

Obedience, Devotion or Legalism?

(Romans 12:1-2)

Survey of Romans part 42

Edwin Gonzalez

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Title: Obedience, Devotion or Legalism?

Text: Romans 12:1-2 but let's read from Romans 11:32

³² For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

³⁴ For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?

³⁵ Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

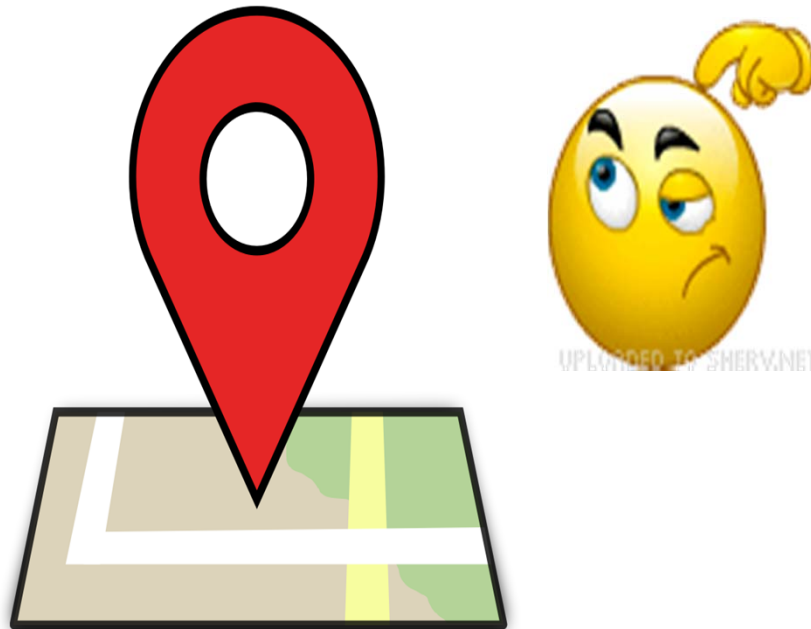
³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

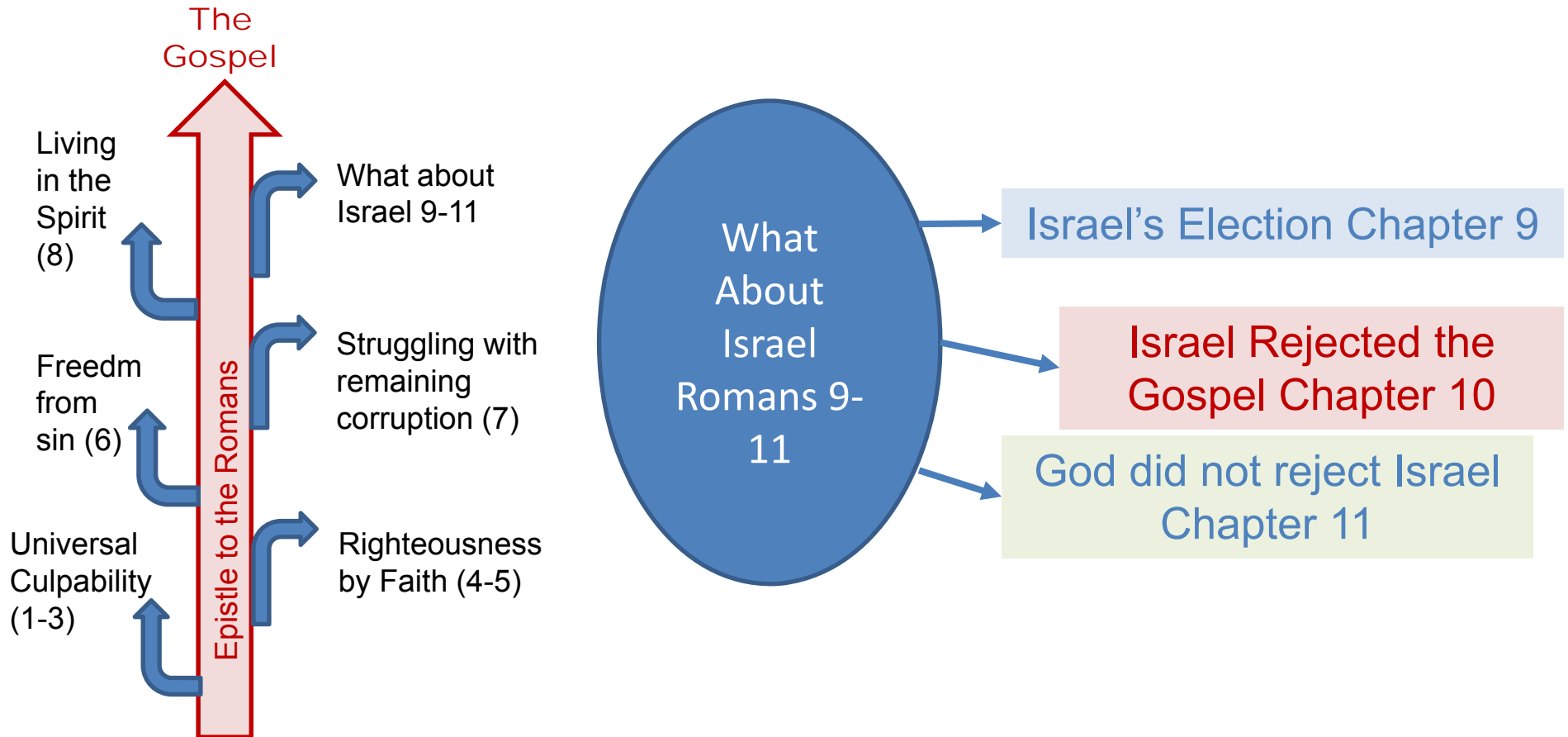
² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect

