

Attitudes and Actions

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] 12 and we're going to look at most of the chapter just covering it very quickly but from verse 3 especially for by the grace given to me i say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think with sober judgment each according to the measure of faith that god has assigned and so on through to the end of the chapter sometimes it's beneficial to take an overview of a passage although my own personal preference especially new testament is to break it down into smaller sections something what we're doing in philippians on the lord's day but it does actually help to take the whole passage and get an overview of it get the uh the whole panorama if you like of of the teaching in it like we are in this passage itself although there are many things in it of course as you know that we could stop over and spend a lot more time on now you can see that the way it begins the chapter begins with a reference especially to the mind presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice and then he goes on don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind and again as you see so often in paul his emphasis on the mind is so significant the mind in many ways the way that rationally in our souls as people who are and who are given the spirit of god to enable us to discern things properly the mind is in many ways the controlling feature of our life what is through of the mind is through of the person by and large as romans 8 puts it the fleshly mind the carnal mind is enmity against god but the spiritual mind the mind of the spirit is life and peace they're very much opposites they're very much in contest with each other the carnal mind the spiritual mind they're complete opposites and when you come to have that mind the mind of the spirit through you're being born again well that mind is then the operating control room if you like of your soul through the way that god gives you more and more to understand truth and that emphasis at the beginning of the chapter on the mind follows through into the the remaining part of the chapter the correct attitude or approach from the mind follows through into the actions that are mentioned in the chapter as it goes on so it's really a passage about attitude about attitude and action the attitude of the right mind the mind that's transformed by the mind that's renewed under the spirit of god's blessing that renewed mind is then leads directly to these actions that are set out in most of what follows in the chapter and they're always connected where you have a renewed mind you have corresponding actions in that christian life as the mind is is enlightened by the spirit of god and the truth of god that leads on to a certain type of lifestyle certain type of practice in every aspect of life as we seek for ourselves daily so let's look at three things briefly first of all in verses three to eight you have a correct attitude and action in the individual sense in which we as individuals as individual christians are called upon to have this kind of attitude and the action that follows on from that and then in verses nine to 16 that correct attitude and action is something that's emphasized in our relationships one with another as christians

and then to finish off in verses 16 to 21 he speaks about that right attitude and action towards the opponents that you face as christians those in the world that don't share your priorities or your lifestyle your way of life and particularly those of them that are actively hostile well here is one passage that gives us direction as to how to face that how to deal with that and you'll find that verses 16 to 21 especially so let's just briefly go over these first of all at verse three uh i i say to you by the grace given to me he said not to think of himself more highly every one of you so he's talking here to to individuals each according to the measure of faith that god has assigned he's talking here about sober judgment and sober judgment um doesn't uh primarily have to do with with alcohol with drugs although that obviously can come into it as well the mind as it's clouded by such things obviously isn't in a proper state to have that attitude towards itself towards ourselves or others but that's not what he's talking about primarily uh thinking sober judgment really is thinking in a measured way in a way that actually approaches things from the point of view of god's truth and the way it leads us into how we should think about all things and uh it's a two-sided thing is saying first

