

# ROMANS

## Therefore

ROMANS 15:7

November 26, 2016

### Today

So far Paul has covered five progressive topics:

Introduction  
All have sinned  
God's remedy for the sin problem  
What it means to walk with Jesus  
God's mercy for all

There is a pattern throughout the book of Romans. It is called Imperative and Indicative or Because and Therefore.

Because of this - Therefore this:

- **Romans 1:22-24** - Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools<sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. **Therefore**, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.
- **Romans 4:25 – 5:1** - He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. **Therefore**, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

### 3 parts of the Indicative - BECAUSE

- **Justification:**
  - Justification needed.
  - Justification provided.
- **Sanctification:**
  - Christian maturity and transformation.
  - The process of growth in Christ.
- **Adoption of all who believe:**
  - No difference between Jews and Gentiles.
  - Paul wrote the letter to the church in Rome, in part, because of division and in fighting as to which group had more authority.

Paul now switches from a theological discussion to an ethical discussion – How the truth of salvation should impact a Christian's daily life – This is where the rubber meets the road.

### Imperative - THEREFORE

- How we live is dependent on what we believe.
- Do you believe that you are a sinner saved by grace? How you live daily should be a reflection of that reality.

**It is fundamental to Paul that his readers understand that a justified person does not live in the same way as an unrepentant sinner. We should clearly be different from the world.**

**It is important to note that obedience comes at the end and not at the beginning of Paul's letter. For Paul salvation always comes before behavior. People must walk with Christ in God's law because they have already been saved.**

- **Exodus 20:1-2** - And God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Often Christians do this the other way around – they try to obey without being saved first and as George Knight observes, this leads to legalism, meanness, spiritual pride and lostness.

**If you are keeping the law for any other reason than out of love and gratitude for what God has already done for you, you are keeping it for the wrong reason.**

Paul urges his readers to offer themselves as living sacrifices and be transformed by the renewing of their minds - to live in dedication to Christ every day and let it be an act of spiritual worship - a natural outflow/response in the way we think and behave. It is living a life full of gratitude.

Worship therefore, is not an action to participate in once a week – it is a 24/7 mindset, a lifestyle.

**God, in His grace, takes us as we are the moment we accept Christ as our savior, but He does not leave us there.**

**Transformation is expected and is a part of the Christian experience.**

**God has promised to do that work and the part we play is to put ourselves in the position to allow our minds to be governed by the Holy Spirit so that we can be transformed into the image of Jesus**

- **Ezekiel 11:19-20** - I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. <sup>20</sup> Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
- **John Ortberg:** When morphing happens, I don't just do the things Jesus would have done; I find myself wanting to do them. They appeal to me. They make sense. I don't just go around trying to do right things; I become the right sort of person (The Life You've Always Wanted)

With these ideas in mind Paul lists 8 lessons for what ***Transformed Living*** looks like:

### **Use God's Gifts (12:3-8)**

Paul's readers need to have an honest estimation of themselves and not to think too highly of their own status in the church. He warns against Pride.

- **Philippians 2:3-5** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
- **Proverbs 11:2** - When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

The world values ambition, recognition, self-promoting, etc. But for the Christian these values contradict the values of heaven. There is no room in the Christian experience for boasting and pride.

He goes on to say that all members have been gifted by God for the benefit to the body of Christ.

These instructions echo those given to other churches regarding spiritual gifts:

- **1 Corinthians 12:1-12** - Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. <sup>7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. <sup>8</sup> To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. <sup>12</sup> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.
- **Ephesians 4:4-13** - There is one body and one Spirit -- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." <sup>9</sup> (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

**Paul is reminding his readers again that they are all equal before God and they all have value in the church.**

### **Love One Another (12:9-16)**

Paul looks at love in action:

- Be devoted to one another
- Honor others before yourself
- Contribute to the needs of others
- Practice hospitality
- Bless those who persecute you
- Rejoice with those who rejoice
- Weep with those who weep
- Be unified in purpose
- Be humble

### Imagine what a church would look like if we lived like this!

Can we really live up to these standards as Paul has presented them?

