work –

Our response is to simply receive it – embrace it and live it.

And so Paul from chapter 12 to 16 – he has been showing us what does it look like for a believer who has responded to His grace, the believer who abides in Jesus, the believer who leans on the Holy Spirit in all he or she does, the believer who is allowing God to transform him / her by the renewing of the mind.

The believer who continues to grow in grace and begins to love the things that Jesus loves and think like Jesus and act like Jesus as we allow the Holy Spirit to do a work in us and through us.

So – Paul tells us what this looks like – practically.

What does our response to grace look like – in action.

We understand who we are in Christ

We understand our role in this fellowship – that God has gathered us here – that we are not here by accident –

Paul tells us how we are to treat one another in the fellowship

That God has equipped every believer with at least one spiritual gifting – by grace, for the purpose of serving one another.

We are members of a family

Loving one another without hypocrisy

Giving preference to one another

Showing brotherly love to each

Actively seeking those who are in need and then meeting that need.

This is how we are to minister to each other within the fellowship – this is the easy part.

In our study this morning – Paul is going to focus on how we are to minister to those who want nothing to do with Jesus, those who oppose grace, those who oppose the gospel – those who persecute us for Christ's sake

Let's pray...

Read Text

**[Pro 16:7 NKJV] 7 When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.**

I like the way the NLT –

When people's lives please the LORD, even their enemies are at peace with them.

God is able to make even our enemies to be at peace with us.

And that is something we all want

We want people to be at peace with us –

We don't want enemies and we don't want to be someone's enemy

We don't want people to hate us

We don't want to deal with trouble or opposition or difficulties – we just want to worship Jesus

This is one of God's blessings – we abide in Him, we lean on the Holy Spirit – we walk in the path that He sets for us – He takes care of the rest.

Now – for a little context – as Paul writes his letter to the believers in Rome –

Paul fully understood that the believers in the early church and especially in Rome - they faced unbelievable opposition and persecution.

They faced severe hardships – for their newfound faith.

Not only from their families who shunned them – but from society at large

People who mocked them relentlessly

People who went out of their way to make their lives difficult – just because they were Christians.

Now -

The definition of (enemy) is a person who is actively opposed or hostile to someone

And for many of us – names begin to come to our mind – individuals who have wronged us and are continuing to wrong – individuals who talk behind our backs – individuals who make our lives difficult.

Individuals who bum us out

And our attitude is – I hate my enemies.

And my prayer this morning as we go through this section is not that we may be distracted by those individuals – but that we may be drawn in by the Holy Spirit to respond to the our enemies the way God wants us to respond to our enemies – and as we will see, He wants us to love and forgive them.

You see loved ones –

It is easy to love people who love us – but how do we love someone who is committed to persecuting us, how do we love someone who is committed to humiliating us, to embarrassing us, to abusing us.

Again – this is something that God does – it is not something that we can will ourselves to do.

Let's go ahead and jump in our text -

**[Rom 12:14-21 NKJV] 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.**

The word that Paul uses here for persecution – is a word used when someone is coming after you – chasing you down relentlessly to harm you physically or emotionally – they want to hurt you

The world's response and our flesh' response is – if someone hurts me – I am going to hurt them back.

I am going to give them a taste of their own medicine.

I am going to hurt them in the same way they hurt me.

But Paul makes it very clear –

Because we are a new creation in Christ – we don't respond like the world.

We don't respond in the flesh – we don't retaliate, we don't seek retribution

We bless them –

We love them –

Notice – we are not simply to endure persecution

We are to heap well wishes on those who persecute us

We are to pray a blessing upon their lives – not pray a curse upon their lives.

And there are a few examples in the bible –

Stephen – Acts 7 – you can read it for homework.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – Stephen gives the religious rulers a history lesson of the Jews continual rebellion against God

Stephen calls them stiff necked

They are cut to the heart – they stone Stephen

As they are dropping these huge boulders upon Stephen – Stephen prays –

He didn't pray – Lord curse these stiff necked religious rulers to hell

He prayed

“Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” – a blessing

Jesus on the cross –

Back torn open, His face is bloodies, beaten, mocked –

With His last few breathes of His life – He didn't cry out – “Father, get them - reign fire upon all those who did this to me”

He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” - a blessing

Jesus lived it out – He just didn't teach it – He showed us

Turn to Matthew 5 –

Because we might be struggling a bit with what Paul is saying – “I don't agree with what Paul is saying.”

If that is the case – we see Jesus say the same them thing.

**[Mat 5:43-47 NKJV] 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'**

BTW – this is never found in scriptures – we are never given permission to hate our enemies

this was the misinterpretation of the law by the rabbi's and the religious rulers of the day – they taught this.

We love those who love God – fellow Jews

And we are to hate everyone else – Gentiles

And so Jesus tells His disciples and us –

That this is not the heart of God

It is not the character of God

It is not His will for our lives

**44 "But I say to you,**

Pay attention to the verbs that Jesus instructs us on our response to our enemies -

**love** your enemies, **bless** those who curse you, **do good** to those who hate you, and **pray** for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more [than others]? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

Love, bless, do good, pray – that is our response



And Jesus says our response is to be like this because we are different than the world.

Even nonbelievers are able to love those that love them back

But the believer – walking in the Spirit – loves and blesses their enemy.

