

ROMANS CHAPTER 12

Introduction

This chapter begins the practical section of the book. Thus far in the book of Romans we have found very few commands (with the exception of certain commands in chapter 6--"know," "reckon," "yield," etc.). The emphasis of the early chapters is not on what we should do, but on what God has done. A similar pattern is found in the book of Ephesians. The first three chapters emphasize what God has done in GRACE and no commands are found. The last three chapters are practical and many commands are found. What God has done IN GRACE is always the true basis for Christian conduct and behavior.

Romans 12:1

"**Beseech**"--Paul was begging, urging (same word as Eph.4:1). The law says, "I command you," but grace says, "I beseech you." Legal obedience is based on **fear** (the person obeys because he is afraid of the penalty he will have to suffer if he does not obey); gospel obedience is based on **love** (2 Cor.5:14--"the love of Christ constrains me").

"**Therefore**"--this points us back to all that Paul has set forth in the first 11 chapters (all that God has done for the guilty, ungodly sinner!).

"**By the mercies of God**"--this is not the same word for mercy which is found in Rom.11:30-32, but the idea is similar. It means "pity, mercy, compassion." Remembering how merciful and compassionate God has been to us ought to be the great incentive for godly Christian living. If God has been so compassionate and merciful to me, then should not I give my life and my all to serve Him? If the Son of God has died for me, how can I do less than live for Him? As Isaac Watts wrote: "Love so amazing, so divine, DEMANDS MY SOUL, MY LIFE, MY ALL!"

"**Brethren**"--Paul is addressing the believers in Rome. Presenting your body as an offering to God (Rom.12:1) is not something that unsaved people are told to do (as "Lordship salvation" advocates might imply), but it is something that saved people must do (we do it because we are saved, not in order to be saved). See our study on Lordship Salvation entitled, "**Saved By Grace Alone.**"

"**Present your bodies**"--the word "present" is the same word found in Romans 6:13 (there translated "**yield**"), and a comparison of these two verses indicates that "your body" is equivalent to "yourself." When you give God your body you are giving Him all that you are and all that you have. The verb "present" is in the aorist tense which simply means "DO IT!" It is not something that is done continually (or the present tense would have been used). It would be the ideal situation if every believer could do this and settle this once, for all, forever. On future occasions the consecrated believer can remember and consider that it has been done ("Lord, my body has been offered and given to You! I have been bought with a price! I am Your servant! May I never forget that my body belongs to You!" compare 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The aorist tense, does not mean (as many Bible teachers say) that it is to be a one time act never to be repeated again. There are times as believers when we fall and fail and we need to do what Romans 12:1 says, "Lord, You have saved me by your wonderful grace and mercy, and though I have sinned and failed you, I gladly present my body to you, for your service. I dedicate myself (all that I am and all that I have) to You afresh. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee. Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee!"

"**Sacrifice**"--every NT believer is a priest, and priests offer sacrifices. A sacrifice belonged wholly to God--it was His! The believer-priest is to offer and give **himself** (his body) wholly to God for God's use. One believer, after reading Romans 12:1, actually went to the side of a mountain and built a crude altar out of stones. He then laid himself on top of the altar, and said, "Lord, here I am! I am Your living sacrifice. I want you to use me in any way that You want. My life is Thine." God does not tell us to build a literal altar out of stones, but He does tell us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice.

"**Living**"--in contrast to OT animal sacrifices which were slain and ended up **dead**. James Ventilato has added the following helpful comments to better understand why this is a **living** sacrifice:

"We are to present ourselves to God **as those who are alive from the dead** (Rom. 6:13)." That is, a "living" sacrifice is not only a contrast to slain sacrifices, but it is also a "living" sacrifice from the standpoint, ground or position of **RESURRECTION LIFE** in Christ Jesus, thus linking up with the identification truths of Romans 6-8.

This also shows the absurdity of the Lordship position. For calling on "sinners" to present, yield, surrender, submit themselves to God--before they are on resurrection ground in Christ Jesus their Life (and thus dead to old Adamic life)--is useless and worthless! Romans 6 "**reckoning**" must precede Romans 12 "presenting" ourselves unto God. And an unsaved soul, one not in Christ Jesus, obviously has no basis to thus reckon. "**Crucifixion** comes before **consecration**."

Miles J. Stanford said it this way: "Here is the crux of the matter. The question is, Which life is to be consecrated to Him, the old self-life, or the new Christ-life? God can accept absolutely nothing from the old [which was condemned at the Cross]--He sees and acknowledges only that which is centered in His Son, who is our Life. Hence God has but one stipulation for consecration: 'Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from among the dead' (Rom. 6:13). This is our only ground, and from this platform we are to count ourselves dead unto sin, self, the law, the world, and alive unto God in Christ risen--to walk in 'newness of life,' 'risen life' (Rom. 6:11, 4b)."

" 'Present yourselves unto God as those alive from the dead' (Rom. 6:13). This is the true place of consecration. For believers to 'consecrate themselves unto God' ere they have learnt their union with Christ in death and resurrection (identification) is only to present to God the members of the natural man [the old, Cross-condemned Adamic life], which He cannot accept. Only those 'alive from the dead' -- that is, having appropriated fully their likeness with Him in death -- are bidden to present their members as instruments unto God."

"A careful study of all the Epistles of Paul will show that they are written on the basis of the Cross set forth in Romans 6 -- the fact that God consigns the old fallen Adam-life to the Cross, and has nothing to do say to it. God deals with all believers on the ground -- 'in Christ you died.' " (Miles Stanford)

"**Holy**"--set apart for God's holy will and service. God's people are "saints," set apart for the service of the King of Kings! Do you see yourself as a holy servant of the Most High God?

