

## **Bibles???**

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

#### **Baby Dedication – Violet Nicole Posko**

Turn your bibles with me to Romans 12

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study of this truly amazing letter that the Holy Spirit inspired our brother – Pablo - the Apostle Paul

To take his pen and begin to write to a group of believers in Rome and to us today about the Gospel of Grace.

God's unmerited, undeserved love and favor toward man.

When we truly deserve nothing but judgment, God gives nothing but love –

He made the way

He did the work

He provided the One way to avoid judgment, by sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to take that judgment upon Himself.

So that anyone, anywhere – even this morning – by faith in Jesus Christ can have their sins forgiven.

His perfect plan – He is the ultimate source.

He is the perfect channel in which that plan was executed – He orchestrates the circumstances in our lives by which this plan is presented to us.

And it is all to Him

He is the Goal.

All things are done for Him.

The Gospel of Grace

This is what Paul has been instructing us in the first eleven chapters of Romans.

In Chapters 1-3 – Paul instructed us on the problem of sin.

**[Rom 3:23 NKJV] 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

In chapters 4 and 5 Paul instructed us on the provision of the Gospel of Grace

**[Rom 5:8 NKJV] 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

In ch 6-8 – Paul instructed us on the power of the gospel of grace –

As Paul gives us insight on his own struggle with the flesh.

Nothing good dwells in me – the things I want to do I don't. The things I don't want to do – I do.

And the in 9-11 – Paul instructs us on the perplexity of the gospel.

The promise that God will continue to be faithful even in the midst of human failure – we saw that in His faithfulness to Israel – despite their present stumbling.

And we learned in these chapters that if God is going to keep His promises to the nation of Israel – He is going to keep His promises to us – the believer. Those that put their faith and trust in Him.

All of this is theology –

All of it is instruction –

Paul has instructed us in it so that we may grasp it and embrace it and live in it.

You see, our study this morning begins the practical portion of Paul's letter.

Up to this point – Paul hasn't told us to do anything.

But now – he wants us to ask ourselves -

What is our response to the Gospel of Grace

How do we live it

And I mentioned it last week –

If we have a wrong perspective of who God is – we will have a wrong perspective of the gospel of grace and I want to add something for our study this morning – we will also have a wrong response to the Gospel of grace.

Let's pray...

We are only doing one verse this morning –

We are actually only doing half a verse – but I want to go ahead and read the first two verses for context.

Read Text – Romans 12:1-2

What is our response to the Gospel of grace???

How do we live each day by grace???

What does it look like?

Unfortunately, like many things – grace is often misunderstood.

Grace is often viewed by many through two different lenses / two very different extremes.

And if we have a wrong perspective of God – and a wrong perspective of grace – we might even find ourselves looking at grace through one of these extremes.

The first extreme that many people fall into is – legalism.

They become legalist

The list makers.

The rule keepers

They are all about the rules.

Have you done?

Why haven't you done?

They focus on what people wear

What they do and what they don't do.

From their perspective – grace is all about action

They have a sense that they are ok with God but that they are not good with God – that they have to do more.

So they are constantly looking for things to do and in doing so – they focus on the actions of others.

And so the legalist is to wave after wave of guilt and condemnation –

They can never live up to their set of rules and neither can anyone else.

The other extreme – is lawlessness

The believer who says –

I have the right to do anything –

They quote 1 Cor 6:12 All things are lawful for me – and they stop. They don't read the rest of the verse.

“You can’t tell me what to do - grace”

They view grace as permission to live anyway they want to during the week – they come to church on Sunday – they get that check mark – feel better about themselves – I am in good standing with God again and then go back doing the same thing they were doing before.

And look forward to the following Sunday when the process can be repeated again.

That church – is not grace.

That is foolishness for the Christian.

Jesus Christ did not die on a cross for us so that we can live the way we want to live.

That is not the heart of God for the believer.

We are to live a life that pleases God.

We are to live a life that draws people to Him and not to us.

