

## Romans 12

Note: This is a major shift in this grand epistle of the New Testament Church. Paul here moves from systematic theology to pastoral/practical theology. Romans 12 through the end of the letter will not put what has been taught into practice.

The new people of God comprehends all nations. The new worship comprehends the whole life of the new man in a sense and in a depth in which the worship of an ancient Israel could not yet comprehend it. For the old worship was worship under the Law; “the giving of the law” and “the worship” of Israel belong together (9:4). The new worship is grounded in “the mercies of God.” In that phrase Paul sums up the creative and transforming power of the Gospel of God as he has been proclaiming it in the first 110 chapters of his letter. The worship of old Israel was regulated; the new worship is inspired, not imposed on man but created in man by the God who gives life to the dead. By the mercies of God the members of the new Israel have risen with Christ to walk in newness of life (6:4), they have been “discharged from the Law so as to “serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit” (7:6), they have been liberated from the “law of sin and death” by the “law of the Spirit of life” (8:2) and have become children of God led by the Spirit (8:14). (Franzmann, 216,217)

*I Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as **living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.*

**“sacrifices” – continuity with OT**

**“living” – discontinuity with NT**

***We see this same relationship with the early Christians gathering in the Temple in Acts 2.***

Whenever there’s a “therefore,” figure out what its there for.

Rear view mirror, looking at what is behind us, is motivation for moving forward. Greek “in view of” is διὰ, “by means of” or “through.” Here is the motivation and the power for what follows.

Why is this sacrifice “holy and pleasing to God”? Because He has made it that way. This sacrifice ends in life and not death, as the offering results in an ongoing service.

“Spiritual,” λογικην, also means “reasonable.” It is a willing service and one that takes place in connection with Christ, with the guidance of the Spirit.

**Becker:** *God wants a Christian to view his whole life as one long worship service. We begin our service “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” This happens when we are baptized, when we renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways, as we say in the “Order of Holy Baptism.” So your lifetime service starts like every worship service, in the name of the Triune God. Then it goes right through to the time when you sing your own Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29).*

*2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

What is the pattern of this world?

συσχηματίζεσθε verb imper pres mid or pass 2nd per pl

[UBS] συσχηματίζομαι be conformed to, be shaped by, live after the pattern of

Colossians 2:8 *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles [elementary things, letters of the alphabet (ABC’s)] of this world rather than on Christ.”*

NASB Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world... KJV and NKJV also have the same.*

What is our pattern for living, then? *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy...*

Romans 3:20-22 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

Romans 1:17-19 *For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.*

1 Thessalonians 2:13 *And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

Augustine: *Those who are moved...to turn again to the Lord out of that state of deformity wherein worldly desires conformed then to this world must receive from the Lord their reformation.*

**Luther:** *For whenever God gives us a new degree of grace, He gives in such a way that it conflicts with all our thinking and understanding. Thus he who then will not yield or change his thinking or wait, but repels God's grace and is impatient, never acquires this grace. Therefore the transformation of our mind is the most useful knowledge that believers in Christ can possess. And the preservation of one's own mind is the most harmful resistance to the Holy Spirit. (LW 25)*

**Luther:** *Hence we must note that these terms "good," "acceptable," and "perfect" are not used in a formal way with respect to the will of God, but in relation to their object. For this does not become the will of God through our proving of it, but rather it is recognized to be such; thus it becomes "good" to us, that is, it is acknowledged as being good, "acceptable" because it becomes most pleasing to us, and "perfect" because it makes all things perfect, that is, it becomes "good, acceptable, and perfect" in our eyes. And thus these are words which are overflowing with comfort. For we ought to have the greatest courage at the very time when evils befall us, for that is where God shows His good will; we should be most pleased at the time when the most unpleasant things happen, for then it is certain that the acceptable will of God is at work, that is, the will which is most pleasing to us; and finally we should be most confident at the time when hopelessness comes over us and the greatest sense of loss, for that is the time when the perfect will of God which makes all things perfect and completely salutary is hardest at work. (ibid.)*

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3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.* From here through the middle of ch. 15, Paul will be discussing relationships. Now he discusses relationships within the church.

"All men are soloists by nature and inclination; they must learn the art of playing in God's orchestra" (Franzmann 221). "Measure of faith" is speaking of faith in action. It is our understanding, gifts, and talents, all of which is from God, "*who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose*" (Philippians 2:13).

