

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 38, **No.37, September 11**, 2012 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

THE FIRST LESSON IN CHRISTIAN LIVING— Romans 12:1-2!

The emphasis of the FIRST 11 chapters of Romans is not on what we should DO, but on what God has DONE! A similar pattern is found in the book of Ephesians. The first three chapters emphasize what God has done in GRACE. The last three chapters are FILLED with instruction and commands. **What God has done for us in His mercy, love and grace is the chief motivation for Christian conduct and behavior.** Indeed! For we love Him because He FIRST loved us! (1 John 4:19)

QUESTION: Have you noticed? — **The Word of God often goes against our flesh, our feelings/emotions and even against the positions of many professing Christians!** Thus, we will not have a willingness to submit our plans/desires to the Word of God UNLESS we are truly living in amazement of the mercy, love and grace of God!

When I am living astounded at the mercy, love and grace of God— I will not compromise the truth of God. I will stand on the Word of God. Decisions as to 'going here, going there, watching this or that, making this decision or that decision, etc'— these are now run through my master passion of, ***'Because of the mercies of God to me, all that matters is that I heed God's Word and, thus, please God!'*** GUIDANCE is no longer afflicted by subjective feelings, self-oriented desires, or popular opinion. **THEREFORE, I need to get the truth of Romans 12:1-2 into my spiritual bloodstream! Romans 12:1— I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.**

I. **"Beseech"**— I exhort, entreat, appeal, plead, even BEG! **This call is from deep love!** CHRISTIAN obedience is a response to the love of God— not a response to a mere list of rules. As for Paul so for us— "the love of Christ constrains me"... **COMPELS ME... THE SPRING OF OUR ACTIONS IS THE LOVE OF CHRIST!"** (2 Corinthians 5:14)

APPLICATION: Desires and decisions are before me. In my humanness, my emotions are screaming to be heeded; and it will be easy to find a crowd to agree with them! However, I choose to flee into the presence of Jesus and take up my position of being IN CHRIST and CHRIST IN ME. I am freshly amazed at His mercy, love and grace to me. THUS, the SPRING OF MY CHOICE, my decision will be an overflow of the compelling love of Christ! **Empowered by His love, I am saying, 'NO!' to sin, self, society and satan and "YES!' to Jesus!**

II. "Therefore"— The *'therefore'* points us back to all that Paul, through the Holy Spirit, has set forth in the first 11 chapters of Romans. The first three chapters focus on revealing the depth of man's hopelessly lost condition. In **Romans 1:18-32 - 3:31** — both Gentiles and Jews are lost. In **Ephesians 2:1-3 and Titus 3:1-7**, the Holy Spirit deems it necessary to remind Christians of their dreadful, lost condition prior to salvation.

Meditation on these brief passages will bring **at least these benefits:** It is HUMBLING and PRIDE destroying. Embracing the truth of our lostness sets the stage for us to be astounded by God's mercy, love, and grace. It also prepares our hearts to minister in humility and hope to those around us who are still in the blinding, binding, grinding slavery of sin, self, society and satan.

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS: Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " <u>Jensen's Survey of the NT</u>				
Romans <u>1:18-3:20</u>	Romans <u>3:21-5:21</u>	Romans <u>6:1-8:39</u>	Romans <u>9:1-11:36</u>	Romans <u>12:1-16:27</u>
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	God's Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith

III. "By the mercies of God— The grace of God is God's "unmerited favor" whereby He gives us what we do not deserve— forgiveness and a whole lot more! **The MERCY of God is the act of God by which He withholds what we do deserve!** We have

sinned against God. We have broken His laws. We have earned the "wages of sin" which is death, (Romans 6:23). We come into this world sinners by nature and then sinners by free choice and UNDER THE WRATH of God, (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 1:18-3:23). God has every right to judge us, find us guilty, and sentence us to a lake of fire, forever.