"**Acceptable**"--well pleasing (God is delighted by such sacrifices). God is not pleased when believers refuse to give Him their all. May there be nothing between our soul and the Saviour.

"**Reasonable**"--we get our English word "**logical**" from this Greek word. In light of what Christ has done for us, giving of ourselves wholly to Him by an act of total consecration is the only REASONABLE and LOGICAL thing to do. For the true believer, nothing else makes good sense! It's the logical thing to do! This is how believers WORSHIP GOD (it is a "service"), by giving of themselves totally to Him for His service.

THE PARABLE OF THE CHICKEN AND THE PIG: A farmer once approached a chicken and a pig and asked a heart-searching question: "Will you contribute to a ham and egg breakfast?" For the one it was merely a contribution. For the other it involved an absolute sacrifice! The believer is to place himself wholly into the hands of God, even as the believers in Macedonia did, "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first **GAVE THEIR OWN SELVES TO THE LORD**" (2 Cor.8:5).

We can do this as we remember that our Saviour gave His all for us!

A word on dedication: Some churches strongly emphasize that believers should walk the aisle or come forward to dedicate their lives to the Lord Jesus. In no way do we want to minimize the importance of such dedication, but we need to be careful to maintain the Biblical balance. "Lordship salvation" advocates seem to give the impression that dedicating your life to the Lord or submitting to Christ's Lordship is a requirement of salvation, and we have discussed the problems of this view in our booklet entitled, "Saved By Grace Alone." Submitting to Christ's Lordship ought to be the fruit of salvation, not the condition of salvation. Salvation is not based upon what we do for God but upon what God has done for us.

Many teach that dedication is something that is done subsequent to salvation at a later time in the Christian life. They might say something like this: "First a person must receive Christ as Saviour. Then perhaps months or even years later, the person must make Christ Lord of his life and dedicate his life to the Saviour." While there is some truth to this, consider the following important points:

1) Dedication ought to take place at the same time as salvation. This was certainly the case in the life of the Apostle Paul. As soon as he was converted he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He surrendered to the Lordship of Christ from the start. When we are first saved, we are so grateful for all that Christ has done for us that our desire is to please the One who died and rose again for us (2 Cor. 5:14-15). We want to live for the One who died for us and honor Him in all we do!

2) **Can a person make Christ Lord?** No! You do not make Him Lord; He is Lord. He is exactly who He is. You cannot make Him Lord of your life. He is Lord of your life whether you acknowledge that fact or not. Because He is Lord, I need to acknowledge Him as such. Because He is Lord, I need to honor Him as Lord, bowing before His authority, trembling before His Word. Because He is Lord, I can present my body to Him a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). We certainly understand what people mean when they say, "I want to make Christ Lord of my life." They are indicating that they want to surrender to His Lordship and submit to His rightful authority. However, there is a better way to say this: "I must live my life consistently with the fact that Jesus Christ is my Lord. His Lordship demands my submission and obedience and glad surrender to His perfect will for my life."

3) If we are honest and face reality we must admit that **there are times when every true believer rebels against Christ's authority and is disobedient to His Word.** Total submission to His Lordship requires total obedience to all His commands, and we all have fallen short of this. Consider the following two statements from professing believer A and from professing believer B:

Professing believer A: "I have received Christ as my Saviour but I refuse to submit to Him as Lord! I reject His authority over my life and I refuse to obey Him. I'm glad to have Him as my Saviour from hell, but He is not going to tell me what to do."

Professing believer B: "I want to obey my Lord, the One who died for me, but there are many times when I fail. My heart is deeply grieved when I fail to obey Him and I'm convicted and bothered and often miserable. I have dishonored my Lord and brought shame to His Name."

Professing believer A, by his words and attitude, does not give much evidence of having a real, personal, saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. **Professing believer B** seems to be a true possessor of Christ, because although he has sinned and rebelled against his Lord, he was bothered and broken about it. The Spirit of God who indwells a sinning believer is grieved, and He makes His grieved presence felt. R.Gene Reynolds has written the following:

A person who is living sinfully, who *knows* he is living sinfully, who *enjoys* living in such a manner, who intends to *continue* that sinful way of living—that person does not

have the Holy Spirit living within him. The very fact that he is "comfortable" about his sin is proof of the Spirit's absence. His spiritual vital sign registers, "no life."

4) **Does a new believer understand the full implications of Christ's Lordship?** No, the new believer is just beginning to learn what Christ's Lordship means and the obligations that accompany it. The newborn babe in Christ knows very little about surrender and submission. He knows his sins have been forgiven and that he has received Christ and that he possesses eternal life. He is full of thanksgiving for his so-great salvation and he desires to please the One who died for him. But how Christ's Lordship will affect his marriage, his family, his job, his finances, his church, the way in which he takes care of his body, etc.—all these things he will need to learn in time.

Similarly, a new believer does not understand the full implications of Christ's saving grace all at once. He is learning what it means to be saved by grace and this learning process takes a lifetime. John 3:16 should mean more to a believer now than it did a year ago and it should mean more to him a year from now than it does today. So it is with discipleship and Lordship. There is a learning process involved. The fact of Christ's Lordship should be more precious to me now than it was last year. As I grow in Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), I will gradually come to a better understanding of what it means to submit to Christ as my Lord.

May Romans 12:1 be a constant reminder to every believer that we are not our own because we have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We don't have the right to use our body as we please; we have the duty as love-slaves of Jesus Christ to use our body as He pleases. We are bought by blood and bound by love. We are to present ourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead (Rom. 6:13). In the light of God's mercy and grace as shown at Calvary, how can we do anything less?

Romans 12:2

Notice that there are two commands in this verse, the first negative (what we should not do) and the second positive (what we must do).

