

Living Like a Christian in Our Relationship with God - Part 1

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[0 : 00] Does it matter how someone lives in the world today? Think about it. Does it really matter how you live?

Generally speaking, you know, there are people who think in today's world, we're not like we used to be. Everybody just sort of does what they want to do.

So just do what you want to do. Don't worry about it. There shouldn't be a problem doing that. Well, if you think that way, I don't know where you've been.

You certainly have not read or listened to any news. It seems that almost every week, a politician, a business executive, a TV personality, or an athlete is caught saying or doing something that just ruins their life.

Some of you most probably in here know some of this. A state senator in Florida forced to resign this past week for his outburst.

[1 : 19] Some of his colleagues, racial slurs, just hard, tough things he said. And the outcry was such. It mattered.

He's no longer a state senator. Bill O'Reilly, number one show on Fox. Forced out. No more the O'Reilly factor. Accusations of sexual immorality.

The list can go on and on. Politicians. Business leaders. Church leaders.

And on lower levels, not so much in the big headlines, but situations that we're familiar with. People say things, they do things, and it misrepresents, or it causes the wrong kind of attention to their company, or their colleagues, or their school, or their team.

And they pay for it. They suffer for it. Now, many people who this happens to, they'll come out and they'll apologize.

[2 : 43] They'll apologize for the way they have reflected so poorly on certain people or organizations that they represent.

University of Oklahoma quarterback Baker Mayfield has been a very public example of this. He was arrested back in February for public drunkenness, disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and a few other infractions, the story goes.

Three days later, he issued a very lengthy apology that demonstrates his awareness that it matters how you live.

It matters a lot how you represent certain people, organizations. I want you to look at part of his statement.

He said, I sincerely apologize for my actions early Saturday morning. I apologize to President Boren, Coach Stoops, and Coach Riley for conducting myself in a manner that does not correctly represent the way the University of Oklahoma should be represented.

[4 : 00] I know better than to bring bad attention and scrutiny to the school and people that I love. Next, I apologize to my family and close friends.

To my parents and brother, I am extremely sorry for bringing this embarrassment to the Mayfield name. I was raised better.

I want you to think. If it matters how athletes and politicians and business executives and go on and on, if it matters how they live, if it matters how they represent their company or organization or whatever, how much more should it matter how we as Christians live and reflect on our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today and for the next four weeks, I want us to turn to Romans chapter 12 and look at how God calls us to live in this world as his children.

And I want us to understand he calls us to do this because it matters. It matters how we live. It matters how we represent him, how we represent the Lord Jesus.

[5 : 27] What we're going to do is we're going to do a study of the entire chapter of Romans or the 12th chapter of Romans. The whole thing is going to be called Living Like a Christian.

And we're going to break it down into five studies, possibly six. Here's the goal. Today, Living Like a Christian in Our Relationship with God, Part 1. We're really just going to look at verse 1 and come back next week and look at verse 2.

Then Living Like a Christian in Our Understanding of Ourselves, beginning in verse 3 through verse 8. And then we'll spend the last two weeks, possibly three, Living Like a Christian in Our Relationships with Others.

Romans 12, verses 9 through 21. Today, I want us to begin by reading Romans 1, or Romans 12, verses 1 and 2. And as we read this, if you've been in church anywhere, I'm going to guess, for any length of time, these two verses are very familiar.

Romans 12, 1 and 2 is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible. Certainly one of the most well-known in the book of Romans.

[6 : 46] If you've been a member of this church for any length of time, for a few years at least, as we read this, if they don't sound familiar, don't tell me.

Please don't tell me that you're not familiar with Romans 12, 1 and 2. Let's read it. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers.

It could be translated brothers and sisters. It includes both. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul wrote this letter to the church at Rome. He wrote this letter to Christians. And the first 11 chapters, he is explaining to them how all people are sinners in need of a Savior and that God graciously provided the Savior we need in the person of His Son, Jesus.

[8 : 16] Paul explained in great detail how salvation is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus, through faith alone in Jesus.

Now, in chapter 12, he starts applying what he's taught. You could put it this way.

