

Book of Romans



Chapter 12

Theme: Relationship to God; relationship to gifts of the Spirit; relationship to other believers; relationship to unbelievers

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Romans Chapter 12

Missler: General Background

Paul divided several of his letters into two major sections, a doctrinal portion and a practical one. (In both Eph. and Col. The doctrinal and the practical sections are about equal in length.)

Here he interjected a dispensational segment, Chapters 9-11, that has both a doctrinal and prophetic aspect.

Section 1: Doctrinal - Sin and Salvation (Chapters 1 - 8)

Section 2: Dispensational - Israel Past, Present, and Future Chapters 9-11)

Section 3: Practical Applications - The “So What?” Section (Chapters 12 - 16)¹

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Romans chapter 12 is one of those that has a bit more depth to it than a casual read of it might suggest. So, we’re going to get a little technical today to add some background to what it is we will read.

One of the unsatisfactory, even risky, results of divesting from the Apostle Paul his Jewishness and his high level of Jewish religious education at the elite rabbinical Academy of Gamaliel is that when we read his words we lose not just the all-important context but the tone and the fabric of his underlying self. That is, who he is, where he came from, and what his deeply ingrained worldview is. Within institutional Christianity it is implied (at times outright stated) that Paul is essentially a Jew who, because of Christ, now identifies more as a gentile; and that when we read his epistles he is making all this up as he goes. That is, he is essentially inventing Christianity and establishing Church doctrine on the fly in the same way Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone and designed the first telephone network starting with a blank sheet of paper. In other words, something new was created where it had never before existed, not even in concept. Just as Bell created the manual of telephony, so did Paul create the manual of Christianity.

While I’ve endeavored at several points to show you how that is not at all the case, I’m going to show you in yet another way why this erroneous platform for understanding Paul needs to be replaced with a reality that ought to have been self-evident even before something near hard proof has emerged. The main source I’ll use comes from the Essene community of Jews who, about 150 years before Christ, separated themselves from regular Jewish society primarily because they felt that the Priesthood and the institutional Temple system had become completely corrupt and wicked. Since they saw the Torah ordained Temple and Priesthood as the molten core of worship of the God of Israel, they went off to prepare themselves as a new order of priests that would eventually replace the corrupt priesthood as it currently existed and restore the Temple and Priesthood to its God intended purity. My effort to help to restore Paul more closely to his actual self will also involve the great series of documents that the Essenes wrote collectively called the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Most Christians think of the Dead Sea Scrolls as but the Bible copied and written down in Hebrew by this strange Dead Sea sect around 100 B.C. And the great news about finding this

¹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

treasure trove of documents in the mid 1940's is that it has proved just how faithfully the Old Testament has been preserved and handed down over the centuries, so we can trust what we have in our Bibles today. But in fact, the Dead Sea Scrolls is much more than only the copied books of the Old Testament; it also contains the theology, the philosophy, and the community rules for the Essenes that were recorded quite meticulously. After being discovered in some caves near the Dead Sea in Israel, the Scrolls were controlled for decades by a very small group of scholars and only fairly recently released for public consumption.

As researchers around the world have poured over these ancient documents it has become clear that our modern views of the New Testament, and therefore of the writers who wrote the various books, were going to be effected....more so in some cases, less so in others. To be clear: some of these scrolls were written as much as 2 centuries before the gospels and letters of the New Testament were first penned, and well more than 3 centuries before those gospels and letters were collected and turned into the New Testament. So, of course, no remnant of any New Testament document was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls; they represent an earlier time. Nevertheless, because of what was found, Paul and his epistles especially were going to have to be rethought not because of errors in the biblical manuscripts, but because of errors in interpreting Paul's meaning and in understanding his perspective and even the sources of some of his thoughts. However, the response of the many mainstream Christian denominations around the world, whether of Western Christianity, Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, Slavic, Coptic, or any other, has been muted to the say the least. Why? Probably because while the scholars and academics that represent these denominations are gleefully excited over the new information that these documents are giving to them, and they are open to its significance, for the various Church governments it feels more like an unwelcome threat to the carefully guarded status quo.

Is this sense of threat because the content of the Dead Sea Scrolls in any way contests or calls to question our faith in Yeshua of Nazareth as Messiah? No. Does it in any way contest or calls to question the Holy Scriptures as reliable? No. What the Dead Sea Scrolls does contest and call to question are the beliefs and motives and even the theology of Judaism in that era, and where the ideas that especially Paul presents in his many letters originally came from. Were those ideas entirely fresh from his own mind? Or were they from divine inspiration by the risen Yeshua? Or where, exactly, did they come from? Ideas that to the gentile early Church Fathers seemed so "new" and innovative that it caused the Church for the past 1800 years to see less and less use for the Old Testament. As we'll soon find out, many of those supposed new and original thoughts of Paul were already in existence and being taught and practiced in the Essene community, and known in the broader Jewish community, more than 100 years before Yeshua, and 150 years before Paul; often using the exact same terminology that Paul is found using to explain some of his theology (in fact, even Yeshua employed some of those Essenes' terms). Coincidence? Hardly. So why does Church government, in general, seem so disinterested in what these documents reveal? Because it puts a different face on the meaning of Paul's words at times, and it more completely describes what the true nature of Jewishness and Judaism at that time looked like, and it reinforces the unmistakable Jewish nature and source of the New Testament concepts and information.²

² <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

McGee: This is the beginning of the final division in the Book of Romans. As you recall, the first eight chapters were doctrinal; the next three chapters were dispensational; now the emphasis in this last section is duty. We come now to the practical application of the theological arguments that Paul has placed before us. Here the gospel walks in shoe leather -- and that is where I like it to walk.

In the first part of Romans the reader saw displayed the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith. But in this last section, the feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. We are to stand in the battle; we are to walk in our life; we are to run in the race.

Someone may suggest that we have already studied the practical application in the section on sanctification. There the gospel walked in shoe leather, it is true, but there is a sharp distinction in these two sections. Under "sanctification" we were dealing with Christian character; in this section we are dealing with Christian conduct. There it was the inner man; here it is the outward man. There it was the condition of the Christian; here it is the consecration of the Christian. There it was who the Christian is; here it is what he does. We have seen the privileges of grace; we now consider the precepts of grace. Enunciation of the way of life must be followed by evidences of life. Announcement of justification by faith must be augmented by activity of life. There is something else we should note as we proceed into this last section. The conduct of the Christian must be expressed in this world by his relationship to those with whom he comes in contact, and these relationships must be regulated in some way. It is so easy to put down rules of conduct, but Paul is not doing that. He has delivered us from the Mosaic Law, and he did not deliver us in order to put us under another legal system. There are a lot of Christians who call themselves separated Christians because they don't do this, they don't do that, and they don't do about fifteen other things. I wish they would do something, by the way. I have found that those folk have gossipy tongues -- you had better watch them. They ought to recognize that the child of God is not given rules and regulations. However, Paul puts down great principles that are to guide the believer. The Holy Spirit is giving the believer a road map of life, showing the curves but not the speed limit. He identifies the motels and eating places which he recommends without commanding the believer to stop at any certain one. Detours are clearly marked, and there is a warning to avoid them. The city of Vanity Fair is named, and the routes of exit are clearly marked. The believer is told to leave without being given the exact route by which to leave -- there are several routes.

We are coming down the mountain top of Romans 8 -- Romans 11; we leave the pinnacle of Romans 11:33-36, and we now plunge down to the plane of duty -- and it is plain duty. This is where we all live and move and have our being.³

BKC: God's Righteousness Revealed in Transformed Living (12:1-15:13)

Paul divided several of his letters into two major sections, a doctrinal portion and a practical one. He followed that pattern in this epistle too, though the doctrinal part is more than twice as long as the practical. (In both Eph. and Col. the doctrinal and the practical sections are about equal in length.)⁴

³ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

Missler: “Therefore...” as a response to all the foregoing.

“Mercies” = *oiktirmos* rendered “compassion” in 2Cor. 1:3; Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12, and “mercy” in Heb. 10:28). God’s compassion has been described in detail in the first 11 chapters of Romans.

“Present” = “yield” (6:13, 16, 19).

“your bodies” : A Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). (7X in NT. Cf. Temple model)

“Living sacrifice” (in contrast to the OT sacrifices). Christians are believer-priests, identified with the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 7:23-28; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6). A believer’s offering of his total life as a sacrifice to God is therefore sacred service.

Such an offering represents a complete change in lifestyle, involving both a negative and a positive aspect: [Cf. Gen 2:24: Leaving as well as cleaving...]⁵

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Chapters 1 – 11 of Romans accomplished several things. First, they had Paul attempting to assert his authority over the believing congregation in Rome as the Christ-chosen Apostle to the Gentiles.

He is doing this long-distance; a first so far as we know since he had never been to Rome so he had no hand in organizing the congregation or teaching it his doctrine. Second, in keeping with the protocol of his several other letters to various congregations, he is writing to the Romans about matters that he perceives directly concern them. He must have heard some things about the Rome congregation that he felt needed his attention and so he wrote to them. The rather standard Christian position is that in Romans Paul is creating a brand new Christian systematic theology and presenting it to the Roman Believers almost like a trial run. I don’t buy this and thankfully many modern NT scholars don’t either. Third, Paul has been setting the foundation and purpose for God’s inclusion of gentiles into what was otherwise but a rather new branch of Judaism; a branch that worshiped Yeshua as Lord and Savior. Paul of course saw this gentile inclusion as membership into the Kingdom of God and into the body of the elect that up to now had consisted solely of Jews.

However, chapter 12 begins a new direction in Paul’s letter. To use more familiar Church language, Paul was moving from theory to application. But from the more apropos Jewish perspective (and especially from that of a trained Rabbi like Paul), Paul was going to draw out some Halakhot (religious rulings) that the Jewish and gentile Believers of Rome should follow based on what Paul had taught them in the 11 previous chapters. This new focus of chapter 12 will continue until about midway through Romans chapter 15.

Verse 1: when Paul says he exhorts, or urges, the Romans to do a certain thing, it is Paul exercising his authority as an Apostle. His intent would have been understood by the letter recipients. Whether some or all of the Believers of Rome would have accepted the authority he claimed is another matter. And from what we find in the Book of Acts, when a few years later he found himself in Rome as a prisoner in chains, the implication is that not much of the Roman congregation had accepted Paul’s authority over them. The challenging issue of verse 1 is what Paul means when he speaks about the need for the Roman Believers to offer themselves up to

⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

God as a sacrifice: living and set apart for the Lord. But even more, what does he mean when he continues that being a sacrifice is the logical Temple worship for these Roman Believers.

The CJB is the only one that states it quite that way. More typical is like we see it in the KJV.

KJV Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Or, as in the NAS version: NAS Romans 12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. However, in the original Greek, neither the term spiritual nor worship is actually there.

In fact, including the word “spiritual” practically turns the impact of this portion of the verse on its head. The key Greek word near the end of this sentence is *logikos*. As you might already be guessing it is where we get the English word logic. And indeed *logikos* means reason or logic. However, this logic pertains to the following Greek word *latreia*, which means a service that is about something religious. So this difficult phrase means something like, “The logical service of worship”. Here, I believe, is the point: Paul is saying that by making ourselves like a sacrifice to God, living and holy, that this is the intelligent, logical, reason-based response to becoming a Believer. Hear that? It is not about a feeling. Offering ourselves up to God is not an ecstatic response; it is not an emotional response; and it should not be a knee-jerk reaction. Rather, knowing what we now know about Yeshua and redemption means that it is the perfectly logical thing for any thinking Believer to do to offer ourselves up to God as a sacrifice. Our response to our salvation needs to begin with our mind. Saying it in the negative would be: NOT becoming a sacrifice, living and holy to God, would defy any kind of normal, intelligent human response to receiving such a great gift.

However slicing that onion, a bit thinner, what does Paul mean by the phrase: “a sacrifice, living and holy”? Some versions have rearranged the word order to “a living and holy sacrifice”. In other words, the sacrifice (us) remains alive and gains holiness. That would be fine except that it ignores how the sacrificial system worked. Clearly the way the CJB says it is much closer to what Paul had in mind because the logical “service” refers to the religious services that take place at the Temple just as the sacrifice also refers to actions that take place ONLY at the Temple. We must take this in its natural, entirely Jewish context. Where else than the Temple would a Jew offer religious service? What else to a Jew is a sacrifice except a living creature that is given to God as an offering of atonement, upon the Holy Altar, at the Holy Temple? This is not some generalized, universal, gentile-oriented statement. Paul is making use of metaphor just as he regularly does (he does not literally mean for a Believer to go to the Temple and throw himself on the altar as a human sacrifice); but the setting and the motif of Paul’s metaphor is of course the Jerusalem Temple and the sacrificial Laws of Moses.

So, what of the underlying concept of a living and holy sacrifice? First, this is nothing new; all Temple sacrifices are to be presented to God living and holy. Dead animals are not presented to God. They are given to Him first as alive, and only shortly before being burned up on the Altar are they killed. From the moment they are given by the worshipper; the moment they are selected out from the flock or herd for sacrifice, they become set apart as God’s holy property. Let me set something before you that at first might not seem so apparent. Paul regularly uses the Temple system as the underlying subject of his metaphors. But he’s not the only NT writer to do this; Peter did as well.