of all don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think he's saying that to each of them so saying that to each of us tonight we're not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think that's one side of it but there's another side to it as well because having sober judgment or measured judgment means you don't think less of yourself than you ought to think it is actually dishonoring to god to actually think less of yourself than what god has made you to be and there were sometimes we would try and uh uh of course humility is signally important in the christian life and it's emphasized throughout the bible as an important aspect or characteristic of god's people but um sometimes we set out to try to be humble um by um not really being prepared to acknowledge positively what god has done in our life or what we may have by his grace been able to achieve but that would be wrong as well because we have to look at what god has done for us what god has done in us what has god gifted us with in order to serve the church and our tendency is to think very low of that and not really emphasize it now in that sense that's good but if it's if it's to the extent of really not presenting what god has done clearly and uh thankfully then that is dishonoring to god we must never uh set out in any way to obscure or to uh try and keep uh too low a profile of what god has done in our lives so think with sober judgment he's saying and for all of us tonight whatever age we're at whatever um contribution we have or haven't made yet thinking sober judgment is think of myself you're saying to yourself think of myself not not uh highly as a as i ought to think don't think of yourself too highly more highly than you ought to think on the other hand ask yourself am i using the gifts god has given me do i have sober judgment am i prepared to accept that god has given me certain abilities through which i can serve him through which i can serve his church and serve this congregation so there's one thing it's the correct attitude and and action but then he says according to the measure of faith that god has assigned now that doesn't mean primarily it doesn't mean different amounts or levels of faith it doesn't mean for example one person of strong faith another person having a much less than that in terms of their faith or their assurance or whatever what this is dealing with is actually the particular gifts that god has assigned to his people and that very much comes into relationships how we actually follow through uh with the attitude we have to ourselves and to others and what he's saying is each according to the measure of faith that god has assigned uh primarily saying the application of faith using the different gifts that god has given to his people that's what we actually bring forward as we think of the measure of faith not how much faith do i have compared to somebody else as far as believing is concerned but being prepared to ask myself where has god given me certain abilities or gifts without thinking of myself more highly than i ought to think and yet not less either but it's according to the measure of faith the amount or a measure the way in which if you like god has apportioned or portioned out the various gifts that exist within his believing people because then he goes on to speak about the body of christ for it's all connected together of course the ways arguing here for us in one body we have many members and members do not all have the same function so we though many are one body in christ and individually members one of another are you saying think with sober judgment think positively think of yourself not more highly than you ought to think but don't think less than you ought to think but it's according to the measure of faith that god has assigned looking at whatever gifts they may be and asking god to help you to discern them because you exist within the body you exist within that one spiritual body of christ his church in this world that's where the gifts are to be used and that's where the apportioning of by god of these gifts actually comes to be used and notice he's saying members one of another now this of course is a an illustration that paul uses in first corinthians 12 and ephesians 4 looking at the spiritual body of christ the spiritual membership of the body of christ in the way that these other passages do it lifting gifts of grace that he gives to the various people that are his well he's saying here in the imagery of the body he's adding here that we are one body in christ but individually members one of another now what does he mean by that it's a bit of a strange phrase and you don't find it in the other passages that i've mentioned there well for one thing it certainly means that we actually need one another we are members one of another my membership of the body of christ does not exist separately from yours your membership as an individual of the body of christ your place in the body and the gifts that god has given you does not exist in isolation from the rest of the body from the other members of that body in other words we're members one of another so that we are out we are we are set out in in a way that needs one another that supports one another that looks out for one another that seeks to comfort when we need comfort one another that seeks to teach when we need teaching that seeks sometimes even to rebuke when it's necessary as part of the development and progress of god's people and of the truth in our own

practice of it so he's saying this is what it is each person individually members of the body of christ think of yourselves not more highly than you ought to think but not less either because god has gifted you the measure of faith the measure of gifting that he has given to you that's what you need to use and you use it within the overall body that functions according to the grace that's given and then he mentions the various uh the various types of of um activity there according to the grace that's given as prophecy serving teaching and so on he's he lists a few there just to show what he's actually about in terms of the body functioning together and being members one of another and it really is important in the world in which we live that this is what we present to the world it's not just for that reason that we are members one of another but nevertheless that's what the world sees and what the world sees must be that we actually are members one of another in the sense of showing the world that we do need each other that we value each other that is our privilege and our blessing to have that relationship with one another to form the body of christ and to exercise our gifts in relation to the well-being of the body but of each person with whom we have this wonderful spiritual connection and contact in the body of christ so it's a correct attitude and action for us as individuals then verses 8 to 16 you have a correct attitude and action in regard to one another well of course there's an overlap with with what i've said already what's in the previous verses we've just mentioned but notice in verse 9 let love be let love be genuine abhor what is evil hold fast to what is good love one another with brotherly affection outdo one another in showing honor and as often with paul love comes to the fore and in many ways as he begins this part of the passage with an emphasis on love so that carries through into everything else that he's saying here in terms whether it's rejoicing or patience or contributing to the needs of the saints to show hospitality to bless those who persecute and rejoice with those who rejoice all of that we'll just mention them in a minute very briefly but that's what he's beginning with the love that he mentions here in verse 9 is the love that carries through into all of these other activities they are all aspects of love as it works through in the practice of christians and he gives that priority to love as you can see in the next chapter and right through into the following chapters as well where obviously love comes to the fore and what he's saying and some of that as well but he gives us then some of these elements of love in the verses down to verse 16 i'm not going to read these in detail but let's just look at them as they go along they're just they're not a complete list by any means it's a sample list you might say he's giving us but even then as a sample there are about a dozen or so things here which we actually have to look at in in passing just now but let's look at it let love uh he says here but let love be genuine now that word literally is let love be unhyprocritical because the genuineness or sincerity of the love of christians is the exact opposite of hypocrisy it's uh something that is based itself on the truth of god on the truth of god in christ and in the scriptures and so that exercise of love this is it connected you see to the mind the renewed mind is the mind that loves and the renewed mind as the mind that loves is the love is the mind that loves sincerely it's the love it's the mind that abhors uh insincerity that abhors hypocrisy that doesn't want to present things in a pretended kind of way or in an imagined kind of way it's not presenting an outer an outer skin of love if you like in our practice without it having a really genuine heart let love be sincere let it be unhyprocritical let it be genuine and sometimes that means when love needs to rebuke when love needs to pass comment lovingly on something that's out of place either in another christian's life or even in the life of the world it's your love for the truth it's your love for god that brings you to speak about that or against that but you do it lovingly and you do it in such a way that your love is sincere it's unhyprocritical you're not taking that up to make a name for yourself you're not taking that up in anything other than out of concern for the honor and glory of god let love be sincere let it be unhyprocritical and that's a big challenge in itself we could spend the rest of the night looking at the sincerity of love and the way that god that paul speaks about in another in that respect in other passages as well but let's leave it there he then goes on to speak about a holding fast to abhor what is evil hold fast to what is good in other words have a discerning mind a discerning attitude and that discernment that leads to action abhor what is evil hold fast to what is good and throughout this passage it's wonderful the way that the apostle puts opposites together we'll see that at the end of the passage as well and these two things obviously go together as opposites in other words to abhor what is evil you need at the same time even more so to hold fast to what is good how are you going to abhor evil well it's by holding fast to what is good the one outdoes the other if you hold fast to what is evil then you're going to have something against what is good that's really how it works but for the christian for the mind that's been renewed for the mind that wants to honor christ this is what he's saying abhor what is evil hold fast to what is good love

