

Epistle of Romans XXIV

(Chapter 12:1-2)

How to be Well-Pleasing to God

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There's a lot that we can learn here, brethren. Romans 12 has to do basically with the inner functioning with each other within the Church and then right at the end it goes out and interfacing with the public and things like that.

Romans 12:1. "I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, Holy *and well-pleasing to God*, which is your spiritual service. Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind in order that you may prove what *is well-pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God*" (vs 1-2). Notice he says, *well-pleasing to God* and then the *well-pleasing will of God*.

What we're going to study today is going to be very important for us to understand:

The Will of God

No one is going to be in the Kingdom of God without doing the *will of God*—it's that simple. We can add many, many verses to it, but what I want to do is cover one that is very basic here in Matt. 7. It's become very evident that there are a lot of people out there who are bothering the brethren with all sorts of teachings, with all sorts of whatever it may be.

Just recently, I had a visit with a man, because he thinks he's now an expert in Strong's Concordance, he's a teacher. We find that everywhere. Just because you have a little expertise with Strong's Concordance or you can read the Bible does not necessarily make you a teacher. The kind of thing that's very important to understand in teaching there are two kinds of things that you learn. First of all, you learn intellectually, and much of what has been presented in the Churches of God—and yes, in the world—is intellectual; it is knowledge. There's nothing wrong with knowledge. We're to grow in grace and knowledge that is true.

But the kind of teaching that God wants is the kind that is going to be *heart moving!* In other words, God wants us to speak to the heart. That's why God says you're to love Him with all your heart, because the heart is the most important thing, that becomes *well-pleasing* to God. But *no one is going to be in the Kingdom of God unless they are doing the will of God*.

Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but the one who is doing the will of My Father, Who *is* in heaven."

Here were a lot of people who had things that they taught, miracles that they performed, but they weren't keeping the commandments of God. When you don't keep the commandments of God from the heart, you are not pleasing to God. Look at all of Judaism, for example, with all of their laws, with all of their rules, with all of their regulations. That wasn't well-pleasing to God. As a matter of fact, they got so wrapped up in law *they rejected the commandments of God! They rejected the will of God!* We'll see they were lacking in mercy.

Verse 22: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?' And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness'" (vs 22-23).

It's a very profound thing to really understand the will of God and that you do it with all your heart and with all your mind. God's will *is* going to be performed. What do we ask in the prayer everyday? '*Lord, Your will be done!*'

There's something very important with that that we need to understand. We don't ask God to do His will according to ours. That was a problem that Job had. When we ask for God's will—whatever it may be—it may be difficult, there may be persecution, there may be problems, but that's just all a part of it.

Mercies of God

Romans 12:1: "I exhort you, therefore, brethren, **by the mercies of God...**" Notice what Paul is emphasizing here. He didn't say *the law* of God, he didn't say *the power* of God, he didn't say *the authority* of God. He said, "...by the **mercies of God...**" Let's understand how important the mercies of God really are, and then we'll find out that there will come a point when God will take away His mercies. So, we need to understand that, also.

We'll see *mercy and truth* go together.

there's a proper use of mercy. Mercy in this case is not what we would call modeled in emotions or 'muddle-headed mush-mindedness.' Mercy is when you understand, in Truth, that God is right and you, as a human being, need God's mercy.

Psalm 61:1: "Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.... [notice how he's beseeching God; notice the attitude] ...From the end of the earth I cry to You when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the Rock higher than me" (vs 1-2). This is really a prophecy of Christ Who is the Rock (1-Cor. 10:4—and that Rock that followed them was Christ.

Verse 3: "For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower against the enemy. I will dwell in Your tabernacle forever; I will take refuge in the hiding place of Your wings. Selah" (vs 3-4). Think on this! Just think of your own circumstances. I can relate quite well to some of the things that he says here. I'm sure you can in your life, too.

Verse 5: "For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given *me* the heritage of those who fear Your name. May You add to the days of the king's life; may his years be as many generations. May he abide before God forever..." (vs 5-7).

Notice how he gets right into eternal salvation. This also could be part of the prophecy of Christ Who is the King; part of the prophecy of His bringing mercy.

"...prepare **mercy and truth** to preserve him" (v 7). Of course, all the way through the ministry of Christ is *mercy and truth!* How many times was He moved with compassion, and even in dealing with the Pharisees in the way that they were, He had to be very strong with them, but they got the Truth in love, because it was in love that He gave it to them, though it was in power.

Psalm 85 talks about *mercy and truth*; so you can't really separate *mercy and truth*—they go together. It talks about forgiveness and all of that is part of mercy. We will see how it comes and then we will see one of the problems that the scribes and Pharisees had. They didn't have love or mercy and that created some great problems for them.

Psalm 85:1: "O LORD, You have shown favor to Your land; You have brought back Jacob from exile."

This is in a Millennial setting as it were, or you could also tie this in when they came back from the Babylonian captivity. But this more fits the Millennium, the captivity of Jacob.

Verse 2: "You have forgiven the iniquity of

Your people; You have covered all their sins. Selah." First of all, where there's *mercy and truth*, there's recognition of sin. Before there is mercy there has to be recognition of sin.

Verse 3: "You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease. Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations? Will You not give us life again, so that Your people may rejoice in You?... [this is really a confession and repentance as you're going along] ...**Show us Your mercy, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation**" (vs 3-7). We will see that *mercy and salvation* also go hand-in-hand. So, you have *truth, mercy and salvation* going hand-in-hand.