CJB 1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, the King's *cohanim*, a holy nation, a people for

God to possess! Why? In order for you to declare the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Or as you are more used to hearing it:

NAS 1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

A royal priesthood; in numerous places in the New Testament Believers are called priests. But for the most part, this is metaphor since biblically priests can only be Levites. But what mental image is this metaphor meant to conjure up? It is the image of Temple service since the underlying subject of the metaphor is the Holy Temple and its ritual services that must be performed by Levitical priests. You can't get much more Jewish than that!

Indeed, Paul spent a great deal of time speaking about Believers dying to ourselves in earlier chapters of Romans. And that like Christ, we are to voluntarily die (in our case die to our sin and to our former ways). Thus, the sacrificial altar at the Holy Temple is the backdrop for Paul's concept as the place where Believers are to die to ourselves, but only after presenting ourselves to God holy and living, just as with any sacrifice. So, Believers, this is not a new concept that Paul is suggesting. And even more, the Essenes thought the same way 1 ½ centuries before Paul. Here is an excerpt from Dead Sea Scroll 1QS 5. I'm only going to partially quote it for time's sake.

And this is the rule for the members of the Community, for those who volunteer to be converted from all evil and to cling to all His commands according to His will; to separate themselves from the congregation of perverse men, to become a community in The Law.....The shall practice truth....humility and righteousness and justice and loving charity.....But in the Community they shall circumcise the foreskin of the evil inclination and of disobedience in order to lay a foundation of truth for Israel, for the community of the everlasting covenant; that they may atone for all who are volunteers for the holiness of Aaron.....

So, we see the Essenes use the Temple motif as metaphor, and when they speak of atoning it is the same as when Paul speaks of being a sacrifice, living and holy, because the purpose of an animal sacrifice is atonement. Temple service is what righteous men do, logically. And yet, we are confronted with this irony that both the Essenes and Paul noted: the logical rational thing for a man made righteous by trust in God is his SPIRITUAL worship of God. Today, as it has been since the European Enlightenment of the early 18th century, logic and spirit are seen as mutually exclusive concepts; they can't be spoken of in the same sentence. In fact, logic and reason replace spirit and inspiration. To be spiritual is not logical, it is thought, and vice versa. This is the basis of secular humanism.⁶

McGee: In other words: Therefore, I beg of you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you yield your bodies -- your total personalities -- a living sacrifice, set apart for God, well-pleasing to God, which is your rational or spiritual service.

Notice that the "therefore" ties it into everything that has come before it. Although it has immediate connection with that which has just preceded it, I am of the opinion that Paul is gathering up the whole epistle when he says, "Therefore."

"I beg of you" is the language of grace, not law. There is no thunder here from Mount Sinai. Moses commanded; Paul exhorts. Could Paul have commanded? Well, he told Philemon that he could have given him a command, but he didn't. Paul doesn't command; he says, "I beg of you."

⁶ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

"By the mercies of God" -- the plural is a Hebraism, denoting an abundance of mercy. God is rich in mercy; God has plenty of it, my friend. He has had to use a lot of it for me, but He still has plenty of it for you. "Mercy" means compassion, pity, and the tenderness of God. His compassions never fail.

We are called upon to "present" -- to yield. This is the same word we had, you recall, back in chapter 6. Although some expositors suggest that there it refers to the mind while here it refers to the will, I think it is a false distinction. The appeal in both instances is to the will. In the sixth chapter, the way of Christian character is to yield to Him. Here yielding is the way to Christian consecration and conduct.

He says to yield "your bodies," your total personalities. The body is the instrument through which we express ourselves. The mind, the affections, the will, and the Holy Spirit can use the body.

Vincent has assembled the following Scriptures which reveal this wide latitude. We are told to glorify God in our bodies. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Cor. 6:20). "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Phil. 1:20). "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2Cor. 4:10).

By an act of the will we place our total personalities at the disposal of God. This is our "reasonable service," our rational service, and it is well-pleasing to God.⁷

BKC: 1-2. The start of this practical section is indicated by Paul's exhortation I urge (the first word of v. 1 in the Gr. text). Therefore, also shows a transition (cf. "therefore" in 3:20; 5:1; 8:1). The basis of Paul's exhortation is God's mercy (*oiktirmōn*, rendered "compassion" in 2 Cor. 1:3; Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12, and "mercy" in Heb. 10:28). God's compassion has been described in detail in the first 11 chapters of Romans. The content of Paul's urging is to offer your bodies (cf. Rom. 6:13) as living sacrifices. A Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In the kjv "offer" is translated "present" (Rom. 12:1) and "yield" (6:13, 16, 19). The word "bodies," mindful of the Old Testament sacrifices, represents the totality of one's life and activities, of which his body is the vehicle of expression. In contrast with Old Testament sacrifices this is a "living" sacrifice. Such an offering is holy (set apart) and pleasing (cf. "pleasing" in 12:2) to God. Furthermore, it is spiritual (*logikēn*; cf. 1 Peter 2:2) worship (*latreian*.) *Latreian* refers to any ministry performed for God, such as that of the priests and the Levites. Christians are believer-priests, identified with the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 7:23-28; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6). A believer's offering of his total life as a sacrifice to God is therefore sacred service. In the light of Paul's closely reasoned and finely argued exposition of the mercies of God (Rom. 1-11), such an offering is obviously a desirable response for believers.

Paul then stated general implications of a believer's offering his life to God as a sacrifice. Such an offering represents a complete change in lifestyle, involving both a negative and a positive aspect. First, Paul commanded, Do not conform (lit., "Do not be conformed"; this Gr. word occurs elsewhere in the NT only in 1 Peter 1:14) any longer to the pattern of this world (*aiōni*, "Age"). Living according to the lifestyle of "the present evil Age" (Gal. 1:4; cf. Eph. 1:21) must now be put aside. Then Paul commanded, But be transformed (pres. passive imper., "keep on being transformed") by the renewing of your mind. The Greek verb translated

⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

"transformed" (*metamorphousthe*) is seen in the English word "metamorphosis," a total change from inside out (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). The key to this change is the "mind" (noos), the control center of one's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions (cf. Eph. 4:22-23). As one's mind keeps on being made new by the spiritual input of God's Word, prayer, and Christian fellowship, his lifestyle keeps on being transformed.

Paul added, Then you will be able to test and approve (dokimazein, "prove by testing" [1 Peter 1:7, "proved genuine"], i.e., ascertain) what God's will is—His good, pleasing (cf. Rom. 12:1), and perfect will. These three qualities are not attributes of God's will as the niv and some other translations imply. Rather, Paul said that God's will itself is what is good, well-pleasing (to Him), and perfect. "Good," for example, is not an adjective (God's "good" will) but a noun (God's will is what is good—good, i.e., for each believer).

As a Christian is transformed in his mind and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God's will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God's will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.⁸

Guzik: I beseech you: This reminds us that Paul appeals to our will. God calls us to make a choice about the way that we live for Him.

Therefore brethren: It is Paul's pattern to begin a letter with a strong doctrinal section and follow with exhortations to Christian living. Paul begs Christians to live a certain way in light of what God did for them.

“When he uses this pattern, Paul is saying that the Christian life is dependent on the great Christian doctrines.” (Morris)

By the mercies of God reminds us that we do this because of the mercy shown to us by God (described well in Romans 1-11), and that we are only able to offer ourselves to God as He works His mercy in us. God commanded us to do this, and He makes it possible for us to do it.

“Whereas the heathen are prone to sacrifice in order to obtain mercy, biblical faith teaches that the divine mercy provides the basis of sacrifice as the fitting response.” (Harrison)

Think of all the mercies of God Paul has explained to us thus far:

- Justification from the guilt and penalty of sin
- Adoption in Jesus and identification with Christ
- Placed under grace, not law
- Giving the Holy Spirit to live within
- Promise of help in all affliction
- Assurance of a standing in God's election
- Confidence of coming glory
- Confidence of no separation from the love of God
- Confidence in God's continued faithfulness

In light of all this mercy – past, present, and future – Paul begs us to present your bodies a living sacrifice. “We must believe that these Divine mercies have persuasive powers over our wills.” (Newell)

Present your bodies: Connected with the idea of a living sacrifice, this calls to mind priestly service. Spiritually speaking, our bodies are brought to God's altar.

It is best to see the body here as a reference to our entire being. Whatever we say about our spirit, soul, flesh, and mind, we know that they each live in our bodies. When we give the body

⁸ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

to God, the soul and spirit go with it. Present your bodies means that God wants you, not just your work. You may do all kinds of work for God, but never give Him yourself.

The previous appeal to the will (I beseech you) means that the will is to be the master over the body. The thinking of our age says that our body must tell the will what to do; but the Bible says that our will must bring the body as a living sacrifice to God. The body is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. Keeping it at God's altar as a living sacrifice keeps the body where it should be.

An ancient Greek never thought of presenting his body to God. They thought the body was so unspiritual that God didn't care about it. Paul shows here that God is concerned about our bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:20 reminds us that God bought our bodies with a price.

A living sacrifice: First century people, both Jews and pagans, knew firsthand what sacrifice was all about. To beg that they make themselves a living sacrifice was a striking image.

- The sacrifice is living because it is brought alive to the altar
- The sacrifice is living because it stays alive at the altar; it is ongoing

Holy, acceptable to God: When we offer our body, God intends it to be a holy and acceptable sacrifice. The standard for sacrifices made to God under the New Covenant are not any less than the standard under the Old Covenant.

In the Old Testament, every sacrifice had to be holy and acceptable to God

- He shall bring a male without blemish (Leviticus 1:10)
- But if there is a defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 15:21)

The idea of a sweet aroma to the Lord is almost always linked to the idea of an offering made by fire. There is a "burning" in this matter of a living sacrifice. It also shows that Paul has in mind the burnt offering, in which the entire sacrifice was given to the Lord. In some sacrifices, the one offering the sacrifice and the priest shared in some of the meal, but never in the burnt offering.

The holiness we bring to the altar is a decision for holiness and yielding to the work of holiness in our life. As we present our bodies a living sacrifice, God makes our life holy by burning away impurities.

Reasonable service: The ancient Greek word for reasonable (*logikos*) can also be translated "of the word" (as it is in 1 Peter 2:2). Reasonable service is a life of worship according to God's Word.

The sacrifice of an animal was reasonable service, but only for the one bringing the sacrifice – not for the sacrifice itself. Under the New Covenant we have far greater mercies, so it is reasonable to offer a far greater sacrifice.⁹

ESV: 1–2 Paradigm for Exhortations: Total Dedication to God. These verses summarize the response to God's grace and serve as the introduction for all of 12:1-15:13. They encapsulate what it means to live in a way that pleases God.

12:1 Therefore points back to the entire argument from 1:18-11:36. mercies of God. Christians are to give themselves entirely to God because of his saving grace, as shown in 3:21-11:36. Sacrificial language from the OT is used to denote the new life of Christians, and this means that the word bodies here refers to Christians as whole persons, for both body and soul belong to God. They are a living sacrifice, meaning that they are alive from the dead since they enjoy new life with Christ (6:4). "Living" also means that they will not be put to death as OT animal

⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

sacrifices were (see notes on sacrifices in Leviticus 1-7), for Christ has fulfilled what was predicted by those sacrifices. Whereas OT worship focused on offering animal sacrifices in the temple, Paul says that spiritual worship in a broad sense now includes offering one's whole life to God (cf. Heb. 13:15–16). Elsewhere, however, the NT can also use the word “worship” in a narrower sense, to speak of specific acts of adoration and praise (Matt. 2:2; John 4:20; Acts 13:2; 1 Cor. 14:25; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 11:1).¹⁰

FCSBN: Living sacrifice. Paul returns to his earlier theme that in light of their freedom in Christ, Gentile Christians should not live like pagans but should live holy lives, as if their bodies were a sacrificially pure offering to God. The Dead Sea Scrolls community similarly believed that their holy way of life was a kind of substitution for the sacrifices in the temple—sacrifices they believed to be corrupt. In the early church document *A Plea for the Christians*, Athenagoras argued that Christians should not participate in pagan sacrifices but “present a bloodless sacrifice, to offer ‘spiritual worship.’”

Word Study: True and proper λογικός λογικός
This can also be translated “rational,” which is derived from the Greek word *logos* (see word study on Jn 1:1). Philo also used this word to explain the true meaning of sacrifice: “That which is precious in the sight of God is not the number of victims immolated but the true purity of a rational [*logikon*] spirit in him who makes the sacrifice.”¹¹

CJSBN: I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God’s mercies. God’s mercies are referenced throughout chs. 1–11, especially in 9–11 and explicitly in 11:30–32. This section is the pivotal point of the book of Romans, on which Sha’ul turns from doctrine to the practical advice: “I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God’s mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God.” This is a striking metaphor, in that animal sacrifices were still being made twice daily within Temple worship in Jerusalem.¹²

²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Missler: “Stop being conformed to this [age].” “Conformed” = pressed into a mold. Modern media has placed incredible technology in Satan’s hands. The export of depravity is unprecedented . . .

Advertising exploitation of basest desires. The underlying presuppositions of the entertainment industry is anti-godly.

“keep on being transformed”: present tense, passive voice, imperative mood. “transformed” = *metamorphousthe*, is seen in the English word “metamorphosis,” a total change from inside out (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). The key to this change is the “mind” (*noos*), the control center of one’s attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions. Cf. Eph. 4:22-23.

Eph 4:22, That ye put off concerning the former conversation [manner of life] the old man [self], which is [being] corrupt[ed] according to the deceitful lusts; Eph 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

¹⁰ ESV Study Bible Notes

¹¹ First-Century Study Bible Notes

¹² Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

Again, continuous action; passive voice: "And constantly allow the spirit of your mind to be renewed"

Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man[self], which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

There are only two world views:

- 1) We're product of random chance with no destiny;
- 2) We're the result of a deliberate and purposeful Creation...