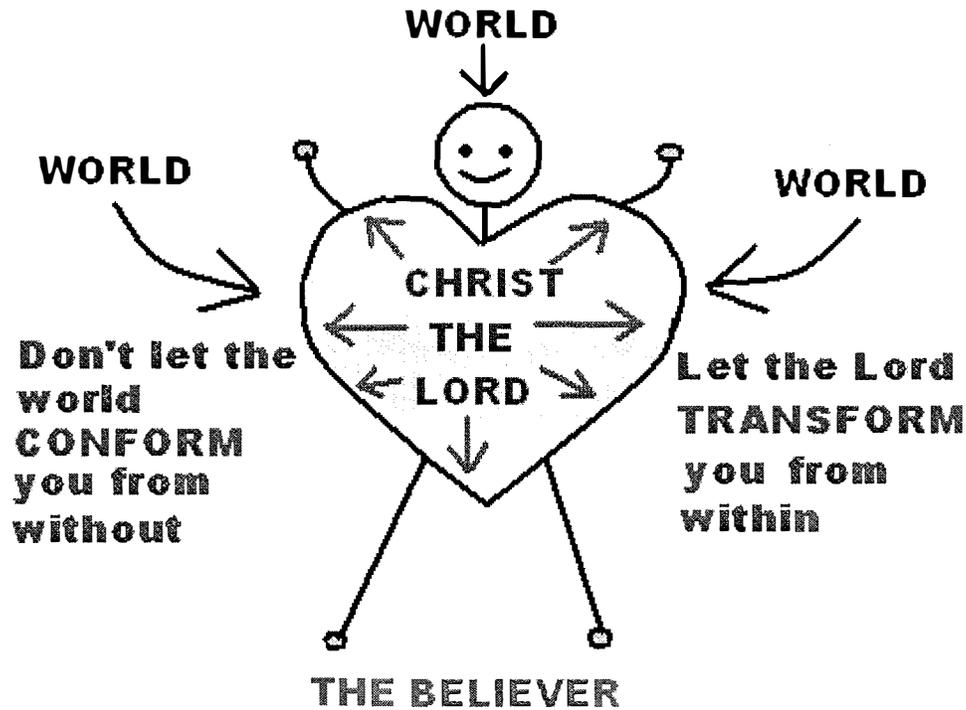
"**This world**"=this age (Greek-**αιων**). In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we learn that Satan is the "god of this world (age)." Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world (age)--Galatians 1:4. When we were unsaved we were a part of this evil, Satanic age/world, but God has delivered us out of it. Demas, who was considered to be a loyal believer in Colosians 4:14 was later described by Paul in these tragic words, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10--"present" indicating that it is here now but will not last long; it is very temporal). Finally in Titus 2:12, believers are taught by grace to live godly in this present age. We are in this world, but we are not to live as those who are "of this world" and who are part of this world system which is in opposition to the true and living God.

"**Be not conformed**"--the verb means "to be formed like, to be conformed to, to be molded by, to fashion or shape one thing like another." Paul is saying, "Don't be letting the world squeeze you into its mold!" Don't be molded by the mannerisms, speech, expressions, styles and habits of this world! Kenneth Wuest has paraphrased the verse as follows: "Stop assuming an outward expression which is patterned after this world, an expression which does not come from, nor is it representative of what you are in your inner being as a regenerated child of God."

"**But**"--indicating a strong contrast. God follows this negative command with a strong positive command!

"**Be ye transformed**"--this verb means to be changed, to be transformed. The Greek is **metamorphosis** (we think of the remarkable transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly). This word is used in Matthew 17:2 of our Lord's transformation (popularly called "transfiguration"). The Lord was changed in such a way that His inner glory became visible on the outside (compare John 1:14). Here and in 2 Corinthians 3:18 the word is used of the transformation process which takes place in the Christian life as the believer is more and more conformed to the image of Christ (more like Him today than I was yesterday; more like Him tomorrow than I am today). In 2 Corinthians 3:18 the word is used with reference to the change produced by the Holy Spirit resulting from the

believer beholding the glory of the Lord Jesus through His Word and being gradually (from one stage of glory to the next) transformed into the likeness of Christ. We have already seen in the Book of Romans that God's purpose is to conform us to Christ's image (Rom.8:29). The tense is present (in 2 Cor. 3:18): we are constantly to be transformed. It does not all happen in one day or one month or one year. It's a process which will not end until we are with Christ (1 John 3:2). The verb is in the passive voice (in 2 Cor. 3:18), indicating that we do not CHANGE OR TRANSFORM OURSELVES! We must BE transformed. It is something that God does in and through us. We are to trust Him and allow Him to do what only He can do.



How will this transformation come about? "By the **renewing of your mind.**" It's a mental process described by Vine as "the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God, which is designed to have a transforming effect upon the life." The believer's mind needs to be saturated with the Word of God so that we might more and more see, think and feel as God does. For other N.T. verses on renewal, see Colossians 3:10 and 2 Corinthians 4:16. This believer who is being transformed is constantly **proving** (testing and discovering) what is the will of God, even that good, acceptable (pleasing, well-pleasing) and perfect will of God. The heart-cry of the believer: "I WANT WANT GOD WANTS, no more and no less! I want nothing but God's best! Not my will but thine be done!"

AND GOD SAID: Let us **FORM** man in our image.

THE DEVIL SAYS: I will **DEFORM** man by sin.

THE WORLD SAYS: We must **CONFORM** man in our image.

EDUCATION SAYS: Let us **INFORM** man by knowledge.

SOCIETY SAYS: We will **REFORM** man by culture.

ONLY CHRIST SAYS: I will **TRANSFORM** man by grace.