Verse 8: "I will hear what God the LORD will speak; for He will speak peace to His people, and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly." Another thing concerning mercy, you don't want to take advantage of it.

Verse 9: "Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, so that glory may dwell in our land. **Mercy and Truth** have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (vs 9-10). Notice how that in a Millennial setting that this is, and I'm sure that that's going to apply to Israel when they're brought out of captivity.

Verse 11: "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before Him and shall set us in the way of His steps" (vs 11-13).

There's another thing with mercy that comes along, Psalm 101:1—there's *mercy and justice!* "I will sing of **mercy and justice**; to You, O LORD, I will sing praise." Now, there's something very important concerning *mercy and judgment* that we need to look at. **Before you can have mercy, there must first of all be judgment.** That's what the scribes and Pharisees were lacking, and we'll see also they were lacking love. Notice what God considers important:

Matthew 23:23: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, but you have abandoned the **more important matters** of the law—... [Notice he didn't say Sabbath and Holy Days, that's all understood. What are the 'weightier [important] matters of the law?'] ...**judgment, and mercy and faith....**"

So, before you can have mercy, you must have judgment, otherwise, how can you have mercy? Also, before there can be mercy, there must be repentance, and repentance is when there is judgment. That's why when you come along and are convicted of sin, the judgment is *the wages of sin is death!* You're convicted, so **you repent!** And God is merciful and what does He do? *Remove your sins far from you!* Then mercy follows judgment. What happens when you have mercy? *You're increased in faith!* **You believe and love God even more!**

Let's look at Luke's account because it's a little bit different, Luke 11:42: "But woe to you, Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every herb, but you pass over the judgment and the love of God..."

They didn't have the love of God. There's one thing for sure, you cannot have proper judgment unless you have the love of God; and you cannot have mercy unless you first have judgment. So, here's what we have:

- judgment
- mercy
- love
- faith

All tied together within the **mercies of God**. "...It is obligatory *for you* to do these things, and not to set aside those *lesser things*" (v 42).

John 5:42 is a very profound verse, and I think we have too much of this [Pharisaism] within the Churches of God, and Pharisaism is based on self-righteousness:

John 5:42 [Jesus said] "But I have known you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves."

You tie that altogether with all of the self-appointed 'teachers' going around here and there, doing this and teaching that and teaching the other thing. I tell you, brethren, it really makes you want to just go out some place and just hang your head and bawl about how bad the Church really is, the condition of the brethren.

God looks down here and He wants to give **His love** and He wants to give **His mercy**. But people are running around just doing their own thing. It's sad! For years I've heard all the horror stories that people have gone through, all because there's *no love of God* in the Church. Then it comes back to me that I preach on the love of God too much. Well, the problem is, you don't have enough of it, that's why you don't like it being preached if

you think I preach on the love of God too much. How can you preach on it too much when it's the greatest thing and God is love?

So, Christ told them, 'You don't have the love of God.' You tie that together with all the things the scribes and Pharisees did. Because they didn't have the love of God, they didn't receive the mercy of God. *They received the judgment of God!* We need to understand that when God judged Jerusalem and He scraped the earth: got rid of the temple, got rid of that system and sent them into captivity. God did not enjoy doing it, but I'll tell you one thing, they would not repent. When people come to the point that they won't repent, then they're in terrible shape.

Let's see that there does come a point that the mercies of God are withdrawn. Brethren, may that not be with the Church, and may that not be with the lives of the brethren. I'll also tell you, too—and I've seen it and continue to see it—Jesus said, 'He that has *even that shall be taken from him*, which he thinks he has, and given to another.' We're seeing that principle happen today! With ministers and Churches of God who think they have it, and they don't, it is going down, **down, down!**

One young lady who was attending one of the other Churches of God, after three or four times going there, she was so fed up with it she says she's not going back. The sermons are 'stupid!' This is the way it is all over, and people are just sitting there going to sleep, and they don't realize that it's almost like liposuction of the brain! You'll have everything taken away from you. And the ministers—because they don't turn to God and they don't repent—the ceiling of their understanding is getting lower and lower and then they have to talk about silly things like 'how can you have a schedule to adjust your time.' **Nonsense!** If you can't figure that out without Sabbath services and someone telling you, 'Look, at such and such a time you get up and then you get dressed and then you brush your teeth and then you have breakfast...' **NONSENSE!** 'Then you go to work.' Listen! If you don't have that figured out by time you're 21, you're in bad shape!

What's going to happen is we're going to see this phenomena occur, Jeremiah 16:1 "The Word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for yourself, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place.' For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them, and concerning their fathers who begot them in this land: 'They shall die grievous deaths...' " (vs 1-4).

Listen, brethren, we don't know how long it's going to be until the end is here. This is a warning for us. That's why Paul is beseeching us, 'I exhort you by the mercies of God.' He wants us to turn to God, not to come to this point here:

“...of diseases; they shall not be mourned, nor shall they be buried. *But* they shall be as dung on the face of the earth. And they shall be destroyed by the sword and by famine; and their bodies shall be food for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth.’ For thus says the LORD, ‘Do not enter into the house of mourning; do not go to weep nor moan over them. For I have taken away My peace from this people,’ says the LORD, ‘even loving kindness and mercies. Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried, nor shall *men* mourn for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them” (vs 4-6).