And every answer to every question in life will derive from our world view: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? To whom am I accountable?

Conformity = consensus thinking. Leave your convictions outside of the meeting room.

Relationships rather than truth.

Eph 2:2, Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

1 John 5:19 (NAS) We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Mind vs Brain: software vs hardware... Be careful of your spiritual (and soulish) diet.

As a Christian is transformed in his mind and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God's will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God's will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs.¹³

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Paul continues the concept of the logical-rational mind being the location where spiritual renewal takes place in verse 2. And the ruling from Paul is straightforward: if you want to agree with God and please Him then turn away from the standards of this world that have always been your standards because until you believed, you were part of the world. Here's the point Paul is making: since renewal begins in your mind then you must make the correct mental decisions. Now that we are saved, and have the Holy Spirit in us, it is our responsibility to consciously make different choices than we used to make before we knew Yeshua. We must think before we act and cease acting instinctively, because our instincts are of this world. Of course, as Paul pointed out in Romans chapter 7, humans are caught in a conundrum when it comes to choices and our behavior:

Romans 7:15-20 CJB 15 I don't understand my own behavior- I don't do what I want to do; instead, I do the very thing I hate! 16 Now if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am agreeing that the Torah is good. 17 But now it is no longer "the real me" doing it, but the sin housed inside me. 18 For I know that there is nothing good housed inside me- that is, inside my old nature. I can want what is good, but I can't do it! 19 For I don't do the good I want; instead, the evil that I don't want is what I do! 20 But if I am doing what "the real me" doesn't want, it is no longer "the real me" doing it but the sin housed inside me. And he ends this crying out in frustration by saying: 24 What a miserable creature I am! Who will rescue me from this body bound for death? 25 Thanks be to God [, he will]!- through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord! To sum up: with my mind, I am a slave of God's Torah; but with my old nature, I am a slave of sin's "Torah."

So this is kind of a good news/bad news situation for Believers. The bad news is that although we are saved, we still live in the world with all its pulls and temptations and reminders of our past life. The good news is that we are no longer helpless victims of our evil inclinations that keep us bound to this world. There is now a power in us, the Holy Spirit, to help us overcome.

¹³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

However, we can't go take a nap and leave it to the Holy Spirit to do all the work. We have to put this new reality into practice, being aware that it will be hard and not easy and it begins with our conscious choices. It means fighting our knee-jerk reactions. The problem that any psychologist or counselor will tell you is that it is the human nature to want approval from our peers, and there will be constant pressure on us to conform to whatever the social norms might be. A popular term for this today is political correctness.¹⁴

McGee: Kenneth S. Wuest has an excellent translation -- actually an interpretation -- of this verse: "And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being, but is patterned after this age; but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing, and complete will, and having found that it meets specification, placing your approval upon it" (Romans in the Greek New Testament, p. 290). Although this is rather elaborate, it is exactly what Paul is saying in this passage of Scripture. Paul is urging the believer not to fashion his life and conduct by those around him, even those in the church.

I know two or three groups of folk who, when they come together in a meeting, assume a front that is not real at all. They are super-pious. Oh, I tell you, when they meet on Sunday night, you would think they had just had their halos shined. They are not normal and they are not natural. Yet if you want to hear the meanest and dirtiest gossip, you meet with that group! The child of God ought not to be like that. We ought to be normal and natural -- or probably I should say, normal and supernatural. It is so easy to play a part. That is what the word hypocrite really means. *Hypokrites* is the Greek word for actors. They were playing a part. *Hypokrites* means to answer back. In acting it means to get your cue and to say the right thing at the right time. In our daily lives hypocrisy is to seem to be something that we are not. I have learned over the years that some folk who flatter you to your face, smile, and pat you on the back can be your worst enemies. They are dangerous to be with. It was Shakespeare who said something about the world being a stage and that every man must play a part. This is not true of the believer. He must be genuine because the Holy Spirit is working from within, transforming his life by "renewing" the mind.

Again, and again Paul calls attention to this. To the Corinthians he said, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Cor. 3:18). Also to Titus he said, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

By permitting the Spirit of God to renew the mind, the believer will be able to test the will of God and find it good. The minute that you and I assume a pose and pretend to be something we are not, it is impossible for us to determine the will of God for our lives. By yielding, the will of God for the life of the believer becomes good and fits the believer's will exactly. It's first good, and then it is acceptable, and finally it is perfect, in that the believer's will and God's will are equal to each other. My friend, you can't improve on that kind of situation. Paul could say, "I can do all things." Where? "Through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:13). The believer can do all things that are in God's will. It is wonderful not to have to act the part of being Christian, but

¹⁴ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

just be natural and let the Spirit of God move and work through you. Handley C. G. Moule (The Epistle to the Romans, p. 335) has put it like this:

I would not have the restless will That hurries to and fro, Seeking for some great thing to do Or secret thing to know; I would be treated as a child, And guided where I go.

Oh, to reach the place of just turning this over to the Lord! Paul begs us to do this. This is the way of happiness. This is the way of joy. This is the way of fullness in your life. If you are in a church or in a group of play actors, for God's sake get away from it and try to live a normal Christian life where you can be genuine. A man said to me the other day, "My wife and I have quit going to such and such a group." I asked why. He told me, "We just got tired of going to a place where you almost have to assume something that you are not. Everyone there is being absolutely abnormal. The way I found out was that I had an occasion to meet a super-pious member of the group in a place of business. I hardly recognized the man -- his manner and everything about him was different." He was "conformed to the world" when he was not with the pious group. Oh, to be a normal Christian and enjoy God's blessing.¹⁵

Guzik: Resisting conformity to the world and embracing the transformation that comes in Jesus Christ.

Do not be conformed to this world: This warns us that the "world system" – the popular culture and manner of thinking that is in rebellion against God – will try to conform us to its ungodly pattern, and that process must be resisted.

But be transformed by the renewing of your mind: This is the opposite of being conformed to this world. The battle ground between conforming to the world and being transformed is within the mind of the believer. Christians must think differently.

"I don't want to be conformed to this world. I want to be transformed. How do I do it?" By the renewing of your mind. The problem with many Christians is they live life based on feelings, or they are only concerned about doing.

The life based on feeling says, "How do I feel today? How do I feel about my job? How do I feel about my wife? How do I feel about worship? How do I feel about the preacher?" This life by feeling will never know the transforming power of God, because it ignores the renewing of the mind.

The life based on doing says, "Don't give me your theology. Just tell me what to do. Give me the four points for this and the seven keys for that." This life of doing will never know the transforming power of God, because it ignores the renewing of the mind.

God is never against the principles of feeling and doing. He is a God of powerful and passionate feeling and He commands us to be doers. Yet feelings and doing are completely insufficient foundations for the Christian life. The first questions cannot be "How do I feel?" or "What do I do?" Rather, they must be "What is true here? What does God's Word say?"

Transformed: This is the ancient Greek word metamorphoo – describing a metamorphosis. The same word is used to describe Jesus in His transfiguration (Mark 9:2-3). This is a glorious transformation!

The only other place Paul uses this word for transformed is in 2 Corinthians 3:18: But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. For Paul, this transformation and renewing of our minds takes place as we behold the face of God, spending time in His glory.

¹⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God: As we are transformed on the inside, the proof is evident on the outside, as others can see what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is through our life.

Paul here explains how to live out the will of God:

- Keep in mind the rich mercy of God to you – past, present, and future (by the mercies of God)
- As an act of intelligent worship, decide to yield your entire self to Him (present your bodies a living sacrifice)
- Resist conformity to the thoughts and actions of this world (do not be conformed)
- By focus on God’s word and fellowship with Him (be transformed by the renewing of your mind)

Then, your life will be in the will of God. Your life will prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

You may know what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is, but you can’t prove it in your life apart from the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

ESV: The present evil age still threatens those who belong to Christ, so they must resist its pressure. Their lives are changed as their minds are made new (contrast 1:28), so that they are able to “discern” God’s will. By testing you may discern translates Greek *dokimazō*, which often has the sense of finding out the worth of something by putting it to use or testing it in actual practice (cf. Luke 14:19; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 8:22; 1 Tim. 3:10).¹⁷

³For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Missler: Interesting introduction to spiritual gifts: need for humility!

Invariable sign of spiritual maturity. It begins with understanding grace... It’s all from Him.

The proud look heads the list of the “Big 7” (Prov 6:16-19).

Self-esteem? Prov 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

By his involved word play on various forms of the verb *phroneo*, “to think,” Paul emphasized that human pride is wrong (cf. 3:27; 11:18, 20) partly because all-natural abilities and spiritual gifts are from God.

Every believer has a measure of faith; perfect for the plan He has for each of us.
1 Tim 3:6; 1 Tim 5:22; Prov 16:18, 19; Prov 29:23; John 3:27; Matt 20:25-28.

“It’s amazing what can be accomplished when you don’t care who gets the credit.”¹⁸

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

So, in verse 3 Paul commands (he creates a religious ruling) that no one should exaggerate their own importance but rather should view oneself by the standard that God uses; and that standard is trust in His Son. When Paul says, “Through the grace that has been given to me” he is speaking about grace as the position of authority that the Lord has graciously given him; he’s

¹⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

¹⁷ ESV Study Bible Notes

¹⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

speaking of being an Apostle. Most other versions of the Bible than the CJB gives this verse a different meaning. The NAS says this: NAS Romans 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

What does the phrase “measure of faith” mean to tell us? If we take the way the NAS and most other versions interpret it, it means measure in the sense of “amount” or “quantity”. That is, God has allotted to each of us a certain amount of faith. And since what a Believer can do is based on the quantity of faith he or she has, then those whom God has given a large amount of faith can do miracles, and those whom God has given a little tiny bit of faith can do next to nothing. If this is the case, brotherly unity among Believers becomes exceedingly difficult if not impossible, especially in light of what is being said in the following verses about how we are each a different part of the same body, and we must not think that our part is better than another and different part. So, this idea of faith being measured in terms of quantity or amount cannot be what Paul has in mind.

Rather, the term “measure of faith” is better expressed in English as “standard of faith”. One legitimate definition of the word measure is “standard”; but the modern English language doesn’t use the word measure that way very much. What is the standard of faith that God measures us by? Trust. So, says Paul, we need to evaluate ourselves honestly to see where we are on God’s trust scale. We shouldn’t deceive ourselves about ourselves. Our trust in Yeshua is the measure by which God views us and deals with us. This has much bearing on what he says next.

Now that Paul has explained the preliminaries, he is going to install general guidelines that Believers, Jews and gentiles, are to follow as members of the Believing community. He is essentially following the same pattern of community building that we find the Essenes used as they recorded it in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Remember: while for us all that remains of the Essenes is the Dead Sea Scrolls, for Paul the Essenes community was current. Essenes walked among the people of the Holy Land. They were a long established, alive and thriving Jewish community. They were well known, well accepted, and quite influential among the common folks, hated by the Priesthood, and admired among the theologians of Judaism.....like Paul. So not surprisingly he approaches setting out community rules for the Messianic community very similarly to how the Essenes did it.¹⁹

McGee: This is my translation: For I am saying through the grace given to me, to everyone among you, not to be thinking of himself more highly than that which is necessary to think, but to think wisely of oneself, even as God has divided a measure of faith to each one. My translation may have lost something of that pungent statement: "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." I imagine that when Paul wrote this, there was a whimsical smile on his face, because there are a great many Christians who are ambitious, who feel that they must have positions of prominence. And I have found out in Christian work that a great many folk in the church want to hold an office. If you want to be a successful pastor today and get a bunch of folk working like termites, you create a great many offices, committees, boards, and have presidents, chairmen, and heads of organizations. You will get a lot of people working who would never work on any other basis. Why? Because they think more highly of themselves than they ought to think.

What we need to do, as Paul says here, is "to think soberly." He says that we ought not try to advance ourselves in Christians circles. There is the ever-present danger of the believer

¹⁹ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

overestimating his ability and his character and his gifts. We need to have a correct estimation of ourselves in relationship to other members of the church.

When I became pastor of certain churches, I was invited to serve as a board member of certain organizations. Finally, I was serving on about a dozen or fifteen boards, and I was really a bored member. I was bored for the simple reason that I don't have gifts for that type of thing. To begin with, I don't have the patience to sit and listen to pages of "minutes" that take hours to read. And the second thing is that I just don't like to sit in a board meeting and listen to a group of incompetent men discussing spiritual matters. It took me a long time to find out I didn't have the kind of gift that would make me helpful in such situations, and I was killing myself going to board meetings. The Christian life became a round of being bored. Finally, one day I came to myself, like the prodigal son, and I sat down and wrote twelve or more letters of resignation. That was one of the happiest days of my life. And today I am not on anybody's board. I have several friends who say to me, "Oh, won't you be on my board?" I say, "No, I wouldn't help you. I have no gift for it. I'm for you, I'll even pray for you, but I cannot be on your board." My friend, we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We need to recognize our inabilities and do the things God wants us to do. It is a joy to get into the slot where God wants you to be!²⁰

BKC: 3-5. A believer's consecration to God and his transformed lifestyle is demonstrated in his exercising his spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. As an apostle of Christ (by the grace given me; cf. 1:5; 15:15-16) he warned his readers individually (every one of you), Do not think of yourself more highly (*hyperphronein*, "think higher") than you ought. An inflated view of oneself is out of place in the Christian life. Then Paul encouraged them, But rather think (*phronein*) of yourself with sober judgment (*sōphronein*, "sound thinking"), in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. God has given each believer some faith by which to serve Him. By his involved word play on various forms of the verb *phroneō*, "to think," Paul emphasized that human pride is wrong (cf. 3:27; 11:18, 20) partly because all-natural abilities and spiritual gifts are from God. As a result, every Christian should have a proper sense of humility and an awareness of his need to be involved with other members of Christ's body. As Paul explained, a parallelism exists between a believer's physical body which has parts with differing functions and the community of believers in Christ as a spiritual body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:11-12, 15-16). The point is that each member functions to serve the body, not the body to serve the members. The diversity of the many accompanies the unity of the body. Therefore, it is important to think soundly about oneself and to evaluate properly God's gifts and their uses.²¹

Guzik: A warning to live in humility.