Romans 12:3

In verse 2 we learned that we must allow the Spirit of God to transform us into the image and likeness of Christ (compare 2 Corinthians 3:18). If we are going to be like Christ, then we must be HUMBLE (compare Philippians 2:5-8) and this is what Paul's point is in verse 3. **"I say"**--this is Paul's way of giving a mild, gentle command. **"Through the grace given unto me"**--Paul had received grace (God's undeserved favor) to be an apostle (Rom.1:5), and as an apostle he is now writing to these Roman believers and giving them a gentle, loving command concerning humility.

"Not to think more highly than he ought to think"--we must think correctly about ourselves, and not be puffed up with an exaggerated and unrealistic idea of our own importance and superiority. We must not have a high, lofty, proud view of ourselves, but we need to have God's view of ourselves (see ourselves as God does). **"Soberly"**--having a sound mind and mental health, sensibly, seriously, to have a balanced and correct estimate of myself, to see myself as God sees me.

Consider Galatians 6:3. We think we are something; God says we are nothing! We think we are a big number, but we are actually a ZERO apart from God. But we must not be discouraged at our own nothingness and lack of importance. The good news is that God in His grace is able to make something out of nothing. Martin Luther once said, "God created the world out of nothing (Gen. 1:1; Heb.11:3) and as long as we are nothing God can make something out of us." Consider also the humbling truth of 1 Corinthians 4:7--What do you have that you did not receive?

Illustrations: Here is some advice for anyone who considers himself a V.I.P. (Very Important Person):

Sometime when you're feeling important, sometime when you ego's way up; sometime when you take it for granted that you are the prize winning "pup"; sometime when you feel that your absence would leave an unfillable hole, just follow these simple instructions, and see how it humbles your soul. Take a bucket and fill it with water, put your hand in it up to your wrist. Now pull it out fast and the hole that remains is the measure of how you'll be missed. You may splash all you please as you enter, and stir up the water galore, but STOP and you'll find in a minute, it's back where it was before.

Another poem gives the perspective of true humility:

A little tree, short but self-satisfied, glanced toward the ground then tossed its head and cried, "Behold, how tall I am, how far from earth!" And boasting thus, it swayed in scornful mirth. The tallest pine tree in the forest raised its head toward heaven, and sighed the while it gazed, "Alas, how small am I, and great skies how far; What years of space 'twixt me and yonder star." Our height depends on what we measure by--if up from earth, or downward from the sky!

The lowly man is the one who has caught a true glimpse of the High and Lofty One (Isaiah 6:1,5; 57:15):

The believer who thinks too highly of himself compares himself with others and exalts himself above others, as he proudly thinks himself to be more important than someone else. In Romans 12:3 Paul wants the Romans to understand that every believer has a special place in the body of Christ and has a special gift given by God for the benefit of the whole body.

"Dealt"=divide, deal out. God is the great Giver of the gifts, and in His wisdom He distributes the gifts in just the right way. **"Every man"**--each one, each believer (none are left out). There is no gift-less believer (there is no believer without a gift). Every believer has been gifted. This took place at the moment of salvation. There is no need to SEEK for a gift. A believer would be foolish to seek and try to get what has already been given to him. There is a need to develop and exercise whatever gifts we have, and this is done by being a healthy believer, abiding in the true Vine who is our Life (John 15:1-5).

"**The measure of faith**"--compare verse 6 ("**according to the proportion of faith**"). Paul is not talking about saving faith here (the faith through which we are saved--Eph.2:8), but he is talking about particular and diverse gifts which God has imparted to believers and the faith necessary to exercise those gifts. The gifts cannot be exercised rightly apart from faith and trust in the Saviour.

Romans 12:4-5

Just as it is in the human body, so it is in the body of Christ. There is one body but many members, and the members have differing functions, but they are all members of the same body and they all have an important function. All have a function, all are important, all have a part, but the functions are different. In one respect we are many (many members); but in another respect we are one (one body). We are fellow members of the same body, sharing the same life. The truth of these verses is greatly amplified in 1 Cor.12:12-31. When the local body of believers is healthy, the life of Christ will be manifested, the unsaved will be convicted and God will be glorified.

Romans 12:6

Paul now discusses spiritual gifts (for other N.T. chapters which deal with spiritual gifts, see 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4). The word "gift" is the Greek word "**charisma**" (from which we get the word "charismatic," a term now used of a modern religious movement which sadly over-emphasizes the spiritual gifts). "**Charis**" is the Greek word for **GRACE**, hence these are "grace gifts." God graciously has given these gifts to His body so that not one member of the body is without a gift, and the gifts are for the benefit of the entire body.

"**Gifts differing**"--all the members have **different** (not the same) gifts and different abilities which complement each other. This is illustrated by the members of the human body which have different functions (see 1 Corinthians chapter 12). "**Proportion of faith**"--this is an interesting expression from which we get the theological term: "**analogy of faith**" (sometimes referred to as "analogy of Scripture"). "Analogy of faith" means that Scripture is to be interpreted in light of Scripture and in accord with Scripture. The infallible rule of the interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. Any verse must be understood in light of the overall teaching of the Bible and it cannot contradict what the Bible clearly teaches elsewhere. The Bible cannot contradict itself. **Example:** Hebrews 10:26-30 at first glance may appear to teach that a true believer can lose his salvation, but by analogy of Scripture we know that this cannot be so (John 10:27-30; John 6:37-40; etc.). This is a true principle of Bible interpretation, but this is not exactly what the expression "proportion of faith" means in this verse. Those who have the gift of prophecy should prophesy in proportion to their faith. All spiritual gifts should be exercised in faith, looking to God, looking to His Word, looking to maintain a healthy relationship with Christ.