Nevertheless, Daniel 9:9 declares, *"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him."* Jeremiah says, *"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not"* (Lamentations 3:22). By God's mercy He withholds His judgment upon our sin. BUT IF GOD WITHHOLDS JUDGMENT FROM THE REDEEMED— does that mean that JUSTICE was not satisfied, that God will just 'wink' at sin? No, the wages of sin are paid, but by a Substitute. GOD Poured OUT His judgment of our sin upon the Lord Jesus Christ Who "was made sin for us" and Who "bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

Sin has indeed brought forth death. Christ has died for us, in our place, paying our penalty, so that God can withhold from us our deserved judgment. Mercy avails for us and we go free the very moment we trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

However, mercy delivers only if one receives Christ (John 1:10-13). Trusting nothing of your own position or effort or religious rituals or obedience or baptism, you must receive Jesus Christ, by faith, as your own personal Savior. Rejecting God's mercy allows sin, when it is finished, to bring forth death and God will not temper His judgment.

CHRISTIAN: REMEMBERING how merciful and compassionate God has been to us IS THE GREATEST incentive for godly Christian living. SINCE God has been so compassionate and merciful to me, CONSTRAINED BY SUCH LOVE, I give my life and my all to serve Him! SINCE the Son of God has died for me, how can I NOT live for Him? As Isaac Watts wrote: "Love so amazing, so divine, DEMANDS MY SOUL, MY LIFE, MY ALL!" **WHAT IS MY SONG**— "Love so amazing, so divine— but I still want what I want and I expect God to bless it!???" God forbid!

ALERT: If while in a perfect environment and being yet unfallen and lacking nothing, satan was able to deceive Eve— can you imagine how easy a time satan has in deceiving us!? **Moreover, if we are discontented with our present lot in life AND failing in gratitude; AND not presently awed by God's mercies— sometimes** we keep desiring/seeking what God has not given; and God sometimes gives us what we want... as judgment! (Ps. 106:14-15)

IV. "Brethren"— Romans 12:1-2 is 'family-talk'... it's for believers!

V. "Present your bodies"— the word "present" is the same word found in Romans 6:13 (there translated "yield"); **and** a comparison of these two verses indicates that "your body" is equivalent to "yourself." You are giving Him all that you are and all that you have. Presenting ONE'S body as an offering to God (Rom.12:1) is something that saved people do and we do it because we are saved, not in order to be saved. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

REALITY: There are times as believers **when we fall and fail** and we need to do what Romans 12:1 says over and over again: "Lord, You have saved me by your wonderful grace and mercy and though I have sinned and failed you— I present my body to you, for your service. I dedicate myself (all that I am and all that I have) to You afresh. "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee. Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee!"

VI. "Sacrifice"— every New Testament believer is a priest, and priests offer sacrifices. The believer-priest is to offer and give himself **as a living sacrifice** wholly to God for God's use. **'Present yourselves unto God as those alive from the dead'** (Rom. 6:13)

VII. "Holy"— God's people are "saints," set apart for the service of the King of Kings! I AM CALLED TO BE a holy servant of the Most High God.

VIII. "Acceptable"— well pleasing (God is delighted by such sacrifices). WITH WHAT IS God NOT pleased?? 1. WITH DIVIDED LOYALTIES; 2. HALF HEARTS; 3. DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS; 4. IDOLS IN OUR HEARTS. We are exhorted to FLEE from idolatry! **BUT WHAT, WHO IS AN IDOL?**

"It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. An idol has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, your emotional and financial resources, on it without a second thought. **It can be family and children, or career and making money, or achievement and critical acclaim, or saving "face" and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty or your brains, a great political or social cause, your morality and virtue, or even success in the Christian ministry.** When your meaning in life is to fix someone else's life, we may call it "codependency" but it is really idolatry. An idol is whatever [whoever] you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, "If I have that [her/him], then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure." (*quoted from Keller's Counterfeit Gods*)

