

## A NEW LIFESTYLE IN JESUS

Romans 12:1-21

Key Verse: 12:1

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship."

We want to study Romans chapters 12-16 to prepare ourselves to live as God's precious children, even though we have to live in this confused world. As we have studied, Romans chapters 1-8 are about basic Christianity. When God had to reveal his wrath and anger on sinners because of their sins, he revealed his righteousness through his Son Jesus Christ. So when we believe in Jesus we are clothed with the righteousness of God. Part 2, chapters 9-11, teaches us God's world salvation purpose through his chosen people Israel. God made a plan of salvation and chose Israel as a priestly nation. This part teaches us that when God's people do not have world mission vision or personal missionary calling they have no part with God at all: they cannot be God's people. Part 3, chapters 12-16, teaches us the Christian ethic, that is the [application](#) of our basic Christianity to the practical life of faith. In light of the worldly consensus, this part seems to be of no use. But when we cling to the teachings of these chapters we will see that we are blessed in the long run both materially and spiritually. Today let's learn about our new lifestyle in Jesus.

First, we must live lives that are holy and pleasing to God. (1) Look at verse 1. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship." Paul begins this part with the word, "therefore." Here, "therefore" refers to the basic Christianity he taught in chapters 1 through 8. 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." In the past we were the objects of God's wrath and condemnation. But through the atoning sacrifice of his Son we are ransomed. We also become precious children of God and heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. (Ro 8:17, 2Ti 2:12) Since we are clothed with the [love](#) of God and with the grace of our [Lord Jesus Christ](#), we should live lives that are holy and pleasing to God.

How can we live lives that are pleasing to God? Verse 1 suggests that we must offer our bodies as living sacrifices. This phrase really scares us, as if we had to be a lamb before the slaughterer. But when Paul said, "to offer your bodies as living sacrifices," it meant that we should not offer our bodies to please our emotional feelings or physical pleasures, but to offer our bodies to please God. Romans 6:13 explains the meaning of a living sacrifice most adequately. It says, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness." Plainly speaking, "to offer your bodies as living sacrifices" means to imitate Jesus who lived to please God. This seems to be too difficult to do. But that is not true. When we do so we can experience true joy in our hearts. A woman came from Germany and married a man of God. She had passed the higher civil service examination given by the government. When she came to Chicago, it was natural for her to show herself off as a high-class woman. But she did not do so. While preparing the Christmas worship service 1990, she tried to find

her position in God's work and history. As a newcomer, she had nothing to do. Satan must have whispered to her, "It is a very good chance for you to enjoy a Christmas honeymoon." At that time, she got the flu. But she found that she could join the sewing team, to make Russian costumes for the dancing team. So she worked hard as a sewing team member, staying up late every night for two weeks. She worked so hard. But she looked happy. She also looked more beautiful.

The last part of verse 1, "this is your spiritual act of worship," explains deeper the meaning of "living sacrifices." In this verse, "worship" is the key word. "Worship" does not necessarily mean to perform long and tedious ritual ceremonies. It means to express our great love and admiration and adoration to God. (Deut 6:5) It is because he gave us his one and only Son to save us from our sins. How can we love God in this way? It's possible for us when we remember his great love and the grace of his Son who shed his blood for us to save us from our sins.

Second, we should not conform to the pattern of this world. (2) Look at verse 2. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." In this verse Paul urges us not to conform to the pattern of the world. Sometimes, it's confusing to know why we should not conform to the pattern of this world and why we have to live according to the teachings of the Bible only. It seems not too bad to live like others. When others wear mini-skirts it seems good for us to try mini-skirts. When others wear maxis it seems good for us to try maxis. When others intentionally rip their gym pants around the buttocks and make short pants with many ragged edges and wear them in order to show themselves off as free men, it seems good for us to do the same. However, one thing must be clear. Surely we must not imitate their inner persons. We must adopt Jesus' lifestyle living in this world.

These days most people live for their own future success and security, according to the pattern of this world. Because of the influence of pragmatism and the secular humanistic educational system, most young people come to the conclusion that the easy way to success and the easy way of life are rampant in the nation. They don't have a sense of history or a sense of honor. If only they achieve an easy way to success and live an easy life, that's all. However this easy-going mentality deprives many young Americans of their spiritual strength. Many Americans painfully acknowledge that this kind of worldly consensus is not good at all. Still, most people blindly follow the worldly consensus. These days the worldly consensus seems to be the easy-going mentality which is against God's truth. The easy-going mentality says, "Take it easy." The Bible says, "You must deny yourself and take up your cross." (Lk 9:23)

These days a relativistic way of thinking seems to be the worldly consensus. Relativistic people deny the absolutes of God. When they see God relativistically, everything becomes relativistic, even their lives. As a result they do not find the absolute meaning of their lives. Relativism is a most fearsome enemy to God's children. Relativism gives a man a divided heart and results in an uncommitted life. Relativism is the worst enemy of our country. One young man's father, who had a relativistic way of thinking, lived an extremely selfish life. With no obvious reason, he lived separately from his wife to have more time for his secret enjoyment. Because of this, his children suffered. The tragedy is his children are becoming just like

their father. Here we learn that we must defeat relativism by having an absolute attitude toward the word of God.