Turn to 1 Peter 2

**[1Pe 2:15-16 NKJV] 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.**

So – what Paul is going to point out to us over the next couple of months – from now until the middle of chapter 15 - is that the gospel of grace is lived out in our lives is by godly action.

There is a balance between doctrine and action

The right doctrine will lead to the right action

And by right action –

Paul is going to instruct us on the importance of understanding that we have been set apart for God. That we have been consecrated by Him, for Him

And really this is a pattern in all of Paul's letter

Doctrine is always first – followed by service.

Commitment

Because the committed Christian is the one who serves.

Because that is our identity in Christ

We serve – not because we have to serve.

We serve because we are servants.

So let's look at our verse -

[Rom 12:1 NKJV] 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, [which is] your reasonable service.

Paul opens up chapter 12 here –

And he says – I beg you

I am begging you (he is talking to me and you) to respond to the gospel.

I am begging you to let the gospel of grace change your behavior, change your actions, change your life.

He wants to let us know that after all he has said – he has something very important to tell us.

Paul wants us to understand – that....

Christianity is not simply a matter of raising a hand at a church service and thinking that everything is fine – that we can live the way we want to live –

No – Paul is begging us to respond to the grace of God.

To understand that our right standing before God is not found in anything that we have done – but on what Jesus has done for us, not a list of do's and don'ts and regulations – but truly, a lifestyle of relationship with a God who loves us.



It is very important loved ones to understand that Paul is not begging us to try harder – because that is the mistake that many believers make.

To try harder by praying more

To try harder to not let people annoy me

To try harder by reading our bibles more

To try harder through church attendance –

To try harder by being on church on time (hint hint!!!)

And we let God know that we are trying harder for Him

And the problem with trying harder is that it gives us a false sense that everything is going to be ok – after, we are trying harder – we feel like we are fully committing ourselves.

The error in this loved ones – is that we put our relationship with God all on our shoulders and on our good deeds.

Day 1 – trying harder – everything is good. Got all the things done that I was trying harder on.

Day 6 – something happens. Car breaks down. Trouble at work. Health issues –

Guess what – those things that I made a commitment to try harder – not going to happen.

We walk into the trap of basing our Christian walk on trying harder or doing more.

Does God delight in our prayers? Yes

Does He delight in us seeking His face through the reading of scriptures and listening to sermons? Yes

Does He take great joy when the saints gather together and worship Him and grow in His grace and fellowship together and serve and love one another? Yes

But it is not the means by which He relates to you and me.

He relates to you and me – not on what we do – but on what He has already done.

Turn with me to James 2–

**[Jas 2:14-17 NKJV] 14 What [does it] profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what [does it] profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**

Now – turn to Ephesians 2

**[Eph 2:8-10 NKJV] 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

Now – this portion of James and this portion of Ephesians – there are many people that take them out of context and the legalist will say that James is saying that we relate to God based on our works and then the individual on the other side will say that Paul is saying the complete opposite.

So then people will say that James and Paul contradict each other.

But the truth church is that they don't contradict each other – they complement each other.

James and Paul are saying the same thing – just from two different perspectives.

Paul is referring to our entry into salvation –

We enter into a right relationship with God by receiving God's free gift. Grace

James is saying – this is how we express our faith.

This is what it looks like.

There are works in our lives

We actually care about people that are poor.

Those that have needs.

We do something about it.

We stand up for those who can't speak for themselves.

Why?

Because that work of Jesus Christ is flowing through our lives is being manifested through good works.

We are not saved by works –

We are saved for good works.

James 2:14-17 – Is actually the portion of Romans that we started this morning –

Ephesians 2:8-9 – when we look at it closely – It is a summary of Romans 1-11, the gospel of grace

Ephesians 2:10 – is actually a summary of Romans 12-13-14-15, the response to the gospel of grace.

We are His workmanship

God desires and even requires service from each and every person who names the name of Jesus.

Who says they love Jesus

Who says they walk with Jesus

So – Paul after presenting to us the gospel of grace – he wants us to respond to it the right way.

To do the right thing. The Godly thing -

And notice the basis of Paul's appeal –

By the mercies of God.

