

Romans

I. Living Godly In The World & Church

A. Before reading the portion of Romans for our study today, I want to remind you that the larger context of Romans 12-16 is focused on living godly in the church and in the world. Romans 13:8-10 provides a narrower focus on the practice of love as the best means of fulfilling all God's requirements for living godly in the church and in the world. Then we come to the end of Romans 13 where we are exhorted to put off whatever prevents us from loving according to love's standard, and put on what will enable us to love and live as we ought.

B. Romans 13:11-14 . . . Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. [12] The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13] Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. [14] But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

1. In this section, Paul presents the urgency of practicing love, or as we are more prone to say, living a godly life. But why the urgency? Because the end is coming ever nearer, and that means the time for living a love-controlled, godly life is growing shorter and shorter.
2. But why does this matter so much? Because it is God's intention that we finish this life and enter the next in as holy a condition as possible. The scripture confirms this in 1 John 3:2-3, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. [3] And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
3. Then Paul – without including much explanation – presents the method required to purify ourselves so that we can come to the end of this life in as holy a condition as possible. And simply stated, the method begins with putting off the old nature and all the evil our old nature includes, and then putting on the new nature and all the ways of love and godliness it includes.

4. There is one more truth that I want to remind you of before proceeding with today's teaching. You cannot become Christ-like in a month or a year or even in five years.
 - a. The reason for this is because you cannot put off all of the old nature at once, or even in a short amount of time. Putting off the old nature and putting on the new is a process that requires hard work over an extended period of time. And it requires hard work over an extended period of time for two primary reasons.
 - (1) First, you can only put off the sin in your life that you are aware of – that is, that you know about. And though a careful study of the scriptures exposes sin in us, and though the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, discovering all the sin within us and gaining a sufficient understanding of the sin discovered in order to put it off and die to it, takes time.
 - (2) Second, it is nearly impossible to change more than two or three areas of known sin at the same time. In fact, for most of us, changing one or two areas of known sin – at the same time – is all we can handle. Therefore, at this pace, it will take time to become Christ-like in every area of life.
 - b. Now the reason this method of transformation is hard work is because (1) the world will continue trying to press you into its mold, (2) the devil won't give up tempting you to serve him instead of God, (3) and your old sinful ways won't lie down and die – you will have to do serious battle with them until they are dead and replaced with godliness.
5. So I urge you not to despair. God has given you everything necessary to work this method. So keep your eye on the goal, your mind on the things above, and your energy focused on persevering to the end.

C. Prayer

II. Be all the more zealous knowing the end is near

- A. Romans 13:13 . . . Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.
 1. I suppose it is easy to read this list of sins and decide there is nothing in this list that applies to you. And that may be true. However, in spite of that, I still invite you to apply today's teaching to your own life.
 2. And to help you see why my invitation is reasonable, I want to ask just one question: "Is there any sinful activity, any ungodly attitude, any inappropriate thought, any worldly desire, or any recurring

behavior that you prefer to keep hidden from the rest of us?” If so, then the lessons we will draw from this portion of Romans is for you.

- B. Romans 13:14 . . . But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.
 - 1. My goal today is to use this verse as the foundation for presenting a biblical picture of what it means to both work hard and put in the time required to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh.

- C. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
 - 1. In Romans 8:29, Paul says that God pre-determined that all who repent and come to faith in Christ will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. And the reason given as to why God pre-determined this is so Jesus Christ would not be an only child, but rather the first born or eldest brother among many siblings.
 - a. In other words, God wants a holy family – which means He is not looking for children of just any sort. He is looking for children who want Him as their father, and want to be of the same godly character as their eldest sibling – Jesus Christ.
 - b. Therefore, when Paul speaks of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is speaking of the practical, day-to-day activity of purposefully putting off our old sin nature and putting on the godly character and spiritual qualities of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - c. In other words, the doctrinal truth that God predetermined believers to be conformed to the image of Christ only becomes a practical reality for you when you begin putting off specific parts of your old nature, and start putting specific qualities of Christ-likeness in their place.
 - 2. Now you may be wondering how you can, in practical ways, put on the Lord Jesus Christ so as to be conformed to the image of Christ. So let me give you just a few practical ways this can be done.
 - a. You can put on the Lord Jesus Christ by taking the time to consider, pray about, identify, and then put off specific sins and sinful ways associated with your old nature. This is necessary because you cannot put good over evil. You must remove the evil first and then put the good in its place.
 - b. You can put on the Lord Jesus Christ by coming into each day prepared to resist the devil’s temptations and the desires of your old nature to return to its sinful ways.