In chapters 1 through 11, Paul explains a lot in great detail, answers questions, objections even, to what God has done for us in Christ and how we should respond by repentance and faith.

And it could be that you get to the end of chapter 11 and you think about all he's said and you ask the question, so what? Well, in chapter 12, verse 1, Paul starts answering, so what?

He explains, he applies what he's been teaching. What he's going to do is tell us how we need to respond to what God has graciously and mercifully done in our lives.

[9 : 31] And he's going to say that we need to respond by making a commitment of our whole lives to God. That's how we demonstrate we're God's children.

That's how we express our love and appreciation to God for what he's done for us by making a great commitment, a real, wholehearted commitment. But I want you to understand, that word commitment is falling on hard times.

We live in a day where we don't like to make commitments. A lot of people won't make a commitment to somebody or something next week.

commitment. But commitment is not a bad word. Now sometimes it's just not everything that is cracked up to be.

For example, there's a such thing as a try your hardest because you've got to do it kind of commitment. That's the kind of commitment where you go to the doctor and he tells you you've got high blood pressure.

[10 : 40] Your blood sugar levels are too high. And what you've got to do in order to avoid going on medication, what you've got to do maybe to avoid becoming a diabetic or having a stroke, you've got to lose 30 pounds.

And so you think to yourself, well I don't want to have a stroke, I don't want to be a diabetic, I don't want to have to take medication, so I'm going to lose the weight and I'm going to make a commitment but I absolutely hate the thought of dieting, of exercising, of doing all I've got to do to lose that weight.

Yes, I want to do it, yes, I want to make a commitment but I'm going to hate every single day that I don't get to eat what I want to eat and every single day that I have to run where I don't want to run,

do what I've got to do that way.

That is not the kind of commitment that God is calling us to make in verse 1. I want you to get out of your mind any kind of coerced, do your best even though you don't want to kind of commitment.

I want you to look at what kind it is. Number 1, our commitment to God is based on a loving relationship with Him. The first place that we begin as we think about the commitment He's calling us to make, it is based on a loving relationship with Him.

[12:07] Look at verse 1, the first phrase. I appeal to you therefore brothers by the mercies of God. This is not really a command command.

Paul is urging, strongly encouraging these people that he calls brothers and sisters. It's like he's saying to them, I'm urging you, I'm encouraging you.

It's strong. He's an apostle. He has the authority to do that. It's the Word of God. We ought to do it, but Paul is making the appeal because it's something based on the mercy of God, the mercies of God.

Look at the word therefore for a moment. That recalls what Paul has been describing verses 1 through 11, which can be summarized the mercies of God or the merciful acts of God in providing for our salvation.

Paul is trying to motivate us, trying to motivate those people originally and us today to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to God by pointing out to us what God has so mercifully and graciously and lovingly done for us.

[13:27] This is positive motivation. Paul's already pointed out in this letter, first 11 chapters, how God has, from His own initiative, from His own love, from His own grace, chose us to be His children through faith in Jesus.

Paul has explained how God has called us by His grace to enjoy the privileges of being His children, being able to call Him Heavenly Father.

God has shown us, or Paul has written here about what God has done in offering us, giving us salvation as a gift that we receive through faith in Jesus.

Paul has explained while that gift is free to us, it was very costly to Him. He sent His Son into this world to actually die a horrible death.

on a cross, but to die as our substitute, suffering the punishment that our sins deserve, that we deserve. God offers forgiveness, wiping the slate clean, a new start, a new life.

[14:53] God offers eternal life as a gift through faith in His Son, Jesus. forgiveness. Now, if you have received that gift, if you truly know Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want you to think about what God has done for you, and He didn't have to.

He was under no obligation. But I want you to know that God has forgiven you. God has, in His sight, made you new.

God has put His Spirit in you. God now thinks of you as His son or His daughter. You are His child. And God promises to be with you and take care of you every step of the way in this world. That doesn't mean life's going to be easy by no means. But God promises to be with us, to never leave us nor forsake us.

sometimes He'll just have to carry us through a situation. God promises not only to be with us in this life, but to bring us into His real presence after death where we will enjoy eternity in heaven with Him and with all of His people.