Now, very important to understand.

Our response to the Gospel of grace is not so that we can obtain God's mercies.

Because for the believer – we have already been beneficiaries of God's mercies and we still continue to be the beneficiaries of His mercies – every morning.

The mercies of forgiveness.

The mercies of justification.

The mercies of assurance.

And because He has given us grace and He has shown us mercy and because He has imparted to us righteousness, we are forgiven, we are accepted, we're no longer condemned, we're no longer guilty –

And because of all of these things

Because He is so merciful toward us

Because He does not give us what we deserve

We respond the right way

We commit ourselves to be an empty vessel that He can use for His glory

We submit our lives to the hands of the Potter.

Again, we are His workmanship.

There is no greater incentive church to godly holy living – than thinking on the great and wonderful truths of God's love.

**[Lam 3:22-23 NKJV] 22 [Through] the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 [They are] new every morning; Great [is] Your faithfulness.**

Our commitment and service to Jesus is motivated not by force –

Paul doesn't write to us – I beseech you brethren on the basis of force or fear or guilt – but by love and gratitude.

It's not because we are totally afraid of God that we serve Him, but because we love Him so much. And we love Him only because He has loved us.

I want you to notice that Paul doesn't say – clean up your act first, then come to God.

He just says, think of God's mercies – worship Him in spirit and in truth and give Him your entire life – give Him everything because that is the very next thing he says –

Church – always remember, the motive for serving Him is never guilt –

it is always grace.

The motive of drawing near to God is His goodness and His grace that when we draw near to God, He draws near to us.

It is always based on grace

The last portion that we are going to look at here in the first half of verse one -

**that you present your bodies a living sacrifice**

When we grasp the Gospel of grace – when we grasp the mercies that God has bestowed upon our lives –

The response is to voluntarily present our bodies a living sacrifice.

We offer ourselves completely in a decisive act of dedication –

It is a gift that is given once and for all – not in bits and pieces.

Not when we are ready or we think we have figured it out.

When Paul says that we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, he means the whole person, body soul, and spirit

This is the key to discovering the will of God.

We give ourselves completely to God

**[Pro 3:5-6 NKJV] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.**

What a joy it is to put our complete trust in God

What a joy it is to be able to live our lives where we are trusting God in every area in all of our ways.

The difficulty for us is that when certain things happen in our lives – the tendency is to lean on our own understanding and lean on our own experience and on our own knowledge.

As Paul challenges us to present ourselves as living sacrifices –

We need to remember that there are only two other mentions of living sacrifices in the bible –

1<sup>st</sup> one – Isaac – we all know the story. Gen 22

Isaac was not only Abraham's son – he was the son of the promise. He was the son of hope because God had a plan and purpose that was going to unfold in the generations to come.



And God tells Abraham

“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

And Abraham was convinced that if he was going to sacrifice his son – that God was still going to have to keep His promise.

The thing about a living sacrifice is that it has to be a willing sacrifice – and one of the things I have always mentioned about Isaac is that he was a grown man – it was not like he was a 6 year old.

When Abraham tells Isaac that he was going to be the sacrifice – Isaac could have said, “Not today old man”

Isaac in humility and submission, willingly went forward with it.

Jesus is the other instance of a living sacrifice

And Jesus voluntarily offered Himself as the sacrifice for sin.

It a commitment

So Paul wants us to ask ourselves the question –

Have we presented ourselves?

Have we committed ourselves?

Have we consecrated ourselves?

Paul's argument – we present ourselves as a living sacrifice because it is the right thing to do – because of everything that God has done for me and you.

An old dead guy – I haven't done one of these in a while -

David Livingstone – he was a Scottish physician and missionary to Africa in the 1800's

In his journal entry – he wrote,

“People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paying back a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind and a bright hope of glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege.”

**Any opportunity we have to serve others is a privilege.**

Always remember that, according to the scriptures, all we deserve is eternal separation from God. It's only His great love for us that has saved us.

No longer living for self, we live for Him

AMEN

And we are not even done with verse 1 -

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.

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.'

