

Application in daily life

Romans 12:1-21

In the chapters 9 through 11 the apostle Paul taught the Gentile disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ the status of the Jewish people and how God has used their stubbornness to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. One of the purposes of God for doing this was to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy towards the Gentile disciples in order to have them turn back to Him so He would show them mercy also.

In chapter 12 Paul starts a lot of teaching regarding the application of the Gospel in their daily lives, both within their community as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as in their relationship with the people around them.

However, he also does this in relationship with that purpose of God to making the Jewish people jealous. We see that for instance in the first verse.

Romans 12:1

- 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.
- Ik roep u er dan toe op, broeders, door de ontfermingen van God, om uw lichamen aan God te wijden als een levend offer, heilig en voor God welbehaaglijk: dat is uw redelijke godsdienst.

The first 4 words in this verse, and especially the word therefore, connects what is coming to what he discussed in the previous chapters.

What Paul is instructing them to do is to live their whole life as a sacrifice to God.

Remember 1 Corinthians 10:31 which I used last time as the end of the sermon:

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Before we go on with this chapter let's first look at some verses that may direct us in the way we can fulfil this instruction from the apostle Paul.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

- And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?
- Nu dan, Israël, wat vraagt de HEERE, uw God, van u dan de HEERE, uw God, te vrezen, in al Zijn wegen te gaan, Hem lief te hebben en de HEERE, uw God, te dienen, met heel uw hart en met heel uw ziel, en de geboden van de HEERE en Zijn verordeningen, die ik u heden gebied, in acht te nemen, u ten goede?

When I spoke on the 10th chapter of the letter to the Romans I ended by asking a question about our attitude towards the Law, whether we considered it a burden or a blessing.

Look at the last 3 words of these verses! Isn't that actually telling us how to look at the Law of God? It is for our good that God gave His commandments to us through Moses.

As a matter of fact, all the things that God requires from us are indeed for our good.

Our Lord Jesus said it in the following way:

Matthew 22:37-40

- “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’
- “This is the first and great commandment.
- “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’
- “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

The Dutch version we see on the next sheet.

Matthew 22:37-40

- U zult de Heere, uw God, liefhebben met heel uw hart, met heel uw ziel en met heel uw verstand.
- Dit is het eerste en het grote gebod.
- En het tweede, hieraan gelijk, is: U zult uw naaste liefhebben als uzelf.
- Aan deze twee geboden hangt heel de Wet, en de Profeten.

These two commandments, which our Lord Jesus Christ quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures, form the basis for our conduct in this world, both within our Christian community as well as towards the other people around us.

But to live this out is not so easy, as Paul also indicated in Romans chapter 7 where he spoke about the struggle he experienced in his own life due to the sin living in his flesh.

It is obvious that we cannot trust on our own strength to live the life as God is requiring from us as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the following two sheet we will look at some serious advice from Paul regarding this matter.

Galatians 2:20

- “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- Ik ben met Christus gekruisigd; en niet meer ik leef, maar Christus leeft in mij; en voor zover ik nu in het vlees leef, leef ik door het geloof in de Zoon van God, Die mij heeft liefgehad en Zichzelf voor mij heeft overgegeven.

Here Paul indicates very clearly that he turned over his life completely to the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is important to do. We cannot hold back any part of our life from His Lordship.

So, we have to live our life under the guidance of our Lord.

This is in line with the verses on the next sheet.

Philippians 2:12-13

- Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
- Daarom, mijn geliefden, zoals u altijd gehoorzaam geweest bent, niet alleen zoals in mijn aanwezigheid, maar nu veel meer in mijn afwezigheid, werk aan uw eigen zaligheid met vrees en beven, want het is God, Die in u werkt zowel het willen als het werken, naar Zijn welbehagen.

In the last part of this instruction Paul actually refers to what God did say in Ezekiel 36:26-27

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

It is very important to keep these advices of Paul in mind when we study the Word of God. And studying the Word of God is important also in relation to the next verses from Romans 12.

Romans 12:2

- And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- En word niet aan deze wereld gelijkvormig, maar word innerlijk veranderd door de vernieuwing van uw gezindheid om te kunnen onderscheiden wat de goede, welbehaglijke en volmaakte wil van God is.

The world, under the influence of Satan, will tell us that God only wants to limit our freedom and our opportunity to enjoy all the pleasures the world has to offer.

But that's not true as we already saw in the previous sheets.

In order to get rid of all the lies the world has told us, we need to learn the truth and fill our mind with it.

The purpose of that is to see the wonderful things in the Law of God and appreciate them in the same way the writer of Psalm 119 did.

As the Holy Spirit works out these things in us we will learn to walk in the ways of God with gladness. Then we can be true witnesses of the goodness of our Lord towards all people, whether Jew or Gentile. This also requires a certain attitude from us as we see in the next verses.

Romans 12:3

- 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.
- Want door de genade die mij gegeven is, zeg ik ieder onder u niet hoger te denken dan hij moet denken, maar laat hij denken in bescheidenheid, naar de mate van geloof zoals God die aan ieder heeft toebedeeld.

All of us need to remain humble, no matter what kind of grace and spiritual gifts God has given to us.

We see that also in the next verses, where things are being put in the bigger context of the Body of Christ.

Let's go there.

Romans 12:4-5

- For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.
- Want zoals wij in één lichaam vele leden hebben en de leden niet alle dezelfde functie hebben, zo zijn wij, hoewel velen, één lichaam in Christus, maar ieder afzonderlijk leden van elkaar.

As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we are all part of His worldwide body, and therefore we are related to one another and we indeed need one another.