TRAGIC REALITY: If we refuse to FLEE as exhorted in 1 Cor. 10:14— it is possible that God may instruct others NOT to pray for us! (Jer. 7:13-16)... And it is possible that we could hear God's word to Ephraim: **"Ephraim is joined to idols. LEAVE HER ALONE!"** (Hosea 4:17)

IX. "Reasonable service"— we get our English word "logical" from this Greek word. In light of what Christ has done for us, the giving of ourselves wholly to Him by an act of total consecration is reasonable! For the true believer, nothing else makes good sense! It's the logical thing to do! This is how believers WORSHIP GOD— by giving of our selves totally to Him for His service. Those in Macedonia first GAVE THEIR OWN SELVES TO THE LORD" (2 Cor.8:5).

May Romans 12:1 be a constant reminder to every believer that we are not our own because we have been bought with a price! *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s!”* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Spurgeon preached: “Look you back to the day when you were bought, when you were bondslaves to your sins, when you were under the just sentence of divine justice, when it was inevitable that God should punish your transgressions; remember how the Son of God became your substitute, how He bared His back to the lash that should have fallen upon you, and laid His soul beneath the sword which should have quenched its fury in your blood.”

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE! “WITHOUT QUESTION THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT in all of my personal past is that I have been bought by the blood of Jesus!” Thus, I am not my own. I belong to Jesus! My past is forgiven! The blinding, binding, grinding power of sin and satan is broken. Sin’s weights are lifted! **I am set free from the futility of performance based living, of trying to be good enough to merit heaven.** I am resting in the total sufficiency of Jesus, in His precious blood, in His goodness and in His merit.

The MOST SIGNIFICANT REALITY in all of my experiences in the present is that I am IN CHRIST and CHRIST IS IN ME; and that I am a Minister of Reconciliation, an Ambassador for Christ, and On Mission with God! (1 Cor. 3:7-9; 2 Cor. 5:19-20) Forgiven (Past! Present! Future!) and resting in Christ— I am now free to be and become all that Christ intends today! **I no longer search or strive for significance.** For in Christ I have supreme significance— I am a Child of God!

“The most significant thing about my future is that I will continue to experience the ongoing cleansing power of the blood of Christ; and I will rule and reign with Christ for all eternity.” (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9-12; 12:11) Moreover, I am free from any obligation to fear death or the future. Nothing, no one can separate me from the love of God in Christ. Whether I live or whether I die, I am the LORD’S! As I walk with Him, being on Mission with him, I am invincible until He calls me home!

We are bought by blood and bound by love. We are to present ourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead (Rom. 6:13). In the light of God's mercy and grace as shown at Calvary, how can we do anything less?

Romans 12:2 “And be not conformed to this world; but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

I. “This world”— this age. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we learn that Satan is the "god of this world (age)." Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world or age. (Galatians 1:4) When we were unsaved we were a part of this evil, Satanic age/world, but God has delivered us out of it. In Titus 2:12, believers are taught by grace to live godly in this present age. We are in this world, but we are

not to live as those who are "of this world" and who are part of this world system which is in opposition to the true and living God.

II. "Be not conformed"— the verb means "to be formed like, to be conformed to, to be molded by, to fashion or shape one thing like another." Paul is saying, EXACTLY AS PHILLIPS PARAPHRASES: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould!"

III. "But"— indicating a strong contrast. God follows this negative command with a strong positive command!

IV. "Be ye transformed"— be changed, to be transformed. The Greek is metamorphosis (as of the remarkable transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly). The same word is used in Matthew 17:2 of our Lord's "transfiguration". **The Lord was changed in such a way that His inner glory became visible on the outside** (compare John 1:14). Here and in 2 Corinthians 3:18 the word is used of the transformation process which takes place in the Christian life as the believer is more and more conformed to the image of Christ (more like Him today than I was yesterday; more like Him tomorrow than I am today).

