

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2017: *Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans*
Lesson 12 “Overcoming Evil With Good”

Read for this week’s study

Romans 12, 13.

Memory Text

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

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Your Reasonable Service
- III. To Think Soberly
- IV. The Christian and the State
- V. Love One Another
- VI. Now Is Our Salvation
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “With chapter 11, the doctrinal part of the book of Romans ends. Chapters 12 through 16 present practical instruction and personal notes. Nevertheless, these concluding chapters are extremely important because they show how the life of faith is to be lived.” (Sunday’s lesson)
2. When Paul did his analysis of human rebellion (in 1:18-32), he noted that sin includes a fair amount of wrong thinking. By allowing God’s Spirit to teach and guide toward safer paths of thinking and to renew the way our minds work, we experience the freedom of true human living that God desires for his children.
3. Paul’s invitation, his appeal, is to be transformed. Our minds need to be renewed. God in Christ, in his Spirit, in his mercy is making it possible for us to recognize and resist the pressures of the “present age”, which squeeze us into that lesser mold, dictating to us what and how we should think and behave.
4. God does not expect or desire mindless obedience of rules and regulations. That approach doesn’t lead to maturity or reflect his gracious character. At the center of genuine Christianity is an alert mind that actively processes information, seeks

guidance, walks forward, assesses evidence and tries to understand why human life is meant to be lived one way rather than another.

5. This is what the metaphor of offering one's whole self, one's 'body' as a living sacrifice means. While the sacrifices in the temple were to be killed, the Christian self-offering is actually all about coming alive with new life that bursts out in unexpected ways. Christian living goes beyond unthinking adherence to a set of rules. It involves the renewal of the mind making it possible for us to think and behave in new and surprising ways.
6. One of the first consequences for Christians to process is the call to live as unique members of a single family (12:3-13). The world will see something new when our minds have been renewed, when we see ourselves as one family, Christians with various temperaments, backgrounds, callings, gifts and abilities coming together.
7. In 13:1-7, Paul deals with the attitude of Christians towards the state/government. Through the centuries, his counsel has been taken out of context and sadly abused. Already in 12:14-21 he showed that vengeance is ruled out as a response to evil in the world.
8. Paul now shows that "the concept, the principle of government, is God-ordained. Human beings need to live in a community with rules and regulations and standards. Anarchy is not a biblical concept. That being said, it doesn't mean that God approves of all forms of government or how all governments are run." (Tuesday's lesson)
9. Paul does not want Christians to get an additional reputation as trouble-makers. The Romans of that time already considered them the scum of the earth. If the followers of Jesus were to be regarded as unbalanced dissidents, unwilling to cooperate with the most basic social mechanisms, the cause of the gospel would be damaged. Because Jesus is the true Lord of the world, Paul is anxious that his followers do not pick unnecessary quarrels with lesser gods.
10. God knows that his fallen world needs to be governed under the rule of appropriate law. What does this mean for us today, as Christians, especially in the light of knowing that Jesus is already enthroned as the supreme Lord of heaven and earth?
11. In 13:8-14 Paul warns what to avoid, and suggests how to proceed in accomplishing that goal – "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 14). This Christian's 'clothing' is referred to in v. 12 as 'the armor of light' which is needed when we are coming out of the darkness.
12. In this time between the darkness of night and light of 'the day', Christians are encouraged to live according to the law of love, reflecting the truths of God's character and his universe. It is God's love and mercy that leads and empowers us in this self-giving journey (12:1). The light that shines testifies of him.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Recommended Listening: The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the book of Romans is available at <http://pkp.cc/MMROMANS66>

“I appeal to you therefore, brethren,” after all the theology, Paul comes down to the practical affairs of life; and if theology does not affect the way we live, it’s a waste of time. “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your ...” What do you have?

King James had “reasonable service,” and I remember hearing sermons on the fact that health reform is a “reasonable” thing to do. I believe it is, but that’s not the message here at all. The Greek word for “service” is not the service of a slave, nor the service of a deacon. Those are different words. It is “worship”. It’s the service of a priest. It’s worship. And the word “reasonable” is not the opposite of “unreasonable”. It’s the word that means, well, Peter says, “As newborn babes, earnestly desire the ‘milk of the word’”, or spiritual milk, that you may grow thereby. He wasn’t saying goat’s milk, or cow’s milk, or soy milk. He meant milk that pertains to the mind, that you may grow thereby. This word means “intelligent, rational, spiritual” worship. In other words, to present ourselves to God not half dead, but as living sacrifices, is an act of “intelligent worship.” And what Paul is saying is, “Think of all the dead pigeons we used to bring to God. And it was right if we read the right meaning into it.”