(1) THE GIFT OF PROPHECY--It is very important to understand what the gift of prophecy involved. Some inadequate definitions of this gift are as follows: "the ability to understand and to engage in the exposition of the Word of God" (Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 139). "The gift of prophecy was actually the ability to speak before people, to proclaim God's Word, sometimes with a predictive element" (John MacArthur, Jr., *The Charismatics*, page 164). According to these definitions, any gifted Bible teacher or pastor would have the gift of prophecy, and yet Romans 12:6-7 makes a clear distinction between the gifts of prophecy and teaching.

For a Biblical definition of what a prophet is, see Exodus 4:15-16; 7:1-2 and 2 Peter 1:21 (a prophet was the spokesman or mouthpiece of God, and what he spoke as a prophet was inspired speech; it was the Word of God). The prophets were "men who spoke under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God, and delivered some divine communication relative to doctrinal truths, to present duty, to future events, as the case may be" (Hodge). In the early church there was a great need for prophecy because the early churches did not have a complete New Testament (it took decades for these books to be written). How can a church function without New Testament truth? It cannot! Even though the early churches lacked the NT Books, God made sure that they did not lack NT truth. He provided this through the NT prophets who provided the churches with this needed revelation (revelation concerning church truth, concerning divorce, concerning church leaders, concerning church discipline, concerning prophetic events and the many other key topics that are now dealt with in the NT Books, especially the epistles). That the gift of prophecy was a temporary gift is strongly suggested by Ephesians 2:20 (a foundation

is only laid once). Also, if prophesy were given today, then this would mean that the Bible is not complete and not sufficient for the church. It would mean that we need additional revelation and that what we have in our Bible is NOT ENOUGH. Perish the thought! God's Word is totally sufficient for the church today.

Romans 12:7

(2) **THE GIFT OF MINISTRY**--this is the gift of **servicing** (humble service). We get the word "deacon" from this word (deacons are Biblically defined as humble servants, those who help to take the load off the elders and spiritual leaders so that they can devote themselves to prayer and the Word of God). Our Lord's example is found in Mark 10:45. All believers ought to serve in this way, but some are especially gifted in this respect. May God give to each believer a servant's heart.

(3) **THE GIFT OF TEACHING**--this involves **indoctrination** (putting doctrine or God's truth into the hearts and minds of God's people by the ministry of the Holy Spirit and by the clear proclamation of the Scriptures). The teacher is to saturate people with doctrine and with truth. All believers ought to be able to teach and share truth to some degree, but some believers are especially gifted at this. A difference between a teacher and prophet is this: A prophet gets his message directly from God with the result that what he says is inspired speech: "Thus saith the Lord!" A teacher gets his message by diligently studying the Word of God in prayerful dependence upon the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. The prophet gives forth the Word of God. The teacher explains and proclaims God's Word (but not under direct inspiration). The teacher's explanations of God's Word may be fallible. He needs to lean hard upon the Lord for understanding, praying that the Lord will guide him to the true interpretation of Scripture and keep him from error.

Romans 12:8

(4) **THE GIFT OF EXHORTATION**--this is the gift of being able to comfort, encourage and help others (compare the word "Comforter"). God's people need words of comfort and encouragement. We all should do this (see Hebrews 3:13; 10:25) but some are especially gifted at this. We don't want to be "miserable comforters" like the friends of Job!

(5) **THE GIFT OF GIVING**--the word means "to give a part of, to impart, to contribute, to share, contribute to the needs of others (in a material or financial way)." "**Simplicity**"-- generously, liberally. We all are to be GIVERS (Eph.4:28) but some believers are especially gifted at this.

(6) **THE GIFT OF RULING**--this word means "to stand before", hence "to be at the head, to rule, direct." It is speaking of leadership in the local assembly. Not all are gifted as leaders. This word is also used of local church leadership in 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17. "**Diligence**"=eagerness involves giving it all your effort, making every effort to provide God-honoring leadership.

(7) **THE GIFT OF SHOWING MERCY**--this refers to compassion (being a sunbeam to some dark, benighted, afflicted, sick, sorrowing soul). "**Cheerfulness**"=cheerful (we get our word "hilarious" from this word. It is the same word as in 2 Corinthians 9:7, and it means "cheerful"). Cheerful refers to one who can dispel gloom or worry, who can arouse hope and courage in the heart of one who is dejected, one who can gladden the heart. The word "hilarious" carries a different connotation today (boisterous merriment), which is not the precise meaning of this Greek word. "Cheerful" conveys the proper meaning.

Thus Paul in these three verses (6-8) mentions seven distinct and different gifts. This is just a sample list of gifts, certainly not exhaustive. One of these gifts, prophecy, was a temporary gift which has since been "done away" (1 Cor.13:8) but the others are gifts still needed in the local churches today.

It is of vital importance to recognize that the Scriptures emphasize the greatest gift of all: **the gift of God's life** which is the present possession of every believer (1 John 5:11-12; Rom.6:23; John 6:47). No believer is without this gift! It is our responsibility first and foremost to seek to manifest the resurrected life of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor.4:10-11; Gal. 2:20; 4:19; 5:22-23) by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Each member of the body of

Christ needs to be staying in a healthy and right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, abiding in Him as the True Vine (John 15:1-5). He is our Life! (Col. 3:4) As we stay in a healthy relationship with Christ, God will develop our gift or gifts for His glory and for the benefit of the local assembly of which we are a part.