To everyone among you: Paul will soon speak about how we should exercise spiritual gifts in the body of Christ, but a warning about humility is in order, given the inordinate pride that often arises from those who regard themselves as spiritually gifted.

We should remember that spiritual giftedness does not equal spiritual maturity. Just because a person has substantial spiritual gifts does not mean they are necessarily spiritually mature or a worthy example.

Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: Paul does not tell the believer to take an attitude that finds pleasure in humiliation or degradation. Rather, the idea is that we

²⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

should see the truth about ourselves and live in light of it. When we see ourselves as we really are, it is impossible to be given over to pride.

God has dealt to each one a measure of faith: This means that we should see even our saving faith as a gift from God, and that we have no basis for pride or a superior opinion of ourselves.²²

ESV: God has granted a differing measure of faith to each of his children, and Paul calls upon each to assess himself or herself realistically.²³

CJSBN: Develop a sober estimate of yourself. The warning to Gentiles against boasting and conceit (11:18, 25) is extended to “every single one of you,” because a person committed to doing God’s will (12:2) is easy prey to delusions of grandeur.²⁴

4For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

Missler: We all need each other. When you don’t exercise your spiritual gift, you are disenfranchising the Body.

Cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:11-12, 15-16.²⁵

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

So, the first community principle that Paul must establish is that while everyone is equal spiritually in God’s eyes, not everyone has been given the same abilities or purpose. Thus, using the metaphor of the human body there is not one part of the body that can say it is more valuable than another; all parts of a body are needed to achieve wholeness. Even so, each part is for a different purpose; they cannot all be the same or perform the same function. But here’s the crux: all the many parts must understand that they are there for the well-being of the entire body. Some parts may have more visibility and so get more attention and more credit than the others. Some parts may get the dirty work while other parts seem to get the glory. And in the body of Christ even one more step of complexity exists: some parts will be Jews and other parts will be gentiles, so the possibility of jealousy, cultural misunderstanding, and the want of dominance is a clear and present danger at all times. However, if community unity is Christ centered, and not self-centered, then it can work properly. If we see ourselves as belonging to the others of our community, then our function will not rate ourselves based on our sense of importance but rather on how well we achieve our particular purpose for the good of the entire body.²⁶

McGee 4-5: This is the first time that Paul has introduced the great theme of the church as the body of Christ. This is the primary subject in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. The church as the body of Christ is to function as a body. This means that the many members do not have the same gifts. You may have a gift that I could never exercise. There are many members in the body, hundreds of members, and therefore hundreds of gifts. I do not think Paul ever gave a complete list of all the gifts because every time he dealt with gifts of the Spirit

²² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

²³ ESV Study Bible Notes

²⁴ Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

²⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

²⁶ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

he always brought up new gifts which he had not mentioned in previous lists. I am sure the Spirit of God led him to do that.²⁷

Guzik: (Rom 12:4-5) Unity and diversity in the body of Christ.

Many members in one body: The church is a unified whole (one body), yet we are distinct within that one body (individually members). In the body of Christ there is unity but not uniformity.²⁸

ESV: 4–5 The diversity and unity of the church is illustrated by comparison to the human body. Just as the human body is one with many members (lit., body parts, limbs), so the church is united though it is composed of many members. On the theme of the church as the body of Christ, see also 1 Corinthians 12 and Eph. 4:4, 12-16.²⁹

⁵So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Missler: Heb 10:23-25. [Have you experienced the growth that occurs within the home Bible studies?]³⁰

Guzik: Individually members of one another: We err when we neglect either aspect; unity should never be promoted at the expense of individuality, and individuality should never diminish the church's essential unity in Christ; He is our common ground, we are one body in Christ.³¹

⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith*;

Missler: All have different gifts. cf. v. 4, “not all have the same function”; cf. 1 Cor. 12:4. [See our Briefing Package, The Spiritual Gifts...]

The Greek text is much more abrupt than any English translation; “let us” is supplied for smoother English. One’s “prophesying” is to be done “according to the proportion of faith”: a better translation would be “in agreement to the faith.” That is, prophesying — communicating God’s message, to strengthen, encourage, and comfort (1 Cor 14:3)—is to be in right relationship to the body of truth already revealed (cf. “faith” as doctrine in Gal 1:23; Jude 3, 20).³²

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

²⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

²⁹ ESV Study Bible Notes

³⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

³¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

³² Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

In verse 6 we again see the rather unique way that Paul uses the term “grace” when he says that gifts will differ and are meant to be used according to the grace given to each person. Grace in this instance is used by Paul almost to mean the substance of the gift; that is, the grace is the nature of the gift to Believers just as for Paul the grace he received was the apostolic authority he was given. But now Paul begins to list some of these gifts that are usually called in Western Christian circles “spiritual” gifts. Some think that the order that Paul lists them indicates the order of importance that God sees them; that is, they are listed from the greater gifts to the lesser gifts. I disagree with that and there is nothing in these words to indicate such a thing. Why the order he chose? There is nothing to indicate what that might be. Might there be lesser and greater gifts in God’s eyes? It certainly seems possible. However, on the other hand it would sort of go against Paul’s thought that while all parts of the body are equal, they will also be different with none more valuable than the other. So, to set the spiritual gifts up in a pecking order of value or importance in the next verse would seem to conflict with what he just said.³³

McGee: "Gifts" is the Greek word *charismata*, which comes from the same stem as the word for grace. It can be translated as "grace" or "free gift" and is what the Spirit of God gives you. He gave to the church men who had the gift of a prophet, or a teacher, etc.

"Having then gifts" -- each member of the body of Christ has a gift and a function to perform. "Differing" means that the gifts differ; it does not mean that some folk do not have a gift. Every individual in the church has a gift. And the gift is part and parcel of the grace of God to us. When God saves you and puts you in the body of believers, you are to function. You are not to function as a machine, but as a member of a body, a living organization. When the gift is exercised, it is confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every believer needs to test his gift. If you feel that you have a certain gift and you are using it, you ought to test it. Analyze your effectiveness: Are you really a blessing to folk? Are you building up the church? Or are you dividing the church? "Prophecy" here does not refer to prediction but to any message from God. Notice that prophecy is to be done in "proportion" (this is a mathematical term) to God's provision of the faith and the power to match the gift.³⁴

BKC: 6-8. Paul then applied what he had just said (vv. 3-5) to the exercise of God-given abilities for spiritual service (vv. 6-8). He built on the principle, We have different gifts (cf. v. 4, "not all have the same function"; cf. 1 Cor. 12:4). The grace-gifts (*charismata*) are according to God's grace (*charis*). He listed seven gifts, none of which—with the possible exception of prophesying—is a sign gift. The Greek text is much more abrupt than any English translation; let him be supplied for smoother English. One's "prophesying" is to be done in proportion to his faith; a better translation would be "in agreement to the (not 'his') faith." That is, prophesying—communicating God's message, to strengthen, encourage, and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3)—is to be in right relationship to the body of truth already revealed (cf. "faith" as doctrine in Gal. 1:23; Jude 3, 20). The other six gifts mentioned here are serving... teaching... encouraging... contributing... leadership and showing mercy. Contributing to people's needs is to be done with generosity (*en haplotēti*), not skimpily (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13). Managing, leading, or administering (*proistamenos*, lit., "standing before"; cf. *proistamenous*, "who are over," 1 Thes. 5:12) is to be done diligently (*en spoudē*, "in eagerness, earnestness"), not lazily or halfheartedly. And bestowing mercy is to be done cheerfully (*en hilarotēti*, "in gladness"), not with sadness. Three

³³ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

³⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

of these seven gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (prophets, teachers, administration); two (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in Ephesians 4:11; and two (administering and serving) are listed in 1 Peter 4:10-11. Whatever one's gift, he should exercise it faithfully as a stewardship from God.³⁵

Guzik: (Rom 12:6-8) An exhortation to use (and how to use) the gifts God has granted to the individual members of the church.

Having then gifts: The difference and distribution of gifts is all due to the grace that is given to us. Spiritual gifts are not given on the basis of merit, but because God chooses to give them.

This idea is related in the ancient Greek word for “spiritual gifts”: *charismata*, which means a gift of grace. This term was apparently coined by Paul to emphasize that the giving of these spiritual gifts was all of grace.

Spiritual gifts are given at the discretion of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says, But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Knowing this should be an insurmountable barrier to pride in the exercise of spiritual gifts. However, man, in the depravity of his heart, finds a way to be proud about spiritual gifts and insists on exalting men for how God has gifted them.

If prophecy: Prophecy must be practiced in proportion to our faith. God may give us something to say to an individual or church body that stretches our faith. If we can't prophecy in faith and trust that God has really spoken to us, we shouldn't do it at all.

We are reminded that prophecy, in the Biblical understanding, isn't necessarily “fore-telling” in a strictly predictive sense. It is more accurately “forth-telling” the heart and mind of God, which may or may not include a predictive aspect.

This warns us against flippant, “stream of consciousness” prophecy that has no difficulty saying, “Thus says the Lord” at the drop of a hat.

In proportion to our faith: The ancient Greek text actually has “the” before faith. Paul may be cautioning that prophecy must be according to the faith, in accord with the accepted body of doctrine held among believers.

Some take the proportion of faith to be the proportion of the faith of the audience of the prophecy; this has truth also.³⁶

ESV: The variety of the body is evident from the various gifts God has given the church (see chart). On the gift of prophecy, see notes on Acts 21:4; 21:10–11; 1 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 2:20; 1 Thess. 5:20–21; and other notes on 1 Corinthians 12–14. in proportion to our faith. Paul instructs prophets to speak only when they have faith or confidence that the Holy Spirit is truly revealing something to them, and not to exceed the faith that God has given them by trying to impress others.³⁷

³⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

³⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

³⁷ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁷Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;*

Missler: Spiritual gifts don't eliminate the need for preparation...³⁸

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

So, without assigning value or importance, here are the gifts: Prophecy, serving, teaching, counseling, giving, leading, and doing acts of mercy. In the New Testament, prophecy most often means discerning and explaining Scripture (OT Scripture). However, in this case, since prophecy and teaching are listed as two separate gifts, then prophecy must mean something else. If we take prophecy as meaning something a little closer to revelation that is probably the best idea. That is, prophets in the Old Testament were generally directly attached to specific kings of Israel, and they heard directly from God and delivered His oracles to Israel's kings. They were often given the ability to see into the future, or better, were given information about the future. There is no such claim to this in the New Testament except perhaps by John in Revelation. However, there is still inspiration and revelation of already existing truths that until now had not been correctly understood or fully revealed. So, in this sense Paul could be said to have this gift of prophecy. In fact, since Judaism is the cultural backdrop for the New Testament, it is good for you to know that about a half century before Paul's day the Sages had declared that prophecy as it was known and practiced in the Tanakh (the Old Testament) had come to a halt. But just few years later, Rabbis shifted and claimed that they were the new prophets. However, they too meant it more in the sense of revealing truth than seeing the future. Paul's era was a time of transition as regards how prophecy was thought about. Rabbis once again believed that OT style prophecy was still possible and yet exactly what that amounted to differed according to different Rabbis. Thus, we see in the New Testament a fuzzy definition of prophecy and use of the term that, depending on the writer, the character, and the situation, can mean anything from merely teaching Scripture all the way up to bringing a new oracle from the Lord, and even in a limited sense to seeing into the future.

The gift of serving is more meant in the realm of service, and service is meant in the realm of Temple worship (not like doing the good deed of washing your elderly neighbor's windows). This service would include things like prayer, teaching about the Torah, making financial contributions to the Temple (or perhaps to the Synagogue) and doing everything generously and without seeking compensation. So, service is meant entirely in the religious sense and not in the humanitarian sense.

The gift of teaching was center stage during Paul's era. The purpose of a teacher was to instruct others on how to walk in the ways of God. The reference material for a teacher was Holy Scripture, and his job was not to add to it or make bold predictions from it, but rather it was to show people how to know God's will and to another extent to make application. Interestingly the most revered person in the community of the Essenes was called the Teacher of Righteousness. I think for us to better understand the office of Teacher in 2nd Temple Judaism, it is good to hear from the Essene Teacher of Righteousness himself.

Taken from the Dead Sea Scrolls 1QH, the Teacher of Righteousness says this:
And thou hast created me for Thy sake to fulfill The Law and to teach by my mouth the men of thy council in the midst of the sons of men, that They marvels may be told to everlasting generations and Thy mighty deeds be contemplated without end. And all the nations shall know Thy truth and all the peoples Thy glory. For Thou hast caused them to enter Thy glorious

³⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Covenant with all the men of Thy council and into a common lot with the Angels of the Face and none shall treat with insolence the sons...and they shall be converted by Thy glorious mouth and shall be Thy princes in the lot of light.

