

Romans Part 41 – Chapter 12

Sunday, February 19, 2023

With input from Roland Muller https://nabataea.net/explore/culture_and_religion/honorshame, National Park Service
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/secret-symbol-of-the-lincoln-memorial.htm>

Paul now states very clear and pragmatic requirements for the believer. We tend to read these as suggestions that might be helpful, as if Martha Stewart is helping us with a spring garden.

Romans 12:10-13:

10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Let's Dissect:

Romans 12:10:

10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Romans 12:10 ISV *Be devoted to each other with mutual affection. Excel at showing respect for each other.*

John 13:34: *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (Love is not optional)*

John 15:12: *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

2 Peter 1:7: *For this very reason...*

(what reason? Paul just stated in verse 4: *he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire*)

make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:1: *Let brotherly love continue.*

1 Thessalonians 4:9: *Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,*

1 Peter 1:22: *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart*

1 Corinthians 13:4: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.*

Psalms 133:1: *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!*

1 Peter 3:8: *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.*

1 Peter 4:8: *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

Romans 12:10:

10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Going against the cultural norm and our flesh, Paul teaches that Christ-followers are to outdo one another in showing honor. In other words, Christians do not fall into the trap of letting someone's perceived honor affect how well they are loved or treated. Instead, Christians are called to honor one another without limitation.

Ronald Reagan: *“There is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit.”*

Roland Muller: Sociologists have recognized that three social issues have existed since earliest times. As civilizations formed, each of them grappled with the concept of **fear**, **shame** and **guilt**. These are, in essence the building blocks of society. Every society has its particular ways of dealing with these issues. And each of these issues have different importance, depending on the cultural makeup of that society.

These three aspects make up the basic building blocks of worldview. It is similar to the three basic colors that an artist mixes to make all the colors of the universe. On my computer, I can mix the three primary colors to make up 64 million other colors. That's the way it is with worldview. There are many different kinds of worldview, but when carefully examined they can be better understood when looking at them in the light of man's response to guilt, shame and fear.

Sociologists have used terms like guilt-based cultures, and shame-based cultures for years now. We must be careful, however, not to try and fit each culture or worldview into one specific category such as fear based or shame based. As I stated, these building blocks are similar to an artist, creating thousands of colors from three basic primary colors. How much of each primary color is used, determines what the final color will be when the paint is mixed. In the same way, all three building blocks are present in all cultures and worldviews, but how much of each one is present, determines the actual type of culture that emerges.

Having determined this, one must also consider how people in a particular local culture react to the elements of the overall culture. As an example, when an Arab is shamed, he may react by taking revenge on the one who causes the shame, but when an oriental is shamed, he may react by committing

suicide. While individual cultures may react to sin in different way, in general terms there are great blocks of the world that have similar worldviews.

Where are the major blocks? Many western nations (Northern Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand) have cultures that contain mostly guilt-based cultural characteristics. On the other hand, much of the Middle East and Asia is made up shame-based cultures. Most of the primal religions and cultures of the world (such as tribes in the jungles of Africa, Asia, and South America) are structured around fear-based principles.

The problem comes when we want to simply classify cultures into these three basic classifications. They do not easily fit, because they are made up of blends of all three.

Thus, when analyzing a culture, one must look for the primary cultural characteristics, and then the secondary ones. As an example, many North American Native cultures are made up of elements of both shame-based and fear-based cultures. On the other hand, much of North American culture has been made up almost exclusively of guilt-based principles, although this has changed in the last two decades.

There are some general characteristics or mega-traits that fit the majority of people in the western world. Certain basic fundamental beliefs have molded western civilization. These beliefs have laid the foundations upon which these nations are built, and from which the fabric of their society has been formed.

One of these basic foundations is their belief in right versus wrong. This understanding is so deeply ingrained in western culture, that westerners analyze almost everything from this perspective. Most western forms of entertainment are built upon ‘the good guys and the bad guys.’ It is so familiar to westerners that few of them question its validity. It is such an integral part of religion and society, that they often cannot imagine a world where ‘right versus wrong’ isn’t the accepted basic underlying principle.

‘Right versus wrong’ is the yardstick used in their culture to measure everything else with. They talk about the rightness and wrongness of someone else’s actions. They talk about things being “right for me.” They are obsessed with knowing their rights and exercising them. Many western societies spend countless hours and billions of dollars debating the wrongs of society. Is homosexuality right or wrong? Is spending billions on the military right or wrong? Is possession of drugs right or wrong? How about possession of nuclear bombs, or weapons of mass destruction?

Almost every major issue the west struggles with involves an aspect of deciding whether something is right or wrong. They arrive at this basic tension in life because almost everything in western culture is plotted on a guilt/innocence line. (Innocence being something defined as being right or righteousness).

Guilt ————— Innocence

The pulls and demands of these two diametrically opposed forces dictate much of western human behavior. Guilt can plague and haunt people bringing fear and condemnation upon them. Many westerners do everything they can to avoid being guilty. Psychologists spend a great deal of their time helping people deal with all sorts of guilt complexes.