That's some pretty strong language. ***Last place you ever want to be is that God withdraws His mercy and loving-kindness!*** Because then it gets to the point, as it says over here:

Jeremiah 7:16: “Therefore, do not pray for this people, nor lift up cry nor prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you.”

So, *God's mercies* are not there just to be had ***unless there's great repentance***. I'm afraid that the Church of God is rapidly reaching that point, and it all lies at the doorsteps of the ministry, *and* the brethren because they're responsible, too. ***God is going to take away His mercies!*** When He does, it's not going to be very pleasant; it's not going to be very nice.

Let's look at the things concerning the *mercies of God*; let's look at some more of these and understand how much we need the *mercies of God*.

Isaiah 63:7: “I will mention the loving kindnesses of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, and the great good to the house of Israel *by* which He bestowed on them according to **His mercies**, and according to the multitude of **His loving kindnesses**.”

That's why it's always important, brethren, that we always keep our heart tender before God. We need the mercies of God all the time. Remember what Jesus said: ‘Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.’ It works both ways: *If you receive mercy then you must give mercy*.

Verse 7: “I will mention the **loving kindnesses** of the LORD...” We're going to see *mercies and loving-kindness* tied together in many

cases.

“...the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, and the great good to the house of Israel *by* which He bestowed on them **according to His mercies**, and **according to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses**, for He said, ‘Surely they *are* My people, children that will not lie.’ So, He was their Savior” (vs 7-8). That was a time referring to the Church. That is also a prophecy of the Church.

Verse 9: “In all their affliction He *was* afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His compassion He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and troubled His Holy Spirit... (vs 9-10).

So you see what happens. We are living in a time when everything is nice, everything is comfortable, and economically there's plenty of money everywhere; but, ***those are dangerous spiritual times*** when that happens. That's why we need to get our houses in order spiritually; get our houses in order economically; before they turn us into an Indonesia.

Let's also notice that *repentance and mercy* go together. ***Repentance, mercy and confession of sins*** all go together. There is no mercy without judgment and judgment is to bring repentance so that mercy can come. This is the *Psalms of Repentance* that David had when he had the affair with Bathsheba. I imagine that he was flat on the floor when he was saying this. I don't think he was lifting up his head very high. Remember what happened? Yes, he did, he laid on the floor for seven days! When Nathan came and said ***you*** are the man! ***And David repented!***

Psalms 51:1: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin” (vs 1-2).

This is what we need to do, brethren. May this be what the whole Church of God and every minister and every one of the brethren will do today. Go to God with this kind of attitude. God will forgive!

But you have to do this, v 3: “**for I acknowledge my transgressions**, and my sin is ever before me.” So, ***with great deep and heartfelt repentance***; it was quite a thing!

If you feel kind of spiritually blah, and you know you haven't been doing what you need to do,

and you've been busying yourself with things so you don't have to face the reality of going to God and repenting, then what I suggest you do is take a deep study through the book of Psalms, study it on your knees and let all of these words apply to you personally, as if these were your words; as if these were your prayers.

Psalm 69:13: "But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD..." Too many times we pray to ourselves—like the Pharisee; the Pharisee was standing praying to himself: 'God, I thank You I'm not like other men,' (Luke 18).

"...in an acceptable time; O God, in the abundance of Your mercy answer me, in the Truth of Your salvation.... [mercy, Truth and salvation] ...But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in an acceptable time; O God, in the abundance of Your mercy answer me, in the Truth of Your salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me and out of the deep waters. Do not let the flood of waters overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut its mouth upon me. Answer me, O LORD, for Your steadfast love is good; turn unto me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; answer me speedily" (vs 13-17).

Notice again, *repentance and mercy*. So, if Paul is pleading 'by the mercies of God, present your bodies a *living sacrifice*'—that is motivated spiritually, because it is the Spirit that gives life; it is the Spirit that quickens—that's what it's talking about.

Psalm 103:1 is about the *mercy of God*—"Bless the LORD, O my soul; and **all that is within me...**" That's part of being a living sacrifice. If you're 'religious' you've got a little corner in your mind to do 'religious' things. But if you're *walking in God's way*, it is wholehearted and it's *all of you!* There's a difference. That's why *God's way* is not a 'religion.' people from the outside would view it as a religion, because that's how they view God's way. *It is a way of life, a way to live!*

Verse 2: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." How many times did Israel forget all the benefits and blessings of God—and what did it get them into? *Nothing but trouble!* I think that's where we are in the Church today. They're forgetting all about the blessings of God; forgetting all about the goodness, mercy and kindness of God; and fighting and quarrelling and arguing—it's a mess, brethren! I tell you, it's effecting on each one in their own lives, and God is

going to keep on doing it until everyone really turns to God and turns to Him in *truth, love and mercy!*

Verse 3: "Who forgives all your iniquities..." That's why you never come to a point and say, 'God can't forgive me this; God can't forgive me that.' What are you doing? *You're setting yourself up as more righteous than God! God can forgive you!* If you say 'God can't forgive me,' then you're just being self-righteous; you're not committing the unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin is you wouldn't care anything about God and walk off and just hate God, forget God and curse God. I've seen some of that, too.

