

ROMANS
Lesson 394–December 31, 2017

Welcome To
BARAH MINISTRIES
a Christian Church
Rory Clark
Pastor-Teacher

Good Morning!

Welcome to Barah Ministries...a Christian Church with worldwide impact based in Mesa, AZ...my name is Pastor Rory Clark. At Barah Ministries, our God is the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Second Peter, Chapter 3, Verse 9 says...

SECOND PETER 3:9

The Lord Jesus Christ is not slow about His promise of salvation, as some accuse Him of, but instead He is patient toward you unbelievers, not wishing for any of you to perish (in the Lake of Fire) but for all of you to come to repentance (a change of mind about having a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ).

We know this verse applies to unbelievers...but it is also not God's will that believers perish. We're not worried about the Lake of Fire because it is impossible for believers in Christ to go there...but we perish...we suffer small and painful deaths through the misuse of our will.

In today's lesson, we'll wrap up the year with a reminder that in God's plan for you...

TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON
Character Matters

Let's begin with a song that reminds you that God's love for you is unconditional...here's June Murphy to sing...

MUSIC AND REFLECTION

Be Occupied with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ
Enjoy the Singing of His Praises

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WHEN I SAY I LOVE YOU
June Murphy

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray...

Almighty God and Father, thank you for allowing me to have another year of teaching truth...thank you for the spiritual gift of Pastor-Teacher and for installing a burning desire and a heated passion in me to provide the Word of God from this pulpit as often as I can...

Thank you for the hearers you provide...this loyal group of people...both resident and non-resident...who are as passionate about spiritual growth as I am...bless them...keep them healthy...illuminate their spiritual gifts...and keep on giving them the adversity that shapes their character...

We ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit...in Christ's name...Amen.

TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON

Character Matters

Sixty lessons were posted from this pulpit in 2017. I am proud of these lessons. I grew quite a bit spiritually from writing the lessons, and I am certain those of you who make Barah Ministries a regular part of your daily routine are growing from the lessons as well. In our conversations, your spiritual growth is obvious to me. You thinking that is reflected in our discussions, the experiences God is giving to shape you, are fun to listen to...you make teaching worth it to me.

As I reflect on the year and on Christianity, one of the confounding things about Christians is how happy we are to just “get by.” We are on victorious ground as Christians...we are saints... priests...absolutely righteous ones... in union with Christ...justified...redeemed...reconciled...expiated...atoned for...ambassadors...adopted adult children of the living God...heirs...holy and blameless in the eyes of God...in union with Christ...indwelt by the entire Trinity...yet many of us still live defeated lives. We are winners in the Creator-creature conflict, yet we live as if we are losers. We are eternally successful yet we think like failures...we obsess with failure. We

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act like spiritual cripples. Instead of walking with our heads held high, pressing on to the mark for the upward call of God the Father for those in union with Christ Jesus, we walk as if we are lame. We have divine solutions for every human problem, yet we seek the advice of the world to solve our problems and wonder why we feel powerless.

In God's plan, character matters. I've been thinking about this all year, and I hope you will indulge me as I share a few closing thoughts for the year.

What are some of the things you would be doing if you were living life God's way?

All of us have an attitude toward Christ and an attitude toward Christianity...whether Atheist or Agnostic or Religious or Believer.

With more than six decades of both observing and participating in life, it seems to me that human life is a journey. The journey occurs on a path. It has a start date...your birthday. It has an end date...the day of your physical death. It has a lot of days in between. The days in between are commonly referred to as "the dash." If your birth date and your death date were on a tombstone, there is always a dash between the two dates that represents your life.

Life is filled with circumstances. There is a period of time in life when you are totally dependent... the years between your birth and age twelve...there is a period of time in life when you think you are independent and you are not...the years between ages thirteen and twenty-one...most of those years typically called the teen years...then at twenty-one years old you are an adult, theoretically able to support yourself and to fend for yourself.

As the path of this temporal life wind to a destination...your physical death... there are several circumstances along the way.

Perhaps one of the circumstances between your birth and age twelve is that you are bullied at school. Every morning when you wake up, you dread going to school because you know as soon as you hit campus there is a bully there who will both humiliate you and take your lunch money. The bully problem doesn't go away until you handle it, and the bully problem is designed to teach you a lesson.

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Perhaps one of the circumstances between ages thirteen and twenty-one is that you feel tremendously self-conscious. You imagine in your mind that everyone is looking at you all the time, observing, in fact scrutinizing your life, and is overtly critical of you. Being a person who wants to be liked, it is hurtful for you to think some may not like you, and you obsess with ways you can change yourself to be more acceptable to the crowd of critics. The self-consciousness problem doesn't go away until you handle it, and the self-consciousness problem is designed to teach you a lesson.

Perhaps one of the circumstances of adulthood is that early into it, you learn of your own mortality. You become ill, and you have to turn your fate over to the experts in the healthcare system who will run a series of tests on complex and expensive machines to let you know your physical malady. It's cancer...a blood disorder called leukemia. Nowhere in your wildest dreams, only perhaps in your deepest fears, did you suspect that twenty-three years into the journey along the path of life you would run into a health challenge that threatened the length of your journey. It seems so unfair, when those of similar age are experiencing different challenges that are not life threatening. The health problem doesn't go away until you handle it, and the health problem is designed to teach you a lesson.