Title: Is Obedience Legalism?

- **41 Previous Installments? WHERE ARE WE?**



A SUMMARY OF ROMANS 1 to 11:



Romans 12 & ff - challenged to serve ...

- Obedience is a bad word to certain groups within Christianity.
- Obedience is the synonym of Legalism according to a group of Christians.
- “Obedience” is confusing Law and Gospel in the opinion of many.

- Obedience is a Hallmark of the true Gospel to another segment of Christianity.
- Obedience is showing the Fruits of Repentance to others.
- Obedience is the Evidence of Faith in Jesus in the eyes of others.

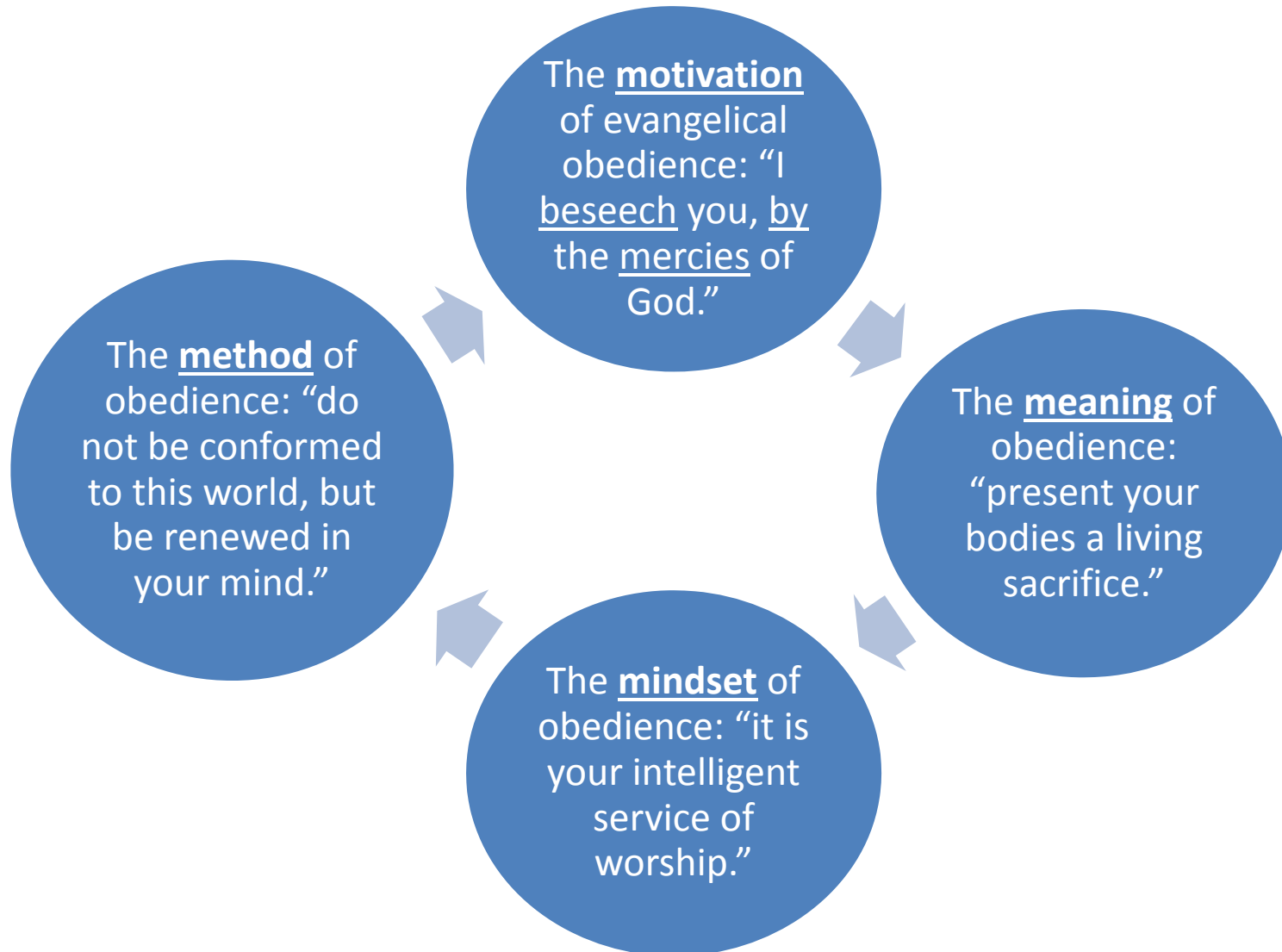
⇒ Who is right? Yes
⇒ Who is wrong? Yes
⇒ Do we have it right? Sure...
Keep dreaming or continue preaching the Gospel to yourselves daily!

What is Romans 12:1-2 about?

- There is a shift in the letter that starts in what we call chapter 12.
- Paul starts to outline practical aspects of the Christian corporate life (life in the church).
- Commentators have aptly stated that from Romans 12 and on, Paul fleshes out the practical consequences of understanding the Gospel foundation outlined on the previous 11 chapters.
- Remember Paul was a Jewish Rabbi, a Middle East wisdom teacher and he wrote as such.
- **Romans 1-11 The Gospel explained & Romans 12-16 The Gospel lived**
- This section is about “OBEDIENCE”, or “PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING” but it must be understood in light of the Evangelical Context it stems from.

What is Romans 12:1-2 about?

A CHEAP, ALLITERATED, WESTERN AND ARTIFICIAL OUTLINE FOR VERSES 1 AND 2:



What is Romans 12:1-2 about?

a) I beseech

Parakalw - a plea not a command much less a threat -

Let me share something from **Steve Brown** about how we elicit or teach “obedience”.

I wish I could apologize to all of those people I have done this to. These are methods pastors (or figures authority) employ to encourage obedience.

What is Romans 12:1-2 about?

Human Methods to Produce Obedience

1. Manipulate with guilt

You would be surprised at how far a “How could you?” or “After all that Jesus has done for you!” will go if it is said with sincerity and passion. It’s even better and more effective if you can attach a Bible verse to it.