"...Who heals all your diseases" (v 3). I just might mention here that it's good to do good things, take care of your body—that's fine. But God is the One Who heals! Never forget that! Even if you do the things that are natural, God is still the One Who heals. In healing, let's understand, there are certain things we can do, there are other things that only God can do. We need to look to God for healing. We have a lot of healings, brethren. I send out anywhere from four to ten anointed cloths every week, and the people are healed. I don't go making great, long lists on it. I think we need to handle that and not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. *Let God do the work and let God do the healing!*

He's also sending a message to us that we need to take care of our bodies. I know I've let mine go and I'm paying the price for it with my hip. I'm just asking God to intervene and heal me, and I'm doing what I can do, but you know it gives me great understanding of the pain and agony that people go through, because of what I've gone through. "...Who heals all your diseases."

Verse 4: "Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies." That's why we exist. That's the very reason why we breathe

Verse 8: "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in mercy. He will not always chasten, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, for as the heavens are high above the earth, so is His mercy toward those who fear Him" (vs 8-11).

That fear means *going on into the love of God*. When we do the things that please God—that's why it's talking about here to do the things that please God—then God's mercies keep coming, God's mercies keep flowing, and that's what we want.

Go through all of Psa. 119 and look up all the areas concerning mercy. That will be another whole study itself. We can't possibly cover everything in this study, otherwise we would never get done with the book of Romans. We would still be at it five years from now. This is something you can always count on, brethren, since:

- God is eternal
- God is love
- God is there
- He hasn't forsaken us
- He's called us
- He's given us His Spirit
- He wants us to have His mercies

2-Corinthians 1:3 “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of **mercies**, and *the* God of all **comfort**.”

If you're upset and agitated because of things, or things in your life, God is the One Who will comfort you. It's a spiritual thing that you have to do. Too many times we try to work it out on our own. But it's a spiritual thing that we must do.

Verse 4: “**Who comforts us in all our tribulation...** [sometimes you wonder why you go through the things that you do; here's why]: ...in order that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trial, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (vs 3-4).

That's part of what we're trying to do with the brethren today, with what we're doing—help them, comfort them, restore them to God—but, as we've seen, there are things they have to do.

Verse 5: “For to the degree *that* the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. And if we are in distress, *it is* for your comfort and salvation, which is being worked out by *your* enduring the same sufferings that we also suffer; *and* if we are comforted, *it is* for your comfort and salvation (and our hope *is* steadfast for you); knowing that as you are partners in the sufferings, *you are* also *partners* in the comfort” (vs 5-7). **God is the One Who comforts!**

Part of this is a spiritual thing that takes time. You don't necessarily understand this until you've gone through it and God has blessed you and you've been removed from the difficulty. Then you look back and you see, 'Ah! Now I know why I went through this.' Then you can use that as a lesson to help other people, to help them. Plus, it gives you something else; it gives you an understanding that you don't judge by appearances. You know that

there's more to it than meets the eye. You don't judge just by the circumstances that you see. Maybe there are other circumstances, which you haven't yet seen. That's all important! Then that puts you in a frame of mind that you want to do things that are *well-pleasing* to God.

Romans 12:1: “...to present your bodies a living sacrifice, Holy...” Brethren, this is why we follow the laws of clean and unclean meats. Did you know that? *Because we're Holy!* Notice why God gave these laws, and this applies to us. If we have the Holy Spirit, are we Holy people? *Yes, we are!*

Deuteronomy 14:1: “You *are* the children of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves nor make *any* baldness between your eyes for the dead, for you *are* a Holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a specially treasured people to Himself, above all the nations that are on the earth. You shall not eat any abominable thing” (vs 1-3).

That's the whole basis of the law of clean and unclean. Not whether we have refrigerators or have means of preserving and smoking meats and things like that. It's that God wants us to be Holy. The other things are all abominations.

I was talking to some people who were in the congregation when it was announced in the Church of God that it was all right to eat unclean foods. As soon as the 'amen' was said, there were people out there gathering, deciding where they were going to go eat their shrimp and lobster and all of that sort of thing—*the very day!* They must have been 'tares.' I tell you, I can't stand the smell of some of those things; it's just nauseating! When you understand about these things... Of course, they're many people who understand that the hog isn't fit to eat.

This shows that we are Holy people, how this was not only to Israel, but also was a prophecy of us, 1-Peter 2:9: “But you *are* a chosen stock, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, a people for a possession *of God*, that you might proclaim His *excellent* virtues, Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people, but now *are the* people of God; who had not received mercy, but now have received mercy” (vs 9-10). Do you see how all the fits in with what we're studying here? *To present your bodies Holy!*

Let's add in here the explanation of clean and unclean foods. They will always turn to Acts 10—let's understand that it has nothing to do with eating clean or unclean foods. Remember what Peter said: 'Lord, I've never eaten anything common or

unclean.’ Remember when the vision came? Simon the Tanner didn’t come down off the roof and say to Peter, ‘Come on over here, we’ve got a nice hog we just butchered.’ *NO!*

1-Timothy 4:1: “Now, the Spirit tells us explicitly that in *the* latter times some shall apostatize from the faith... [that means they were in] (notice where these things come from): ...*and* shall follow deceiving spirits... [unclean, lying spirits] ...and doctrines of demons... [that’s where these things come from] ...speaking lies in hypocrisy, their consciences having been cauterized *with a hot iron*; forbidding to marry; *and commanding* to abstain from meats...” (vs 1-3). Notice very carefully, this is not clean or unclean; this is vegetarianism; by command!

“...which God created to be received with thanksgiving... [Did God create all animals and all things to be received with thanksgiving? *NO!*] (we’ll define it here): ...by the faithful, even *by* those who know the Truth” (v 3).