But God is saying now, “Don’t bring me any more dead sheep or dead pigeons, but please bring yourselves. And bring yourselves in the best condition possible. This will be an act of intelligent worship. Because I have so much to tell you, if you could just listen. But some of you are in such miserable health, you find it very difficult to listen. So please, even this far from the tree of life, look after yourselves. Be living sacrifices, and listen.” “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind [so look after it, please], that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

What I like about this is, the kind of worship God desires is described as rational, intelligent, spiritual worship; not mechanical, not ritualistic, not ceremonial. But we worship an intelligent God. He wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth, Jesus said. So to do something mechanical, learned by rote, is a terrible misrepresentation of the truth about God. Remember Isaiah? “Your worship of me is but the commandments of men learned by rote.” You come into the temple, but your hearts aren’t in it. Remember the Sabbath-keepers in Amos? All that kind of unthinking obedience suggests an unthinking God.

So Romans 12: 1, 2 is a magnificent passage. The kind of worship God wants is worship that is appropriate to the kind of God that he is. And I think that really affects the way we worship.

You know when we go through an hour of worship—the things we all do in the right and proper order. We have a song service, and get the books out, and we sing, and have you ever sung a song through and hardly noticed the words? Have you ever repeated the Lord’s Prayer and come to the Amen, and you can’t remember saying anything in between? Well, you hope God enjoyed it, anyway. Or, you hold that last note long and high, which is fun at times, but why do we do it? Or if we repeat things over and over, and over and over and over, as some do, does God kind of like that? It may not make sense to us, he rather likes it? If you were God, how would you want to be worshipped? The way we worship God? If you were God, would you want people to meet for an hour and do the things we sometimes do for the hour? We sometimes worship God as if he were less intelligent than we are.

I love Paul’s comment here. He wants intelligent, rational, spiritual worship. Or do you have “the worship of heart and mind” in your version? It’s intelligent worship, because he’s that kind of a God. I believe if God is the kind of a God we are convinced he is from going through the sixty-six, it will greatly affect the way we worship, the way we pray, certainly the way we treat each other. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66* – {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66* – Romans, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

We have something to do that requires our complete focus. In the *Commentary* 20 years ago I tried this:

Paul does not imply in these verses that God always approves the conduct of civil governments. Nor does Paul mean that it is the Christian’s duty always to submit to them. The requirements of government may at times be contrary to the law of God, and under such circumstances the Christian is “to obey God rather than men” [remember in Acts]. Paul’s point is that the ruling power of human governments is entrusted to men by God, according to His own purposes for man’s welfare. Their continuance in power, or their fall from authority, is in His hands. Therefore, the Christian will support the authority of the existing state. He will not presume to take it into his own hands to resist or to depose “the powers that be.”

Such instruction was especially needful in Paul’s day, for at that time the Jews were in a turbulent mood and had already stirred up rebellion in various parts of the Roman Empire. For Christians to reveal a similarly unsubmissive spirit would have been to incur the same displeasure that was beginning to fall upon the Jews. It would also have resulted in their forfeiting the protection of the Roman state, which had often been a

blessing to the early Christians, as Paul could testify from his own experience. Furthermore, it would have brought reproach upon the Christian church and its message of peace and brotherly love. Therefore, Paul elsewhere urges believers to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy) and to obey them (Titus). Likewise Peter commands Christians to submit “to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake” (1 Peter 2).

Isn’t this practical advice under the circumstances? There’ll be times, though, when one might have to say at risk of life, “I can’t do this” but isn’t it a desire to avoid unnecessary trouble for we have a work to do. These other matters can be settled at some other time. But at the same time if someone has a great burden to do something I think we should be very careful how we pass judgment on that individual. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 13, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/25MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Such transformation of character as is seen in the life of John is ever the result of communion with Christ. There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed from glory to glory, until he is like Him whom he adores. {AA 559.1}

Even John, the beloved disciple, the one who most fully reflected the likeness of the Saviour, did not naturally possess that loveliness of character. He was not only self-assertive and ambitious for honor, but impetuous, and resentful under injuries. But as the character of the Divine One was manifested to him, he saw his own deficiency and was humbled by the knowledge. The strength and patience, the power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness, that he beheld in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration and love. Day by day his heart was drawn out toward Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master. His resentful, ambitious temper was yielded to the molding power of Christ. The regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit renewed his heart. The power of the love of Christ wrought a transformation of character. This is the sure result of union with Jesus. When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ’s Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven. {SC 73.1}