Basil: *Paul clearly allots to each one the form of ministry which is right for him and forbids him to encroach on another's territory when he says this.*

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4 *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,* Have any of you ever coached kids sports. I coached football for three years, grades 2-3 and 3-5. If you want to have a mob of hands raised, ask who wants to play quarterback. This is not to be the case with the church. We look to our "measure of faith" to see where we fit in the Body of Christ. There is to be no pride of place, selfish ambition, or scheming. Our gifts are not our own. They are God's and He has given them to us so that we may serve in the places He would have us serve.

Chrysostom: *Paul says not that one person received more and another less of God's gifts but only that they are different. We all have different functions, but the body is one and the same.*

"The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence."

Sometimes we don't always see the gifts/fruits which others (outsiders even) do. Brenner's MLS story.

5 *so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

We tend to take the word "member" in a worldly sense. It is attached to ideas of status, value, and privilege. Not so with Paul. We are members in that we are parts of one Body, working, that is, serving each other within the scope of our callings and abilities. We are members of the Body of Christ, who washed feet and bowed His head in service. Remove any part/member of a body and it ceases being whole. Each part, no matter how ignominious, completes the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:16 *From him the **whole** body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

Clement of Rome: *Why do we divide and tear to pieces the members of Christ and raise up strife against our own body, and why have we reached such a height of madness as to forget that **we are members of one another.***

Paul is setting the stage for the gifts to follow. One must not view them with covetousness, with a desire to find the gift he or she has and exult in it in and of itself, or to gain it for one's own benefit.

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The following verses do not each present formal offices within the Church, but functions.

6 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

[UBS] προφητεία, ας f preaching the message of God, the gift of preaching the message of God; an inspired message or utterance; intelligible preaching, an intelligible message (as opposed to speaking in tongues 1 Cor 14.6, 22)

Didore: *Prophecy means primarily the explanation of things which are unclear, whether the future or the past, whether present or hidden. Prophecy may also refer to the interpretation of a prophets words.*

1 Corinthians 14:3 *But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.*

1 Corinthians 14:25 *But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all,*

*25 and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"*

κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως

He is to use it in proportion to his understanding and, as an alternate reading says, in agreement with the faith (*fides quae*).

Pseudo-Constantius: *Not according to the faith which is from us but according to the faith which has been given and granted to each person from God.*

Luther: *At this point, and from here to the end of the epistle, he teaches how we should act toward our neighbor and explains at length this command to love our neighbor. But it is remarkable how such a clear and important teaching of such a great apostle, indeed of the Holy Spirit Himself, receives no attention. We are busy with I don't know what kind of trifles in building churches, in increasing the wealth of the church, in piling up money, in multiplying ornamentation and gold and silver vessels, in installing organs, and in other forms of visible display. And the sum total of our piety consists of this; we are not at all concerned about the things the apostle here enjoins, to say nothing of the monstrous display of pride, ostentation, avarice, luxury, and ambition which are found in these activities. (ibid.)*

7 *If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;*

Notice "service" comes second on the list, but from a worldly perspective, is the one everyone would want least. See the Corinthian congregation for proof.

Teaching probably was instruction in the Scriptures (the OT at that time). This was a crucial ministry in the NT Church, as its identity was rooted in the OT Scriptures. Paul presupposes their knowledge of these writings throughout this epistle. The are the writings which Timothy would have known from infancy (2 Timothy 3:15).

8 *if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

The teacher imparts the knowledge. The exhorter encourages its application and practice.

"God may have withheld from another the gift of instructive or fervent speech and have given him instead a well-lined purse" (Franzmann 223).

In showing mercy, Christ's mercy is reflected through us to "little christs." This mercy springs from His mercy and essentially is His mercy worked through our hands.

Matthew 25:40 *"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"*

All work done by the grace of God, out of love for God, in the service of God is done cheerfully. Gospel service is cheerful and free. Law service is begrudging and coerced. Notice the difference.

Luther: *"Ministers" are all those who serve in ecclesiastical offices, such as the priest, the deacon, the subdeacon, and all who have to do with sacred rites except the administration of the Word of God, and also those who assist a teacher, as the apostle often speaks of his helpers. (ibid.)*

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The relational scope now expands to include even enemies.