It is one thing to sit here and agree with what Jesus says –

But, we need the power of God to actually do it.

We need to be doers of the word – not just hearers of the word

This is what sets us apart – how we respond to our enemies.

And if our response is the same as the world's – and we hate our enemies

And we only love those who love us back

Then -

How can we convince a watching world that Jesus is really at the heart of who we are and what we are.

Some might say – but I can't love my enemies – it is too hard

But the bible says we must.

We just read it earlier – Jesus said, but I say to you (speaking to us) love your enemies.

Not a warm fuzzy feeling kind of love – but an agape love, a sacrificial love, a selfless love.

Think about the impact that love will have them.

But you don't understand Herb – my enemy is going to think I am weak – my enemy is going to think I am a patsy – my enemy is going to think I am a coward.

Some might – but, not all of them

Not every person will be convinced

Not every person will be won to Christ

But each of them must be given a strong witness that can be used by the Holy Spirit

Earlier I mentioned Stephen -

One of the guys that was there – Saul of Tarsus

Saul never forgets the image of seeing Stephen praying for a blessing upon those who are stoning him.

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

The tendency of this broken world and our flesh is that when our enemy weeps – we rejoice – it's about time they get what they deserve.

and when our enemy rejoices – we weep.

Why should they get blessing – they are jerks. They are bad people.

Paul tells us that for the believer – we are to be radically different.

We don't celebrate when bad things happen to them

We don't mope when good things happen to them

We are to sympathize with our enemy –

We rejoice when they rejoice and we weep when they weep.

Why?

Because that is what love does.

We cannot say we love our enemies and at the same time say – I don't care if they are happy or sad or say I am not interested in other people.

Because if that is our mentality – then we are not interested in love.

Because love is interested in others

Love is interested in what they think

Love is interested in how they feel

Love is God's way

**16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.**

The idea that Paul gives to us in this verse is that love unites.

We are called to humility

We are called to be in harmony with one another

This is the same thing that Paul mentioned earlier in the chapter in verse 3

**[Rom 12:3 NKJV] 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think [of himself] more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.**

This means we are not to be partial with one another

We are not to be proud and think more highly of ourselves than others

And we are not to bring division within the church

Love unites

Love doesn't allow for snobbery

Love is God's way

Self is the world's way

Self is the flesh's way – it is the - what about me mentality, what about me????

Paul is warning us about inflated egos

And throughout the scriptures we see the dangers of pride

Turn to 2 Chronicles 26

Here in 2 Chronicles 26 – we have the events of King Uzziah –

And King Uzziah for the most part – did things that were right.

But he developed an inflated ego

He wasn't content in simply being a king – he also wanted to be a priest.

**[2Ch 26:16-21 NKJV] 16 But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to [his] destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD--valiant men. 18 And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "[It is] not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You [shall have] no honor from the LORD God." 19 Then Uzziah became furious; and he [had] a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. 20 And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he [was]**

leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. 21 King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD.

Pride always demands

Pride has selfish requests

We are to have a humble mindset like Jesus

**17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.**

Paul knows how quick we are to dish out what we've been served.

We tend to react without thinking to the crud people hurl at us.

So Paul warns us - We must not return evil for evil.

Instead, use it as an opportunity to overcome evil by doing good.

Question – was Paul a recipient of evil treatment? Yes

Was Jesus a recipient of evil treatment? Yes

So we respond in love

And so we do things in such a way that everyone can see are honorable.

We develop a good reputation

**[2Co 8:21 NKJV] 21 providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

There is a sense in which it is important that people see that we are walking uprightly before God.

**18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

There are going to be people who we will never be able to get along with

There are going to be people who have made up their mind that they just don't like you

People who are going to look at things differently than me and you.

People who we are not going to be able to have peace with

But here is what Paul is saying – it should never be that we were the ones responsible for "disturbing the peace" or keeping the war going.

We're going to have strained relationships; we need to make sure that it is not coming from us.

Blessed are the peacemakers – for they shall be sons of God

**19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but [rather] give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance [is] Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.**

We are not to retaliate

We are not to seek vengeance

We are to allow for the biblical doctrine of God's wrath and God's judgment.

We are to grasp that there is a God and He will judge and He will judge fairly

**20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."**

We're not to fight evil with evil, we're to do good & by doing so, prove ourselves the people of God.

You see – what Paul is saying here is that if our enemy has wronged us – hurt us – offended us – we are not to just have the mindset of – oh well, God is going to judge them -

Paul says we are to serve our enemies, we are to continue to meet their needs -

And when we do this – Paul says we will heap coals on our enemies head –

Now – there are many explanations to what this means

But again we keep everything in context –

And I think the word heap is the important phrase here –

The idea is that when we do good to our enemies – the heaping of coals – they will feel the heat of conviction and may ultimately repent and come to faith.



We have to remember that it was the goodness of God that led us to repentance –

Me sitting in an assistant pastor's office

Telling me that Jesus loves me

That He died for me

And so – by following the example of Jesus – we help the enemies in our life see His great love as it flows from us.

**21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Paul exhorts us –

Not to go the way of the world -

Remember Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind

Paul says – do it God's way.

Lean on the Holy Spirit

And as we lean on Him, we are empowered, we are changed – from the inside - with His Spirit and His love and then, we overcome as we walk in faith and walk in His grace. Amen!

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