[16:19] So the idea is, when Paul says, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, the idea is, in light of God's great mercy and grace and love, all this, He is calling us to willingly commit ourselves to Him and live the kind of life that will honor Him, that will please Him.

And there's other things in Romans that tell us it'll be the most satisfying life that we could live as well. It matters how we live in this world. God really wants us to live like His children, to have a right kind of relationship with Him.

And to have a right kind of relationship with Him day by day, it requires that we commit ourselves to Him. But understand, He's calling us to commit ourselves to Him because He's the one who loves us more than anyone could.

He's the one who's already done for us what no one else could do and will for all eternity do for us. there is no greater one than Almighty God and His Son Jesus Christ who is for us, who is with us.

There's no greater one, greater thing that should motivate us to want to say, Lord, I am yours. I am committed to you, to your way, to your will.

[17 : 49] The motivation should come from the relationship we have with God based on His mercy. Number two, our commitment to God is to be a total life commitment.

God's not playing around. It is a great, a great urging. He wants us to be motivated from within. Spirit of God Himself motivates us from love and gratitude. But God is calling us to make, make no mistake, a total, 100% commitment to Him.

He says, look at it. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Look at the first phrase, present your bodies. On one hand, that refers to everything that you are, you, your life. But He uses that word body for a purpose.

[18 : 53] That literally means use your body in sacrificial service to the Lord. Use your eyes, use your mouth, hands, use your feet, use your mind to please God instead of pleasing yourself or fulfilling your sinful desires.

Paul talks about that earlier in Romans in chapter 6. I want you to look at one verse where he sort of explains this. He says, do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves, some translations say your members, members of your body, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer every part of yourself to Him as an instrument of righteousness.

And I want you to think about what he's saying here. He's calling us to make a total commitment of ourselves, of our bodies. God wants us to commit to using our mouth to speak truth, not lies.

God wants us to use our mouth to speak encouraging words to people, not put-downs. God wants us to use our mouth to speak words of the gospel, of life, of hope to people, not just talk about just the things of this world.

God wants us to use our hands in serving people, meeting needs, actually touching people's lives, not just taking care of ourselves, meeting our own needs.

[20 : 48] sacrifice. This verse specifically says to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. And when Paul wrote that, everybody understood the idea of animal sacrifice.

Not just Jews, it was just the way of the times. Pagans, everybody worships, always have, always will. And there was animal sacrifices in the pagan temples.

In the most extreme abuses of the system, there were human sacrifices offered. But as Paul wrote this, there was a Jewish element in the church, and for sure it brought to mind the animal sacrifices that were killed, blood spilt, as an atonement for their sins.

Problem was, in the Old Testament, it had to be done over and over and over again. It really was not, it was God's plan, it was part of the law, but it wasn't God's final word.

It wasn't the fulfilled plan. If you read in Hebrews chapter 8, 9, and 10, for example, those animal sacrifices are no longer, they're obsolete.

[22 : 01] Jesus Christ, all those sacrifices, they actually pointed to Him. He is the Lamb of God, who by His death, by the shedding of His blood, that really removed sin, that really atoned for our sins, the sins of those who trust in Him, the sins of His people.

Well, now, God calls us, forget the animal sacrifices, present yourself, present your life, present your body as a living sacrifice.

sacrifice. And look what He says, how to do it. As holy and acceptable to God. We're to present ourselves to God. The word holy here is talking about being set apart. We're to present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice.

We're holy. We're set apart. We're not like the world. We'll get into that next week. We're to be God's unique people. And as we present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, holy, set apart, not like everybody else, it will be acceptable to Him.

Or some translations say it'll be pleasing to Him. That's another positive motivation. I want you to think about this. There's some people you know that no matter what you do, you cannot please them.

[23 : 25] Some of you, you may be thinking, that's my mama, that's my daddy. Some of you may be thinking, that's my husband, that's my wife. Or my boss.

Or someone in my life. They just cannot be pleased. And some people would have the idea, you can never please God, but that's not true. We can be pleasing to God.

We can be acceptable to Him. In fact, if you want to do some more reading on that, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning in verse 1, talks about living a life that pleases God. In fact, a

few years ago, a couple of years ago, we did a little short series on pleasing God.

