

ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH
LOVING GOD AND LIVING GODLY – Chapters 12-14

LESSON 44 – THE LIFE YOU’VE ALWAYS WANTED – Romans 12:9-16

It’s one thing to say we love God and to say that Christ is the most important things in our lives, but the truth is more in our actions than our words. If we are living as sacrifices to Him, our lives will take on the characteristics that make us His...which is really the life we always wanted anyway.

So far in our study we’ve seen Paul’s plea for believers to present themselves as a living sacrifice to God and not to be conformed to this world’s system. Then we saw what a commitment to Christ looks like within the context of the church...everyone using their gifts in service to Him.

In this lesson we look at the individual traits of a person who has committed themselves fully to the Lord as a living sacrifice. What does that person look like and how do they live? As the world around us grows darker both spiritually and morally, it is crucial that Christians shine brighter and brighter. The characteristics Paul gives here will make those who are wholly committed to Christ stand out clearly in a world that doesn’t live for Him.

A Life Marked By Love

Not surprisingly, love is the first characteristic Paul focuses on. He tells us that our lives should be marked by the same love that marked the Savior. In verses 9-16, Paul mentions “one another” three different times. This whole section of Scripture concerns relationships within the body of Christ. Love is the ultimate part of a relationship. Paul has so far only used agape love to describe God’s love for us. Now he begins to use it to describe Christians’ love for each other.

There are more than 50 commands to love given in the New Testament. This means it is NOT an option. We are not free to pick and choose who we love...we are to love everyone equally. When Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment, He said there were two...love God and love your neighbor. Love is at the very heart of the Bible and should be in the heart of every Christian.

The controlling criteria for our love is that it should be genuine...not imitation...not hypocritical...but the real thing. Paul tells us that we are really supposed to love, not pretend to love. Love and hypocrisy don’t go together. Throughout the New Testament we find an emphasis on genuine, deep love that goes beyond an outward expression. Christ loved from the heart and we must love that way as well.

No one has ever said that genuine love is easy. There is a challenge in loving others. If we truly love another person, we will want what’s best for them even if it isn’t what we would prefer. When we love from a pure heart, we will want the very best for others. This obviously is contrary to our self-centered human nature, whose desire is to look out for “number one.” A genuinely saved person will love with a genuine love.

A Life Marked By Morality

Besides being marked by love, we should be marked by absolute standards of morality. Many people are shocked to see the word hate in regard to Christians because we are never to hate anything according to the world. But we are to hate evil. The only way to keep evil out of our lives is to hate it. Far too many Christians have taken an attitude of tolerance toward evil and it

has infected their lives. Proverbs 8:13 says, “To fear the Lord is to hate evil.” We are not to hate evil people but we are to hate the evil that controls their lives.

While we hate evil, we are to “cling to what is good.” It takes effort and dedication to make this happen. If we hold on to the good, our lives will reflect it. Things in this life always seek the lowest level. It takes constant energy to hold our standards high but that is exactly what is needed if we are to hold on to the good.

A Life Marked By Enthusiasm

Every person who lives sacrificially for Christ will be genuinely enthusiastic about God both outwardly and inwardly. When Paul says, “Never be lacking in zeal” he means not being lazy when it comes to serving the Lord. We should be more energetic about serving the Lord than anyone else doing anything else. Too many Christians take the easy way out in what they do. The Bible doesn’t hesitate to speak out against laziness.

Colossians 3:23-24, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

There is nothing we should do with more enthusiasm than serve the Lord. Don’t you love to be around people who have a genuine enthusiasm for the things of God? The reality is that God doesn’t like half-hearted Christians who are afraid to stand up for Him.

A Life Marked By Faith

Christians fully committed to Christ will stand firm through hope, patience and prayer. The Bible tells us that even when the world says there’s no hope, we have hope if we know God. Our faith is made strong in these dark days by reading His Word and rejoicing in hope.

We are not only to rejoice in hope but to be patient in the face of trials and tribulation. Jesus told his disciples that they would face trials and tribulations in this world. We should expect it and prepare to persevere through it. If you’re committed to Christ, you’ll be committed to being patient in trials and tribulations until God’s purposes are accomplished.

Hope and patience in times of trouble should lead us naturally to our knees. “Faithful in prayer” means living in an attitude of trust...continuing to commit our circumstances to God and to trust Him.

A Life Marked By Ministry

The fifth mark of people totally committed to Christ is they have a positive ministry to others. Let’s look at three areas of Christians ministry...

The Ministry of the Open Hand – This is the ministry of generosity. “Sharing with the Lord’s people who are in need” is a characteristic of those who are waiting for God’s direction on how to use what they have in service to others.

The Ministry of the Open Home – Verse 13 tells us to “practice hospitality.” It is a godly practice to be hospitable. You never know who heaven might have come by for a visit.

Hebrews 13:2, "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."

The Ministry of the Open Heart – An open heart blesses, rejoices and weeps. Whatever the need, an open heart reaches out and embraces others.

"Bless those who persecute you..." You will discover at some point in your Christian life that someone has done something unkind to you. You are to love them and do good to them.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice..." It seems like it's much easier to console someone who is hurting than to rejoice with someone who is rejoicing because we are envious of their happiness. But Christians are a body, and when one part rejoices, we should all rejoice.

"Mourn with those who mourn..." If we are hesitant to mourn with others, it's because we don't want to get involved. But because we're a family of believers, we are already involved.

A Life Marked By Unity

Unity begins with humility and pride divides the body. When we're unwilling to associate with any member of the body of Christ, we become willing to divide it. Jesus is our example of unity. He associated with every part of society...especially those others refuse to associate with. He was comfortable with everyone...even the outcast sinners.

Not being wise in our own eyes is a path for remaining humble. When we think we've got it all figured out, God will allow something to show us that unless we remain totally dependent on Him, we will fail. Remaining teachable will promote unity in the body of Christ.

Does that sound like the life you've always wanted? You can have it by becoming a living sacrifice to God through total commitment to Jesus.