- c. You can put on the Lord Jesus Christ by learning the words and ways of Christ, and then applying those truths to your life. And there is no better way to become familiar with Jesus and His ways than to read and reread His teachings and parables, and ponder His character, and His behavior.
 - d. You can put on the Lord Jesus Christ by making time each day to prepare so that you get better and better at resisting temptation, saying no to the desires of your old nature, submitting to Christ's lordship, obeying His commands, and doing His will. This kind of preparation is best done by studying the scriptures, memorizing scriptures specific to what you are working on, meditating on the memorized scriptures, talking to God about every aspect of what you are putting off and putting on, and persevering at this until you see Jesus face-to-face.
 - e. Finally, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ means using His words, character, and behavior to measure the godliness or ungodliness of all your thoughts, words, and deeds.
 3. If you need help discerning what you ought to put off and put on, there are numerous places in the OT and NT that provide specific examples of selfishness and sin and specific examples of love and godliness. For example, you can study such portions of scripture as Deuteronomy, Proverbs, Matthew 5-7, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Romans 12-16, Galatians 5:19-23, Ephesians 4-6, James, 1 Peter, and 1 John. And should you find nothing that convicts you in the scriptures, follow David's example and pray these words: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; [24] and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23-24).
- D. make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts (ungodly desires)
 1. Another way to say this is: Don't spend any time thinking about or looking for ways to satisfy the unholy and spiritually harmful desires of your old nature. In other words,
 - a. Put an end to all thoughts, desires, choices, and plans related to doing what you know is wrong. Stay away from places, activities and people who tempt you, or encourage you, or ask you to join them in going what you know is wrong.
 - b. Avoid situations which open the door to participating in old sinful ways or gratifying old sinful desires. This kind of avoidance may include guarding against time alone, because when alone you

might feel freer to do what you know is wrong. It may include guarding against what you watch on TV or where you go on the Internet, who you spend time with, what you allow yourself to think or fantasize about, what you allow your eyes to gaze on, what you read, and even what you text message.

- c. But here again, making no provision for the flesh is not limited to putting off what we know we ought not to do, it includes putting on what we know God calls us to do. For example, we complete the work of making no provision for the flesh when we set our mind on the things above (Colossians 3:1-2); and when we guard and control our thoughts so that we think on the things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8); and when we are careful who we are friends with (1 Corinthians 15:33).
 - d. The point here is that there are two sides to making no provision for the flesh – there is the stop doing, turn away side, and the start doing, turn toward side. Both are essential in preventing us from making provision for the flesh to return to is old sinful ways.
2. Paul says something very similar to this in 2 Timothy 2:22, “Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”
 - a. In my life, this scripture has been very helpful in relation to persevering at putting off my old nature and putting on Jesus Christ.
 - b. Because its message is simple, it is easy to remember, and because the action prescribed is spelled out, it is easy to review in a moment of time.
 - (1) The first part says we are to flee (run away from) youthful desires. Youthful desires are those ungodly, prideful, selfish, and self-destructive desires that young people deem natural (everyone’s doing it, I can’t help myself) and therefore acceptable to pursue and gratify. These desires we, that is, you and me, are to run away from.
 - (2) Then, we are to pursue (press on or run toward) righteousness, faith, love and peace.
 - c. Over the years, it has helped me continue persevering in resisting temptation, saying no to my fleshly desires, and pursuing godliness to think of these four words this way –
 - (1) righteousness – doing what I know is right.

- (2) faith – trusting that God’s way, though hard at first, is the way to life, whereas the world’s way, the devil’s way, and the way of my flesh always leads to some form of death. It helps me to review this because my flesh doesn’t always want to trust God and His ways because prior to bringing some form of death, sin brings some form of forbidden pleasure, self-serving power, self-exalting fame, or self-gratifying riches.
 - (3) love – not selfishness or lust, but love.
 - (4) peace – not conflict or arrogance, but peace with God and those around me.
3. This exhortation to flee evil and pursue righteousness is found elsewhere in the NT. As we look at some of these scriptures, remember that God has given you everything necessary for life and godliness, including the empowerment to be godly, and the needed protection to prevent you from being tempted beyond what you can bear.
- a. 1 Corinthians 6:18 . . . Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.
 - b. 1 Timothy 6:10-12 . . . For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. [11] But flee from these things (the love of money and its accompanying evils), you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. [12] Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 . . . Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win (not just finish, but win). [25] Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. [26] Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; [27] but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.
 - d. Hebrews 12:1 . . . Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

- E. There are four additional scriptures that remind me of just how serious God is about putting off my old nature and putting on Christ-likeness, of fleeing temptation and sin and pursuing godliness, of running to win, of exercising self-control, and of making my flesh my slave rather than me serving it.
1. Proverbs 15:9 . . . The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves [the] one who pursues righteousness.
 2. Matthew 18:8-9 . . . If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. [9] If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.
 3. Hebrews 12:14 . . . Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.
 4. 1 John 3:7-10 . . . Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; [8] the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. [10] By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

III. Conclusion

- A. The key words in all the scriptures we have looked at today include pursue, flee, run, run with endurance, run to win, fight, make no provision, and put on. There is no inaction, passivity, or laziness associated with these words. They speak of commitment, determination, action, the use of energy, self-discipline, and perseverance.
- B. Therefore, it is my hope and my prayer that these words will describe your activity and my activity in putting off our old nature, putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and making no provision for the flesh. And it is my hope and prayer that we, individually and as a group, will make the most of what time we have left to love in such a way as to love as God loves, and to run in such a way as to win, that is, to enter His presence in as holy a condition as possible.