Evangelical Christians in particular, often live in circles that are governed by guilt principles based on the authority of the Bible. Outside of these circles, guilt is defined in many other ways. It can be a sense of public disapproval, being in trouble with the authorities, or not being politically correct. However guilt is defined, and to what extent it influences a culture varies widely from location to location. However, the understanding of right and wrong has been instrumental in forming much of western society.

On the other end of the spectrum, is righteousness, or innocence. This is the unspoken goal of much of western society. "I'm OK, you're OK" is the most comfortable situation for many. Many westerners express their innocence with the statement that they are as good as the next person. If this is true, then they can get about their business of pursuing happiness and pleasure within the bounds of being OK and not guilty.

Most westerners do what they can to avoid being guilty and at the same time exercise their rights. This guilt/innocence thinking is so ingrained in western society that most westerners have immediate reflexes to events that catch them off guard.

Being a westerner, I have often noticed some of the reflexes that we have developed. Have you ever noticed what happens in the swimming pool when the lifeguard blows his whistle? Almost all westerners will stop to see who is guilty, and when they realize they are innocent will resume swimming. This is a normal scenario from the western world, but it is not true in much of the eastern world. When we in the western world do something wrong, like unintentionally running a red light, we may feel guilty. This is also not necessarily true in the eastern world.

Or, how about this scenario? Imagine a classroom full of grade school kids. Suddenly, the intercom interrupts their class. Johnny is being called to the principle's office. What is the immediate reaction of the other children? In the west the immediate reaction would almost always be: "What did you do wrong?" Even western children almost always immediately assume guilt. Perhaps the school principal was going to hand out rewards, but much of western society conditions people to expect the worst, and they feel pangs of guilt.

So much of western thinking is wrapped up in guilt. Wars are justified on the basis of establishing guilt. During the opening days of the Gulf War, the American government spent many hours and millions of dollars determining if Saddam Hussein was guilty. Once they thought they had established that he was guilty of committing atrocities they had the right to take military action against him. Throughout the war, they continued to make statements about Mr. Hussein's deranged mental state and irrational actions. All of this helped justify the war. In fact, all during the history of western civilizations, wars have had to be justified, and each side identifies the other as being the 'bad guys.'

But some things are not easy to chart between right and wrong. Is a hungry child stealing food guilty? Should he be punished despite his hunger? These questions disturb us, because we feel that everything in life must fit somewhere between guilt and innocence.

In fact, western association with guilt has gone so far as to provide an avenue for people to develop guilt complexes. They feel guilt for what they have done and also guilt for what they have not done. They even feel guilt for what others have done. People who struggle with a guilt complex can even be overcome with embarrassment and feelings of guilt from the actions of others.

The flip side of guilt is innocence, righteousness, and exercising rights. As I mentioned, “I’m OK, you’re OK” is an important philosophy in western culture. In order not to point a finger at people, western society continues to expand the limits of what is acceptable activity. By making homosexuality acceptable, they help thousands of people avoid feeling guilty. This alone is enough to convince many people in western society that it’s OK for people to be homosexual. In fact, almost anything is tolerated as long as it doesn’t hurt another person.

I have been surprised to discover that many people in our western world believe that our fixation with right and wrong is not only normal, but also the only correct way to think. They assume that anyone, who does not think in these terms, does not think rationally or logically.

In order to understand guilt-based culture, we must go back to Greek and Roman times, and examine the origin of this pattern of thinking, and discover how this has had an impact on society and religion.

The Roman Connection

The Roman Empire has come and gone, leaving us with a few ruined cities, and a wealth of stories about conquest and heroism. While most of what the Romans accomplished has disappeared, there is one facet of Roman life that has impacted the west, right down to the present. It is the Roman law, or the ‘pax romana’ (Roman peace) which was brought about by everyone obeying the Roman law.

Roman law introduced the concept that the law was above everyone, even the lawmakers. This idea was not totally new. The Jews under Moses understood this. Greek politicians developed a similar plan with their city-state, but with laws that were man made, not divine. The Romans, however, perfected the system, and put it into widespread use. They developed a type of democracy known as the republic. They put in place a complex legal system that required lawmakers, lawyers, and judges. This Roman system of law left a tremendous impact on western society. Even to this day, much of the western legal system is still built around the basic Roman code of law.

Roman law during the Roman Empire assumed that the individual’s rights were granted by the state (by government) and that lawmakers can make up laws. Under Roman law, the state was supreme, and rights were granted or erased whenever lawmakers decided. This philosophy is sometimes called ‘statism.’ Its basic premise is that there is no law higher than the government’s law.

What is the opposite of statism?

Anti-statism is any approach to social, economic or political philosophy that rejects statism. An anti-statist is one who opposes intervention by the state into personal, social and economic affairs. In anarchism, this is characterized by a complete rejection of all involuntary hierarchical rulership.