*9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

When you love one thing, you hate its opposite. All the previous gifts were examples of the expression of this love.

"Even within the church there is, tragically enough, much that passes for love and yet is but a sorry substitute for genuine love. It is often sentimental, weak, and therefore basically selfish; it may make the lover "feel good all over," but it does not really help those to whom love is shown. The mark of genuine love is therefore an abhorrence of evil coupled with a holding-fast to the good. 'Love does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right (1 Corinthians 13:6)" (Franzmann 224).

Quickly apply this to church fellowship.

Chrysostom: *If you have love, you will not notice the loss of money, the labor of your body, the toil of your words, your trouble or your ministering, but you will bear everything courageously.*

*10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

προηγούμενοι verb part (imper) pres mid or pass dep nom masc 2nd per pl

[UBS] προηγέομαι **outdo**, lead the way ( τιμῆ ἀλλήλους π. perhaps be eager to show respect to one another Ro 12.10)

Outdo one another in love. Wow. This does not mean tearing yourself down or some sort of false humility, but a genuine concern for our brothers and sister that supersedes our concern for ourselves. This love is always "one-upped" as that love is reciprocated within the Body.

*11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

Our zeal must flow from Spirit-wrought love and thankfulness.

Romans 10:2 *For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.*

This love is not some detached feeling, but a concern, raised by the Spirit, which leaps into action as a necessary consequence of its existence in the believers heart.

Chrysostom: *Love by itself is not enough; there must be zeal as well. For zeal also comes out of loving and gives it warmth, so that the once confirms the other. For there are many who have love in their mind but who do not stretch out their hand. This is why Paul calls on every means he knows to build up love.*

*12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

Love and hope connected: 1 Cor. 13:7; Col. 1:4-5; Philippians 4:5; Romans 13:10-11.

How are we "constant in prayer"?

*13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

*14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

Matthew 5:43-48 *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

This ability to love is inseparably joined to our sure and certain hope for things to come. This perfect, selfless love is a reflection of the perfect, selfless Love who prayed for those crucifying and mocking Him.

*15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*  
Do not view another's downfall as entertainment or an opportunity for self advancement.

*16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*  
NKJV" Be of the same mind toward one another. This is a more literal rendering. The NASB concurs. "Common tribulation and the prospect of a common martyrdom do not of themselves insure unanimity and humility in the troubled church...The church's strength is in her hope" (Franzmann 227,228).  
No church this side of the Church Triumphant is ever above division and stratification. This warning is apt and timely still today.  
Luther: *This is directed against opinionated, hardheaded, stiff-necked people, whom in popular language we call blockheads but whom Scripture describes as "stiff-necked" and "unbelieving." We all are strongly inclined to this fault with a strange propensity, and most rare is the man who does not possess it.* (ibid.)  
Ambrosiaster: *To be haughty is pride, which is how the devil fell.*

*17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*  
"If haughtiness and conceit are overcome, the desire for vengeance is cut off at the root" (Franzmann 228).  
Chrysostom: *Paul means this: As far as possible, play your part and give nobody, either Jew or Gentile, any cause for fighting. But if you see the faith suffering anywhere, do not put harmony above truth. Make a noble stand, even to the point of death. And even then, do not be at war in your soul or of adverse temper, but concentrate on the things themselves.*

*18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*  
This peace is "if possible." It is not to be achieved to the detriment of the truth. This peace is a reflection of the peace cultivated between an angry God and wretched sinners. It is a living of the love Christ showed in His ministry. Think in terms of the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer.

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*19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

A Christian taking revenge ought to be an oxymoron as it is a blasphemous denial of how God has dealt with him. His Lord has fixed the time of grace for each man, woman, and child, and he has no right to usurp that control. The Church bears the Word, not the sword.

*20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

"The only pangs which the Christian can bring upon his enemy are the salutary pangs of contrition; these are the "fiery coals" heaped on his enemy's head" (Franzmann 229).

This is really no vengeance at all, but the preachment of the Gospel through actions. In our reflection of Christ's selfless love, our enemies are shown what they lack, are crushed by the law, and become ready themselves to be recipients of that selfless love from Above through faith.

*21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*  
Christ did not defeat Satan by dancing with Him, but by dying. The same is true for us. When we jump into Satan's mud pit, we get dirty, not even.