

**ROMANS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Romans chapter 12 as we continue our study through Paul's letter to the Romans and we continue our study through the Word of God!

In our study of Romans, we have been through four major divisions of this letter. Paul has shown us how the whole world is guilty before God because of their sin – **CONDEMNATION**, in Romans 1:18 to Romans 3:20.

Then Paul showed us that the righteousness of God has been revealed to us from heaven apart from the works of the Law – **JUSTIFICATION**, in Romans 3:21 to Romans 5:21.

The third division of this letter we see Paul show us the power of God's Spirit to live out a life that is pleasing to God – **SANCTIFICATION**, in Romans chapter 6 through Romans chapter 8.

And the fourth division of this letter Paul shows us that we are chosen by God and yet, we have a free will to choose the Lord or reject Him – **ELECTION**, in Romans chapter 9 through Romans 11.

Tonight, we are beginning Paul's fifth and final main division of his letter to the Romans, and here Paul shows us how we are to apply the doctrine, which he has given to us, to our lives – **APPLICATION**, which we will cover in Romans chapter 12 through Romans chapter 15 verse 13.

Paul has spent that past 11 chapters dealing with what God has given to us, all the blessings, all we have and now he turns it around and tells us to walk accordingly, give back to God, it is a section on application, as I have said. Obviously, this is a very practical section and truly the key to a productive and satisfying Christian life, giving your all to the Lord.

Too often we focus so much of our attention on doctrine, on what God has for us but we miss out on the application part.

Don't get me wrong, doctrine is very important, but if you don't apply it to your life, then it is meaningless!

It would be like studying the law of gravity for years, have all kinds of degrees in this field, you have all the principles down, all the information you can gather, and then one day, as you are walking on the top of a building, you step off the ledge and come crashing down to the ground.

It was not that you had the wrong information about gravity. It is not that you didn't study enough about gravity. You just didn't apply it to your life!

Many Christians do the same with the Word of God, they have all the information, but they don't apply it to their lives and then they wonder why they feel defeated, why they have no happiness, no joy in their lives!

Folks, this is where the rubber meets the road, you might say, for in applying these truths of God to your life you will find happiness, you will find joy in doing what you were created for.

And as we have seen in the past 11 chapters of Romans, all that we have in Christ, we see in Ephesians as well. Paul spent the first three chapters of Ephesians on doctrine and then he says in Ephesians chapter 4, **"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called."** Ephesians 4:1.

Exactly, we know what God has given to us, we know the doctrine, the truths of God found in the Word of God, and now we need to walk accordingly!

One writer summed this last section of Romans, before we get to the conclusion and benediction in the last few chapters of Romans, like this,

***Here Paul wants believers to consider how they serve the Lord. Their minds must be transformed in order to carry out God's will. Furthermore, every child of God must practice humility and exercise sound judgment in serving Him. All believers have been given spiritual gifts and a measure of grace to serve the body of Christ.***

In the preceding eleven chapters, Paul piloted his readers through quite heavy doctrine. But doctrine is never taught in the Bible as an end in itself. It is always taught in order that it may be translated into practice. In John 13:17 Jesus declares, "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." Consequently, it is the Pauline practice to follow a doctrinal section of Scripture with a practical section, and usually these two are linked together with the word therefore (cf. Eph. 4:1; Col. 3:5).

- Woodrow Kroll, Romans – Righteousness in Christ, p. 189

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Romans chapter 12, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**ROMANS 12****VERSES 1-2**

Listen again to how Paul opens up Romans 12:1, “**I beseech you therefore . . .**” In other words, Paul is exhorting them to walk according to what God has said in His Word. And the reason for this, the word “**therefore**” links us back to all that Paul has shown us in the first 11 chapters of Romans. Because of all that God has done for you, won’t you live for Him!

Morris put it this way: “When he uses this pattern Paul is saying that the Christian life is dependent on the great Christian doctrines.”

That is so important for us to understand, especially when people have moved away from the truths of God found in the Word of God!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

“Doctrine divides,” the young man explained. “Of course it’s important, but God cares far more for our deeds than our creeds. Doctrine divides, but love unites.” Could he be right? Is doctrine a force for division meant to bow before the primacy of love?

“I find doctrine boring,” the husband confessed. “I don’t have any interest in hearing about theology. Just tell me what God wants me to do, and I’ll do it. I’m a doer, not a learner.” Could he have it right? Is doctrine a drab discipline fit only for the halls of academia?

As it happens, the Bible has much to say about doctrine and only ever commends it as something that is of great importance to every Christian. In fact, we cannot rightly consider ourselves faithful followers of Jesus Christ unless we thoroughly know our doctrine, staunchly cling to it, and faithfully defend it. Though the Christian faith is far more than knowing doctrine, it is never less. And yet many who profess to be Christians have only the most rudimentary knowledge of Christian doctrine.