2. “Encourage” with comparisons to how much better others have done

It’s sort of like the rooster who found a gigantic eagle’s egg. He rolled it into the chicken coop and said, “Ladies, I don’t want you to think I’m complaining, but I did want you to know what the competition is doing.”

3. Tell stories of heroes of the faith who persevered and were faithful in the hard places

“If they can do it, God will give you the grace to do it too!” It’s very important that, when motivating with biography, you not tell the whole story. You have to leave out the sin, the doubts and the failures. Only reference the victories.

What is Romans 12:1-2 about?

Human Methods to Produce Obedience

1. Manipulate with guilt

2. “Encourage” with comparisons to how much better others have done

3. Tell stories of heroes of the faith who persevered and were faithful in the hard places

4. Use the carrot-and-stick technique

This is one of the best techniques there is. The carrot is heaven, of course, and the stick is hell. After someone becomes a Christian, the hell thing doesn't work very well, but there is always Hebrews 12:8 (“If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are legitimate children and not sons”). It's a simple matter of telling your congregation that while they probably won't go to hell for their sins, God will break their legs if they get out of line. A few attention-grabbing words like “cancer,” “financial ruin,” and “leprosy” help.

5. Throw out the “follow me as I follow Christ” thing

The trick here is to never let them see you sweat. You have to look spiritual, speak spiritual and act spiritual when people are around.

What is Romans 12:1-2 about?

b) By the mercies of God (context) - Romans 9 – 11

- He shut them all (Israel & Gentiles) in disobedience to have mercy on all
- O the depths of the wisdom, knowledge and riches of God.
- Who gave Him first that it would be recompensed back to him?
- Nobody... it is all of, by, through and from Him. To Him alone belongs the Glory.

⇒ οἰκτιρισμῶν mercies (empathy, affection, compassion).

⇒ It is an appeal to God's felt compassion in saving us.

c) Present your bodies a living sacrifice

- Jews and pagans knew what he meant by offering a sacrifice.
- You had to offer, kill and burn it. You could keep nothing.
- Serving God is not a part time job. It's all or nothing
- Obedience is not segmented. It's an ALL IN.
- Serving God is not just complying with mundane duties... ***“where are we different?”***

What is Romans 12:1-2 about?

d) Rational / Thought through form of worship

- logikh.n latrei,an **Logic Latria** / Logical Worship
- Intentional: living to serve, Mk 10:45 – Jesus came to serve and give His life
- Planned: later on Paul delves into the subject of spiritual gifts, and how we ought to not only know which are ours, but then how to employ them in the most profitable way.
- Don't leave it to chance: “if they call me”

e) Do not be molded by this world. aivw/ni This “age” system / this time / this epoch.

- World's definition of success: youth, riches, power.
- We can approach the ministry with a worldly attitude.

f) Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

- Scripture truth & Eternal values -> We end up being what we think
- Who / What feeds your paradigms?
 - Who's the preacher you hear the most? It's you! Be careful!
 - Ps 19 “The Law of the Lord is perfect... converting the soul, making the simple wise, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes.”

