

Romans 12:1-21

Maturing Disciples

Introduction

- I'm looking this morning to build on Pastor Ryan's sermon from last week
 - He laid out for us how we are called to be involved in the disciple-making process
 - Today, I want us to think through, what are the marks of growth from discipleship? What's a maturing disciple?
 - I want to look at Romans 12
 - Not exhaustively, but overview
 - Have you ever asked, "What does a maturing disciple look like?"
 - All too often we reduce it to,
 - and settle for,
 - a list of external rules while ignoring the root source of maturity. Jesus explained it like this:
 - (Matthew 23: 25-26) ' *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean."* ¹
 - It's a heart issue
- Maturing Disciples can be summed up this way:
 - As recipients of grace, they're not conformed to this world
 - As recipients of grace, they're dispensers of grace to believers
 - As recipients of grace, they're dispensers of grace to unbelievers

PRAY

- **Recipients of grace are not conformed to this world**
 - Therefore
 - We need to pause here

¹ Unless noted, all Scripture quoted from: *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

- ◇ Humble “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think”
 - ❖ Not a self-effort
 - ◇ Discerning [sober judgement]
- (v:6)
 - ◇ Use their gifts to serve the body
 - ◇ Serving
 - ◇ Teaching
 - ◇ Being generous
- (v:8)
 - ◇ Merciful
- ***Genuine love should be competitive...***
- (v:10)
 - ◇ Outdo one another in showing honor
- (v:12)
 - ◇ Rejoice [joyful]
 - ◇ Patient – tribulation
 - ◇ Prayerful
- (v:13)
 - ◇ Generous
 - ◇ Hospitable
- (v:15)
 - ◇ compassionate
- (v:16) Harmonious, live in harmony with one another.
 - ◇ Not haughty,
 - ◇ Associate with the lowly.
 - ◇ Never be wise in your own sight.
 - ◇ Honorable
 - ◇ Peaceable
- Summary of (v:3)
 - fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. They love serving Jesus
- If you’re all of these, WOW, I’d like to meet you...but, do you pray at all about these qualities in your life?
 - Sonship

- Recipients of grace dispense grace to unbelievers

- Upside down
 - We get being nice to people who are nice to you
 - ◇ (Matthew 5:47) ‘ *“And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?”* ’ [NIV84]
 - ◇ Being nice toward Christians isn’t something we should exalt in – feel special
 - ◇ The pagans get that
 - Why does Paul bracket (v:3) & (v:16-18) before 19?
 - Because He knows hearts
 - ◇ He knows the command is hard, almost impossible
 - (v:19) **NEVER!**
 - Remember why He let the Israelites divorce?
 - (Matthew 19:7-8) ‘ *They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”* ⁸ *He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”* ’
 - When it comes to being gracious to unbelievers, I don’t really want to
- (v:3) grace driven obedience
 - because you can...
 - Unbeliever’s can never do good from a Spirit-filled life of faith
 - (Romans 14:23b) “...*For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.*”
 - This is what stirs a heart of compassion in believers for the lost, and a heart that
- (v:19) never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘ *“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the LORD.”*
- (v:20) To the contrary [upside down], “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ’
 - Why would I love my enemies?
 - ◇ It’s the kind of heart that Jesus produces
 - ◇ It’s what understanding grace does

- ◇ It's a maturing disciple
- ◇ How I react to my enemies is a true reflection of where my heart is
- What is "Heap burning coals?"
 - ◇ **It is clearly a metaphorical expression whose meaning is not obvious.** ⁴
 - ◇ quoting (Proverbs 25:22-23)
 - ◇ In my notes I have 12 different commentators over a period of 500 years, all have different views.
 - ◇ Here are:

Four different views. Heaping coals of fire on his head symbolizes

 - a. a form of self-inflicted torment, final judgment
 - b. a deed of benevolence (giving live coals to those in need),
 - c. a gesture of sorrow for sin,
 - d. a way of making the enemy ashamed of himself. ⁵
 - ◇ In v:19 believers are commanded not to take vengeance, but in v:20 they are now commanded to do good. But is it not psychologically improbable that the promise of God's judgment **would free** believers to do good to their opponents? ⁶
- Our hearts are prone to vengeance
 - ◇ God wants to deliver us from that
 - ◇ So we can trust His justice
 - ◇ How does this affect our view on capital punishment?
 - ❖ Christians really strive for life
 - ❖ Abortion
 - ❖ How eager, or what kind of heart toward the death penalty?
 - ◇ How often do we rush to judgment?

⁴ Morris, L. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (pp. 454–455).

⁵ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Vol. 12–13, p. 423). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

⁶ Schreiner, T. R. (1998). *Romans* (Vol. 6, p. 675). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

- ◇ “First...we must never be concerned about personal wrongs or seek personal vengeance. That is an absolute. Never seek personal vengeance, no matter what has been done to you. ‘Avenge not yourselves.’ ...We must, secondly, **never even desire** an enemy personal harm. This is the essence of Christian teaching.”⁷
- Once Paul firmly establishes this, he moves on to:
- (v:21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
 - Will you change the evil person?
 - ◇ Maybe, maybe not
 - Will God use it to change you?
 - ◇ Absolutely!

Sum Up

- Here’s LEFC’s vision statement: We exist to bring glory to God in all things by making disciples through Christ-centered worship, Christ-centered community, Christ-centered service, and Christ-centered multiplication.
- You see this is our vision because as you’ve just seen, it’s God’s vision...
- Maturing disciples:
 - Worship
 - Seek meaningful community
 - Serve Jesus in His church
 - Disciple others
- Here’s what your Father wants you to know:
 - As Pastor Ryan said last week, we need not be afraid
 - He is for you
 - He’s calling you to a promise
 - **(chp. 8:29a)**
 - Your sanctification is actively being pressed forward by God
 - To make you more like Jesus
 - He’s calling you to participate [not quench/grieve the Spirit]
 - As you heard last week you can stunt your growth

7. Lloyd-Jones, D.M. (2000). *Romans, Exposition of Chapter 12, Christian Conduct* (p. 490). The Banner of Truth Trust; Edinburgh, England; Cromwell Press.

- But if you belong to Jesus, ultimately you can't stop it
- Because He's promised
- I look over the last nine years and I see growth
- It's not because we're really good Elders
- Because a really good God made a promise
- I want to close with a truth of Scripture
- (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it."*

PRAY