Romans 12:9

"**Love**"--that which seeks God's highest and best for the person loved; it involves my decision and my choice to give of myself for the welfare of the other person, regardless of personal cost or sacrifice. "**Without dissimulation**"=without hypocrisy, unfeigned, a love that is genuine and sincere. Do not pretend to be loving when you are not; don't wear the mask of love. Don't just act and pretend that you love someone, but show it. Examples of hypocritical love are found in James 2:14-16 and 1 John 3:16-18. Some people love verbally but not practically (1 John 3:18). As D.L.Moody said, "Some people talk cream and live skim milk!"

"**Abhor**"=hate, abhor, to shrink back from something in horror, just as you would shrink back from death itself (from a Greek root **stug** from which comes the Greek word Styx which was the river of Hades, the river of death). **Evil**=evil, wicked. "Ye that love the Lord, HATE EVIL" (Psalm 97:10 and see Prov.8:13; Amos 5:15). Christians ought to be known for their love (John 13:35) and they also should be known for their hate. We must hate the things which our God hates. "**Cleave**"=Cling (closely) to something, to be attached and devoted to that which is good, be glued to that which is good.

Note: The idea of unfeigned love pervades the rest of Romans chapter 12. In some ways this is another "love chapter" like 1 Corinthians chapter 13. God's love is certainly a major theme in Romans Chapter 12.

Romans 12:10

"**Kindly affectioned**"=loving dearly, devoted to one another, loving tenderly. It refers to the love and affection that should be found in family relationships--family affection, devotion and concern. It refers to the love of near relations, bound by a family tie. Believers are united in the family of God and ought to have that love and affection one for another (1 John 3:14). "**With brotherly love**"--this is the Greek word "philadelphia" meaning "love for the brethren." It refers to that love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. "**In honor**"--we must honor and value one another; we must see the other person's worth and give him the honor and respect that we ought. Don't treat the person as if he were worth nothing. If Christ lives in a person, that person is valuable!

"**Preferring one another**"--in humble-mindedness I should consider my fellow believer to be better than myself (see Phil. 2:3). Some of the versions may be helpful here: "give preference to one another" (NASV); "honor one another above yourselves" (NIV); "giving precedence and showing honor to one another" (Amplified); "giving preference to one another" (NKJV). How blinded by pride is the person who always sees himself as better and superior to others.

Romans 12:11

"**Slothful**"=idle, lazy (compare Matthew 25:26). "**In business**"=in diligence. The word means eagerness, earnestness, diligence, zeal, making every effort to please the Lord in the things we do. One translation puts it this way: "when earnestness is needed, never be indolent" (20th Century). Other versions: "Not lagging behind in diligence" (NASV); "never be lacking in zeal" (NIV); "Never lag in zeal and earnest endeavor" (Amplified).

"**Fervent in spirit**"--this word "fervent" comes from a verb meaning "to boil, seethe." Spiritually we should be on fire for the Lord, all fired up, boiling, hot, zealous, glowing! Sometimes we get cooled off and become lukewarm (Rev. 3:16,19). God wants us to be HOT, to have a godly enthusiasm and excitement for the things of the Lord. As the hymn says, "May each soul be rekindled with fire from above!" Compare Titus 2:14--"zealous of good works" (having a burning zeal to do good). How is your spiritual temperature? Are you running a fever? Are you fervent? When it comes to enthusiasm for godly things, are you at the boiling point? In Acts 18:25 we learn of such a man! "**Serving the Lord**"--We are to be constantly serving the Lord as His love-slave. He is our blessed Master. God does not want lazy servants. He wants believers who are diligent and fervent.

Romans 12:12

As believers we are to be constantly rejoicing in the hope that we have. Hope refers to that glorious future expectancy which is guaranteed because God said it. As we look to the future we can do so with confident and rejoicing expectancy. The future is as bright as the promises of God. The coming of the Lord Jesus is a sure thing! Every child of God has a very bright future, and this ought to bring great rejoicing to our hearts. Romans chapter 8 has much to say about our future expectancy!.

"Patient in tribulation"--the word "patient" carries the idea of **staying under** the trials of life, persevering, bearing up under, staying with it, "hanging in there," not giving up but keep going on in spite of all the difficulties and obstacles and problems and pressures! In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 we learn that hope produces patience. It's because of hope that we can endure and continue on in the midst of tribulation and pressure. Hope looks beyond the present trial and lays hold of the promises of God. **"Continuing instant"**=adhering to, persisting in. The believer must give himself to prayer and be strong in prayer. Prayer demands effort and persistence. It is not easy to pray and it is not easy to stay with it (see the other usages of this verb in Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; Col. 4:2).

Romans 12:13

"Distributing"=sharing, communicating, taking an interest in, contributing. **"Necessity"**=needs. There are believers who have genuine needs which I am able to meet. Am I sensitive to the needs of other believers? Am I willing to give of myself, my time, my money, etc. to meet these needs in a Christ-honoring way? **"Given to hospitality"**--this is an interesting expression and it literally means pursuing or running after hospitality. It is the Greek word which is often translated "persecute". A persecutor is one who pursues and runs after someone seeking to do them harm. A good example of a man who pursued hospitality is Abraham in Genesis 18:1-6 (notice how he ran!). **"Hospitality"**=the love of strangers. On Christian hospitality, see 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7-8; 1 Timothy 5:10; Hebrews 13:2 (a reference to Genesis 18:1-6); 1 Peter 4:9 and 3 John 5-8.

Romans 12:14

"Bless"=to speak well of (the opposite of "curse" as we see even in this verse). **"Persecute"**--this is the same word we found in verse 13 (**"pursue** hospitality"). Here it is referring to those who chase after and pursue believers with a hostile intent to harm and to hurt. Paul is instructing us not to pronounce judgment upon such people. Don't retaliate (he will say more about this at the end of the chapter). Actually Paul is here repeating the teaching of Christ Himself (see Matthew 5:44). **"Curse"**--this is the natural reaction toward our enemies but it is not the Christian reaction. The last part of chapter 12 will tell us how we are to react and respond when people mistreat us!