Roman politicians were not the first to invent statism but they did such an effective job of applying it, that the Roman Empire has become the guiding star for politicians in the west. Statists see the “pax romana,” the period in which Rome dominated the Mediterranean world, as the golden days of statism. The known world was “unified” and controlled by one large government. This unification was symbolized in Roman times by something known as the fasces. This was a bundle of wooden rods bound together by red-colored bands. In ancient Rome the fasces was fixed to a wooden pole, with an ax at the top or side. This symbolized the unification of the people under a single government. The ax suggested what would happen to anyone who didn’t obey the government. The Roman fasces became the origin of the word fascism.



Recognized around the world as a symbol of the United States and one of its great presidents, the awe-inspiring Lincoln Memorial attracts millions of visitors every year. In the main chamber of the memorial, some of these visitors lean against the back wall, crane their necks and contort their faces looking for a face in the rear of Lincoln's head. Some will attempt to decode Lincoln's hands. Looking for some deeper meaning, convinced that it must be here in this exalted chamber, most of these visitors will end up shaking their heads, shrugging, and walking away unconvinced of what they have seen. The irony is that the deeper meaning surrounds them, and has probably gone overlooked.

While distracted by myths about faces in hair and letter-signing hands, many visitors miss the true meaning of the memorial and the ubiquitous symbol that carries that meaning. Instead of being hidden somewhere inaccessible, the symbol is deceptively obvious, right there under Abraham Lincoln's hands. This symbol is so overlooked that, even when pointed out, many observers will not recognize it. The symbol is that of fasces (FAS-eez), a bundle of rods bound by a leather thong. Repeated throughout the memorial, the fasces reveal the higher meaning of the Lincoln Memorial and the way the memorial's designers meant to honor Abraham Lincoln.

What do fasces represent?

In ancient times, fasces were a Roman symbol of power and authority, a bundle of wooden rods and an axe bound together by leather thongs. Fasces represented that a man held imperium, or executive authority. Exercising imperium, a Roman leader could expect his orders to be obeyed, could dole out punishment, and could even execute those who disobeyed. The fasces he carried symbolized this power in two ways: the rods suggest punishment by beating, the axe suggests beheading. On its surface, the fasces imply power, strength, authority, and justice.



Fasces on the Lincoln Memorial Exterior - A carving of a bundle of rods on a stone wall
Fasces at the base of the Lincoln Memorial steps depict the axe, an eagle, and thirteen bound rods.

As one approaches the Lincoln Memorial from the plaza below, he or she passes by the first of these fasces at the base of the main stairs. The carving is easily missed even though it is more than ten feet tall, but to miss it is to miss the introduction to the theme of the memorial. On the end of the wall is a carving of rods with an axe bound by a leather thong, the classic Roman fasces. The fasces indicate the power and authority of the state over the citizens, commanding respect.

But there is a twist. A bald eagle's head sits atop the axe, an American touch on an ancient Roman symbol. Adding to the American-ness, there are thirteen rods shown in the fasces, suggesting the thirteen original states that achieved independence from Britain and formed the United States. Seen as symbols of the states — and the American motto "E Pluribus Unum," or "Out of Many, One," — the rods bound together suggest the union of the states and their bond by the Constitution. Each state is weaker individually, but together, they are stronger. This concept is so important that it is presented long before visitors reach the building itself and see the representation of the Savior of the Union.

Since we are a republic, what is a good definition of a republic?

A state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives, and which has an elected or nominated president rather than a monarch – Oxford

OR

A form of government in which a state is ruled by representatives of the citizen body. Modern republics are founded on the idea that sovereignty rests with the people, though who is included and excluded from the category of the people has varied across history – Britannica

Fascism is a political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition. – Merriam-Webster

What is **republic** vs **democracy**?

Republic: "A state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives, and which has an elected or nominated president rather than a monarch." **Democracy:** "A system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives."

What is Communism?

A political theory derived from Karl Marx, advocating class war and leading to a society in which all property is publicly owned and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs – Oxford

Communism is a political and economic ideology that positions itself in opposition to liberal democracy and capitalism, advocating instead for a classless system in which the means of production are owned communally and private property is nonexistent or severely curtailed – Investopedia

Remember what we learned in Revelation 6 with the first four seal judgements which are referred to as the four horsemen of the apocalypse:

These are the four things that are shaken to their core:

1. Our Government or religion = what we have placed our faith in
2. Our Military Might
3. Our material things
4. Our Health

And in Revelation 18:

“Woe! Woe to you, great city,
you mighty city of Babylon!
In one hour your doom has come!”

11 “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore— 12 cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron

and marble; 13 cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and human beings sold as slaves.

14 “They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’ 15 The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn 16 and cry out:

“Woe! Woe to you, great city,
dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet,
and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!
17 In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’

“Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. 18 When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’ 19 They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out:

“Woe! Woe to you, great city,
where all who had ships on the sea
became rich through her wealth!
In one hour she has been brought to ruin!’