So, the office of teacher was purely about teaching God's Word and fulfilling The Law of Moses by teaching it to others so that God's marvels and mighty deeds will be known forever. And the hope is that all the nations (meaning the gentiles) will hear of it and revere the God of Israel. Does not that sound exactly like Paul's purpose as an Apostle to the Gentiles and Christ's exhortation to Believers in the New Testament? And speaking of exhortation, the term councilor in verse 8 has much to do with exhortation. In fact, to again inject the Jewish perspective into this that Paul would of course have had, a person who exhorted was a counselor or a preacher (those two terms were generally synonymous). A councilor was a person who gave sermons and dealt more with life questions like 'why do bad things happen to good people', and the nature of morality; they kept the stories of Israel's great heroes alive, spoke about what proper justice is, when vengeance is warranted and when it's not, and so on. A preacher or a councilor did not teach God's Holy Scriptures exegetically, and especially did not teach exegetically on the Torah, The Law of Moses; that privilege belonged to the office of the Teacher.

I want to pause for a moment for you to notice something critical in everything I've told you. I've told you before that there were parallel religious systems operating within Judaism in Paul's day that the people just took for granted: The Temple and the Synagogue. All of these offices and jobs and gifts were thought of by Paul as operating within the definitions and rules of the Synagogue system led by Rabbis; not with the Temple rules overseen by Priests. While the Temple system was still venerated for the purpose of the biblical feasts, appointed times, and sacrificing, the Priesthood (especially the High Priest) was no longer trusted and in fact earned the title Sons of Darkness from the Essenes. So while Temple imagery is used especially by Paul in the several metaphors he employs in his writings, this is not to be confused with thinking that Paul had any more to do with that system than did any typical Jew. The typical Jew was far more tied to the Synagogue system.

The gift of giving is pretty straight forward. While it certainly includes supporting the Temple and the Synagogue, it just as easily included being hospitable to strangers (this was a high virtue social custom in the Middle East anyway).

The gift of leading can be seen mainly as a task that fell to Israel's elders. Elders in this era were also known as overseers. Included in this gift category was the President of the Synagogue who was tasked with finding speakers, assuring the maintenance of the Synagogue building, and serving on elder boards. It also included presiding over meetings. Leading was not political, nor was it in any official government capacity. It, too, was meant as leading within the religious realm. It is difficult to find what was in the Jewish mind a person who did acts of mercy, especially if it is seen as a special spiritual gift. It is my position that this is not meant to be a job a person did, or an office like teacher or prophet. Rather it is more a highly revered character trait that all Believers should desire to have rather than a separate gifting. But the main point Paul makes about doing acts of mercy (charity) is to always do it cheerfully as opposed to doing it grudgingly, or as little as possible but still maintaining a good reputation before your peers.

Since this ends the section about gifts, we'll stop here and continue with the remainder of chapter 12 next time.³⁹

³⁹ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

McGee: "Ministering" is performing an act of service, referring to a manifold ministry with practical implications. There are multitudinous forms for service in the body of believers which this gift covers -- setting up chairs and giving out songbooks is a ministry. Some folk do not have a gift of speaking, but they do have a gift of service. I know one dear lady who can put on a dinner that will make everybody happy. And I believe in church dinners; if you look at me, you will know I have been to quite a few of them -- and many that this lady put on. That is her gift, and I've told her that. She would never make a good president of the missionary society, and you wouldn't want her to sing in the choir, but if you want to put on a church dinner for some purpose, she is the one to get. "Ministering" includes many gifts, my friend.⁴⁰

Guzik: Ministry: This has in view the broader picture of simply serving in practical ways. Paul sees this as important ministry from the Holy Spirit as well.

Teaching: This has in mind instruction, while exhortation encourages people to practice what they have been taught; both are necessary for a healthy Christian life.

Those who are taught but not exhorted become "fat sheep" that only take in and never live the Christian life. Those who are exhorted but not taught become excited and active, but have no depth or understanding to what they do and will burn out quickly or will work in wrong ways.⁴¹

ESV: 7–8 Christians should concentrate upon and give their energies to the gifts God has given them, whether in serving others, teaching God's Word patiently, or in exhortation and encouragement in the things of God. Thus, Paul spotlights three attitudes necessary in exercising particular gifts: (1) those who have a special gift of helping others financially should never give grudgingly but always generously; (2) those who lead often have no one to whom they are accountable, and hence they must beware of laziness; (3) those who show mercy to the hurting must not grow weary but continue to minister with gladness.⁴²

⁸Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Missler: "Exhortation": from the Greek root meaning "encouragement"

Contributing to people's needs is to be done with generosity, not skimpily (cf. 2 Cor 8:2; 9:11, 13). [2 Cor 9:7: "...God loveth a cheerful giver." Cheerful = *hilaros*, hilarious]

Seven Gifts

Three of these (prophets, teachers, administration) are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28; two (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in Ephesians 4:11; and two (administering and serving) are listed in 1 Peter 4:10-11. Whatever one's gift, he should exercise it faithfully as a stewardship from God. A danger with "gifts:" don't seek experiences; seek Him, and seek Him in His Word. We are to be fruit-inspectors, not gift-inspectors.⁴³

McGee: "Exhortation" is the Greek word *paraklesis*, literally "a calling near" or "a calling for." In other words, exhortation is comfort. Some folk have the gift of being able to comfort. I know

⁴⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁴² ESV Study Bible Notes

⁴³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

one pastor who is not a preacher -- he knows he is not -- but if I were sick or had lost a loved one, he is the man I would want to come to visit me. He can comfort.

"He that giveth" is he that shares his earthly possessions. God may have given you a gift of making money -- and that is a gift. I know several Christian businessmen who have the Midas touch. That is their gift.

"He that ruleth, with diligence" refers to the gift of leadership. There are certain men who are leaders, and they need to exercise their gift in the church so that everything might be done decently and in order. The business of the church requires a man with the gift of administration. "He that sheweth mercy" indicates the gift of performing acts of kindness. For instance, there are some believers who can bring a sunbeam into a sickroom, while others cast a spell of gloom.⁴⁴

Guzik: He who gives: This refers to someone who is a channel through whom God provides resources for His body. This is an important spiritual gift that must be exercised with liberality. When someone who is called and gifted to be a giver stops giving liberally, they will often see their resources dry up – having forgotten why God has blessed them.

He who leads: This one must show diligence. It is easy for leaders to become discouraged and feel like giving up, but they must persevere if they will please God by their leadership.

He who shows mercy: This gift needs cheerfulness. It can be hard enough to show mercy, but even harder to be cheerful about it. This reminds us that the gift of showing mercy is a supernatural gift of the Spirit.⁴⁵

CJSBN: 8–21 If you are a counselor... It is easy to find Jewish parallels to Sha'ul's ethical teachings. Compare the end of v. 8 with this passage from the Mishnah: "The world is upheld by three things—Torah, Temple worship and acts of mercy" (Sacks 4–5; Pirque Avot 1:2).⁴⁶

⁹Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Missler: Evidences of a Spirit-filled Person

Cf. 1 Cor 13.

"Without hypocrisy" ("sincere") translates *anupokritos*, also used of love (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22), of faith (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5), and of wisdom (James 3:17).

Agape is the signature of the Holy Spirit's presence. Phil 4:8-9.⁴⁷

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

The final part of last week's lesson regarded gifts of specific aptitudes and abilities given to each Believer by God; these are better known in Christian circles as spiritual gifts. They were: prophecy, serving, teaching, counseling, giving, leading, and doing acts of mercy. No priority or preeminence seems to have been assigned to these by Paul. They had to be presented in some order or another and he says nothing about the first gift listed (prophecy) being greater than any

⁴⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁴⁶ Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

⁴⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

of the following gifts, nor that the last gift listed (doing acts of mercy) is the least of them. If one gift was indeed greater or better than the others, then Paul's entire metaphorical soliloquy about parts of the body all being different yet needed for their own purposes, and his other thoughts about the equality between Jews and gentiles would be contradictory. So it seems to me that the spiritual gifts all have approximately equal value and importance in God's Kingdom so that no one should boast about which one they might have received. There is a hint of a hierarchy of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28, but I think Paul is simply numbering them and not listing them in a numerical pecking order. Beyond that, the lists from 1 Corinthians and Romans don't match.

Paul having spoken, now, about different gifting given to different people according to the Lord's will, what follows next beginning in verse 9 are the Apostle's instructions that apply universally to all Believers. Before we read this section of Romans chapter 12 I want to remind you that to the Jewish Rabbi Paul establishing these instructions for Believers must be looked at from the Jewish cultural perspective. That is, within the Jewish world these kinds of religious rulings are called Halakhot and within any community of Jewish people these rulings were the norm for establishing behavior and doctrine. What makes them unique in Romans 12 is that this was Messianic Halakhah; that is, religious rulings for followers of Yeshua. However, lest we think that Paul's rulings were different from what was already being practiced in Jewish society, these rulings bear a striking resemblance to the manner, terminology, and in many cases the theology used by the Essenes in establishing the community rules for their Dead Sea sect of Judaism. So let's read starting in verse 9.

Paul's first general instructions concern love and hate. We're going to spend a few minutes with the subject of love and hate because it can sometimes be hard in this modern world (including within Christianity) to define these two terms due to what they have come to mean in the West as opposed to what they meant 2000 years ago in a Jewish Middle Eastern context. What ought to matter to us is what love and hate means from God's perspective. First and foremost, love means a wholehearted acceptance and hate means a complete rejection. Thus as it relates to our relationship with God, to love Him is to fully accept Him and to hate Him is to firmly reject Him. To love what is good is to fully accept and internalize what is good. To hate what is good is to purposely and knowingly reject what is good. Second, love is complete devotion to a person, an ideal, a god or perhaps a way of life. Hate is a complete disregard and aversion towards a person, an ideal, a god, or a way of life. But third, as biblically defined, love and hate intrinsically involve actions: outward behavior. And this may be the largest departure from how those two terms are thought of today whereby love and hate are seen as mostly products of emotion. While love and hate can certainly involve our emotions, biblically speaking love and hate are not the names of two of our emotions nor are love and hate primarily about emotion.

Because the Bible makes it clear that love and hate both emanate from the heart, then because of the modern romantic sense of the heart being the seat of our emotions (especially of love) then the knee-jerk reaction of Christians and secular people alike to the terms love and hate is to think of them as super-intense emotions. So for modern people to love is to "like" someone or something to an extreme level and to hate is to "dislike" someone or something to an equally extreme level. However, as we've discussed innumerable times, when the Bible uses the term "heart" it means it as the seat of our will and our intellect; not of our emotions. In that era the kidneys, liver, and even stomach were seen as the inner sources of human emotions. To summarize: in Bible times the heart was NOT seen as the seat of our emotions, but rather as the

seat of our intellect. Yes; back then it was assumed that the human heart organ was where our mental processes, our thinking, took place. They knew nothing of the brain as part of the thinking process. So the better way to perceive what the Bible means by “heart” (*lev* in Hebrew, *kardia* in Greek) is to substitute the word “mind”.

God tells us that it is our minds that give birth to love and hate, but He also tells us that our actions (our outward behaviors) are used to express love and hate. Thus, when in Romans 12:9 Paul speaks about not letting our love be a mere outward show (not letting love be only insincere actions) instead of our behavior expressing our true inward mind, it is meant to connect nicely with what he has been teaching in previous chapters of Romans about following the Law of Moses in inward spirit and not only in an outward, mechanical following of religious instructions. I think it would be fair to say that Paul is telling Believers not to be hypocritical or phony.

Building upon what I explained about biblical love and hate ALWAYS involving action, Paul says to recoil from what is evil and instead to cling to what is good. Once again while certainly the instruction to recoil from the one and to cling to the other begins with our minds making a decision (and for Believers this decision should be based upon what the Lord has taught and commanded us) recoiling and clinging also characterizes our outward behaviors. So, let me give you an example of this in our time; I’ll use something that can be most challenging to deal with. The matter of homosexuality is approached in a straightforward manner in both the Old and New Testaments and it is listed as among the worst sins possible; thus, it is biblically immoral and even called abhorrent by God. Therefore, what is to be the Christian reaction to this lifestyle that God calls evil? Paul says we are to recoil from evil. So, what does that mean; are we merely to intellectually reject it and leave it at that? No. Does it mean being outwardly nasty and even abusive to the person who has embraced the sin of homosexuality? No; that violates the principle of loving your neighbor. Does that mean we should be accepting, excusing, and tolerant of the lifestyle of the person who has embraced homosexuality in a show of our love? No to that as well. To recoil means to reject any particular evil for ourselves; first mentally and then behaviorally. But it also means to never compromise and accept any evil as merely reasonable personal choice for others. Unfortunately, in some cases it can mean having as little to do as possible with the unrepentant person who has fully embraced that sin and its accompanying lifestyle.

Therefore, we must not recoil in our conscience from something but at the same time cling to it in our behavior. Nor should we cling in our conscience to something but outwardly recoil against it. To try to do so reveals that we are self-deceived or it is the epitome of hypocrisy. That may not be a politically correct viewpoint today, but biblically that is how it is.

