

# “...your reasonable service” –Part 2

- Romans 12

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## Romans 12

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**12:9 - Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.**

1) In the context of the “body of Christ,” Paul continues to describe the attributes that are to emanate from that body if it is truly of Christ. He describes not *membership*, which the New Testament never refers to, but *fellowship*. Such speaks of a realm of commonality; a sharing of joys and pains as well as responsibilities, the blessings of adoption, and the accountability one to another.

Many folks attempt to be a *member* of a church while denying its *fellowship*. But we must realize that no such dynamic exists in God’s plan. “Let love be without hypocrisy...” D.L. Moody once said that this is “talking cream and living skim milk.” Any Christian who walks the faith for even a short time learns that love is the most important issue. But Paul doesn’t just leave it there. He tells us that love must be “without hypocrisy.”

With a uncanny clarity of the human heart! This idea is not unusual with Paul:  
"Giving no offence in anything...by love unfeigned [genuine]" (2 Cor 6:3, 6).  
"Prove the sincerity of your love" (2 Cor 8:8) ).

2) Paul recognizes that our love can be manifested in false ways, because we often come to the stage with a misunderstanding concerning what love really is. We often deal with people in the realm of a *human earthly* ideal of a “perfect love.” Such earthly love is at its core, selfish and infantile. Scripture tells us that “God is love” and that He is the example of real “perfect love.” This kind of love characterizes God’s nature.

Thus to manifest His love, we must realize and accept *His* version of love, not force our concepts into the picture! We can know when we are “off-base” on this issue, because our version of love in fact ultimately causes dissention, division, strife, and in the end no lasting fruit. We can *call* it love, but if it’s not how God loved in His word, then it isn’t the love *He* is looking for.

“Abhor what is evil...” The language is extreme in its implication. We are to “hate and detest” all things evil. We are to “*cleave*” to what is good. Such language calls us away from the imaginary “middle ground” that creates such ideas as “the end justifies the means.”



We cannot expect to be free from the draw of sin unless we despise all sin enough to move far away from it. But human nature will always attempt to “walk the line”; *to come as close to the flame as possible without getting burned.*

**12:10 - *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.***

God calls us, through the pen of the apostle Paul, to be “kindly affectionate” to *one another*. Speaking in the context of the body of Christ, we are clearly all placed into one group here. We cannot pick and choose to whom we will express God’s love. Such is a very real problem within any body of Christ as we tend to choose to love only those we find acceptable or “personably palatable.” We want to show our love only to those like us, or only one genre of individual. The leaders, the youth, or the underdogs. We tend to choose those we want to love *and those we do not.*

**12:11 - *not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;***

The KJV uses the term “slothful” meaning “lazy.”

We are not to be lazy within this body of Christ. We are called to be diligent and active in both our church lives as well as in our “non-church lives”. Such a call has never been more critical as it is today. While the evangelical Christian world bickers amongst themselves about minor doctrinal issues and becomes distracted by non-biblical practices and even falling to the flesh, the world is quickly becoming inundated by Islam on the left and Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons on the right. *Time* is not on our side. The NEB version renders Jeremiah 48:10: “*A curse on him who is slack in doing the Lord’s work!*”

“*Fervent in spirit...*” “*Zeal to the boiling point*” is what is being called for. This is not some deep mysterious concept! Let us ask ourselves for an honest evaluation: *am I indeed “fervent in spirit?”* Many of us will quickly respond in the affirmative, but truly, how do I know? How do I prove such a position? For such is not just *theory*, but *practical* in its manifestation! The answer lies in the next sentence: “*...serving the Lord.*”

Many believe that mere lip-service is enough when it comes to proving our zeal. And we will look the other way when we read passages such as this.

**12:12 - *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;***

“*hope*” is the “expectation of the eternal.” Such a statement redirects our hearts and eyes away from the world and turns them toward heaven. Where is our hearts today? For “where our heart is, there lies our treasure.” (Luke 12:34)

Many of us have invested in this world where “moths and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal.” For each of us in the end of this life we will turn our heads away from these things, and look ahead. What will we see? Will there be anything there waiting for us? Will we have anything that will not burn like “hay and stubble?”

“*...patient in tribulation.*” Such a statement needs little commentary: *are we patient when things are difficult? When we are being tested, are we willing to wait upon the Lord?* Such a directive plays out inside and outside of the church! The word “tribulation” comes from an original word meaning “a log with spikes in it, used to roll over wheat to separate the chaff.”

“*...continuing steadfastly in prayer.*”

The term is “diligent.” *Forever diligent...never quitting...never pausing.*

**12:13 - *distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.***

This speaks of the loving care of your brethren. But please note that it says the *needs* of the saints, not the *wants*. And let us remember that *love* is to supersede all. So let us be careful that our *distribution* is truly in the framework of love. That can sometimes take some effort to look into the situation before you open your billfold or your couch.

We are to be “given to hospitality” and I have seen this fellowship give freely to individuals and causes but only after “testing and examining” each spirit. (1John 4:1) Such warning is not an excuse to not bless others, but to always do so in *love*. Not to make *ourselves* feel better but to truly love others as Christ loved them; in honesty and with an eternal mindset.

**12:14 - *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.***

Not just outwardly, but with heart. Paul was one who knew such a situation as this. Such a heart comes only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

**12:15 - *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.***

Again, continuing in the theme of the unity of the body of Christ, we are called to share personally with those in pain as well as those rejoicing. Notice that “jealousy” is not a gift of the Spirit.

**12:16 - *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.***

“*Be of the same mind toward one another...*” This means we are to live in harmony with each other. The sad statistic here is that many of us live with constant hearts of bitterness and division. We cause strife in the body of Christ, and are unable to see beyond our anger to our own heart. But Paul’s directive here is not an isolated one. He makes the same call elsewhere.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 cor 1:10)

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” 2 Cor 13:11)

We are called to live with each other with a humble mind. The irony of this battle is that those who are most prideful among us are generally those who believe themselves to be the humblest! But these people find repeatedly that their pride gets them into constant trouble as they struggle with those around them.

**12:17-19 - *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.***

This one can also be a difficulty in a society that is constantly teaching the opposite. We live in a “get even” world where such is being taught constantly. And like so many other issues and worldly stances, this too is being gradually accepted within the broader church today. But I have found that when I find myself in such situations, I don’t know the whole story, or the individual who is striving against me does not know the whole story. But in our pride we *think* we know it all, and of course, that we are right and righteous!

**12:20-21 - *Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***

Such thinking is so often passé and archaic in today’s churches! In a realm of overt politics infecting the church, the “religious right,” the “moral majority,” and the “sin-sniffing” mentality of rabid legalism in many churches, we have turned the church into religious police instead of a holy body of believers who love as Christ loved and seek to be as He was and is in all things. Because the wider church is failing so miserably in these things Paul has taught here, as well as so many other plain biblical truths, we are being rendered inept and powerless. The church today isn’t being beaten by the devil, we are being beaten by ourselves. Our flesh, and our very long leash we have provided for ourselves.

We have lost the sense of living separate and sanctified lives. Sanctification means “set apart” for the exclusive use of the Father and the Kingdom of God. We have wholly adopted a “Jesus plus” message and lifestyle. Is Jesus the light that fills your life or flashlight to find the path when things get dark? Is He an important part of your life, or is He literally your *everything*? *What does the living of your life answer to that question?*