What is Truth? Your Word is Truth! So, if we read back in Deut. 14 that we’re Holy people, that we are not to eat these things, then that ties right in with this, because it is:

“...created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful, even *by* those who know the Truth. For every creature of God *designated for human consumption* is good, and nothing to be refused, *if* it is received with thanksgiving, because it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer” (vs 3-5).

So, it’s specifically defined! That’s what it means. If it’s sanctified, it is set aside, it is specifically defined. Part of *presenting your body Holy to God* then it is that you obey concerning the clean and unclean meat laws.

Romans 12:1: “...to present your bodies a living sacrifice, Holy *and well-pleasing to God*, which is your spiritual service....” Let’s look at the things that are *pleasing to God*.

Verse 2: “...in order that you may prove what *is* well-pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God.” If God says unclean foods are an abomination, is that part of the good and perfect will of God? *If you eat them, no, it’s not!* If you don’t eat them, *yes, it is!*

Let’s talk about *pleasing God!*

(go to the next track)

Pleasing God and Belief

This is the *faith chapter*, very important to

understand, Hebrews 11:6: “Now, **without faith it is impossible to please God...**” Means *you have no power to please Him*. What happens if you know you don’t have enough faith? The kind of faith that God wants us to have is *His faith*; meaning that the faith is a *gift of God*.

You have to go to God and do like this man did when he brought his son to have the demon cast out, Mark 9:17: “Then one from the multitude said, ‘Master, I brought my son who has a dumb spirit to You; for wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and gnashes his teeth, and is withering away. And I spoke to Your disciples, in order that they might cast it out, but they did not have *the power*.’” (vs 17-18).

Even the disciples, at that point, didn’t have faith. Yet, Christ was right there with them on a day-to-day basis. Quite amazing!

Verse 19: “And He answered him, saying, ‘O faithless generation! How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.’ Then they brought him to Him. But when the spirit saw Him, *it* immediately threw him into convulsions; and he fell down on the ground *and* began rolling about *and* foaming *at the mouth*. And He asked his father, ‘How long a time has this *demon* been with him?’ And he said, ‘From childhood. For it often throws him both into the fire and into the water, that it might destroy him. But if You have the power *to do* anything, have compassion on us *and* help us’” (vs 19-22). That’s a terrible situation, brethren!

Verse 23: “And Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to the one who believes.’” This is a difficult problem. Notice what the father did. First of all, he started out in Truth.

Verse 24: “And the father of the little child cried out at once, saying with tears, ‘Lord, I believe. **Help my unbelief.**’” His unbelief was confounded further because he came to the disciples and the disciples couldn’t do it. We’ve had this many times, too, with brethren. They come to the ministers and the ministers don’t have any faith, and consequently, they’re not healed. So, it works both ways. You have to start off by admitting that you don’t have the faith.

When the disciples came and said, ‘Why couldn’t we do it, v 29: “Then He said to them, ‘This kind cannot *be made to go out* by anything except prayer and fasting.’” So that you’re close to God and you have that spiritual relationship and the Spirit of God so that these things can be done. If you’re drifting away and far away from God, you don’t

have faith. Sure enough there's going to be some sort of crunch that's going to come. You can almost be guaranteed it. That's why you have to grow in faith and look to God for faith.

Hebrews 11:6 "Now, without faith *it is* impossible to please *God*. For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God **to believe** that He exists..." Have absolutely no doubt about it; that includes everything about God, because **if you believe** that He is, you must also believe everything about Him and everything that He has done, including sending His Son Jesus Christ.

"...*that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (v 6). That ties right in with being a *living sacrifice*; doing the things that are *well-pleasing*.

You know, maybe Herbert Armstrong was right when he said, 'Brethren, I don't think half of you are converted.' I mean, since he's been gone and everything has been scattered, more than half of the Church is gone. Where are they?

Romans 8:5: "For those who walk according to the flesh..." We'll see how this ties in together, because we're not to be conformed to the world; if you're after the flesh you want to be conformed to the world.

"...mind the things of the flesh; but those who walk according to *the Spirit* mind the things of the Spirit" (v 5). The things of the Spirit are *the fruits of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:22):

- love
- faith
- joy
- hope
- peace
- long-suffering
- goodness
- gentleness
- meekness

—'against such there is no law!' Those are the things of the Spirit.

Verse 6: "For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace, because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But those who are in *the flesh* cannot please God" (vs 6-8). You tie that together with the one who comes to God *must believe that He is*. It's impossible to please God unless you believe that He is! Why? *Because all you're doing is getting 'religion' for your own selfish self*, rather than seeking salvation, which comes from God. That's

quite a profound lesson!

Verse 9: "However, you are not in *the flesh*, but in *the Spirit*, if *the Spirit* of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not have *the Spirit* of Christ, he does not belong to Him." There is the dividing line.

They can go through and do a lot of things in the letter of the Law. They can even recite Scripture, and they can even teach. But if they don't have the Spirit of God 'they are none of His.' That's why all this separating and things has come on today.