I want you to understand what Paul is saying here about committing ourselves to Him because we love Him, because we're appreciative of what He's done for us, committing ourselves to Him wholeheartedly as a living sacrifice, that pleases God.

You can leave here this morning as one in whom God is pleased. A smile comes across His face because you are trusting in His Son for your salvation.

[24 : 35] That means the penalty for your sins paid. That means God credits the righteousness of Jesus to you. And if you're trusting in Jesus this way, and you want to express your love and thanks to God by committing yourself to Him 100% as a living sacrifice, separated from this world, you will leave here pleasing God.

Now, this kind of commitment to God requires that we have to be intentional in how we live in this world. We have to be intentional about what we do as we do what we do at home and work and school and on the ball field and everywhere else.

We've got to be intentional about, I am seeking to please God in the way that I am committed to Him in just doing what I've got to do wherever I am and go in life.

We've got to be intentional. Our goal has to be more than just trying to be good. Just trying to be good citizens, good Americans, morally upright, or even good church members.

Jerry Bridges, the Christian author, written a lot of books on living Christian life. Great, great guy.

Lots of help. He talks about, in one of his books, there's a lot of people who are committed to doing good.

[26 : 08] They're, what you might call, they're committed to moral values. They're committed to morality. Or they're committed to the church. church. I want you to know that you can be an atheist.

And you can be committed to doing good. There's a lot of people who don't believe in God, who don't care about God, and they're basically good, morally upright people. What the Scripture is calling us to do is not be committed to some vague sense of goodness and moral values, or even being committed to the church, standing alone.

We're supposed to be committed to God, to Him, in a relationship. And if we are, we'll be committed to His Word. We'll be committed to the moral teachings and truth that He reveals in His Word.

We'll be committed to His church. But the commitment is really to Him. It's really to the Lord Jesus.

And we just live it out by obeying the moral principles.

By participating in worship and study and fellowship that we do in church. Now this commitment to honor God and please Him.

[27 : 26] You know this kind of devotion cannot be forced. You can't just decide, I'm just going to do the best I can and be committed to God this way.

You can't make yourself have this inner love and gratitude, appreciation to God for what He has done for you and saving you.

You can't do it. This will only come from a heart that has been changed, from a person who's been changed by the Spirit of God. This can only happen in the life of a real Christian.

This is one way to tell if you have a real relationship with God. If you think to yourself, I don't really have a clue what you're talking about this morning. This idea of having a relationship with God, having this inward motivation to love Him and show thanks to Him because of what He's done for me.

If you say, I don't understand that, I want you to understand, I just don't see that you could be a Christian possibly. Because if you're a Christian, the Spirit of God lives within you. If you're a Christian, you understand what God has done for you in sending Jesus.

[28 : 51] You understand the forgiveness. You understand the freedom. You understand His love. You've experienced it. And there's something within you that causes you to want to express your love back and show Him your gratitude by the way that you live.

Now, you don't always do that and no one does. We still have this sinful nature that we have to battle. Some days I just want to please me more than God.

You know that. But you also know if the Spirit of God lives within you, that it's He who gives us the desire, the ability to want to be committed to our Heavenly Father for these right reasons.

Let's look at one more thing. Our commitment to God makes sense. If we are His children. This whole, this call to wholehearted commitment to God is not something fanatical, unrealistic that Paul just made up because he was a fanatical, unreal kind of guy.

No. It makes sense. Look at the last phrase here. He says, which is your spiritual worship. Or, in the footnote of the ESV, which I'm reading from, it says, it is your rational service.

[30 : 13] New American Standard says, which is your spiritual service of worship. The Net Bible, the New English translation, says, which is your reasonable service.

service. What Paul is saying here that this call to commit yourself to God as a living sacrifice wholeheartedly, because God's shown His mercy to you and you love Him and you just want to do this because you know it will please Him.

Paul is saying that this is reasonable service. This is rational worship.

It just makes sense if you know who God is and what He's done. It's not fanatical. It's not over the top. It's not crazy at all.