And we need to realize that each one is necessary in that body and not only that, but that it is necessary that each one fulfills his role in the Body of Christ as assigned to him by God.

Because within the Body of Christ we do have different functions, just as the members in our bodies all have different functions and we need them all.

Romans 12:6-8

- Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
- En nu hebben wij genadegaven, onderscheiden naar de genade die ons is gegeven: hetzij profetie, naar de mate van het geloof; hetzij dienstbetoon, in het dienen; hetzij wie onderwijst, in het onderwijzen; hetzij wie bemoedigt, in het bemoedigen; wie uitdeelt, in oprechtheid; wie leiding geeft, met inzet; wie zich over anderen ontfermt, met blijmoedigheid.

The apostle Paul shows us a number of different functions that we can see in the Body of Christ.

All of these things we have to understand as activities in which God wants us to be active, each according to the specific grace God has given unto us.

And no matter to whatever activity God has assigned us we need to continue to do those in all humbleness for the building up of one another.

Let's go to the next verse.

Romans 12:9

- Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.
- Laat de liefde ongeveinsd zijn. Heb een afkeer van het kwade en houd vast aan het goede.

Whatever we are to do, we are to do it out of true love, seeking what is good for the persons around us.

No matter what happens to us may hinder us in that. That's the reason why Paul gives us these warnings.

Let's continue.

Romans 12:10-13

- Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
- Heb elkaar hartelijk lief met broederlijke liefde. Ga elkaar voor in eerbetoon. Wees niet traag wat uw inzet betreft. Wees vurig van geest. Dien de Heere. Verblijd u in de hoop. Wees geduldig in de verdrukking. Volhard in het gebed. Wees deelgenoot in de noden van de heiligen. Leg u toe op de gastvrijheid.

In these verses we see the things Paul tells his readers to do within their community in order to build up one another.

All of these things are truly very important and we should not forget one of them.

Think for instance about rejoicing in hope!

How difficult would many of the other things become if we no longer rejoice in the hope that is set before us, the hope of the resurrection of our bodies and the hope of eternal life in the presence of our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the next verses Paul even puts things in a wider context.

Let's go there.

Romans 12:14-15

- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
- Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

- Zegen wie u vervolgen. Zegen hen en vervloek hen niet.
- Verblijd u met hen die blij zijn, en huil met hen die huilen.

I worked almost 12 years for a Christian organization called Open Doors. This organization works among and supports persecuted Christians in more than 50 countries.

One of the most important things our persecuted brothers and sisters ask for is prayer. And of course Open Doors as well as similar organizations encourage us to pray for them.

But it is equally important to pray for those who persecute our brothers and sisters. The best way to stop persecution is by the conversion of persecutors into disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is not impossible, just think about Paul himself!

Let's also look at the second verse on this sheet.

The first part is of course much easier than the second part. But the second part is most probably even more important.

Let's continue.

Romans 12:16

- 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.
- Wees eensgezind onder elkaar. Streef niet naar de hoge dingen, maar houd u bij de nederige. Wees niet wijs in eigen oog.

In Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul says this is the following way:

Ephesians 4:1-3

- I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- Zo roep ik, de gevangene in de Heere, u op tot een wandel die de roeping waarmee u geroepen bent, waardig is, in alle nederigheid en zachtmoedigheid, met geduld, door elkaar in liefde te verdragen, en u te beijveren om de eenheid van de Geest te bewaren door de band van de vrede.

This is not always easy and I believe the Body of Christ has seriously failed in this matter.

At least partly this has been due to pride and to the unwillingness to admit mistakes and faults that have been made.

For instance: due to pride and unwillingness to correct faults by the leadership of the Roman Catholic church the reformation resulted in the start of a new denomination instead of the reformation of the Roman church from the inside out.

And many more splits have followed after that, resulting in serious divisions and disunity within the worldwide Body of Christ. Let's never forget that our Lord prayed that we would be one, as we read in John 17:20-23.

But let's go back to the letter to the Romans.

Romans 12:17-18

- Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.
- If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.
- Vergeld niemand kwaad met kwaad. Wees bedacht op wat goed is voor alle mensen.
- Leef, zo mogelijk, voor zover het van u afhangt, in vrede met alle mensen.

This is quite clear, but nevertheless not so easy.

That is also due to our human nature that quite often tends to take revenge for anything wrong done to us.

But Paul directs us to a different attitude in the next verse.

Romans 12:19

- Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.
- Wreek uzelf niet, geliefden, maar laat ruimte voor de toorn, want er staat geschreven: Mij komt de wraak toe, ik zal het vergelden, zegt de Heere.

This does not mean, that we cannot report any crime committed against us to the authorities and have them investigate it and punish the ones in the wrong.

It talks about personally taking revenge against anything done wrong to us or experienced as being done wrong to us.

This taking personal revenge is what we should not do.

Let's go to the last verses of this chapter.

Romans 12:20-21

- 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.”
- Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
- Als dan uw vijand honger heeft, geef hem te eten, als hij dorst heeft, geef hem te drinken, want door dat te doen, zult u vurige kolen op zijn hoofd hopen.
- Word niet overwonnen door het kwade, maar overwin het kwade door het goede.

This is a radical different way of treating your enemies , isn't it?
Paul actually is quoting here Proverbs 25:21-22.

Taking revenge ourselves can bring us down to the level of our enemy.
But this approach might bring our enemy up to our level.

If this world needs something more than anything else it is to be
exposed to true love.

When we spread that, it may open opportunities to share a love with
them that is even far bigger than the love we can share with them. Of
course that bigger love is the love of our Savior.

Let's pray.