Let's see how it should be different with us than with the world, 1-Thessalonians 4:1: "Now then, as for the rest, brethren, we are beseeching and exhorting you in *the Lord Jesus*, even as you received from us how you are duty-bound to walk... [a *way of life*.] ...and **to please God**, that you would abound *still* more. For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus; because this is the will of God—*even* your sanctification—that you abstain from fornication" (vs 1-3)—and so forth; do the things that are *pleasing to God!*

1-John 3 tells us the things that we do to please God; what is delightful to Him. I don't think that all of the doctrinal stupidity of some of the things that we've all gone through was pleasing to God. I know some of these things upset me and just affected me for a long period of time. When they cut right to the heart you don't necessarily overcome it right away. It takes some time. It just does. Those things weren't pleasing to God. That can be the same thing with some of the things that I have heard in arguments and 'religious' things.

1-John 3:22: "And whatever we may ask we receive from Him because... [Notice there's a joint thing]: ...we **keep His commandments** and **practice those things that are pleasing in His sight.**"

So, you see there is a differentiation between commandment-keeping and doing the things that are pleasing. Commandment-keeping is required. Everyone should keep the commandments of God! To do the things that are pleasing to God is going above and beyond, and it's a spiritual thing.

Verse 23: "And this is His commandment: that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and that we love one another, exactly as He gave commandment to us." Is that not pleasing to God? *Yes!*

Heb. 13 talks about *pleasing God* twice here. The book of Hebrews was written to all of the

Jews there in Jerusalem. The reason that Paul's name is not on it—though it has the hand of Paul and Luke in it—is because anything coming from the Apostle Paul to Jerusalem would have been burned on arrival. I mean, even so-called Christians in Jerusalem, of the circumcision party, did not accept Paul. We need to understand that. A lot of the zealots were not converted. What they were doing, they were going back to all the animal sacrifices and saying—since Jesus didn't come when they figured He should come and save their city and save their nation—they were going to take up and go back to the animal sacrifices; they were going to do all of the physical things. By that, constrain God to intervene and save Jerusalem and the temple.

So, Paul is saying here, Hebrews 13:9: “Do not be carried about by all kinds of strange doctrines.... [Oh, may we learn that! *Yes! Doctrine, doctrine, who's got a doctrine!*] ...For it is good for the heart to be confirmed by grace and not by foods, which have brought no *spiritual* benefit to those who have been preoccupied with them. We have an altar from which those who are serving the *present earthly* tabernacle do not have authority to eat” (vs 9-10).

That's something, *saying that the priesthood had no right to the altar of Christ*; that is, unless they repented!

Verse 11: “For *pertaining to* those animals whose blood is brought into the Holy places by the high priest for a *sin offering*, the bodies of all these are burned outside the camp.”

When they're burned without the camp there was bridge that went from the east end of the temple area across Kidron and then it went up to the Mt. of Olives. That's why we know Christ was crucified on the Mt. of Olives. He was a *sin offering!* And we know by the description of Luke, Mark and Matthew that the Centurion saw the veil rent, which covered the front of the temple. The only way you could see that is if you were on the Mt. Olives and you were looking west toward the temple. You could not have seen it if He was crucified down in the low valley; you couldn't even see the temple, nor in some of the traditional spots where they have Him crucified.

Near where Jesus was crucified was the altar where they took out all the sin offerings to burn them totally; burn them to ashes. The *wages of sin is death!* And the ultimate wages of sin is *the Lake of Fire*; burned in ashes. That's why all sin offerings were handled that way.

Verse 12: “For this reason, Jesus...” was outside the camp; He was crucified right close to

where that altar for burning the sin offerings was, the Miphkad Altar.

“...in order that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, also suffered outside the gate.... [outside the gate of the city; outside the east gate of the temple] ...So then, let us go forward to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For we do not have a continuing city here *on earth...*” (vs 12-14).

That's what the whole struggle was at that time with the destruction of Jerusalem coming; they wanted to preserve the city and the temple, and that's why you read in the book of *Josephus* so many pilgrims came that year that the temple was destroyed. The word went out, ‘Let's all come; let's all keep the Passover; let's all have all these animal sacrifices and God surely will spare us from the Romans.’ But it all backfired on them, because those things don't please God.

“...rather, we are seeking the one that is coming. Accordingly, let us offer *the* sacrifice of praise continually to God through Him; that is, *with the* fruit of *our* lips openly professing *our* faith in His name. Now do not forget to do good and to fellowship, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (vs 14-16).

Present your bodies whole, wholly a living sacrifice. This is what it's talking about, the kind of living sacrifice of:

- service
- love
- prayer
- faith
- hope
- mercy

Verse 17: “Follow your leaders, and be submissive, because they are looking out for your spiritual well-being, as *those who must be* ready to give an account *to God* in order that they may do this with joy, and not *with* groaning because that *would be* unprofitable for you. Pray for us; for we are certain that we have a clear conscience, in all things desiring to conduct ourselves well. Now, I am earnestly exhorting *you* to do this more diligently that I may be sent back to you more quickly. And *may* the God of peace, Who raised our Lord Jesus from among *the* dead—that great Shepherd of the sheep—through *the* blood of *the* everlasting covenant, perfect you in every good work in order that you may do His will...” (vs 17-21).

Notice how this ties in with Rom. 12:1-2, and, of course, the rest of Rom. 12 tells about *how*

you are perfect in every good work; it lays it out in full description.

“...**accomplishing in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ...**” (v 21). There it is, you can’t please God unless it’s through Jesus Christ. What did Jesus say? ***None can come to Me except the Father draw him; and none can come unto the Father except through Me!*** That’s how we do the things that are well-pleasing to God.

“...to Whom *be the* glory into the ages of eternity. Amen” (v 21).