So, what does it mean, biblically speaking, to cling to good? In our time, just as it meant in Paul’s day, it means to constantly behave in a righteous manner that conforms to God’s Torah: the Law of Moses. It is the Torah that sets down the standard of good for the entire world; so the good it mandates should be especially embraced by followers of Yeshua. We don’t have the time to get into the deep discussion of exactly how to bring across the intent (the spirit) of each of the 613 laws to modern times.....some are much more difficult to do than others. But rather I mean to generalize (just as Paul is doing) to say that our outward behaviors need to stay closely tied to the biblical definitions of good that we mentally agree with, even if our friends or authorities think we are being too prudish, inflexible, or intellectually backward for the 21st century. It is a fine thing to mentally agree with God’s definitions of good and that these principles should be

obeyed; it is another to act it out especially around others who don't walk with the Lord or don't take their faith as seriously as do you.

I'll give you another rather touchy example for our time to mull over; eating and diet. The Torah has clearly set aside certain edible items as for God's followers, and other edible items that are to be shunned by His followers. The permitted items are to be the sole food sources for Believers; the prohibited items are not to be considered food at all (even though technically they might be perfectly edible and perhaps even tasty and desirable). The list of prohibited and permissible items is not something that neither is difficult to bring across time and culture nor is difficult to follow. All of the edible items listed in Leviticus are generally available in nearly every culture of the world (certainly they are in the West). Therefore, we must first mentally put ourselves subject to God's commandments regarding food and diet, and then we must put that decision into action. However, if we are not convinced in our conscience about eating biblically Kosher (even though all Believers should be), then to eat Kosher anyway because our friends do so or so we can fit in with a certain religious group so that we can look good, means that we're doing it for the wrong reasons; we're neither clinging nor recoiling, we're being hypocritical. Spiritually speaking, we are trying to love and hate the same thing at the same time; the Bible calls this being double-minded. Let's move on from love and hate to Paul's next ruling.⁴⁸

McGee: "Let love be without dissimulation" -- that is, without hypocrisy. Don't pat another believer on the back and say something that you don't mean. Let love be without hypocrisy. "Abhor that which is evil" means to express your hatred of that which is evil. When you find something wrong in the church, bring it to the attention of the proper authorities. If you are on the board of directors and you find things are being done which are not honest, you are to stand up for the truth. There are too many Mr. Milquetoasts and Priscilla Goodbodies, these sweet folk who haven't the intestinal fortitude to stand for that which is honorable. This is the reason many good, fundamental churches are in trouble today. We need men and women with backbone to express their hatred for that which is evil.

"Cleave to that which is good." Cleave means to stick like adhesive tape, to be welded or cemented together with the good things. The believer should always be identified with good things rather than shady or questionable practices.⁴⁹

BKC: 9-10. Paul began these specific exhortations with the key ingredient for success: Love must be sincere. This is God's love, which has been ministered to believers by the Holy Spirit (5:5) and must be ministered by them to others in the Holy Spirit's power. "Sincere" translates *anypokritos* (lit., "without hypocrisy"), also used of love (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22), of faith (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5), and of wisdom (James 3:17).

This first command is followed by a pair of related basic commands—Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Many Bible students consider these two clauses as explanatory of the sincerity of love, translating the verse, "Let love be unfeigned, abhorring the evil and cleaving to the good." Hating various forms of sin is frequently mentioned in Scripture (Pss. 97:10; 119:104, 128, 163; Prov. 8:13; 13:5; 28:16; Heb. 1:9; Rev. 2:6). Turning from evil is to accompany adhering to the good (cf. 1 Peter 3:11).

Divine love is to be exercised with other believers. The Greek adjective *philostorgoi*, translated devoted, suggests family affection. As in Romans 12:9, the second clause in verse 10 can be

⁴⁸ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁴⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

understood as explaining the first command. Verse 10 may be translated, "With brotherly love have family affection for one another, in honor giving place to one another" (cf. Phil. 2:3, "consider others better than yourselves").⁵⁰

Guzik: A series of brief instructions on living like a Christian with others.

This section shows one thing clearly: Paul knew the teaching of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount. (Rom 12:9-13) Relating to those in the Christian family.

Let love be without hypocrisy: Of course, love with hypocrisy isn't real love at all; but much of what masquerades as "love" in the Christian community is laced with hypocrisy, and must be demonstrated against.

Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good: In some ways, it is often easier for us to either abhor what is evil or cling to what is good rather than doing both. The godly person knows how to practice both.⁵¹

ESV: The remainder of the chapter is a description of the life that is pleasing to God. Not surprisingly, love heads the list, for all that Paul says is embraced by the call to love (see note on John 13:34–35). genuine. Love cannot be reduced to sentimentalism. abhor. Christians are to hate evil.⁵²

¹⁰Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Missler: *philadelphia*, brotherly love.

"Honor" = to respect someone on a true evaluation of their worth.

Philippians 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

These exhortations are at the end of this epistle: they rely on the foundation that has been set: they can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. They cannot be produced in the flesh.⁵³

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Verse 10 is essentially Paul making a ruling based on his midrash (his interpretation) of the meaning of Leviticus 19:18.

CJB Leviticus 19:18 Don't take vengeance on or bear a grudge against any of your people; rather, love your neighbor as yourself; I am ADONAI.

It's important to notice that this religious ruling that Paul makes for Believers to love your neighbor as yourself and to show honor to others is not a new Christian innovation; Paul is merely stating a fundamental principle within mainstream Judaism of his day. The *Pirkei Avot*, which in English means Chapters of the Fathers, is a compilation of Hebrew ethical and moral teachings passed down to the Rabbis.

In *Pirkei Avot* 2.10 we read this: R. Eliezer said: Let the honor of your friend be as dear to you as your own.....Who is he that is honored? He who honors his fellow man, as it is said: For

⁵⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

⁵¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁵² ESV Study Bible Notes

⁵³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. What we just heard is basically a rabbinic way of pronouncing the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.⁵⁴

McGee: 10-11 My, how wonderful these things are: have a code of honor, and be aglow with the spirit of God. Never flag in zeal -- have a zeal for the things of God.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." In other words, as to your brotherly love, have family affection one to another. Farrar puts it in this language, "Love the brethren in the faith as though they were brethren in blood." For example, three men are sitting together. Two of the men are identical twins; one twin is a Christian and the other is not. Sitting with these men is a believer from Africa. His culture, background, and language are all different. The color of his skin is different, but he knows the Lord as Savior. The Christian twin is actually closer to the man from Africa than he is to his twin brother. My friend, you ought to be nicer to your fellow believer because you will have to live with him throughout eternity. You had better start getting along now and practice putting up with his peculiar ways. However, he will have a new body then, and he will be rid of his old nature -- and you will also! It will make it better for both of you.

"Not slothful in business" is better translated "never flag in zeal." It has nothing to do with business. Luther gives it this translation: "In regard to zeal be not lazy."

"Fervent in spirit," or aglow with the Spirit, suggests that our zeal and enthusiasm should be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

"Serving the Lord" points everything in Christian conduct toward this focal point. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.⁵⁵

Guzik: Be kindly affectionate to one another: This is a command, that Christians should not have a cold, stand-offish attitude. In honor giving preference to one another shows that the displays of affection are genuine.

We should see in this, as much as anything, a call to simple good manners among Christians.⁵⁶

FCSBN: In love. The Dead Sea Scrolls community described their community in similar terms: "For according to the holy design, they shall all of them be in a community of truth and virtuous humility, of loving-kindness and good intent towards one another."⁵⁷

¹¹Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

Missler: "Not lagging behind in diligence" (NAS). Diligence is essential in any serious endeavor.

⁵⁴ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁵⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁵⁷ First-Century Study Bible Notes

Note: Joshua 1:8 “...then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” It doesn’t happen by itself.⁵⁸

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Another ethical teaching Paul introduces to the Believers at Rome follows in verse 11: CJB Romans 12:11 Don't be lazy when hard work is needed, but serve the Lord with spiritual fervor. Clearly this verse is less about not being lazy at our jobs, and more about how zealously we serve in the Kingdom of God. And the idea is for Believers to not shun getting our hands dirty doing Kingdom work but to be eager participants. That is, don't leave everything to the other guy and especially the hard things or even the little things that may go largely unseen by others of the community. Even more we are to do whatever our task might be with the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in us as our motivation and as our guide.⁵⁹

BKC: 11-12. Paul then provided a series of exhortations concerning a believer's personal attitudes, attitudes that will make him more attractive to others. In verse 11 the key thought is the last clause—serving (*doyleuontes*; *diakonian* in v. 7 is trans. "serving") the Lord—and the first two clauses explain how a believer is to serve as the Lord's "slave" (*doulos*; cf. 1:1): never... lacking ("not shrinking, not hesitating, not being lazy") in zeal (*en spoudē*, "diligence," rendered "diligently" in 12:8), and being fervent in spirit. Keep your spiritual fervor is literally, "being fervent, or boiling (*zeontes*, used only here and in Acts 18:25 of Apollos) in the spirit" (either the Holy Spirit or one's inner life). These two commands also balance each other as negative and positive commands (cf. Rom. 12:9). As believers serve God as His slaves they should be enthusiastic and diligent.

The three exhortations in verse 12 can be understood either as independent items or as additional descriptions of how believers should serve the Lord. They are to be joyful in hope, because their hope in Christ is the basis of their rejoicing (5:2-5; 1 Peter 1:6-9). In affliction (*thlipsei*, "distress, trouble, pressure"; cf. Rom. 8:35) believers are to be patient (*hypomenontes*, "being steadfast, having endurance"; cf. 5:3). Also Christians should continue in prayer to God for wisdom, guidance, and strength (cf. 1 Thes. 5:17). Being faithful, niv's translation of *proskarterountes*, should be rendered "persisting in" or "devoted to" (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:42; Col. 4:2).⁶⁰

Guzik: Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord: If we are called to warm relations and good manners, we also know that we are called to hard work. The church is no place for laziness.

Fervent in spirit could be translated, “with respect to the spirit, boiling.”⁶¹

¹²Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Missler: Hope is prophetic awareness. It is the goal of maturity. Cf. Rom 5:4; 8:20-25. “He who has no hope in eternity has no hold on time.” – Carlyle.

⁵⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

⁵⁹ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁶⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

⁶¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

“Patient in” = “persevering in” tribulation. “May the lessons on be wasted.”
“instant in prayer” = faithful in, devoted to, prayer.⁶²

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Paul gives us this instruction in verse 12:

CJB Romans 12:12 Rejoice in your hope, be patient in your troubles, and continue steadfastly in prayer. Yeshua made these two statements that no doubt Paul had in mind when he wrote those words.

CJB Matthew 10:22 Everyone will hate you because of me, but whoever holds out till the end will be preserved from harm. Christ also said: John 15:18-19 CJB18 "If the world hates you, understand that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, the world would have loved its own. But because you do not belong to the world- on the contrary, I have picked you out of the world therefore the world hates you.

So Paul is telling Believers that we need to rejoice in hope....but a hope of what? Whenever Paul speaks of hope it is nearly always hope for resurrection from the dead. Believers receive this hope of personal resurrection because of our trust in Yeshua and His resurrection; so then it follows that we will be afflicted with hatred from the world because of the world's staunch hatred of Him. This source of hate from the world will come from two sources: individuals or governments. Paul uses the term “troubles” to describe this hateful opposition Believers will face. What is our solution? What should we do about this? Nobody wants to be hated for their faith; their hope. Should we protest in the streets? Should we try to overthrow our government and install a Christian one? Paul says our solution is to be steadfast in prayer so that we can rejoice in our hope at the same time we are patient in our troubles with the world. Let me be quick to comment as regards troubles aimed at Believers. In Paul's time there was no such thing as Democracy; there were only autocratic governments. So, citizens had no choice about who ruled over them or what laws were enacted to control them. But in modern times, especially in the West, we have government leaders who, for the most part, are chosen by the people. So, the context Paul is operating under is that all government actions against Believers are dictatorial, and therefore the dynamic is that Believers should not lead society in rebellion but rather instead should pray. This would apply somewhat differently when we live in a Democracy where there are legal and peaceful means to change government leaders and policies.

Thus, Paul's point is prayer instead of retaliation; pray instead of retaliating against individuals or rebelling against governments. Why pray instead of retaliate or rebel? Listen to this excerpt from the Testament of Benjamin. The Testament of Benjamin is taken from a Jewish work composed in the mid 100's A.D., and is part of a larger work called the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. I want to quote this because it helps to demonstrate the mindset of the traditional Jewish community in general during and following Paul's time. I want to keep highlighting that most of what Paul issues as Halakhah, a series of religious rulings for Believers, is little more than rephrasing what was already taught and practiced within mainstream Judaism in his day.....but of course within the context of the Gospel of Christ.

“If anyone wantonly attacks a pious man, he repents since the pious shows mercy to the one who abused him, and maintains his silence. And if anyone betrays a righteous man, the righteous man prays. Even though for a brief time he may be humbled, later he will appear far more illustrious, as happened with Joseph my brother....”

So here members of Jewish communities are being urged to pray for those who are oppressing

⁶² Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

them instead of retaliating against them; even going so far as to do good to their enemies. Remember: this work I'm quoting from is NOT a work of Believing Jews, but rather of non-Believing Jews. And yet look how close this comes to things that Christ said: CJB Matthew 5:44 But I tell you, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!⁶³

McGee: 12-14 "Rejoicing in hope" should be the portion of the believer. The circumstances of the believer may not warrant rejoicing. The contrary may be true. But he sees the future, and in hope projects himself into other circumstances which are more favorable. I think of a brother down in my Southland years ago. In a church service they were giving favorite Scripture verses. He stood and said that his favorite verse was "It came to pass." Everyone looked puzzled. The preacher stood up and said, "Brother, how in the world can 'It came to pass' be your favorite?" His answer was, "When I have trouble, and when I have problems, I like to read that verse, 'It came to pass,' and I know that my trouble or my problem has come to pass; it hasn't come to stay." He was looking for a new day out there, and that is what Paul has in mind when he says, "rejoicing in hope."