one another with brotherly affection is translated here and you can see immediately that that really that that is as a family word it takes you into the idea of of family love and family relations and family concerns that's what we are as a body of christ we are god's spiritual family he is our father he is the one who has brought us into being spiritually and through being born again and adopted by him we're brought into relation with each other as his people we belong to that same family as all other converted christians are so he's saying here um outdo one another in showing affection that to us uh the family word honoring one another be fervent um he's saying in spirit don't be slothful and zeal be fervent and spirit serving the lord i think it should be translated there rather than a separate thing do not be slothful in zeal be fervent and spirit serving the lord there you can see again the two the two opposites and the way they go together if you don't want to be slothful in your zeal if you don't want to have that sort of attitude that doesn't really care too much about things then how do you overcome that well you've you'll be fervent in spirit and the word fervent there literally means boiling something that you see in a pan on the stove when it's boiling rapidly that's what he's saying to us there how do

[20 : 12] you come how do you overcome being slothful and zeal well you'll be fervent in spirit ask the lord to make you fervent ask the lord to give you a boiling heart ask the lord to really move you inwardly in such a way that you're agitated away from being slothful and zeal from being just uh as they say in gallic comico you about things and that's the opposite of what you have here in fervency of spirit and serving the lord then he speaks about perseverance firstly rejoicing in hope patient and tribulation constant in prayer you could summarize these really under perseverance it's a persevering mind and and action on the part of the christian there as well and he moves to being generous verse 13 contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality you can see how they connect together if you're concerned to supply the needs of those who are very much in need whether they're saints or otherwise he he mentions they're the saints as he often does because this is the family he's still talking about and our priority is to to look to the needs of the family first of course without neglecting those out with but he's saying contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality which really goes along with contributing to their needs showing hospitality hospitality in paul's day was absolutely crucial because as he and others went from place to place with the gospel as they carried the message of jesus from place to place they were depending on being received by those who would actually look after them whether it was for a night or two or for longer because they lived in a dangerous world they lived in a world when persecution of christians was was absolutely rife in most places of these large cities and you can see that from his own writings of course what happened to him and so hospitality was a means of security in many ways it wasn't just that you cared for the needs of the person and gave them a place to sleep for the night and made sure they were safe you were actually exercising your love for them in a way that gave them security that provided in that way for them showing hospitality and he goes then on to speak about being good willed verse 14 bless those who persecute you bless and do not curse them you see the way that goes together again bless and do not curse them so it's not just enough for us not to curse those who actually persecute us that's good if we don't actually curse them that's what we're required to but that doesn't go far enough for the apostle he's saying not just uh don't curse them but bless them pronounce blessing and seek blessing for them and that's going much further than just avoiding cursing them because that stops short of blessing them and seeking god's blessing for them and it's it's very difficult at times if you were living in ukraine tonight um and actually uh saying to christians they're no you should really bless those russians those russian troops that come upon you see how difficult that would be because very often understandably those who are interviewed will say well i just hate these russians of course the russian soldier are just carrying out their duties um whether they do it in a way that's acceptable or not another thing but you can see the difficulty for a christian facing that just as it would be in paul's day yet that's what he's saying uh do not uh curse those who persecute you but bless them seek god's blessing for them pronounce blessing towards them and upon them in the name of christ seek their conversion seek their well-being all that comes into it and uh verse 15 then um rejoice with those who rejoice weep with those who weep in other words he's saying ask god and keep asking for grace so as to be empathetic or sympathetic and empathetic to people whether they're weeping or whether they're rejoicing you can join with them and your joining with them is in kind so that you're able to rejoice with them if they're rejoicing properly as they should be and if it's the opposite if it's mourning if it's weeping seek to weep with them too and it doesn't mean that you need to have the ability to speak