There are some other things that we can put down there, there are plenty of other Scriptures concerning about doing the things that *please God*. I’ll let you do a little extra study in that.

Romans 12:2: “Do not conform yourselves to this world...” It’s going to be harder today than ever before, because there are so many things out there that you can just love. When life is easy, pleasant and smooth, it’s easy to love the world. Especially when the world is placing its good foot forward.

But here’s what God says, 1-John 2:15: “**Do not love the world**, nor the things *that are* in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

That’s a profound statement! If you have the love of the Father in you, and you are loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and being, you’re going to understand that even the best the world has to offer ***is nothing compared to what God is going to give***. That’s why we don’t love the world.

Verse 16: “Because **everything** that *is* in the world—... [not part or some—ALL]...the lust of the flesh... [that is **everywhere** today] ...and the lust of the eyes, and the pretentious pride of physical life—...”

Sounds like these soap operas that you watch. I tell you what, brethren, television is getting so bad anymore, I’m ready to go to bed at 6:30 in the evening. No question about it! The other night I was watching a little bit of baseball and that was boring. You watch a little bit of basketball and that is boring. Then you watch a movie and all they do is kill, lie, cheat and commit adultery. Then you think you’re watching a good movie or documentary and then comes on the most raunchy ad you’d ever see. You think you’re going to watch the Discovery Channel, because that’s nice and clean. Then what happens, they put on an ad for some movie somewhere: nudity, killing, blowing up, shooting

and destroying! *It is unreal!* Now, we’re going to have 500 channels and nothing on! Used to be you had 15 channels and you had nothing on, now there are going to be 500 channels and nothing on. They’re dummifying people down, ***down, down*** even more and more. How many of the barbarian movies do they have to have? It seems like every other movie is barbarian: someone mad and throwing, hitting, kicking and dressed up in leather and having whips and gauntlets and swords and guns, brass knuckles and motorcycles!

“—is not from the Father, but is from the world” (v 16). Who is the ‘god of this world’? *Satan the devil!* He’s the one that’s inspiring all of this.

Verse 17: “And the world and its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever.” That’s how you do the things that are pleasing to God, if you do those things that are the will of the Father. That’s what’s very important. It says, ***‘so that you may prove what is the good and perfect, well-pleasing will of God.’*** That’s why the carnal mind can’t do it, because it can’t see that these things are good and right.

The Renewing the Mind

We have to have our minds renewed with the Spirit of God. That’s why there’s repentance, because repentance brings about the cleaning, the cleansing of the Holy Spirit. That’s why you need the Word of God, which is the ‘washing of the water by the Word.’ You literally need the Word of God to cleanse your mind, the Spirit of God to heal your mind. That’s how you are *renewed*.

Ephesians 4:17: “So then, I declare and testify this in *the* Lord that you are no longer to walk even as the rest of *the* Gentiles are walking, in *the* vanity of their minds.”

What a true statement that is—‘vanity of vanities, all it is vanity’ and everything is to puff up the self, improve the self-image.

Verse 18: “Having *their* understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts.”

If you take this and do it in reverse, if you’re over here at one time doing the things that please God, and you gradually go back to the world and it becomes more and more comfortable, and you begin to love the world more and more, and you begin to accept those things more and more—what happens? ***You end up right here! You are blinded through your own ignorance! You cut yourself off!*** Then what

happens?

Verse 19: “They have cast off all feelings, *and* have given themselves up to licentiousness...”

When I was back in Massachusetts at the hotel we had the meeting in, they had a prom that night, Sabbath night. I tell you what, they're all dressed up in their tuxedos and their gowns and going to the prom. As we got done eating dinner, we came by and here were some of the teacher chaperones all dressed up in the bar. They were up there getting away from it all. They had their ties on and their tux on and I walked by and I made the comment, ‘Oh, the chaperones are here.’ *Yes!* ‘You’re getting away from it all.’ *Yes!* As we were walking down the hall, we heard this music, beating of drums, yelling, screaming and jumping up and down. We stopped! It was startling! We opened the door and here are all these lights going around and everybody jumping up and down and yelling and screaming!

“...cast off all feelings, *and* have given themselves up to licentiousness...” That’s exactly what was happening there. These are the leaders of tomorrow! May God help us!

“...to work every uncleanness with insatiable desire. But you have not so learned Christ; **if indeed you have heard Him...**” (vs 19-21). That’s quite a statement! That ties in with ‘if you have an ear, let him hear.’ A lot of people hear but they don’t *hear!* That’s what he’s saying here.

“...and have been taught in Him, according to *the Truth* in Jesus: That concerning your former conduct, you **put off** the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts” (vs 21-22). *Put that off!*

- Is it well-pleasing to God that you put away sin? *Yes!*
- Is it well-pleasing to God that you put off deceitful lusts? *Yes!*

Verse 23: “And that you **be renewed** in the spirit of your mind.” That’s what’s so important, brethren, *renewed in the spirit of your mind:*

- be changed
- be converted
- to grow
- to develop

Being “...renewed in the spirit of your mind” there’s also something else you need to do. You cannot go out and be like the world and just let all of these things just pour into your mind. They’re going to have an affect on your mind. Here’s what we’re told:

Proverbs 4:23: “Above all **guard the door**

of your mind with diligence, for out of it *are* the issues of life.” That’s why it’s important that *in order to renew your mind you have to put in the Word of God!* You’ve got to put out the deceitful lusts, but you have to also put out those things that are of this world.