"Continuing instant in prayer" is to be a man or woman of prayer.

"Distributing to the necessity of saints" means sharing the necessities of life with needy believers. A great many churches make a great deal of having a fund for the poor, but how much do they use it? God expects us to share what He has given to us with fellow believers who are in need.

"Given to hospitality" means actually to pursue hospitality. That is, we are to seek out other believers to whom we can extend hospitality. There may be a person in your neighborhood or even in your church who is introverted and retiring yet longs for Christian fellowship. We are to look him up and extend our fellowship to him.

"Bless them which persecute you" seems to be a needless injunction for believers. Surely one believer would not persecute another -- or would he? It is difficult to bless a man who is kicking you! But we are to bless and "curse not."⁶⁴

Guzik: Rejoicing in hope: The call to hope usually has in mind our ultimate reward with Jesus. Paul says we serve God rejoicing in hope, not rejoicing in results. This shows how we are commanded to do all these things with an eye towards heaven. This how we fulfill the command for hope, patience and steadfast character described here.

Patient in tribulation: Difficult times do not excuse us when we abandon hope or patience or continuing steadfastly in prayer. Trials do not excuse a lack of love in the body of Christ or a lack of willingness to do His work.

Leon Morris explains these two important words. Patient "denotes not a passive putting up with things, but an active, steadfast endurance." Tribulation "denotes not some minor pinprick, but deep and serious trouble."

¹³Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Missler: "Distributing": Different than the "giving" of v.8: "contributing to fellow believers;" entering into the fellowship of others needs; as our opportunity to help.

⁶³ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁶⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

koinoneo

- 1) to come into communion or fellowship with, to become a sharer, be made a partner
- 2) to enter into fellowship, join one's self to an associate, make one's self a sharer or partner; a fiduciary.

Prov 19:17; Luke 6:38.

[This attitude characterized the Jerusalem church (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 34-37). This concern also motivated the church in Antioch (Acts 11:27-30) and the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-27) to give to the church in Jerusalem.]

Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Gen 18,(& 19); Rom 16:1, 23, ff.⁶⁵

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

After dealing with the spiritual side of tribulation against us from the world, in verse 13 Paul turns to the humanitarian side. For Jews, attending to the practical needs of those who form their community was itself seen as a biblical measure of righteousness. Paul demonstrated this in the Book of Acts when he went from synagogue to synagogue in the Diaspora collecting money to take with him to donate to the needy Believers in Jerusalem. And while we must never think that the only people Believers should help are a) other Believers, and b) those of our own community, it is the Believers of our community that are the top priority. Why is that? Because the world takes care of its own and Believers are no longer part of the world. The world does, and always will, far outnumber us demographically and outstrip us in resources. In Bible times the precise definition and boundaries of one's own community weren't exactly the same as they are today because social systems have changed and evolved. But notice that Paul demonstrated that regardless of which local Believers' community we might belong to we must always consider the Holy Land (Israel) as part of our community.....and especially the Messianic Jews living in the Holy Land who have need.

Yeshua said this: CJB Luke 6:27 Nevertheless, to you who are listening, what I say is this: "Love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you."⁶⁶

BKC: Returning to Christians' responsibilities to other believers, Paul exhorted them, Share with God's people who are in need (lit., "sharing [*koinōnountes*, 'having in common'] the needs of the saints"). This characterized the Jerusalem church (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 34-37). This concern also motivated the church in Antioch (Acts 11:27-30) and the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-27) to give to the church in Jerusalem. In the same vein the apostle commanded, Practice hospitality (lit., "pursuing friendliness to strangers"). Both ministries, meeting needs and being hospitable, involve helping others.⁶⁷

Guzik: Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality: Our care and concern will demonstrate itself in practical deeds done for others, either going to them (distributing to the needs of the saints) or inviting them to come to us (given to hospitality)

⁶⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

⁶⁶ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁶⁷ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

The ancient Greek word for hospitality is literally translated “love for strangers.” In addition, “given” is a strong word, sometimes translated “persecute” (as in Romans 12:14). The idea is to “pursue” people you don’t know with hospitality. This is love in action, not just feelings.⁶⁸

ESV: Hospitality was very important for early Christians, for most of them could not afford hotels (lodging houses) when traveling but depended on the provision of fellow believers.⁶⁹

14Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Missler: This can only be done in the Spirit, rarely in the flesh (Mt 5: 44-47; Luke 23:34). Paul probably also remembered Stephen (Acts 7:59-60).⁷⁰

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

In verse 14 Paul essentially reiterates this fundamental commandment that Christ gave to His disciples. While I’m not a fan of many of Calvin’s doctrines, he does provide some sharp insight on parts of the New Testament and here I’d like to quote him because I think it precisely captures Paul’s purpose in saying what he did.

“Although there is hardly anyone who has made such advance in the law of the Lord that he fulfills this precept (love your enemies), no one can boast that he is the child of God, or glory in the name of a Christian, who has not (at least) partially undertaken this course, and does not struggle daily to resist his (personal) will to do the opposite.”⁷¹

BKC: 14-16. Paul's exhortations in this section relate to a believer's reactions to the actions and emotions of others, whether Christians or not. The hatred displayed in persecution usually evokes response in kind, but Paul commanded, Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse (cf. Matt. 5:44). Perhaps Paul thought of Stephen (Acts 7:59-60) and of Jesus Christ (Luke 23:34). They both modeled these words and responded to persecution even to death by praying for God's forgiveness of their persecutors.

Christians should be able to empathize with others, both believers and unbelievers. Paul commanded, Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Related to this is the next command, Live in harmony with one another (lit., "having the same attitude toward one another"; cf. Rom. 15:5; Phil. 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8). Being in harmony with other Christians is basic to being able to empathize with them. This idea is then presented in negative and positive details: Do not be proud (lit., "not thinking highly" of yourself; cf. Rom. 11:20; 12:3) and be willing to associate with people of low position (cf. James 2:1-9). These orders are summarized in the command, Do not be conceited (lit., "Do not become wise concerning themselves"; cf. Prov. 3:7; Rom. 11:25), an attitude that makes empathy impossible.⁷²

Guzik: (Rom 12:14) Relating to those outside of the Christian family.

⁶⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁶⁹ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁷⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

⁷¹ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁷² The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

Bless those who persecute you: We are not to have a hateful attitude towards anyone, not even towards those who persecute us.

Do not curse: Jesus spoke of this same heart in Matthew 5:46: For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? The surpassing greatness of the love of Jesus in us is shown in that it can be extended to our enemies.

Who persecute you: Of course, not all persecution comes from outside the church. Jesus told us the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service (John 16:2).⁷³

¹⁵Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Missler: Envy has no place in this. Enter into the fellowship of others: (vs. Job's friends...)⁷⁴

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

This is followed in verse 15 where Paul speaks of rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep. This is Paul's way of saying that the true measure of caring and compassion for our fellow man (regardless of whom that may be) is to join in empathizing with that person's experiences in whatever way they might occur. Is this a new Christian edict? Once again, this is a fundamental principle within Jewish society in Paul's day. In Ecclesiastes 3 we read this:

"A man should not rejoice when among people who weep or weep when among those who rejoice. He should not stay awake among people who sleep or sleep among those who are awake. He should not be standing when all others are sitting or sit when all others are standing. This is the general rule: A man should not deviate from the custom of his companions or from society....."

Another way of thinking about Paul's regulation is that we should respect, and give a fair hearing, to the views of others within the community to which we belong. Why? Because only then will we have any ground upon which we can create the kind of relationship whereupon we can lead them to the Lord. I've said to many well-meaning Believers who want to go to Israel with the grand vision that they are going to bring Jews to Christ: leave your Christian tracts at home and begin by creating an honest relationship of friendship and mutual respect. This will take time, perhaps years, and it must be sincere and without agenda or you will quickly be found out and all opportunity to speak about Yeshua will vanish. A 10-day Israel tour will not provide sufficient time to create that relationship. And it will almost certainly require you being as open to learning from them, and bending to their society and customs, as what you hope to show to them. And this is precisely what verse 16 tells us.⁷⁵

McGee: 15-16 "Rejoice with them that do rejoice." The world's motto is "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone." But that is not true of the believer. We are to enter into the joys and sorrows of other believers. Weep with those who weep. "Be of the same mind one toward another" doesn't mean uniformity of thought but that we are to have the mind of Christ.

⁷³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁷⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

⁷⁵ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

Believers ought to enter emotionally into the lives of other believers. I think that is something that makes genuine Christians so wonderful.

"Mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate." My friend, let's not be afraid of associating with humble men and things of low estate. Paul said to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5) -- what kind of a mind did Christ have? A humble mind.

"Be not wise in your own conceits." In other words, stop being wise in your own opinion. What an injunction that is! A great many of the saints think they are spiritual giants, but they are not. Solomon, who was a man with wisdom from God, gave a very interesting injunction: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Prov. 26:12). I wouldn't dare say a thing like this, but Solomon said it.⁷⁶

Guzik: (Rom 12:15-21) How to get along with people both inside and outside the church.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep: This is how we can fulfill the command to be of the same mind toward one another. It is a simple command to be considerate of the feelings of others instead of waiting for them to be considerate of your feelings.⁷⁷

FCSBN: Mourn with those who mourn. This is paralleled in the noncanonical book of Sirach, which states in 7:34, "Do not avoid those who weep, but mourn with those who mourn."⁷⁸

¹⁶Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

No class distinctions in the Body of Christ.

Guzik: Associate with the humble: Paul cautions us to have a humble mind-set. In refusing to set our mind on high things and in associating with the humble, we simply imitate Jesus. Do not be wise in your own opinion reminds us of how far we still have to go in actually being like Jesus.⁷⁹

¹⁷Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Missler: Ethics don't come automatically: it takes training, commitment, and discipline. A most serious lack in the Body...

1 Cor 9:19-23.⁸⁰

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

From there Paul moves on to yet another traditional Jewish maxim: don't repay evil with evil. In other words, don't seek revenge for a wrong done to you because this violates the principle of

⁷⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁷⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁷⁸ First-Century Study Bible Notes

⁷⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁸⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

loving your neighbor as yourself. Among the most pious of Jews, including the Essenes, the reason behind this regulation is that perhaps a merciful person who has been dealt an evil blow by someone will be able to lead the offender to behaving more righteously. Let's revisit the Testament of Benjamin. In chapter 4 we read this:

"See then, my children, what is the goal of the good man. Be imitators of him in his goodness, because of his compassion, in order that you may wear crowns of glory. For a good man does not have a blind eye, but is merciful to all, even though they may be sinners. And even if persons plot against him for evil ends, by doing good this man conquers evil, being watched over by God. He loves those who wrong him as he loves his own life. If anyone glorifies him, he holds no envy.....If your mind is set towards good, even evil men will be at peace with you...."

This sounds like something Yeshua himself could have said. Again, I want to draw you back to a major point in this week's lesson: the principles Paul introduces in his letters that the average Believer thinks are being newly formed by Paul's words and thus belong exclusively to Christianity and Messianic Judaism were neither new nor revolutionary as so much of the Christian world assumes. In fact, we see a pattern emerge: Paul is essentially but reminding the Jews of the Diaspora (in this case Believing Jews in the city of Rome) of these long held bedrock principles of Judaism at the same moment he is introducing these same principles to new gentile Believers who, as former pagans, are likely hearing them for the first time. Truly, Christianity has a Hebrew heritage.⁸¹

McGee; 17-18 "Recompense to no man evil for evil." The suggestion is that the believer may expect evil at the hands of the world. However, we are not to strike back.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men." There is nothing that can hurt the cause of Christ more than a dishonest Christian. The non-Christian is not concerned about the doctrine you hold -- whether you are a premillennialist or whether you believe in election or free will. However, he does want to know if you are truthful or not, and he does want to know if you pay your honest debts. Are you a person that a man can depend upon? Providing things honest in the sight of all men is a lot better than giving out tracts, my friend. Let me illustrate this. Some years ago, in Memphis, Tennessee, a Christian handed a man a tract. "What is this?" asked the man. The Christian replied, "It is a tract and I want you to read it." "I don't read," the man replied, "but I will tell you what I will do -- I will watch your tracks!" Oh, how accurate that is! The world is watching the tracks that you make, not the tracts you give out. Don't misunderstand me; giving out gospel tracts is important. But you had better have a life that will back them up when you give out tracts.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably" -- I love this because there are people that you just cannot get along with; they won't let you get along with them. A dear lady who lived alone, a wonderful Christian, called me one day in deep concern because she had a neighbor whom she couldn't get along with, and she wondered if I would come and talk with the neighbor. As I was driving out there, I was thinking that since this lady had been living alone, although she was a Christian, she might be a little difficult herself. So I went out and talked to her neighbor. Well, the neighbor told me what she thought of me as well as this dear lady. I went back to this wonderful Christian and said, "I don't think you need to worry anymore if you can't get along with her. Nobody can get along with that woman. The Bible says 'as much as lieth in you'; it doesn't say you have to get along with her. Just do the best you can."

