

Romans 9-12

By Trish Gerstel

There's a popular saying: "It's the thought that counts." And **while that saying normally applies to gift-giving** (it doesn't matter that someone gifted you with the same exact kitchen tool you've owned for years – **what matters is that it was offered to you as a symbol of affection**), **this is, essentially, what Paul says in these three chapters of Romans.** His most basic point is that **It doesn't matter if someone was born Israelite or gentile, salvation is offered by grace through faith, and only then when a person's faith is sincere (10:9-14); and that an offering that is holy and pleasing to God can only be made when you are sincere in all that you do for Him (12:9).**

When we read Paul's words in chapters nine thru 11, we should look beyond the historical context (that Paul lived in a



time when gentiles were spiritual outcasts and the Israelites had for generations understood that they were God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6)) and turn our study inwardly. Just as the Israelites had a hard time accepting that gentiles could be

granted salvation, we sometimes struggle with accepting new members into the body of Christ. Our human minds scream, "Ha! **This is just a temporary thing** – he won't last," or, "What a fake – I know she's not really saved!" when we see someone new come into the church professing their faith. **This is especially true if that someone has openly struggled with a "public" sin such as addiction, violence toward others, stealing, etc. In these instances, we need to push away those human thoughts (which Satan gladly spurs on) and reflect on Paul's words in 11:19-21 as well as 11:23-24, remembering that we do not deserve our salvation and that God is no less likely to make a path for someone else as He did for us!**

In chapter 12, Paul goes on to address sincerity in our thanks to the Lord ("in view of God's mercy...offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God," 12:1), and he notes that **humility and loving treatment of one another is critical to this "spiritual act of worship."** We give thanks to the Lord and make **living sacrifices not by engaging in ritualistic or forced actions,** but by seeking out His "good, pleasing and perfect will" (12:2b); **acknowledging that He has given us (we have not earned) our "talents";** and putting others ahead of ourselves. Sincerity in these actions is **no less important than sincerity in our faith. Using our spiritual gifts for God's work is not an honorable pursuit when we do so begrudgingly (12:6-8) or so that we will receive praises from others (12:3); it is honorable when we are sincere in fulfilling His will and bringing glory to Him. Spouting scripture about loving your neighbor means nothing; it is when you show hospitality and "live in harmony with one another" (12:13, 16) that you truly worship the Lord.**

At the closing of chapter 12 we find not only an encouraging notation, but a summation of all that Paul has addressed in these chapters: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:21). When we are sincere in our faith, we overcome the evil of our human nature (and Satan's pursuit) with the good of the Lord, welcoming Him into our hearts to transform us; and when we are sincere in our thanks and worship to the Lord, we overcome the evil of the fallen world with the good of His perfect love. Amen.

*Scripture quotations taken from the New International Version.



Romans 9-12

By Trish Gerstel

There's a popular saying: "It's the thought that counts." And **while that saying normally applies to gift-giving** (it doesn't matter that someone gifted you with the same exact kitchen tool you've owned for years – **what matters is that it was offered to you as a symbol of affection**), **this is, essentially, what Paul says in these three chapters of Romans.** His most basic point is that **It doesn't matter if someone was born Israelite or gentile, salvation is offered by grace through faith, and only then when a person's faith is sincere (10:9-14); and that an offering that is holy and pleasing to God can only be made when you are sincere in all that you do for Him (12:9).**

When we read Paul's words in chapters nine thru 11, we should look beyond the historical context (that Paul lived in a



time when gentiles were spiritual outcasts and the Israelites had for generations understood that they were God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6)) and turn our study inwardly. Just as the Israelites had a hard time accepting that gentiles could be

granted salvation, we sometimes struggle with accepting new members into the body of Christ. Our human minds scream, "Ha! **This is just a temporary thing** – he won't last," or, "What a fake – I know she's not really saved!" when we see someone new come into the church professing their faith. **This is especially true if that someone has openly struggled with a "public" sin such as addiction, violence toward others, stealing, etc. In these instances, we need to push away those human thoughts (which Satan gladly spurs on) and reflect on Paul's words in 11:19-21 as well as 11:23-24, remembering that we do not deserve our salvation and that God is no less likely to make a path for someone else as He did for us!**

In chapter 12, Paul goes on to address sincerity in our thanks to the Lord ("in view of God's mercy...offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God," 12:1), and he notes that **humility and loving treatment of one another is critical to this "spiritual act of worship."** We give thanks to the Lord and make **living sacrifices not by engaging in ritualistic or forced actions,** but by seeking out His "good, pleasing and perfect will" (12:2b); **acknowledging that He has given us (we have not earned) our "talents";** and putting others ahead of ourselves. Sincerity in these actions is **no less important than sincerity in our faith. Using our spiritual gifts for God's work is not an honorable pursuit when we do so begrudgingly (12:6-8) or so that we will receive praises from others (12:3); it is honorable when we are sincere in fulfilling His will and bringing glory to Him. Spouting scripture about loving your neighbor means nothing; it is when you show hospitality and "live in harmony with one another" (12:13, 16) that you truly worship the Lord.**

At the closing of chapter 12 we find not only an encouraging notation, but a summation of all that Paul has addressed in these chapters: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:21). When we are sincere in our faith, we overcome the evil of our human nature (and Satan's pursuit) with the good of the Lord, welcoming Him into our hearts to transform us; and when we are sincere in our thanks and worship to the Lord, we overcome the evil of the fallen world with the good of His perfect love. Amen.

*Scripture quotations taken from the New International Version.

