

97-04-06b

As we saw in the first session this morning, God does not simply set a standard for us or give us a command and not give us the means, the enablement to be obedient in that area and to have it come to pass in our lives. So it's not like the commercial, be fit, be healthy, be muscular, be toned, be beautiful, and no power with which to make that happen. And there are some wonderful connections and things that we can learn by comparing Romans 2 and Romans 12.

We've seen a few of those already. One of the major links there is the goodness of God, and you see that word cropping up in both places. People in Romans 2 who were judging others and not judging themselves were despising the riches of God's goodness, not knowing that the goodness of God leads us to change of mind.

But in accordance with their hardness and impenitent hearts, treasuring up wrath in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. You can see in Romans 2.17 that Paul characterizes this crowd. He says, Indeed you, O man, this is the one who is judging others and not judging himself.

Indeed you are called a Jew and rest on the law and make your boast in God and know his will and approve the things that are excellent being instructed out of the law and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You therefore who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? Now this is a stab, this is a sharp object poking the balloon of self-importance, of self-satisfaction, of self-confidence that is falsely placed, isn't it? He says when you think about yourself, you say well I'm resting on the law, I make my boast in God, I think I am righteous, I know his will, I approve the things that are excellent, I'm instructed out of the law. Well, we like to think this about ourselves, don't we? We spend time in the Word of God, we try to learn the truth of God.

What do we need to watch out for? Overconfidence, misplaced self-confidence that because we, and I think this has happened in the past, we used to stack our notebooks and count the number of tapes that we had heard, or the number of lessons that we had listened, or the number of Bible classes that we had attended, and we think well you know, you look around here at the run-of-the-mill believers and my goodness, we're getting all of this doctrine with a capital D. And we would start to place our confidence in the fact that we had heard and been instructed a lot in the Word of God. And Paul says be careful, be careful that you don't wind up, and he draws this cartoon of someone who is in this camp, who rests on the law and boasts in God. And we have done this as believers.

We know His will, we approve the things that are excellent, we're instructed out of the law, we are confident, we are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes. We have the form of knowledge and truth in the law. But you notice one thing as you read down through this, where is the laser beam of observation pointed for this person? It's outside, isn't it? I am a guide to the blind.

I will be a light to those who are in darkness. Let me help you. Let me enhance your understanding.

Let me show you where you are in error. Let me lead you in the path of righteousness. And this is all an outward looking form of righteousness.

I already know, I'm instructed, I'm already taken care of, and now I'm going to come over and help you in the way of righteousness. It's one of the classic manifestations of this attitude, is that we busy ourselves in trying to get other people lined up with God's Word. If we find ourselves more interested in correcting others than we are in being corrected ourselves, we find ourselves in this Romans chapter 2 camp.

What does Romans chapter 12 give us by way of contrast? Look at verse 3. I say through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. He says you need to remember you're a part of the body. You're not the whole body.

Your understanding, your gift, your emphasis, your calling, that's not universal, that's for you. The things that God has taught you, the things that you've learned, the areas where you have a grip, and the Word of God has instructed and built you up, that's for you. That's not necessarily for every other member of the body.

You're one member. You've got a portion of what God is giving the body. And you need to concentrate on what God has given you.

Your gift, your calling, your opportunities, your circumstances. It is not our place, and it's not our calling to find that once we have learned something, and once we have a grip on it, and it's clear to go and be a guide to the blind and a light to those who are in darkness. Well, now I've gotten a grip on this wonderful truth.

I'm going to get everybody else on my same page. We're all going to sing this tune together now. Different believers are going to come to understanding in different areas.

And it isn't helpful to be enlightened and find a truth of God, and then go around and try to browbeat and drag and seek to get everybody else to that same piece of understanding. God has other believers in other places. They're a different part of the body.

They've got different problems. They have different areas where they're weak, and God is teaching them different things. And it's not our place to go and foist our understanding and our learning on others.

Now, it sounds ironic coming from someone who has a communication gift, because basically God does call me to learn and then foist it on others, I suppose, in a sense. But this is talking about attitude. Are we learning so that we can shed a light of illumination to others? Is that the reason why we're learning? Even for a communicator, that's a bad idea.

One of the great things that was taught to me long ago by someone who was a teacher of the Word of God himself was that a pastor or a teacher does not study the Word of God to teach. If I go to the Word of God looking for something to teach, I'm wrong before I ever open the Bible. All of us have to go to the Word of God to learn.

And having learned, we are then equipped to function in our gift. And if it's a communication gift, we can pass on truth that we have learned. But it's a mistake to ever go to the Word of God looking for something to teach.

We go to the Word of God looking for what we can learn, what we can be transformed by, what we can incorporate into our thinking and our lives. And having learned and having been thoroughly equipped for every good work, if our gift or if our opportunity happens to be communication, even speaking the truth to one another in love, because this is something we have learned and that we value, we are now qualified to communicate that to others, whether it's verbally or non-verbally. But you can see the difference.

