

ROMANS 12-16

LIVING IN LIGHT

THE OBEDIENCE

THAT COMES

FROM FAITH

GROWTH GROUP STUDY

INTRODUCTION

This final section of the letter to the Romans is book-ended by two profound descriptions of the Christian life. The first, perhaps more well-known, is in Romans 12:1-2.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Grasping God's mercy by faith leads to Christians being transformed from the inside out. With this in mind, Paul urges his readers to offer themselves to God as 'living sacrifices'. The result of this kind of worship is that they will no longer follow the ways of the world and instead pursue holy obedience and heartfelt worship to God. Faith leads to sacrificial, worshipful obedience.

The second of these bookends is perhaps less well-known, but no less profound. In Paul's final doxology he articulates again the purpose of the gospel – which has been revealed 'so that all the gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith' (16:26). God's purpose in salvation doesn't finish with the grace and mercy shown in Christ, but culminates in a God honouring obedience that flows out of faith in Christ¹. Again Paul's logic is clear – saving faith based in the mercies of Christ leads to change. And yet 'change' is too soft a term for Paul's thought at this point. He chooses the stronger language of 'obedience'.

In between these two bookends Paul lays out his exhortatory material for the letter.

There are no less than 84 commands just 5 chapters. The bulk of these fall in chapters 12-15 where there are 79 commands in 90 verses. There is much for the Christian to put into practice! And yet Paul never exhorts obedience from a framework of litigiousness or cold religious formalism, rather he ties his commandments to gospel-shaped reasoning and, ultimately, love. ²Obedience to God's ways are in Paul's mind a wonderful and glad expression of the new life of freedom that Christ secured for us in his death and resurrection. In this series then, we will be exploring what a life lived in view of the mercies of God will look like. It is in this context that Christian obedience finds its true foundation.

And yet in our particular moment in history and culture – obedience is a concept in exile. It is culturally suspicious, because it, at best, smacks of formalism; at worst it proliferates hierarchy and oppression. We live in a culture where the narrative is: everyone must be free to find their own truth and follow their own path. Romans 12-16 stands in stark contrast to this cultural narrative, by calling the Christian to live in light of the mercies of God, putting aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light (13:12) offering themselves to God in Holy obedience.

¹ With this phrase Paul has come full circle in the letter – to where he began in chapter 1:7: 'Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake'.

² Romans 12:9-10, 13:8-9, 14:15, 15:30

WEEK 1

ROMANS 12:1-2

1. What's something you would like to change about yourself?

2. As we get into our first study in Romans 12-16, it's vital that we have the message of Romans 1-11 in mind – otherwise we risk missing the point of chapters 12-16! Take some good time to refresh your memories about the story of this book so far with one of the following activities:

- Get each person to read through Romans 1-11 in their own time in the week before your first meeting, then discuss what you remember.
- Read through the whole of Romans 1-11 together. It might be helpful to pause after chapter 4 and again after chapter 8, and jot down the points that strike you.
- Split up into pairs or small groups. Have each group read one of the following sections: chapters 1-4, 5-8, or 9-11. Get each group to report back briefly on one or two key verses/sections that summarise their unit.

READ ROMANS 12:1-2.

3. Either together or in pairs, make note of the different words that link these sentences together. Draw a flowchart to show how the different parts of these sentences relate to each other. What questions arise out of the passage for you?

4. Romans 12-16 contains all sorts of instructions and commands on different parts of the Christian life. How do these instructions relate to Romans 9-11? How might that shape the way we think about Christian obedience?

5. What do you think of when you hear the word “worship”? How might this passage reshape your definition of worship?

6. What do you think is the goal of the transformation in v. 2? (Romans 8:28-30 may help.) How does this transformation come about?

7. We will see all sorts of spheres of life where Paul applies these ideas in the weeks to come. For now, does “offering yourself” describe the way you are seeking to respond to God in your life at the moment? If it did, how would that change your attitude to...

8. How do you think your day-to-day habits shape your mind and impact what your mind is filled with? What habits could you cultivate to help your mind be renewed?

WEEK 2

ROMANS 12:3-8

1. Discuss when you most felt most part of something, like you belonged. and what made you feel this way?

READ ROMANS 12:3-8

2. Read again yourselves, notes and raise any questions that come up for you or any initial observations? While doing this highlight the repeated ideas and phrases in the passage

3. The passage we are looking at this week starts off with a command to a certain way of thinking. What did we learn about our way of thinking from verses 1-2?

4. How does this passage challenge the way in which Christians think about themselves? How does the faith God gives us inform a Christian's way of thinking?