- **No** – not if you try to do it on your own. Without the Holy Spirit we are incapable of loving the way Jesus loves – it just won't ever happen.
- **Yes** – through Holy Spirit power, which God has promised to provide. Through the Holy Spirit we become capable of extending love, grace and forgiveness to everyone.
- **John 14:26** - But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

### Overcome Evil with Good (12:17-21)

Loving someone is not just what you do for them but what you don't do as well. He tells us, where possible, to live at peace with all people.

Through Jesus we have peace with God, so why is it that we live as if we are still at war?

- I was reading an article on the news yesterday about three people being shot at a Wal-Mart because of a dispute over a parking spot – A PARKING SPOT!
- Consider the current political climate. Both sides accuse and both sides are guilty of bullying and harassment of those who don't view things the same way they do.
- People go crazy if they believe that another person has interfered with their personal rights.
- One driver believes another driver has intentionally done something to them.... As a result, they believe they are within their rights to shoot, run over or otherwise inflict pain on that person.

Sadly, Christians are equally guilty....

Paul is making it clear that part of loving people includes not retaliating against them.

- No insult for insult
- No bullying for bullying
- No evil for evil
- **Leviticus 19:18** - Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.
- **Matthew 5:44** - But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

As Christian's we should extend grace and blessing to those who seek to do harm to us.

That doesn't mean that we tolerate evil, but it does mean we love as Jesus loved: feed your enemy if he is hungry, give him a glass of water if he is thirsty AND leave the rest in the hands of God.

### Respect for Civil Government (13:1-7)

Paul's fourth lesson seems strange especially when you consider the political environment of the Roman Empire at the time. The persecution of Christians was very real and yet Paul intentionally includes this lesson in his letter.

Did you know that Adolf Hitler had two favorite scriptures – Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13, 14:

- **Romans 13:1-7** - Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. <sup>4</sup> For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong,

be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. <sup>6</sup> This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup> Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

- **1 Peter 2:13-14** - Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

He loved these verses so much that it was required that one of the two be preached once a year in every church in the Third Reich. As the story goes Hitler believed that his authority came directly from God – God had appointed him and therefore everything he did was right.

What Paul is really saying? God established civil government and any government is better than no government at all.

Scripture agrees:

- **Judges 21:25** - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

Civil government may not be perfect, but it is better than anarchy. God established civil government for humanity's good and Paul is saying straight out as Christians it is our duty to live under the authority of civil government.

But does this mean that government is always right and it is always wrong to oppose it?

Paul says it is God who appoints civil authority. Heads of state from Paul's perspective were not free agents, however, and their function was to bring about **good**. Therefore, loyalty to the State is prescribed **so long**s as it conforms to its divinely ordained rights and functions. However, when the state demands personal loyalty that conflicts with loyalty to God, civil disobedience is appropriate. (Thou shalt have no other gods before Me).

- **Acts 5:27-29** - Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. <sup>28</sup> "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." <sup>29</sup> Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

**Read the book: Bonhoeffer – Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy by Eric Metaxas**

Paul was respectful of the government that would eventually take his life because he knew that without the *pax Romana* (the Roman peace) the empire would disintegrate. Paul had not the slightest doubt that government is fundamentally a good thing and that Christians have a duty to respect civil authority.

**After this brief adventure into politics, Paul, in his fifth lesson, returns to his primary focus – Love.**

**Live God's Love** (13:8-10)

Remember this was a church divided - they had a problem with loving each other, so Paul spent a lot of time on the idea of loving your neighbor.

- Don't commit adultery
- Don't murder
- Don't steal
- Don't covet your neighbor's stuff
- **Mark 12:30-31** - Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

**Transformed living means that God's love is the foundation of every action.**

**Walk in Advent Hope** (13:11-14)

Paul doesn't want his readers to get drowsy. There is no time for sleeping. We are in a battle between good and evil.

- Quit living in the darkness of an unloving and vengeful spirit.
- Quit living in the darkness of drunkenness and promiscuity.

People who are anxiously waiting for the return of Jesus live a different way.