Now, I want you to think with me. This call to commitment. It's a call to, it says here, to worship God, which is your spiritual worship, which is your reasonable service, service of worship, whatever you want to say.

[31 : 27] I want you to look with me at what Doug Moo, New Testament commentator, how he explains this idea of our commitment to God being an act of worship or worshipful service.

Look at it. He says, worship is the way we live, not what we do on Sunday morning. Now, he goes on. I'm not going to do it because we don't have time. He talks about what we do on Sunday morning is corporate worship and it matters how we worship.

So he's not discounting God's people gathering for worship. He's not discounting us having a devotional life where we worship God and praise Him. Look at it. Worship in this context is the way we live, not what we do on Sunday morning.

We worship God, says Paul, by giving ourselves in sacrificial service to our Lord. We are to serve Him every day, every hour, every minute.

Paul deliberately uses the word body to describe what we are to offer to God. He gives some examples. Look at it. As we eat our food, we worship God by thanking Him for what He has given us, honoring Him with our conversation and providing for the bodies He has given us.

[32 : 39] As we sweat on the treadmill, we worship God by seeking to be good stewards of the body He has given us. This next one is for me, but I know it's for some of you as well.

As we seek to avoid driving with the same egotistical aggressiveness as others, we worship God by displaying the fruit of His Spirit.

We do our work to the best of our ability, worshiping God by giving our best to our employers. All of our life is to be a continuous worship of the God who created and redeemed us.

The commitment that God calls us to make in order to live like His children in this world is a total commitment. Touches every aspect of our lives every day.

And no one can force you or manipulate you to make this kind of wholehearted, willing commitment. This kind of commitment calls on you to look within.

[33 : 55] Think about your relationship with God, what He's done for you. Think about how much He loves you and has shown His mercy to you. And when you do, that's when you'll make that kind of commitment.

So I just want to ask you here as we wind down, is this the kind of relationship you have with God? If it is, you just thank Him. If you understand fully what I'm talking about this morning and there's just that within you that understands God has been so merciful and loving and kind and gracious to you and you appreciate it, you know that your salvation, your trust in Jesus is because of what God's done in you to enable you to understand that and believe that and because of what God's done to forgive you and make you His child and always be with you, you do love Him and you want to be committed to Him.

You want to serve Him. You know you don't do it perfectly by any means. But if you understand this, this is your heartfelt desire, you just thank Him for what He's done, what He's doing and keep on.

If you understand what I'm talking about this morning and that commitment used to be true about you but you've let other things or people or something get in the way, your priorities aren't what they used to be.

Your level of commitment has just fallen off drastically to what it used to be. What you know right now, you really want it to be because you know God wants it to rise.

[35 : 29] I want you to search your life. If there's sin, confess it. Repent of it. If there's some wrong priorities, even wrong relationships, abandon them.

Ask God to give you the wisdom to know how you need to rearrange your life and make the commitment that by His grace, you're going to seek to show Him your love and your gratitude. By the way, you are committed to being a living sacrifice in every aspect of your life every day. Now, if none of this is true about you but you want it to be, humble yourself before God and admit that it's not.

Even if you're a church member, admit that it's not. Admit your sin, your failure, your rebellion, whatever it is. Change your mind.

Turn from this way of life, this sinful way of life. Put your trust in Jesus. Call upon Him to save you. Surrender your life to Him as Lord.

[36 : 42] If you do that, the Scripture says, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. God will change you and He will so work in you that you will want to be committed because of the love you have for Him, His grace and mercy.

It really does matter how we live as God's children. We represent our Heavenly Father. We represent the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to live a life that pleases Him, make sure you leave here today wholeheartedly committed to Him now because you love Him and you want to please Him.

make that kind of commitment. Would you pray with me? Dear God, help us to see how we should respond to You, to what You've said to us this morning about how we live and the necessity of a commitment from our heart to You out of love for Your great mercy and grace.

show us, show us, help us to make the kind of commitment You want us to make. And in an attitude of prayer, do that. If I could pray with you, I'm happy to do that here at the front.

But let's just listen to the Lord and obey Him as He speaks to us from His Word and Spirit this morning. Thank you.