Verse 24: “Put away from you a deceitful mouth... [pride and vanity] ...and devious lips put far from you. Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you” (vs 24-25). There comes a time when things are so bad all around you, that all you can do is just put your head down and your eyes straight forward and go right straight ahead; get away from it.

Like Joseph. when he was trying to be seduced by the wife of his master, at that particular time when he was in slavery in Egypt, what did he do? *He said, ‘No, ma’am!* He fled fornication! She grabbed his robe and falsely accused him and had him thrown in jail. He was better off in jail, in the dungeon. So, Joseph did that, he kept his eyes straight ahead. You know the rest of the story. God lifted him up in one day and made him #2 in all of Egypt in one day, from the dungeon to the throne! That’s quite a story when you understand about Joseph.

Verse 26: “Ponder the path of your feet...” Figure out where you are going:

- What are you doing spiritually?
- What are you doing mentally?
- What are your thoughts on?

“...and all your ways *will be* established. Do not turn to the right hand nor to the left; remove your foot from evil” (vs 26-27). It’s all a part of getting out of this world!

I tell you, sometimes I kind of feel like the prayer: *Take me out of the world!* Especially when you get out and see all the people and things like that—it’s something! It’s really something! All of that is part of *renewing your mind!* What is going to happen is when you’re renewing your mind and getting rid of these lusts, you’re going to have flashbacks. You’re going to have mental flashbacks take place because you don’t understand how deeply buried some of these things are in your mind. When a flashback happens, you ask God to help cleanse your mind and get rid of it, clean it up and make it right, because God can give you perfect forgiveness *and forgetfulness.* I think that’s why when we’re old, God gives us flashbacks to our youth, so we can also confess those sins that we’ve forgotten.

Ephesians 4:23: “And that you be renewed

in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man..." (vs 23-24). Step-by-step, new; you're renewed in mind and you put the new man. Who is the new man? *Christ! Christ in you, the hope of glory!*

"...which according to God is created in righteousness and Holiness of the Truth" (v 24). You're the workmanship of God! You are being created by Christ and God the Father, right now, for what you're going to be as a Spirit being in the Kingdom of God. That's why all of this is so important, brethren.

Verse 25: "Therefore, let each one put away lies..." Here's the carnality that comes out. We all have our carnality that comes out.

"...and speak the truth with his neighbor because we are members of one another" (v 25). Then it gives all the things that we need to do. When we put out the sin that is also *pleasing to God*. So, there are two things that please God:

1. you keep His commandments and love Him and grow in the spiritual fruits
2. you put away the deceitful lusts and the things of carnality

Verse 26: "*When* you become angry, do not sin.... [that's a tightrope to walk] ...Do not let the sun go down on your anger... [very simple: if you're angry all night you don't sleep] ...neither give place to the devil" (vs 26-27). If you keep anger, what are you doing? *Giving place to the devil!* Don't give him a place.

Verse 28: "Let the one who stole, steal no more; rather, let him labor with *his* hands, working at what *is* good, so that he may impart *something* to the one who has need. Do not let any corrupt communication come out of your mouth..." (vs 28-29). Now, there's a challenge—isn't it? All of us fall short in that!

"...but that which is good and needful for edification..." (v 29). In other words, let your communication build up. Don't be tearing down. Help, edify, show, teach:

"...that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not vex the Holy Spirit of God..." (vs 29-30). That's quite a statement! How do we 'grieve the Holy Spirit of God'? *By doing all these carnal things!* If the Spirit of God is in us and we're out there doing all these carnal things, then we're 'grieving the Holy Spirit of God.'

"...by which you have been sealed for *the* day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and

indignation, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking be removed from you, together with all malice... [that's how you're *renewed in the spirit of your mind*] ...and be kind *and* tenderhearted toward one another, forgiving one another, even as God has also in Christ forgiven you" (vs 30-32).

Romans 12:2: "...in order that you may prove what *is* well-pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God."

Ephesians 6:6—talking to servants: "Not *merely* with eye service, as *do* pleasers of men; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from *the* heart." That's how you prove what is the good and perfect will of God. You do it from the heart.

Colossians 4:12 "Epaphras, a servant of Christ who *is* from among you, salutes you. He is always striving for you in *his* prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." There you go!

That's quite a message when you understand when he says, v 16: "After you have read the epistle, see that it also is read in the Church of *the* Laodiceans, and that you also read the one from Laodicea."

We don't have that one, so it's quite an admonition to the Laodiceans, that you *may* stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. If you are rich and increased with goods, there's a challenge. Let it be the spiritual goods, not the physical goods. Let it be all the will of God.

Here's something else concerning the pleasing will of God, Hebrews 10:7: "Then said I, 'Lo, I come (*as* it is written of Me in *the* Scroll of *the* Book) to do Your will, O God.'" That's why Christ came.

He says it again in v 9: "Then He said, 'Lo, I come to do Your will, O God.'..."

Verse 36: "For you need to have endurance, so that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." There it shows that not only does it show that we do it, but we also have to have patience and patiently continue doing it. All of this is very important when you put all of this together.

There's quite a message in Romans 12:1: "I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, Holy *and* well-pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service. Do not conform yourselves to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, in order that you may **prove what *is* well-pleasing**

and good, and the perfect will of God" (vs 1-2).

- Galatians 5:22

Also referenced: Book: *Josephus*

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