**Remember Who You Are** (14:1-15:13)

Paul turns again to the subject of judging each other. One of the difficulties the church has always faced is that its membership is made up of the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the young and the old, the conservative and the liberal.

Another difficulty is the natural human inclination to desire those who surround us to think and act as we do.

These two realities often clash and can literally destroy churches.

### **Paul breaks this lesson into 2 parts:**

**Part 1** - Not every "belief" is of equal importance. Sometimes beliefs are just strongly held opinions. The trouble starts when we try and force our OPINIONS on other people. Paul says don't argue over opinions. He gives 2 examples:

- Diet: Some people thought it was okay to eat meat and some were convinced that being a vegetarian was best. (this is not an argument regarding clean/unclean meat)
- Holy Days: which was a specific division in the Roman church (not specific to Sabbath keeping but to the other holy days throughout the year)

Let's not get hung up on meat/no meat or who is keeping a holy day and who is not. That is not the point. Paul's point is how people with different OPINIONS treat each other.

- It is your opinion that being a vegetarian is best? GREAT be a vegetarian.
- It is your opinion that eating clean meat is okay? GREAT eat clean meat.
- It is your opinion that keeping a certain holy day is the right thing to do? GREAT keep that day holy.
- It is your opinion that you don't need to keep the holy days? GREAT don't keep them.

Don't go around trying to convince or shame someone that does not view something the same way you do. It is not our place to judge someone because their opinion disagrees with ours.

Paul goes a step further by condemning anyone who does anything for the wrong reason. If you stop doing something because you have been shamed and not because you are convicted, then Paul says you are in the wrong.

**Side note: That doesn't mean you don't deal with sin in the midst of the congregation – you do. But what Paul is saying is that if you don't eat meat, but your neighbor does, keep your mouth shut. If you don't wear jewelry, but your neighbor does, keep your mouth shut. If you keep the Passover, but your neighbor thinks it's unnecessary, keep your mouth shut. Keep your opinions to yourself and live the life that God has convicted YOU to live.**

**Part 2** - Believers who are strong in their faith will consider what they say and do because it might conflict with the conscience of a member whose faith is weaker. Be tolerant of each other when it comes to opinions. Not every strongly held belief is a salvation issue. A stronger believer must not create a stumbling block for a weaker believer.

- Don't act in ways that will cause others to feel judged.
- We need to respect other people for their convictions. While we may not always agree, we can still live together in mutual respect.
- Just as God has accepted you with all your faults, so you must accept others on the same basis.

### **Build Up One Another (15:1-6)**

The strong tend to use their strength to place undue burden on those who are weaker than themselves. We use phrases like "survival of the fittest" to justify oppression. Christians are often just as guilty of this as their "Gentile" neighbors. Paul's final lesson flies in the face of this trend.

Transformed living finds its center in love and seeks to build-up not oppress or dismiss.

Christ certainly is the ultimate example of this. At every turn He was dealing with humans who did not understand His mission and had plans of their own. Instead of putting them in their place (with the exception of Peter) Christ bore with the weaknesses of those around him and went at their pace. He sought to lift people up. He patiently worked with people to bring them to a better understanding of His mission.

A true Christian will do no less. We are to be in the building business.

**Up to this point the readers of Paul's letter must have felt overwhelmed by how all-encompassing and selfless the love Paul was calling them to. But Paul offers them assurance:**

- **Romans 15:4-6** - For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not left alone to love in our own strength. God has promised to form us into people who love each other with humility, sincerity, faithfulness, patience, devotion and sensitivity.

Therefore, Paul says, accept one another just as Christ accepted you. He welcomed tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, the unclean, the lame, the blind, the skeptic, men and women, old and young. He welcomes everyone always.

## **Take Away**

Paul has taken us a long way in his letter to the church in Rome. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We are all sinners saved by grace. We all receive the righteousness of Christ the same way – through faith. We all become like Jesus the same way – through the transformational power of the Holy Spirit.

He concludes this amazing and life changing letter with these words:

**Romans 16:25-27** - Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him-- <sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.