5. Considering the context of the Roman church, why does Paul tell the Romans to think of themselves as members of a body? Read Romans 14:10 and 13 for more context if it will be helpful

6. What are the implications of being members of the one body for the Romans?

7. What does God give gifts for and how should they be used? How shouldn't they be used?

8. How does the language of belonging to the other members of St Paul's make you feel?

9. If we belong to each other what then can we expect from others and what can they expect from us?

10. Are you using your gifts to serve the body At St Paul's and the wider body of Christ? If so how does it serve the body? If not what needs of the body could you meet with your gifts?

PRAY

- That St Pauls would be a church where we live out the reality of belonging to each other through using our gifts for the good of the body
- Pray that as individuals we would see ourselves as belonging to Christ's body and give our 'gifts' to one other in service.

WEEK 3

ROMANS 12:9-21

1. Have you ever been tempted to react – or seen another Christian react – to criticism or pressure from non-Christians in an unhelpful or unloving way? What was the impact – on you or on others in the community?

2. Remember where we have come to in Romans (Chapters 1-11) – and specifically the instructions in 12: 1-2

Remind each other what the situation was in Rome at this time – both within the church and in the society in general.

READ ROMANS 12: 9-21

3. This passage is full of instructions – both positive and negative. Let's tease these out a little

4. Notice verses 9-16. The love explored in this passage is not simply a feeling, but is seen in obedient action. Create a table - Transformed, Obedient Living v Pattern of the World. Work your way through the passage, listing the obedient behaviour asked of this group of Christians – and then commenting on how this differs from the patterns of behaviour accepted in the world.

5. Verses 17-21 – What is the Christian to do when they are wronged? What does God promise? How does Christ's example help us here? (1 Peter 2:23, Hebrews 12:2-3)

6. None of these instructions are “optional extras” but Is there one verse – or instruction – which particularly challenges you or resonates with you? How might acting on it impact your relationships with those around you?

7. How does living in this way - together - help us to live out the reality of being the body of Christ? Does this list seem a bit overwhelming or impossible to achieve? What resources could we draw on to help us?

PRAY

- Use these verses to pray for each other as we live our daily lives as an obedient, transformed community
- Pray for Christian communities around the world who are facing a hostile environment – especially those that are physically threatened (eg Ukraine)... and those who cannot even really meet for fear of authorities

WEEK 4

ROMANS 13:1-7

1. How would you characterise your own attitude to authority? How might this be influenced by your personality, experience, family, society or culture?

READ ROMANS 13:1-7

2. How might this passage link to the verses we read last week (particularly 12: 14-21) and the idea of a transformed community?

3. In contrast to last week's passage – this week's seems to have one strong focus. What is it? To what people and governments does this apply? Is anyone excluded?

4. Draw up a table: Rulers/ Subjects

How are rulers described? What are the instructions to believers?

5. According to this passage (Romans 13:1-7), what attitude should a Christian have to "governing authorities" and why should a Christian submit to them?

6. In the context of the whole Bible – what examples do we have of situations where believers are called not to obey authorities? What are the grounds for disobedience? Are they still submitting? Are they showing respect?

7. How would we apply these commands to be “subject to the governing authorities” to our lives in Australia’s democratic society? How does demonstrating our identity as a “transformed community” in this way impact our witness? (application)

PRAY – ACCORDING TO 1 TIM 2:1-3

- For those that govern us
- For our response to them

WEEK 5

ROMANS 13:8-14

1. What, if anything, do you think we owe our brothers and sisters at church?

READ ROMANS 13:6-14.

2. What does Paul say that we owe one another, and why?

3. The four commandments mentioned are numbers 6, 7, 8 and 10 of the 10 commandments given by God to the Israelites from Mt Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17).

For each of the four commands given in the negative, describe what love teaches us to do.

Command	What love teaches us to do
You shall not commit adultery	Be concerned for our brothers' and sister's sexual purity, and to take nothing from their present or future partners.
You shall not murder	
You shall not steal	(cf Rom 12:13; Eph. 4:28)
You shall not covet	(cf Rom. 12:15)

Leviticus 19:18 says,

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Why does Paul say that all commands are summed up in this one? (cf. Mt 22:34-40)

4. Paul says of the Jews in 2:18 that they "know his will and approve of what is superior because (they)

are instructed by the law". In 12:2 he tells Christians to be *"transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

- What does this suggest about the role of the law in the life of the Christian?

- How might this help Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome overcome their differences?

5. What reason does Paul give in vv11-14 for us to love one another?

6. What is appropriate for the:

Day	Night

7. To sum up, what three reasons does Paul give us in this passage to love one another?

8. In which relationship do I most often find myself inappropriately 'dressed' at the moment?

**9. What would it look like to be wearing the 'armour of light' and to be 'clothed with the Lord Jesus'?
What would love teach me to do in my life now?**

WEEK 6

ROMANS 14:1-15:13

1. Can you think of some issues in our church where people might be tempted to judge or condemn others?

READ ROMANS 14:1-12.