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 the word is used with reference to **the change produced by the Holy Spirit resulting from** the believer beholding the glory of the Lord Jesus through His Word and being gradually (from one stage of glory to the next) transformed into the likeness of Christ. It does not all happen in one day or one month or one year.

It's a process which will not end until we are with Christ (1 John 3:2). We do not CHANGE OR TRANSFORM OURSELVES! We must BE transformed. **It is something that God does in and through us. How will this transformation come about?**

V. "By the renewing of your mind"— It's a mental process described by Vine as "the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God, which is designed to have a transforming effect upon the life." **The believer's mind needs to be saturated with the Word of God so that we might more and more see, think and feel as God does.** (Colossians 3:10; 2 Corinthians 4:16)

The result is that the heart-cry of the believer is, "I WANT WHAT GOD WANTS! I want God's WILL AS REVEALED IN HIS WORD! Not my will but thine be done!"

MY FLESH MAY SCREAM : "What's wrong with it? I don't see anything wrong with it. IT FEELS GOOD, RIGHT. I HAVE PEACE ABOUT IT. I HAVE SUPPORT FROM LEADING PASTORS OR FRIENDS, ETC. (Many have all of the above and more while blatantly not heeding the pure Word of God!)

The problem with many Christians is they [we!] live based on *feelings*. The life based on *feelings* says, "How do I feel today? How do I feel about my job? How do I feel about my wife? How do I feel about worship? How do I feel about _____? I OBEYED

GOD. But I don't feel so good about it; so, I will turn back away from the revealed will of God.

LIVING life by MY feelings I will never know the transforming power of God, because feelings ignore the renewing of the mind. God is NOT against feelings. He is a God of powerful and passionate feelings. Yet feelings are completely insufficient foundations for the Christian life. The CHIEF questions cannot be "How do I feel?" Rather, "What is true? What does God's Word say?" IN VIEW OF THE MERCIES OF GOD, I CHOOSE TO LINE UP WITH THE WORD OF GOD! **CHRIST SAYS:** I will TRANSFORM you by grace, by the renewing of your mind!

"Feelings come and feelings go, And feelings are deceiving; My warrant is the Word of God-- Naught else is worth believing. Though all my heart should feel condemned For want of some sweet token, There is One greater than my heart Whose Word cannot be broken. I'll trust in God's unchanging Word Till soul and body sever, For, though all things shall pass away, HIS WORD SHALL STAND FOREVER!" — Martin Luther

In summary, ROMANS 12:1-2 explains how to live out the will of God:

1. Keep in mind the rich mercy of God to you - ***(by the mercies of God)***
2. As an act of intelligent worship, decide to yield your entire self to Him - ***(present your bodies a living sacrifice)***
3. Resist conformity to the thoughts and actions of this world - ***(do not be conformed)***
4. By focus on God's Word and fellowship with Him - ***(be transformed by the renewing of your mind!)***
5. Then, your life will ***be in the will of God. Your life will prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.***

Romans 12:1-2: *With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give Him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the Plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity. (Phillips)* [This article was developed from a recent sermon. As usual, a number of sources were used in the process and the personalized to needs and encouragements to Southsiders and whoever else may read or listen.]

James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!

1. Tuesdays, 10:30am— Ladies Bible Study!

2. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM!

YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Adam and Bethany's home.

3. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH VISITATION

4. EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: Men's Fellowship and Bible Study

Sunday Schedule for September 16, 23, 30

1. 9:30am- Sunday School

2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church

3. Noon Fellowship 'Covered Dish' Meal

4. 1:00pm- Early Afternoon Service: LORD'S SUPPER, SEPTEMBER 16 @ 1:00PM / Jesus says, "DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME!" AND MY RESPONSE IS....???????

Southside Christian School: Students entering SCS for the first time are diagnostically tested and placed in class-work where they are actually performing— thus, existing 'learning gaps' are discovered and remedied. A student can enter SCS at any time, begin work and go forward without having been left behind. Please VIEW the video! Then call us: 615-452-5951 <http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>