⁸¹ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.⁸²

BKC: 17-18. The exhortations in verses 17-21 relate primarily to believers' relationships with unbelievers, speaking as they do of those who do evil toward believers (v. 17) and are the "enemy" of believers (v. 20). The Old Testament principle of justice was "eye for eye" (Ex. 21:24), but Paul commanded, Do not repay anyone evil for evil (cf. 1 Peter 3:9). On the positive side Christians are to do what is right (kala, "beautiful," used here in the ethical sense of good, noble, and honorable). Paul then commanded believers, Live at peace with everyone (cf. "live in harmony with one another," Rom. 12:16). But recognizing that limits exist, Paul included the words, If it is possible, as far as it depends on you. Harmony with others may not always be achievable, but believers should not be responsible for that lack of peace (cf. Matt. 5:9).⁸³

Guzik: Repay no one evil for evil recalls Jesus' command in Matthew 5:38-45. We are to love our enemies and treat well those who treat us badly.

Have regard for good things in the sight of all men is a way to live out the idea of praising what is good. People should be able to see what is good and what is not based on our conduct.⁸⁴

FCSBN: Evil for evil. This is paralleled in the Jewish text Joseph and Aseneth, which states in 23:9, "We are men who worship God; and it does not befit us to repay evil with evil."⁸⁵

¹⁸If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Thanks for the "if!"

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Next in verse 18 is one of Paul's more famous sayings, especially embraced by pacifists. CJB Romans 12:18 If possible, and to the extent that it depends on you, live in peace with all people. Let's begin by talking about what this verse does NOT say. It does NOT say that we are obligated to be at peace with all people. It also does NOT say that even though a person refuses to be at peace with you, as a Believer you must be at peace with them. And neither does it say that peace is entirely our responsibility. Rather there are two significant caveats surrounding the instruction to live in peace with all people. The first is "if it is possible", and the second is "to the extent that it depends on you". So, as a Believer my desire ought to be for peace with all people and I should do every reasonable thing within my sphere of control to make that happen. I should try to see the other person's viewpoint; and I should not take retaliatory action merely because I've been offended or shamed. But this does not mean that if a person is holding a knife to my wife's throat that Paul has said that I must stay peaceful and allow that criminal to proceed without interference. It does not mean that when an aggressor nation threatens or attacks us that we don't defend ourselves and if we go to war that we should not play to win. Rather provided there is a way to make peace with another party who also seeks

⁸² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁸³ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

⁸⁴ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁸⁵ First-Century Study Bible Notes

peace, without compromising our moral principles and our relationship with God, and without passively allowing ourselves to be taken over by a criminal or a tyrant, we are obligated to make every effort to effect peace to the point that our efforts are firmly rejected.⁸⁶

Guzik: Live peaceably with all men reminds us that though we are in contrast to the world, we do not seek out contention. If it is possible, we will be at peace with all men.

“If it be possible indicates that it may not always be possible.” (Murray)⁸⁷

ESV: If possible. Paul recognizes it is not always possible to be at peace with everyone, even when one makes the effort.⁸⁸

¹⁹Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Missler: [“Living well is the best revenge.” ?]

(NAS, NIV): “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”

(Deut 32:35; cf. Heb 10:30.)

David’s refusal to kill Saul on two occasions when it seemed that God had delivered Saul into David’s hands is a classic Biblical example of this principle.⁸⁹

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

However, as says verse 19, that also means that even when we have been wronged in some way we should not seek revenge for the sake of revenge. This of course plays to the Jewish principle, and one that Christ reiterated, that we are to love our enemies with the hope that they will repent and turn to the God of Israel. And we can be assured that at some point, either in this life or the next one, God will exact a price for that wrongdoer’s attack upon us. In fact God prefers that we leave such a matter of justice to Him. But do not misunderstand: criminal justice on earth administered by human governments is expected by God and that is one of the reasons He created nations and installed governments. Paul’s statement more concerns unjust actions against us that, for any number of reasons, go unpunished.

We need to be aware of just how difficult of an injunction this was for Believers, Jew or gentile, in Paul’s era. Avenging a family member or yourself was not only common practice it was assumed. In fact, because most of the world operated in a shame/honor society to some degree, to be wronged not only produced harm it also produced shame. And the only way to get rid of this shame was to get your honor back. And usually the only way to get your honor back was some sort of revenge upon the one who shamed you, which often involved killing them. So that you understand this better I’ll expand just a bit more. Whether among Jewish society or Roman society there were strict civil laws and there were police forces, court systems and systems of punishment. So, murder, theft, and mayhem usually did not go unpunished. However certain crimes also produced shame upon the victim (rape for instance), and at other times non-

⁸⁶ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁸⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁸⁸ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁸⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

criminal acts (like a male being slapped on the face as an insult) also produced shame. Thus, the criminal acts could be handled by the criminal justice system, whether Jewish or Roman. However, the criminal justice system had no capacity to solve an issue of loss of honor due to an insult; this, by custom, was left in the hands of the one who was shamed. Both Judaism and the Roman government actually established civil laws that tried to stamp out this practice of vengeance to restore honor; but honor killings were still common. In fact, in one of Jesus of Nazareth's most famous quotes we find Him teaching about what a victim of insult ought to do or not do about losing their honor.

CJB Matthew 5:39 But I tell you not to stand up against someone who does you wrong. On the contrary, if someone hits you on the right cheek, let him hit you on the left cheek too!

This badly misunderstood verse has nothing to do with criminal activity. It is not a call to not defend yourself when being attacked, nor is it a call to allow a criminal to harm you and you refuse to prosecute. God's justice requires that we are to always administer justice according to divine regulations. Being struck on the cheek might be cause for assault and battery in the Western world, but it was not so (and still is not so) in the Middle Eastern world. Rather slapping someone on his face was a cultural act of shaming that person; it was very serious (although judicial authorities would have no involvement because no crime was involved). A slap on the face would almost certainly result in the person who got slapped seeking revenge on the one who slapped him, and the one who did the slapping would have expected it. Thus, a blood feud could erupt that entangled the entire family and could go on for decades. The goal of the one whose cheek was slapped was to regain his lost honor and this was done at any cost up to and including murdering the offender. So Yeshua's only point was to tell those whose honor was taken from them by such a thing as having your face slapped was to NOT seek revenge. Instead, allow the offender to strike the other cheek as well because this issue of shame and honor was based strictly on manmade cultural customs and had no actual basis in God's moral or ethical laws. However, the retaliation of the one who had his cheek slapped would nearly always involve his committing a criminal act that would violate God's laws in hopes of regaining his honor. Yeshua says that among those who follow Him, that should not occur.⁹⁰

McGee: 19-20 This is one of the greatest principles you will find in the Word of God, yet it is the most difficult thing for a child of God to do. When somebody hits you on one cheek, it is difficult to turn the other cheek. I am like the Irishman who was hit on one cheek, and he got up and turned the other cheek. This time the fellow hit him so hard, he knocked him down. Then the Irishman got up and beat the stuffings out of the other fellow. Somebody asked him, "Why in the world did you do that? You turned the other cheek; why didn't you leave it like that?" "Well," he said, "the Bible says to turn your cheek, and I had only one other cheek to turn. The Lord didn't tell me what to do after that, so I did what I thought I ought to do." That is what most of us do. We find it difficult not to hit back. But the minute you and I take the matter into our own hands and attempt to work the thing out by hitting back as hard as we can, we have taken the matter out of God's control, and we are no longer walking by faith. God is saying to us, "You walk by faith with Me, and let Me handle the matter for you, because I will handle it in a just manner. If this person has injured you, I'll take care of him." You and I can turn these matters over to the Lord, and we ought to do that. I can tell you what to do, but I confess that I find it most difficult to do myself. But there have been one or two times when I have turned it over to the Lord, and I have been amazed at how well He handled it. He does it a lot better than I do it.

⁹⁰ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

There was a man, an officer in one of the churches I served, who did me a great injury, a terrible injury. My first thought was to clobber him, but I remembered this passage of Scripture. I went to the Lord and said, "Lord, I'd like to hit back and I can, but I don't think I will. I'll turn him over to You, and I expect you to handle him." Well, I saw that man the other day. I have never looked at a person who is as unhappy as that man is. He has troubles, friend. The Lord has taken him to the woodshed and whipped him within an inch of his life. When I looked into that man's face, I couldn't help but feel sorry for him. I wish I could say that I turn all of these matters over to the Lord, but I confess that sometimes I hit back.⁹¹

BKC: 19-21. Referring again to the negative (cf. v. 17a) Paul then exhorted his readers not to take revenge after they are misused. Instead they should leave room for God's wrath (lit., "for the wrath"), because God has promised to avenge His people: It is Mine to avenge, I will repay (Deut. 32:35; cf. Heb. 10:30). David's refusal to kill Saul on two occasions when it seemed that God had delivered Saul into David's hands is a classic biblical example of this principle. In light of God's promise to execute vengeance, a Christian should therefore feed his enemy and quench his thirst—in short, respond to his evil with Christian love. Heaping burning coals on his head, along with the first part of Romans 12:20, is a quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22. The coals on the head may refer to a ritual in Egypt in which a person showed his repentance by carrying a pan of burning charcoal on his head. Helping rather than cursing an enemy may cause him to be ashamed and penitent. As Paul summarized, Do not be overcome by evil, giving in to the temptation to retaliate, but overcome evil with good (cf. Matt. 5:44, "love your enemies"). Again, positive and negative commands are put together (cf. Rom. 12:9, 11, 16-20).⁹²

Guzik: Do not avenge yourselves: The one who trusts in God will not think it necessary to avenge themselves. They will leave the issue of vengeance to God, and give place to wrath – giving no place to their own wrath, and a wide place to God's wrath.⁹³

ESV: Vengeance is mine. Another allusion to Jesus' teaching (Matt. 5:39). Feelings of revenge can be overcome by realizing that God will make all things right, and that he will visit his wrath on those who deserve it.⁹⁴

²⁰Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Missler: Quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22.

[The coals on the head may refer to a ritual in Egypt in which a person showed his repentance by carrying a pan of burning charcoal on his head. Helping rather than cursing an enemy may cause him to be ashamed and penitent.]⁹⁵

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⁹⁴ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁹⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Paul quotes first Deuteronomy 32:35 and then follows that up with Proverbs 25 verses 21 and 22; notice that the term “your enemy” is used. While we think of our enemy mostly in terms of war that is not how it was always thought of in ancient times. Your enemy was often a person you hated or who hated you for some breach of cultural protocol or some offense that had been committed. This only sometimes involved criminality; more often than not it involved an insult within the cultural shame/honor system of that society. This is why the final few words that read “You will heap fiery coals of shame upon his head” must be taken within the Jewish context; this is about shame and not criminal justice. Thus, in the case of all that Paul has been addressing to close out this chapter, Paul has not been talking not so much about criminal activity but rather the cultural problem of shame and honor and how to restore lost honor. Paul’s solution is to allow God to make the determination about what kind of revenge (if any) ought to be exacted upon a person who caused you to lose your honor in the eyes of your peers.⁹⁶

Guzik: Overcome evil with good: With this mind-set, we will do good to our enemies, looking for the most practical ways we can help them. This is the way we are not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Is the heaping coals of fire on his head something good in the eyes of our enemy or is it something bad? It most likely refers to a “burning conviction” that our kindness places on our enemy. Or, some think it refers to the practice of lending coals from a fire to help a neighbor start their own – an appreciated act of kindness.

Nevertheless, we see that we can destroy our enemy by making him our friend.⁹⁷

ESV: Burning coals is quoted from Prov. 25:21–22. Most interpreters think Paul is teaching that the Christian is to do good to people so that they will feel ashamed and repent, and that sense is possible. But in the OT “burning coals” always represent punishment (2 Sam. 22:13; Ps. 11:6; 18:8, 12-13; 140:10), so another interpretation is that Paul is repeating the thought of Rom. 12:19.⁹⁸

FCSBN: Burning coals. This is typically understood as a description of divine judgment and is probably a quotation from Pr 25:21–22. However, it appears that Paul used the phrase in a positive sense rather than in a negative sense of judgment. Some have suggested Paul was using the image of an Egyptian ritual in which a penitent carried coals on their head as a sign of repentance rather than judgment.⁹⁹

²¹Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Missler: John 15:5, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

Branches look like the vine; but it is the sap from the vine that produces the fruit...¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁹⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-12.cfm?a=1058001

⁹⁸ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁹⁹ First-Century Study Bible Notes

¹⁰⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

And finally, Paul sums up essentially the entire chapter by saying that we are not to be conquered by evil but rather we should conquer evil with good. The bottom line to this is that the best way to bring people into a relationship with Yeshua is through love, mutual respect, and to determine never to exact revenge from someone who has offended you. To be conquered by evil means for us to give in to our evil inclinations; this will result in our burning desire for revenge. Rather God's way to conquer both our evil inclination and doing evil in response to someone who has wronged us, is instead to respond with good. And whatever just punishment that ought to happen, but didn't for whatever reason, God will mete out according to His wrath...or perhaps, just as He has done for countless millions of us, with His mercy.¹⁰¹

McGee: In other words, stop being overcome of evil; overcome evil by means of good. As the believer walks through this evil world with its satanic system, he cannot fight it. If you attempt to fight this satanic system, my friend, it will whip you. You cannot adopt the same worldly tactics of hate and revenge. If you do, you can be assured of defeat.

"Overcome evil with good." God has given the believer the "good," which is the Holy Spirit. He is to walk in the Spirit. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). Paul goes on to say, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).¹⁰²

ESV: Christians are to do good to wrongdoers, recognizing that God will punish them on the last day if they refuse to repent. Overcoming evil with good will ordinarily include acts of kindness toward evildoers, but it may sometimes also include the "good" (13:4) of the civil government stopping evil through the use of superior force (military or police), as Paul explains in 13:3–4. See note on Prov. 25:21–22.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

¹⁰² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁰³ ESV Study Bible Notes