

Paul's Letter to the Romans Lesson 9

Everything changed for Israel with the birth of the Messiah in 4 BC; moreover, she was broken off from God's plan in 30 AD when the Messiah was crucified, buried, and resurrected. Remember Paul's words near the end of chapter 11:

Romans 11:28-29 From the standpoint of the gospel they [*Nation of Israel*] are enemies for your [*believers in the church*] sake, but from the standpoint of *God's* choice they [*Nation of Israel*] are beloved for the sake of the fathers; ²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Israel had stumbled over the stumbling stone of the Messiah. The Israelites had longed for Him, they had pleaded for Him, they had searched for Him, but when He arrived, they rejected Him. To this day the Israel has rejected Him and will continue to do so until the middle of the Tribulation. With Israel's rejection, the Gentile world received a blessing. The gospel message intended for Israel was shared with the rest of the nations of the world. Jews and Gentiles could become children of God by placing their faith in the Messiah. All of Israel is broken off from the root of God and only believers in the Messiah are grafted into the vine that is supported by God. When a Jew is grafted into the root because of his belief in the Messiah, a natural branch has been restored. When a Gentile is grafted into the root because of his belief, a wild branch has been adopted into the family of God. Both are now part of the church and they are no longer Jew or Gentile, but followers of the way and are called Christians.

Beginning in Chapter 12 of Paul's letter to the Romans, Paul provides a list of the principles that Christians should live by in their lives since they have experienced the mercies of God through salvation. Although this list is applicable to all Christians, based on the context of the letter, Paul's main target for this list is the Jewish Christian who is struggling within the Roman Church.

Romans 12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the **mercies of God**, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Mercies of God – Speaking primarily to the Jews, Paul addresses their spiritual service of worship. In the past, Jewish worship incorporated all sorts of rituals, but Paul has written eleven chapters striving to change their understanding. Therefore, Paul begins this list with a point that strikes at the core of their past worship practices. Instead of performing all sorts of outward rituals in their spiritual worship, Paul directs them toward their own bodies. The first act of "spiritual service of worship" deals with how the Christian controls and uses his body in all aspects of living.

²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Mercies of God – The standard of the world has always been in opposition to the standard of God. The world sets rules that, although they are legal in man's eyes, are far from the will of God for a Christian's life. Christians must strive to do only those things which are good, acceptable, and perfect in God's eyes.

³For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Mercies of God – As a Christian lives, he must use sound judgment, especially when it involves personal issues. In the context of this Roman letter, Paul is most likely addressing the Christian Jews' opinion of their status over Gentiles. Since there is no difference between a Jew and a Gentile in Christ, neither should think one is better than the other. Both have faith in the Savior and both should be mindful of their positions in the Lord's plan.

⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Mercies of God – In His plan, the Lord has mercifully bestowed on each Christian a gift according to His grace. We cannot obtain one of these gifts on our own. It has nothing to do with talent; it has everything to do with how the Holy Spirit is operating through an individual Christian. The phrase *let each exercise them accordingly* is not in the most original and reliable texts and it confuses this passage, leading to a thought that we have control over the operation of the gift. We cannot control these gifts; it is the operation of the Holy Spirit's work through our daily lives. Through some members of the Church, the Holy Spirit speaks prophecy – the telling of all the truths of God. When Paul says, "according to the proportion of his faith," faith is better translated truth.

- The prophet excels in telling all the truth of God which the Holy Spirit has revealed to him.
- Service is the relief and attendance we give to others.
- Teaching is the instruction of the doctrines of God. This teaching is different from prophecy. The prophet tells the stories of God, persuading a person to come to the Savior. The teacher teaches a person how to live his new life with the Savior.
- The exhorter brings solace and comfort to the lives of others.
- The giver provides the resources to do the work of the Lord.

- The leaders keep the Christians on God's plan.
- The merciful cheerfully show all people compassion.

⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Mercies of God – Because of the mercies of God in the life of a Christian, love must be sincere; fake love will never be accepted by God. The Christian must also detest evil and latch onto all that is good in God's eyes.

¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Mercies of God – Verses 10 through 13 describe how Christians are to be devoted to one another in the church. All facets are of equal importance in this list of behavior.

- Brotherly love can be summed up in the word "kindness". We are to be kind to all.
- Giving preference to one another in honor means to esteem one another.
- Not lagging behind in diligence calls all Christians into action to help other Christians in need. Christians should not be slow to help if the Lord has provided the resources.
- Being fervent in spirit is the picture of a Christian who glows with the radiance of the Lord at all times.
- Rejoicing in hope means to show gladness in all the promises of the Lord.
- Persevering in tribulation means to be patient when troubles come.
- Devoted to prayer actually means to pray instantly about all things that happen in a person's life.
- Contributing to the needs of the saints means to share with other Christians in other communities which are in times of struggle and trials.
- Practicing hospitality is helping those we do not know who are in need.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.

Mercies of God – A Christian should not retaliate toward a person who has persecuted him. He should speak well of his persecutors.

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

Mercies of God – It is often difficult to rejoice with those who are rejoicing because our pride gets in the way and we often covet that which others have. Yet Christians must never covet; we should truthfully rejoice when others are rejoicing. Weeping when others weep is much easier for Christians. We do not want anyone to suffer loss or heartache. In rejoicing or weeping, Christians must stand beside each other.

¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Mercies of God – Christians are to treat everyone with the same respect for all are equal in the Lord.

¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

Mercies of God – Because of the mercies of God, this verse might be better translated "Never injure someone who has injured you. Provide and do what is right in the sight of all men."

¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Mercies of God – It is not always possible to live at peace with all men. Paul must have understood the struggle because in this verse he placed the emphasis on the Christian. The Christian standpoint he must strive to live at peace, but if one comes waging war, the Christian must protect his family.

¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

Mercies of God – Taken from Deuteronomy, Paul expects the Christian never to take revenge, but to wait on God. God promises in time to avenge the Christian's sufferings at the hands of another.

Deut. 32:35 Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them.

²⁰"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD."

Mercies of God – Quoting from Proverbs, Paul instructs the Christian to care for his enemies' basic needs. This merciful act brings great emotional struggle to the enemy.

Proverbs 25:21-22 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; ²²For you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.

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

Mercies of God - Evil surrounds every person's life and a Christian is not exempt from this basic struggle. He should not be conquered by evil; instead, drown the evil with good.