We see this contrast, don't we, in people in Chapter 2. I have a lock on the Word of God. I know the truth, and I'm going to lead the blind. I'm going to shine to those who are in darkness.

I'm going to instruct the foolish and teach the babes. That's a flaw right at the outset. And so, if we're going to implement this exhortation, if we're going to respond to this urging from Paul, we've got to see the difference between Chapter 2 and Chapter 12.

When he says, not lagging in diligence, being fervent in spirit, in Romans 12, 11, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer, this is light years different than the people in Chapter 2 who are self-confident and are busying themselves in trying to get others into line, correcting the faults and the flaws and the mistakes and the shortcomings and the misunderstandings in others. This is a sharp contrast. There's another interesting thing here.

When you look at Chapter 2, when he says, you are called a Jew, you rest on the law, you make your boast in God. And in verse 18, he says, you know His will and you approve the things that are excellent. Now, Paul is drawing this as a caricature or as a picture of someone who is doing the wrong thing.

And he says, you approve those things which are excellent. Well, the fascinating thing here is he uses this identical phrase. If you look over in Philippians Chapter 1, you might turn with me over there to Philippians Chapter 1 in verse 10.

This idea of approving is our same word, dokimazo, that we saw in Romans 12.2, to test out and find to be approved, find to be valid, find to be worthy. But in Philippians Chapter 1 in verse 10, Paul says, I pray, he starts in verse 9, I pray that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment. It's another reflection of the same principle.

How can our love abound? How can we fulfill these things in Romans 12? It abounds through knowledge and discernment. And the knowledge of God's word and the discernment of the principles of God's word ought to give us an appreciation for God, not a weapon to use against our fellow believers. We don't go to the word of God and say, see, I wish so and so was reading this verse.

Look at the way they're messing up. I'm going to underline this and send them this page out of my Bible. They need to be paying attention to this.

Love abounds through knowledge and discernment. And that's something that operates in our own soul. And we go to the word of God looking for growth, correction, rebuke, and instruction for ourselves so that we can be loving, so that we can have a greater appreciation of God's mercies and God's goodness.

Verse 10, so that you may approve the things that are excellent. The very thing that Paul accuses people of in Romans 2, he says is a benefit of operating in the right way. What's the difference? What's the difference between Philippians 1, approvers of the things that are excellent, and Romans chapter 2, approvers of the things that are excellent? In Philippians chapter 1, we're applying this to ourselves.

In Romans chapter 2, we're busy applying it to others. Who are we judging? Are we judging others or are we judging ourselves? Who are we going to the word of God for? So that we can stand as a beacon in a lighthouse and guide others, or so that we can be transformed by the renewing of our own minds. That's the difference.

It is a wonderful and a legitimate thing to dokimazo, to approve, to test out and find valid the things that are excellent. But that applies to us. That's what equips and motivates us.

It keeps us from being hypocritical. It keeps us from being self-righteous and self-centered, the way people are in Romans chapter 2. This is the means. We don't want to just know what the right things are.

We want to know how to make it take place, and this is how. And Paul says here, he says, My prayer for you is that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and in discernment,

so that you may approve the things that are excellent, so that you may be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ. This word translated sincere here, it's the same word that is used in 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 1. It's *elikes*, or *eulikes*, and that e-u at the beginning means good, *elikes* is from *elike*, which means judgment, having good judgment, having a pure mind, being pure, being undefiled, not being guilty of something that's wrong.

Paul says this is the way that you can be pure and without offense until the day of Christ Jesus. He says, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. It's a matter of being ourselves filled with the fruits of righteousness rather than trying to get everyone else to bear the fruit of righteousness.

That's the difference, and that's one of the wonderful things that we see by comparing these two sections of Romans. Notice the confidence that the Romans chapter 2 person has. He says, we are confident in verse 19, persuaded or convinced that you yourself are a guide to the blind.

There's no lack of confidence. I'm sure, I know that I'm right. There's no question in my mind I'm right and you ought to be right.

And let me tell you how you can be as right as I am. And it's the attitude that Paul is combating in this entire letter, isn't it? Righteousness doesn't come by conforming to someone's standard. Righteousness comes by faith in the truth, by knowledge and discernment of what pleases God and operating in that light.

It doesn't come from this self-confident attitude. This is the same thing he talks about in 2 Corinthians chapter 13, being puffed up by knowledge and not having love. Genuine knowledge and genuine understanding is going to result in love.

It's going to result in these things that we see in Romans chapter 12. We don't have to work at this. We don't have to say, well, I know the loving thing to do would be to not bring this up and to go and try to be a benefit.

So, all right, let me see if I can find something beneficial to go do. We don't have the love on the inside that's producing a genuine thing. We have a hypocritical love.

What's the point? Our confidence should be in the goodness of God, in the compassion of God and in the validity of the truth of God. That's where our confidence should be, not confidence that we are right and that we are qualified to go and judge and lead and illuminate others. That confidence is a bad confidence.