Surrounding the path is an environment that is constantly sending you messages about the best way to travel your path. The messages are designed to create dissatisfaction within yourself, and dissatisfaction with the way you do things, and then to offer you a "solution." Many times you have doubted yourself because of the environment's input...you've felt inferior...and you've decided to try the proposed "solution." Each time, the "solution" has failed to fulfill its promise. It has wasted your time and your money while failing to deliver what it promises. You're actually worse off after trying the "solution." The failures don't stop you from listening to the environment again and again.

Along the path there is a series of lights. Whenever you are offered a "solution," you can always hold it under the light. When you do, you can see the flaws in the proposed "solution." When you notice something is flawed, you are wise to reject it. For example, an over-ripened peach may not be the best selection if you were hungry for fruit. The skin falls off...there are soft, apparently rotten blotches on the fruit...you are most

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often wise enough to reject such fruit. You are not wise when you accept something that's obviously flawed and attempt to make it work. A rotten peach is not tasty, and there is little we can do to make it tasty.

To make a long story short, the path that is our life is filled with circumstances... the path that is our life is conducted in an environment. We have choices along the path. Sometimes we choose to travel the path in the dark. Sometimes we choose to travel the path in the light. It would make logical sense that if we had a choice, we'd much rather travel in the light than in the darkness. Yet no one has ever accused human beings of being logical. We are emotional beings and we do things for emotional reasons, even when we want to live in the deception that we have made an emotional decision for logical reasons.

God offers us trials along the path of life...circumstances designed to instruct. God places us in an environment...a system of negative influence with deceptions designed to instruct. God is light...and in Him there is no darkness at all. He is there, along every step of the journey, encouraging us to follow the instructions of His light. Sometimes we do, and sometimes we don't. When we do, we have character. When we don't we ARE a character. Character matters. Character matters especially to God.

What is character?

CHARACTER

A collection of choices that reveal a person's inclination for handling life's journey.

A part of my character is **WORK ETHIC**. I am willing to invest the amount of hours it takes in thought and in action to achieve a result. When you observe me in action you should see this approach reflected in my person.

Another part of my character is **LOYALTY**. I am willing to remain steadfast in my commitment to others, even when it hurts me, and even when it makes me look like a fool. When you observe me in action you should see this approach reflected in my person.

A third part of my character is **OTHER-FOCUS**. I am willing to serve others before I serve myself even when it is not the smartest choice. When

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you observe me in action you should see this approach reflected in my person.

What will we see when we look at you that reveals your character?

Of course there are choices I make and things I value that are not reflective of my character. If you knew what those things are, you would say, “That’s out of character for him.” For example, if I were to be totally selfish about a thing with a complete disregard for how it affected others, that would be out of character for me.

If you’re being honest, what do your choices reveal about your character?

Most of the definitions of the word character contain the word morality. I don’t think morality is a high enough standard. Morality is the standard of right versus wrong. God calls us to a higher standard...His standard...and in God’s standard there is only one way of doing a thing. In the opening lesson for 2017 I called you to that standard...let this be the year you do things God’s way.

The Lord has been kind enough to invite me to this journey. The least I can do is honor His way. As 2017 closes, I invite you to reflect on how well you lived God’s standard this year...and I invite to a closer walk with God in 2018, being some of the few people who reflect His character and nature to a lost and dying world.

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GOD WANTS YOU!

Make the Most Important Decision of Your Life

There's only one way to get to heaven...in John, Chapter 14, Verse 6, the Lord Jesus Christ said...

JOHN 14:6

...to Thomas, the doubting apostle, "I am the way (to salvation), and (I am) the truth (the Word of God)...and (I am) the (resurrection) life (eternal life)...and no one comes to God the Father but through believing in Me."

In John, Chapter 3, Verse 3, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself gives instruction on how to be saved to Nicodemus...a religious Pharisee...

JOHN 3:3

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a person is born again (the spiritual birth) he cannot see the kingdom of God the Father."

JOHN 3:4

Nicodemus said to the Lord Jesus Christ, "How can a man be born again when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

JOHN 3:5

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of the water of the Word (the gospel message) and the (baptism by God the Holy) Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

JOHN 3:6

That which is born of the flesh is flesh (in other words, that which comes from mortals is mortal), and that which is born (again) of the (baptism of God the Holy) Spirit is spirit."

JOHN 3:7

"Do not be amazed (Nicodemus) that I (the Lord Jesus Christ) said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

So if you want to be born again...if you want to move from spiritual death to

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spiritual life, you can follow the apostle Paul’s advice in Acts, Chapter 16, Verse 31...

ACTS 16:31

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and everyone in your household who also believes.”

John, Chapter 3, Verse 17 says...

JOHN 3:17

God the Father did not send the Son (the Lord Jesus Christ) into the world to judge the world, but God the Father sent the Son in to the world that the world might be saved through union with Him.

Thank you Father for providing a single, crystal clear way to get to heaven that requires no work on our part.

CLOSING SONG

I AM BEAUTIFUL

June Murphy

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray...

THANKS - INTERCESSION - PETITION

Thanks for coming!

Thanks for watching!

Thanks for listening!

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