Romans 12:15

We are fellow members of the same body. God has united us with each other in a wonderful way. "The members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor.12:25-26). We are to feel for one another, entering into their joys and into their sorrows. Since I am a member of the same body as you are, your joys are my joys and your tears are my tears. I am not independent, but rather I am connected with every other member of the body. I need them and they need me. *Note*: Sometimes it is more difficult to rejoice with a person than to weep with a person. This is because of pride, jealousy, envy, etc.

Romans 12:16

"Be of the same mind"=think the same thing, be in agreement, live in harmony, be harmonious. We must not be out of harmony with the body (think of the human body and what it would be like if one leg wanted to go north and the other leg wanted to go south or if one eye wanted to look to the left and the other to the right. Compare Philippians 4:2 and 2 Cor.13:11. Believers need to agree together, to cherish the same views, to be UNANIMOUS. There must be no discord or disagreement. "Who is in favor of glorifying God?" Everyone agrees

and says, "AMEN!" "Who believes that pleasing Christ is top priority?" Everyone is unanimous and says, "AMEN!" "Who wants to follow Christ and fight the good fight of faith?" Everyone steps forward and says, "I DO!" "Who hates sin and error?" Everyone answers, "We all do!" This is the kind of agreement that needs to exist among believers. We must not pursue different ends and aims. This does not mean that there can never be honest and peaceful disagreements about points of doctrines as we grow in the Lord and wrestle with God's truth. None of us understand God's truth as we ought, and none of us have everything correct. God does but we don't! The key is found in Philippians 2:5--the more we agree with Christ, the more we will agree with each other. When there is disagreement regarding truth, then one of the two parties (or both) do not agree with Christ (they are either willfully or ignorantly out of harmony with the God of truth and the truth of God on this particular issue). If we hold the same view as God does, then we will agree with each other.

"HIGH THINGS"--don't strive after things that are too high. This is a warning against prideful ambition (to seek high things such as honor and riches, position and power, to be aspiring). Do not aspire after high things (see Psalm 131:1). **"Men of low estate"**--Grammatically this can mean one of two things: 1) lowly men (masculine); 2) lowly things (neuter). **"Condescend"**=to be carried away with, be led along with. The masculine would mean this: Associate with humble folk, don't consider such people as beneath you (we have the example of Christ who had friends among the publicans and sinners and outcasts and poor, etc.). The neuter would mean this: Accommodate yourself to humble ways, yield or submit to lowly things, conditions, employments, in contrast to high things which were just mentioned.

"Wise in your own conceits"--this is a warning against being conceited (having a very high opinion of yourself). Don't be wise in your own estimation (in your own eyes--see Proverbs 3:7 and Isaiah 5:21).

Romans 12:17

"Evil for evil"=evil in return for evil. **"Recompense"**=to give back, thus to render, to reward, to pay back someone for the evil they have done (someone punches you in the nose and you give back the same treatment to him). This attitude is expressed in this way, "I'm going to pay you back for that! I'm going to get even! You're not going to get away with that! You're going to pay for this!" Instead of the golden rule we have the dirty rule: **DO UNTO OTHERS JUST AS THEY HAVE DONE UNTO YOU OR WORSE!** For other N.T. passages which teach the same subject see 1 Thessalonians 5:15 and 1 Peter 3:9. Don't give the person what he may deserve. How thankful we each need to be that God does not give us what we deserve (see Psalm 103:10; Psalm 130:3-4).

What about the Old Testament teaching of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Exodus 21:24) etc.? This means that the punishment should fit the crime, and this is a true and valid principle of justice. A person should get just what he deserves. See for example, Genesis 9:6 (life for life). Is it true that the O.T. teaches a doctrine of retaliation whereas the N.T. teaches a doctrine of non-retaliation? Proverbs 20:22 and Proverbs 25:21-22 are both from the Old Testament, and both teach non-retaliation. Also Romans 13:1-4 is from the New Testament and this passage clearly teaches that evil-doers should be punished, and that God does this through governments, etc. In Romans 12 Paul is not saying that evil men should not be punished. His main point, as we shall see, is that the believer should let God the Perfect Judge take care of wrong and injustices in His way and in His time (see v.19 for example).

"Provide"--this word is used in 1 Timothy 5:8 (providing for one's household). Here the word means "to take thought for, take into consideration." **"Honest"**=good, morally good and beautiful, noble, praiseworthy. This verse is a quote from Proverbs 3:4 in the LXX and compare 2 Corinthians 8:21. The NIV translates it this way: "be careful to do what is right and good in the sight of everybody." We have a testimony. People are watching and looking. They know how a Christian should act. They will watch and see whether or not we retaliate as the world does, whether or not we try to "get even." An important verse which sheds much light on Romans 12:17 is 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

Today we are living in a lawsuit infatuated society whose motto seems to be "SUE OR BE SUED!" The emphasis is on how much I can get out of the other person for my own personal benefit. This is the opposite of the

principles of love as set forth in this chapter. Love always asks, "How much **can I give** to this person even if it means personal loss and sacrifice?" In such a mixed up society, believers whose hearts are filled with the love of Christ should shine very brightly! Our job is not to use and abuse others for our own personal gain!

Romans 12:18

"**If possible**"--these words clearly imply that it is not always possible. "**As much as lieth in you**"=as far as it depends on you. Peace is a two way street. We must do our part to live peaceably, but we have no control over the other's conduct. I may have a snowball and the other person has one. I can choose not to throw mine at him but I can't control what he does with his. Paul's point is this: The disturbance to the peace should never be initiated by the Christian. The believer should never be the one to break the peace. "**Live peaceably**" means "be at peace, live at peace."