into their circumstances many people who sit really shattered by the difficulties of death in their experience in their families the death of loved ones many people sit silently they're really trying as best they can just to believe that's what happened has really happened and what they need from christians like you and i more than anything else is to go and sit beside them and take their hand and that's all because that's very often all that they're able to take in but that's everything for them weep with those who weep just as jesus did when he attended the the death the incident of lazarus's death he went to martha i've mentioned this before i'm sure he went to martha and he got her to speak because that's what she was like she needed to speak she needed to get things out and he knew that so he got her to speak he asked her questions he made a statement to her do you believe this and all the way through that was her way that was his way of getting her to respond there's no account at all that when he came alongside mary he didn't say anything to her as far as recorded anyway he didn't get her to speak because she was a different character what she needed more than anything else was the very presence of jesus that was enough so often it is for us too it's your presence your genuine good-willed presence that makes all the difference to people in their loss and their need and so he goes on like-minded and then humble verse 16 uh emphasizing again their humility so correct attitude and action to one another as well as to those out with and also our own individual attitude and action and he finishes by a correct attitude and action to our opponents and it has three negative and positive combinations there again from from verse 16 onwards where he says live in harmony with one another do not be haughty but associate with the humble never be conceited repay to no one evil for evil but give thought to what is honorable in the sight of all if possible as far as it depends on you live peaceably with all in other words it's not retaliation but peacemaking that god requires of us the peacemaking of which jesus himself spoke in the beatitudes blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of god or children of god why are they called children of god over and above the other beatitudes well because when you're making peace you are more like your father than in anything else because that's what he has done our father in heaven has made peace for us in christ and when you're making peace between people who have fallen out or between yourself and somebody that's fallen out with you or you've fallen out with making peace is the characteristic that makes you like god as far as that is concerned what he's saying is exactly the same as far as it is possible it doesn't mean that we say well okay i don't really think it's possible so i won't really bother but it's a very opposite direction as much as possible is really what it means as much as possible as far as it depends on you live peaceably with all and then he says never avenge yourselves but give place to wrath leave it to the wrath of god for it is written vengeance is mine i will repay says the lord vengeance has no place in our christian hearts that doesn't mean that we become soft that we don't stand up to those who want to persecute us or that we don't speak strongly out to those who oppose the gospel in a marked way but that's different to vengeance whenever something is done to you because you're a christian when it's taken out on you vengeance is never the response that god requires whatever it is must never be vengeance because he says vengeance is mine i will repay says the lord he may never repay to the person who has abused us he may never repay to that person in this life and that's where people by and large lose sight of the eternal dimensions of god and of god's vengeance if he doesn't actually bring it out in this life be sure of this he'll bring it out in his final judgment and you and i would not like to stand in the shoes of persecutors of god's people if they haven't repented by the time they face the judgment throne of christ it should fill us with horror and terror should make us tremble that anyone who's abused the people of god come to face god without having changed their lives leave it to me says the lord i will repay on the contrary if your enemy is hungry feed him if he's thirsty give him something to drink or by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head what does what does that mean what sort of situation does he describe in that well it's really pretty much following the same lines if your enemy is hungry feed him don't deny him what he needs on that level if he's thirsty give him something to drink in other words treat him kindly because the best way of getting to someone's conscience is to treat them in a way they don't deserve that's precisely what he's saying you will heap burning coals on his head you will get through to their conscience maybe that'll never lead them to christ though we hope it will but the fact is you have dealt with them as god himself requires you and it has touched their conscience and then it's up to them to do something about it but this is our part of it you want to get their conscience moved for god to stir their conscience by your doing good and that's how he finishes don't be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good and again you see there's both sides it's not enough for us not to be overcome with evil we need to go further

than that and we need to overcome evil by doing good by the exercise of goodness as it flows from that renewed mind in the attitude that god has created in his people so may god bless these thoughts on his word to us this evening

let's conclude by singing psalm 15 psalm number 15 and we'll sing the whole psalm page 215 within thy tabernacle lord who shall abide with thee and in thy high and holy hill who shall a dweller be we'll sing that psalm psalm 15 to god's praise within thy tabernacle lord who shall abide with thee and in thy high and holy hill who shall a dweller be a man who walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and as he thinketh in his heart so doth he truth express who doth not slander with his tongue nor to his strength a third nor yet again his name nor yet again his name but doth take up a little report

In whose eyes while men are despised, but those that God to fear, he honoureth and changeeth not.

[34 : 51] Though to his heart he squint, his coin could snort to you, study, nor take reward will he.

Against the guiltless food of us, I'll never prove it be.

If those who are elders can please remain behind because we'll be doing the session.