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual

and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {DA 251.1}

God's promise is, "Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13. {SC 43.1}

The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. By nature we are alienated from God. The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: "Dead in trespasses and sins;" "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" "no soundness in it." We are held fast in the snare of Satan, "taken captive by him at his will." Ephesians 2:1; Isaiah 1:5, 6; 2 Timothy 2:26. God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him. {SC 43.2}

Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory, thought "it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." Philippians 2:6, 7, R.V., margin. Through all the lowly experiences of life He consented to pass, walking among the children of men, not as a king, to demand homage, but as one whose mission it was to serve others. There was in His manner no taint of bigotry, no cold austerity. The world's Redeemer had a greater than angelic nature, yet united with His divine majesty were meekness and humility that attracted all to Himself. {MB 14.2}

Christ is our tower of strength, and Satan can have no power over the soul that walks with God in humility of mind. The promise, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." In Christ there is perfect and complete help for every tempted soul. Dangers beset every path, but the whole universe of heaven is standing on guard, that none may be tempted above that which he is able to bear. Some have strong traits of character, that will need to be constantly repressed. If kept under the control of the Spirit of

God, these traits will be a blessing; but if not, they will prove a curse. . . . If we will give ourselves unselfishly to the work, never swerving in the least from principle, the Lord will throw about us the everlasting arms, and will prove a mighty helper. If we will look to Jesus as the One in whom we may trust, He will never fail us in any emergency. {ML 316.4}

Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father's care. {SC 77.4}

And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator. {SC 79.1}

Those who believe in Christ and walk humbly with Him, . . . who watch to see what they can do to help and bless and strengthen the souls of others, cooperate with the angels who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Jesus gives them grace, and wisdom, and righteousness, making them a blessing to all with whom they are brought in contact. The more humble they are in their own estimation, the more blessings they receive from God, because receiving does not exalt them. They make a right use of their blessings, for they receive to impart. {TDG 356.5}

Satan's policy in this final conflict with God's people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow. And the very work which he was thus endeavoring to accomplish he charged upon the loyal angels. {GC 591.1}

God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God. {GC 591.2}

The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses,—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart. {DA 509.3}

Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12, 13. Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the word of God. {DA 509.4}

Wherever there is union with Christ there is love. Whatever other fruits we may bear, if love be missing, they profit nothing. Love to God and our neighbor is the very essence of our religion. No one can love Christ and not love His children. When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. {RC 104.2}

Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within. We drink in the love of Christ, as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted in Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the Living Vine, we shall give evidence of the fact by bearing rich clusters of living fruit. If we are connected with the Light, we shall be channels of light, and in our words and works we shall reflect light to the world. {RC 104.3}

Those who are truly Christians are bound with the chain of love which links earth to heaven, which binds finite man to the infinite God. The light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ shines in the hearts of His followers, to the glory of God. {RC 104.4}

The most powerful evidence a man can give that he has been born again and is a new man in Christ Jesus, is the manifestation of love for his brethren, the doing of Christlike deeds. This is the most wonderful witness that can be borne in favor of Christianity, and will win souls to the truth. . . . {SD 293.4}

Christ brings all true believers into complete oneness with Himself, even the oneness which exists between Him and His Father. The true children of God are bound up with one another and with their Saviour. They are one with Christ in God. {SD 293.5}

Jesus says, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Love is not simply an impulse, a transitory emotion, dependent upon circumstances; it is a living principle, a permanent power. The soul is fed by the streams of pure love that flow from the heart of Christ, as a well-spring that never fails. (Letter 63, 1896). {5BC 1140.3}

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks. These cost those who give them nothing, but they leave behind a fragrance that surrounds the soul. Their effect can never be estimated. Not only are they a blessing to the receiver, but to the giver; for they react upon him. Genuine love is a precious

attribute of heavenly origin, which increases in fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others. . . . {5BC 1140.4}

Christ's love is deep and earnest, flowing like an irrepressible stream to all who will accept it. There is no selfishness in His love. If this heaven-born love is an abiding principle in the heart, it will make itself known, not only to those we hold most dear in sacred relationship, but to all with whom we come in contact. It will lead us to bestow little acts of attention, to make concessions, to perform deeds of kindness, to speak tender, true, encouraging words. It will lead us to sympathize with those whose hearts hunger for sympathy (MS 17, 1899). {5BC 1140.5}

True sanctification unites believers to Christ and to one another in the bonds of tender sympathy. This union causes to flow continually into the heart rich currents of Christlike love, which flows forth again in love for one another. {5BC 1141.2}

He who called the fisherman of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God. {DA 297.1}