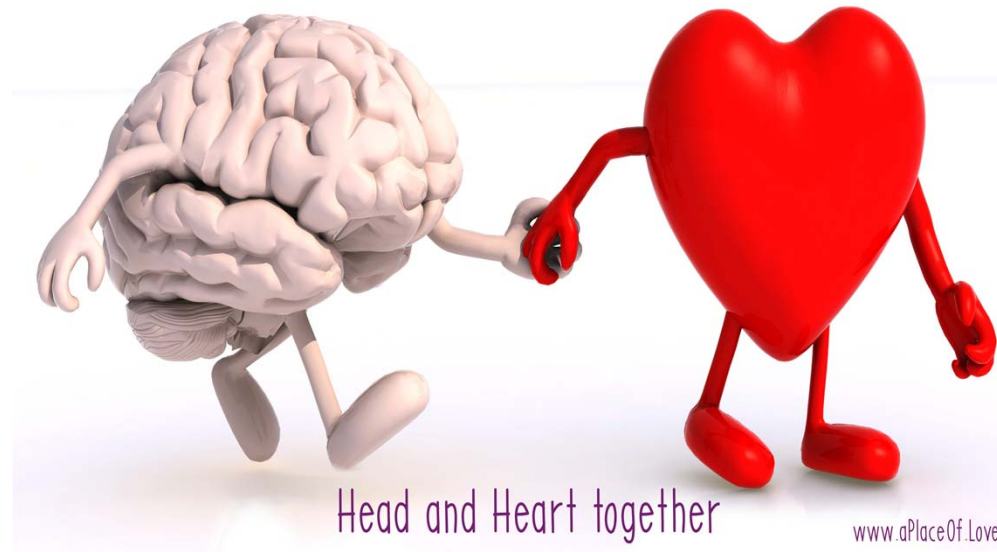
What is Romans 12:1-2 about?

f) This is the route / method to **taste** the good, perfect and agreeable will of God.

CONCLUSION: *Doctrine fleshes out in practice, but the “doctrine” has to be impregnated and saturated with the flavor of the Gospel of Grace. Only THIS doctrine, will produce the RIGHT practice.*

“The short circuit.”

The Daily Battle



CONCLUSION

Doctrine fleshes out in practice, but the “doctrine” has to be impregnated and saturated with the flavor of the Gospel of Grace. Only THIS doctrine, will produce the RIGHT practice.

There is a significant difference between having a conception of the gospel versus having savored the gospel.

Sinclair Ferguson: “Until grace and God himself masters a man, that grace will never flow out to other people. He will become Jonah under his tree with a heart shut up against sinners in need of grace because he thinks of God in conditional terms.”

This is the thought of: I must do good for God to bless me.

CONCLUSION

Doctrine fleshes out in practice, but the “doctrine” has to be impregnated and saturated with the flavor of the Gospel of Grace. Only THIS doctrine, will produce the RIGHT practice.

Alexander White: “There is such a thing as sanctification by vinegar. **It makes a man accurate and hard.** When people come being tempted by sin, broken by it, ashamed to confess the mess they made, it is not a Calvinistic pastor who has been sanctified by vinegar they need, but a pastor who has been mastered by the unconditional grace of God, and from whom iron clad orthodoxy has been torn away and the whole armor of a gracious God has been applied; **the armor of him who would not break the bruised reed or quench the dimly burning wick.**”

CONCLUSION

Doctrine fleshes out in practice, but the “doctrine” has to be impregnated and saturated with the flavor of the Gospel of Grace. Only THIS doctrine, will produce the RIGHT practice.

John Owen: “Unacquaintedness with our mercies & our privileges is our sin as well as our trouble... This makes us go heavily when we might rejoice. And to be weak where we might be strong in the Lord.

How few of the saints are experimentally acquainted with this privilege of holding immediate communion with the Father in love?

With what anxious doubtful thoughts do they look upon him? What fears what questionings are there of his goodwill and kindness?

At the best many think there is no sweetness at all in God towards us, but what is purchased at the high price of the blood of Jesus. It is true that that alone is the way of communication, but *the free fountain and spring of all is in the bosom of the Father.*”

CONCLUSION

Doctrine fleshes out in practice, but the “doctrine” has to be impregnated and saturated with the flavor of the Gospel of Grace. Only THIS doctrine, will produce the RIGHT practice.

John Newton:

“Bowed down beneath a load of sin, by Satan sorely pressed.
By war without, and fears within, I come to thee for rest.
Be thou my shield and hiding-place; That, sheltered near thy side,
I may my fierce accuser face, And tell him, thou hast died!”

CONCLUSION

Obedience, Devotion or Legalism?

The Gospel Translates into Devotion expressed by the apostle as:

Romans 12:1-2 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect

END