There are 4 places in the N.T. where the believer is told to PURSUE PEACE (run after it, persecute it!): Romans 14:19; 2 Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 12:14 and 1 Peter 3:11.

Romans 12:19

"**Avenge**"=get revenge (to exact satisfaction for a wrong by punishing the wrongdoer). Don't get your revenge! "**Give place unto (the) wrath**"--give the wrath of God an opportunity to work out its purpose. Step aside and leave the matter to God and leave the matter with God. Yield and hand the person over to God's wrath which will take care of it at the right time and in the right way. Compare Ephesians 4:27--do not give the devil a chance or opportunity to exert his influence, don't give him an opening. God wants an opportunity to take care of wrongs done to His children, and it is His right to do so. God is the avenger of wrath! God is much more angry at sin than we are! He is also much more long suffering than we are! God will straighten things out. The wicked will not get away with anything. I do not need to get even, but God will.

"**VENGEANCE (punishment) IS MINE!**" As the Hebrew and literal Greek says (see Deuteronomy 32:35 and Hebrews 10:30), "VENGEANCE BELONGS TO ME!" "**Repay**"=give back, return, repay with punishment or revenge. The liberals and modernists have often said something like this: "THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS A CRUEL, RUTHLESS, VENGEFUL GOD OF JUDGMENT AND WRATH, BUT THE GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS A LOVING, MERCIFUL HEAVENLY FATHER." But here in Romans 12 we are introduced to the GOD OF VENGEANCE! And in Psalm 103:13 we have God compared to a compassionate Father! See also Psalm 103:10 which implies that those who do **not** fear God will be dealt with after their sins and rewarded according to their iniquities! See also Psalm 103:17 which implies that the wrath of God is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that do not fear God. **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God** (and by the way, this verse is found in the N.T.--Hebrews 10:31).

Romans 12:20

Here we have love for our enemy set forth in practical terms (compare Matt. 5:44). See Proverbs 25:21,22. True love for one's enemy involves choosing to GIVE to that person what he needs in spite of how we feel toward that person. A person does not naturally feel like loving his enemy. He might feel like punching him in the nose or puncturing the tires of his car, etc., but he does not feel like feeding him and giving him a drink. We love our enemies because God has commanded us to (Matt. 5:44), not because we feel like doing it. If you wait until you feel like doing it, then it will never happen! See 2 Kings 6:20-23 for an example of how Elisha treated his enemies.

"**Coals of fire**"=burning coals, charcoal, burning embers. "heap"=pile up. In feeding and giving drink to your enemy you are piling up burning coals on his head! Obviously this is not to be understood literally. "When the plain sense makes good sense seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense", but here the plain, literal sense does not make good sense. However, to illustrate what this verse is saying, let's take this statement literally. Suppose you were at a picnic and someone intentionally throws a football at you from close range, hits you hard on the head with it and then throws dirt in your face and spits at you. You could take some red-hot burning charcoals and

while he is not looking pile them up on his head. Do you think he would like this? Of course not! That would be the worst kind of treatment you could give a person! What could be worse than that? That would be unbearable. That would really hurt! God is saying this: If you want to get back at your enemy, then do good to him! That would be unbearable treatment. That would be the most effective thing you could do. It would be killing people with kindness; avenging them with virtue, destroying them with deeds of love and persecuting them with peace. Consider Stephen. His enemies would probably HAVE preferred that he throw stones at them instead of praying for them! That must have been painful to them! Next time you are wronged, try giving your enemy the "love treatment" and trust God to use it to work in their hearts. [Note: Hendricksen says, "The coals of fire symbolize the burning pangs of shame and contrition resulting from the unexpected kindness received. The wronged person's magnanimous behavior, returning good for evil, has this effect"--*Romans 9-16*, p. 423. Albert Barnes says, "Burning coals heaped upon a man's head would be expressive of intense agony. So the apostle says that the *effect* of doing good to an enemy would be to produce pain. But the pain will result from shame, remorse of conscience, a conviction of the evil of his conduct, and an apprehension of divine displeasure that may lead to repentance"--*Barnes' Notes, Acts--Romans*, p. 283]

Romans 12:21

Here we have the passive and active forms of the same verbs. "**Be not overcome**"=passive; "**overcome**"=active. Don't let evil conquer you (have the victory over you), but go and conquer evil with good. Drown the evil in good. I know a dedicated believer, Paul McMillan, who was a fellow student with me at seminary. It was his desire to give his life to be a missionary to the very people who had ruthlessly murdered his father on the mission field many years earlier. Here is a beautiful example of overcoming evil with good: giving the gospel of Christ to the very ones who had murdered his father. Revenge found no place in this man's heart, but the love of Christ did. As it turned out, Paul was led of the Lord to another field of labor. It was not God's choice to send him back to the very place where his father had labored, but Paul was willing to go there or anywhere that the Lord would send him.

This concludes our study of Romans chapter 12. There is a connection between chapter 12 and chapter 13. We have learned that it is not the believer's job to punish evildoers. This is God's job. He is the avenger of wrath. Vengeance belongs to Him. He will repay in His way and in His time. Chapter 13 tells us that one of the ways that God punishes evildoers is through human government which He has ordained and established (compare Romans 13:4).

"... PROVE WHAT IS THAT GOOD, AND
ACCEPTABLE, AND PERFECT
WILL OF GOD" — ROM. 12:2



THE UNCONSULTED BOOK



THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ABSOLUTE ...THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS GOOD AND EVIL ...THERE IS NO SUCH...ZZZZZ

"ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL; CLING TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD."
- ROM. 12:9

JACK HAMM