Third, we must be transformed. (2b) The middle part of verse 2 says, "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." When Paul said this he meant we must change our old lifestyle into a new lifestyle in Jesus so that we can please God. What? We must be changed! Never! Nobody wants to change or be changed even if they have to live as miserably as monkeys in the zoo. People are most afraid to be changed. But without drastic change we cannot be called the children of God. So Jesus prayed for his disciples in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth." When we are transformed in Jesus we can see and understand God's will for us.

How can we change our lifestyle? That is a good question. First and last of all, we must decide to live according to the teachings of the Bible. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." This verse seems to be contrary to the pattern of this world. We feel that we will lose too much if we live according to this teaching. That is not the case. When our American forefathers lived to seek first his kingdom and righteousness, God blessed this nation until she became the strongest nation. Most people are afraid to be changed, but still there are many people who want to be changed. But we have no power to change ourselves. When we accept the word of God with sincere hearts God can change us through the word of life. 1 Peter 1:23 says, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."

Fourth, we must respect others' greatness. (3-8) This part concerns our relationships with others. By God's grace we are transformed as the children of God. We the holy children of God are not allowed to criticize or look down on others. There is always a danger to become very proud and self-righteous in our new Christian days. New Christians are apt to criticize others, based on what they heard. Thus they only become a source of anguish in the family and community as well. We must remember God's grace, how wretched we were, but by his grace we became the precious children of God. Look at verse 3. "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

Why do we have to think of others highly? Because we are one body in Christ even though we are each individual persons. (5) And it is because each of us has different greatness, that is a gift from God. When we were ungodly, we took sadistic joy in digging out others' weaknesses and faults and failures and gossiping about them. But since we are transformed in Jesus Christ, now we must live Jesus' lifestyle. We must do our best to discover each fellow member's greatness. When we discover God's greatness in one of our fellow members we are happy. When we discover two persons' greatness, we are happier. When we discover three persons' greatness, we are even more happy. Each person's greatness or gift is different. One person has keen insight to see the future. (6) We must recognize his keen insight and let him use it for the glory of God. Another person is willing to teach, but never to learn. (7) But still we must let him teach others. Still another person never studies the Bible as he ought to do, but he is always ready to encourage others. We must let him do so. One young man never brushes his teeth. But he wants to be recognized as a top leader. It is good to let him

be so. (8) One young man never teaches the painful truths of God to his sheep but always shows mercy to his sheep. We must let him do so. It's not easy for anyone to recognize others' greatness. But without respecting others' weaknesses and greatness altogether, we cannot respect other fellow Christian members. When we don't become one body in Christ, we cannot please God. Therefore, we must ask God to give us a heart like Jesus to embrace all kinds of people and understand each of them thoroughly.

Fifth, we must love others in Jesus. (9-13) Look at verse 9. "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." Many people think that because we are Christians we must condone others' sins and evilness. But they are greatly mistaken. Our love in Jesus must be sincere. Paul says, "Hate what is evil." We must hate the enemies of God. Those who do not hate the enemies of God reveal that they do not love God. If we love God we must hate God's enemies. If we love God we must love those who love God as our own brothers. The single most important factor in the body of Christ is love. But love must be sincere. When we want to love others with sincere love we must learn how to love others in Jesus.

In verse 10, "be devoted to one another in brotherly love," means that we must make a commitment to the body of Christ. Commitments are not vague; they are specific. Christians should be committed to the particular body into which God has led them. Church tramps, who go here and there looking for human or spiritual benefit, never making a commitment to a particular church or community of believers, can't please God or learn what it means to be a Christian, for they are always getting, never giving in Jesus.

Christians should also be aware of their influence in the body of Christ. So we should not live by our feelings. We should never be lacking in zeal, but keep spiritual fervor; we should be faithful in prayer, and be joyful in hope. Gloomy faces are not a good influence on others. We should share freely. We should be hospitable. We should welcome one another in Jesus. (11,12,13)

Sixth, we must not take revenge. (14-21) In this part, Paul tells us how to live a life of faith in a world that is in rebellion against God in which we can expect to be persecuted and misunderstood. We must bless those who persecute us. (14) We are misunderstood, but we must be understanding. Especially we must learn how to rejoice with those who rejoice. (15) Once we had a beautiful wedding. But one single young man was so unhappy about the wedding. The next day he came to his Pastor and acted irrationally. His problem was that he did not know how to rejoice with those who rejoice. We must live in harmony with believers, so as not to invite the scorn of the non-Christian world. We must not be conceited or self-righteous, but humbly associate with all kinds of people in order to share the gospel with them.

Usually when we live sacrificial lives of faith we expect some respect from common people. Contrary to our expectation, they unconditionally offend Christians and do many evil things to us. (17) But we should not take revenge on them.

Godless people are always out to condemn and judge others. But the children of God should not judge others because we believe that God is the Judge. So we must leave room for God's wrath. Read verse 19. "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It

is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord." Not only do we not take revenge on them, we must help our enemies. Verse 20a says, "On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.'" We must prove ourselves to be God's children, by doing good to those who wrong us. We must transcend the human battle and engage in the spiritual battle. (21)

In this chapter we learn that we should not live to satisfy our selfishness. We should not imitate our uncles and nieces and brothers and sisters. We must not live according to the pattern of the world. But we must adopt a new lifestyle in Jesus. Then God will bless us both materially and spiritually and give us peace.