2. How are the ones with strong faith different from those with weak faith?

	The one with the 'strong' faith	The one with the 'weak' faith
Eats		
Considers certain days		
Is tempted to:		

3. How are they the same before God?

4. What is the antidote to the temptations of each?

5. In the context of the church in Rome, do you think the Christians with the strong faith refer to the Jewish Christians or to the Gentile Christians? Why?

READ ROMANS 14:13-15:4.

6. What does acting in love mean for those with a strong faith? What are the consequences of acting otherwise?

7. What are we to do about our own convictions? (14:5b,22)

READ ROMANS 15:5-13.

8. What further reasons does Paul give the Christians in Rome to accept one another?

9. Which of the following are disputable matters, and which are not? Why?

- The type of music played in church
- Church governance (whether the authority in the church should lie with the minister or with a council of elders, for example)
- That all of the Bible is God's Word
- Whether or not baptism is necessary to be saved
- Whether or not Christians are allowed smoke
- Whether or not Christians are allowed to drink alcohol
- That Jesus is fully God

10. The bible is clear that every day may be regarded as the same: why then does Paul say that this is a disputable issue?

11. Pick one of the issues listed before where Christians in our church may disagree with each other on a disputable matter.

- How should we handle any differences we have with our brothers and sisters?
- What might be the challenges involved?

PRAY THE PRAYER OF PAUL FOR OUR CHURCH:

- *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. – Romans 15:5-6*

WEEK 7

ROMANS 15:14-33

1. Reflecting on your calendar what duty or task took up most of your time last week?

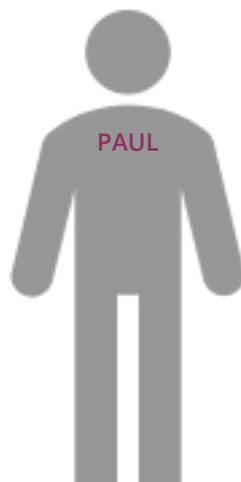
READ ROMANS 15:8-13

We can see that Christ became a servant of the circumcised (Jewish people) for two purposes, the first purpose is to confirm the promises that God made to the patriarchs. The second purpose is so Gentiles would glorify God for his mercy (v.8-9). The rest of the passage then shows how the Old Testament had always had the Gentile glorifying God in view(v.9b-12). This includes the Gentiles in Rome now (v.13).

Christ as the hope and praise of gentiles is the context for our passage now.

READ ROMANS 15:8-13

2. Write down everything you learn about Paul, you can use the map to aid you as well.



ROMANS LOCATION MAP

Search Maps

Show search options



3. Putting it together, how would you complete this sentence

"Paul's passion and mission in life....."

4. Paul quotes Isaiah 52:15 to explain Go to Isaiah 52:13-15, how does context this help us understand why Paul had this passion and mission?

5. What do you find challenging and what do you find exciting as you consider Christ and Paul's mission?

6. Thinking back to the first question, what would it look like for you to make proclaiming the gospel to the nations a priority?

Consider these three steps:

1. What is your habit with praying and giving to our mission partners?
2. How do you feel about crossing cultures to evangelise those from other nations?
3. Would you consider going (short term or long term)?

WEEK 8

ROMANS 16

READ ROMANS 16:1-16

Even though Paul hasn't been to Rome yet he has lots of personal greetings for people he knows or has worked with. These include Jews and Gentiles; men and women; people from all classes or levels of society. Pheobe was probably the person who carried the letter from Cenchreae (near Corinth) to Rome.

1. What do you notice about the ministry of the women here?

2. What does Paul love and value about all these people?

3. Who is a real encouragement to you from church or previous churches and ministries? Can you think of someone it would be good to call, visit or write to?

READ ROMANS 16:17-23

4. Split into pairs and draft a mini resume for the people mentioned in v.17-18

Professional Impact:

Aims:

Skills:

5. What would it look like to follow the instructions of verse 17?

READ ROMANS 16:25–27

Romans finishes with a beautiful doxology that again links obedience with faith, in fact this phrase forms the book end of Romans (see Romans 1:5).

6. Looking back to Romans' exposition on faith. What has been some highlights for you?

7. Looking back to Romans' exposition on obedience that comes from faith. What has been some highlights for you?

As you reflect on this chapter and the book of Romans.
Finish the below:

God I praise you.....

God I confess....

God thank you....

God please.....

St Paul's | REAL
Anglican | HOPE
JESUS