It's a false confidence. And it's interesting because one of the things that this Romans 2 person is confident in is that they have the form of knowledge and truth in the law. In verse 20, he says, you're confident that you're an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

And that word for form there is morphos, m-o-r-p-h-o-s, morphos, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. What did we see in Romans chapter 12, verse 2? Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed, metamorphos. You don't just have the form of the truth, you are transformed by the truth.

And there's an almost palpable connection between this word morphos here in chapter 2 and metamorphos in verse 12. It's not our job to have the form. It reminds me of carrying around our notebooks and citing our credentials and saying, look, I've got X number of years of language and I'm telling you that this is the way you ought to live, this is the way you ought to be.

That's having the form of the truth. And we can know the truth and we can be able to cite Scripture and we can justify our position and we can argue it logically and be confident that we're right, but that's not what God is looking for. God is looking for transform.

He's looking for the change on the inside that is going to produce in us love and that love is what's going to enable us to do all of these things that we find in Romans chapter 12 and to do them from the heart and in an unhyprocritical way. So what do we need to watch for? We need to watch ourselves, don't we? You, oh man, who are pointing the finger at others, don't you see the three fingers pointing back at you? Use this wonderful knowledge of the truth that you have to be transformed yourself rather than trying to judge and change others. What does it say in Romans chapter 12 verse 16? He says, Be of the same mind toward one another.

Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 219, You are confident that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish.

Romans 12 verse 16, Associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. When you're dealing with other people, associate with those who don't understand as much as you.

You don't need to separate from them just because they don't understand everything the way that you understand it. If somebody goes to church on Sunday and they think it's okay to raise their hands or they think it's okay to do some things that you know better than, well, don't be wise in your own opinion. Don't say, well, I'm a guide to the blind.

I need to straighten you out. I need to correct you. Don't you know that that's foolish, that's immature, that's ignorant, that's wrong? He says, Associate with the humble.

How are they ever going to learn if there aren't believers in their periphery who do know better and who at some point may be able? They're going to notice that you don't do those things and if they're interested in understanding the truth of God, they're going to say, I notice you don't do what I do. Why is that? You say, well, here's why. I think that this is what the Word of God has taught me.

This is what I value. This is the way I operate. And we don't learn these things so that we have a sledgehammer to beat someone else over the head.

We let it be a sledgehammer to beat us over the head and hopefully then we're qualified to speak the truth to one another. I was listening to a good friend of mine who is a pastor up in Tulsa of a group very similar to ours that meets in a home. He's a very faithful student of the Word of God.

He was teaching from the Word of God and he pointed out something just in passing that I think is very pertinent. He said, people are always saying, so-and-so really makes me angry or this situation makes me angry. And he said, nothing makes us angry.

People don't make us angry. Situations don't make us angry. People and situations are like kicking over a bucket.

That's the kick that spills the bucket and whatever is inside the bucket is what's going to spill out. If we have anger, if we have bitterness, a situation or a person is going to tip the bucket over and that's what's going to spill out. If we're filled on the inside with love, with patience, with compassion, if we've been changed on the inside, when a pressure comes and kicks over our bucket, what's going to spill out? Love, patience, joy, peace.

All of the things that Paul is talking about here in Romans chapter 12 ought to be in our bucket so that when pressure comes and we're spilled, that's what spills out. And if we find under pressure that we have anger, bitterness, judgmental attitude, trying to correct, trying to rebuke, trying to make others change so that our bucket doesn't get tipped over, we're saying, you shouldn't be doing this because you're making me angry, you're causing me to... it's your fault that I am the way I am. I wouldn't be miserable, I wouldn't be unhappy, and I wouldn't lose my joy if you would straighten up.

And that's wrong thinking on our part. And this is what Paul is telling us. If we are renewed, if we are transformed, if we concentrate on the compassions of God, the mercies of God, the goodness of God, and let that transform us on the inside, when these pressures come, we can have hope in tribulation and patience in trial and be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So that's the challenge that we are left with this morning from this section of Scripture. What is it that spills out when our bucket is tipped over? If it's something other than love, then we need to take a close look at Romans chapter 2 and Romans chapter 12 and seek that transformation that comes through the power of God that will make us a vessel of honor, full of honorable things that glorifies God and accomplishes His purpose. That's why God has measured out to us the measure of faith that we have.

That's why He's called us with the calling that we have and gifted us with the gifting that we have so that in our situation with the people that we deal with and the pressures that are on us, we can be that expression of God's love and that reflection of God's glory that He wants us to be. Let's

close in prayer. Father, we thank You that we are not left to our own devices.

We are not stuck with only the feeble strength and the corruption that is a part of our nature, but through Your Word and through Your Spirit we have access to Your divine power. We can be motivated, we can be enabled through those things that You have provided us to be everything that You want us to be, to express love, to have compassion and to be a reflection of Your image in those areas. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make these things real to us.

We pray that we will see clearly the areas in our lives where these things can be made the object of our faith and the source of application, so that we will not have a hypocritical love, we won't be doing one thing and thinking another, but in every way and in every area of our lives we will be a genuine expression of the transforming power of Your grace. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.