- <https://www.challies.com/articles/know-your-doctrine/>

You see, we don't live a life that is separate from the Word of God but a life that is according to the Word of God! Never forget that!

Now I have touched on this, but someone may ask, "Why should we live unto God?" That is a great question and the answer is simple!

Because of all the mercy He has shown us; like justification, sanctification, election, adopted into the family of God, God's Spirit indwelling us, the love of God and so much more that we have already covered in the first 11 chapters of Romans.

It is as Harrison said, "Whereas the heathen are prone to sacrifice to obtain mercy, biblical faith teaches that divine mercy provides the basis of sacrifice as the fitting response."

You see, how can we not live unto God with all the mercy He has bestowed upon us?

How do we live for God? Paul tells us that we are to be a living sacrifice unto God.

In other words, we are to place our lives on the altar to be offered up as a burnt offering, totally given to God, and it will be a sweet-smelling sacrifice unto God as we do.

Too often we give God portions of our lives but not our entire being. He wants it all and as we do, He gives it back to us, so we may bring Him glory!

Think about this for a minute. The Old Testament sacrifices were dead sacrifices, but we are to be living sacrifices. And Paul says we are living sacrifices and if he has the burnt offering in mind, he is speaking of total consecration to God, all of me given to God! And I believe he is speaking of the burnt offering!

Now, as we give ourselves to God, Paul tells us that it is our “**reasonable service**” or literally “**spiritual worship**” for the word “**service**” in the Greek is LATREIA (lat-ri’-ah), which speaks of the worship of God!

So not only is a life given to God reasonable service, but it is also our reasonable or spiritual worship unto God!

But there is something else here that many don’t speak of, and that is this word “**reasonable.**” In the Greek it is the word LOGIKOS, (log-ik-os’) and means, “of the word.” (See I Peter 2:2)

Think about this. Paul is saying that our life of sacrifice unto God speaks of a life of worship that is according to God’s Word! That is something that the church has moved away from and thus, all goes. No doctrine, no true worship, and lives that are headed for disaster! We need to worship God in Spirit and in truth!

And then Paul says, “**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.**” Romans 12:2.

We see here the contrast between living a life as you please and living a life as a sacrifice unto God.

Being “**conformed to this world**” speaks of becoming like this world, influenced by this world, this system of man apart from God whose ruler is the Devil himself as Paul tells us, “**whose minds the god of this age has blinded . . .**” II Corinthians 4:4.

Make no mistake about it, the battle ground between conforming to the world and being transformed is within the *mind* of the believer. And Paul is telling us, “*Christians must think differently.*”

Then why are so many Christians struggling in this area? Why are so many Christians being conformed to this world?

The answer is not that difficult to figure out. You see, many Christians live their lives based on *feelings*, or they are only concerned about *doing!*

And look how this is played out. “How do I feel today?” “How do I feel about my wife?” “How do I feel about my husband?” “How do I feel about my job?” “How do I feel about the pastor?” You don’t have to answer that one!

That is the problem! You see, a life that is lived based upon feelings will never know the transforming power of God in their lives! Why is that? Because they are ignoring the renewing of the mind!

Look at the Christian self-help books, look at the books that are being used for Bible study instead of the Word of God, listen to the teachers and leaders that may hold the Bible in the air when they teach, but they never open it or teach from it. That is the problem and they are tickling people’s ears, they give feel-good messages that are not transforming anyone, but they are conforming people to look like the world and act like the world does. And, keep in mind that the world is at war with God! Is that where you want to be? “*Feelings ohh feelings!*”

Let’s face it, it is easy to just stand there and let the world press you into their mold!

But Paul is telling us that we need to resist being put into their mold because, as Paul said in Romans 8:6-8, **“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”**

But Paul is calling for us to not be conformed to this world but to be *TRANSFORMED!*

You see, as you surrender your life unto God as a living sacrifice, you will not be conformed to this world, but you are being **“transformed by the renewing of your mind.”**

The word **“transformed”** in the Greek is METAMORPHOO (met-am-or-fo'-o) and it speaks of a metamorphosis that is taking place in our lives.

The only other two places this word is used in the New Testament is in Mark 9:2-3 where we see the transfiguration of Jesus and we are told, **“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was *transfigured* before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.”**

The other place is in II Corinthians 3:18 where we are told, **“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.”**

Folks, as we behold the face of God, as we spend time with Him, as we surrender our lives to Him, our lives will be transformed into the image of God, a metamorphosis will take place.

This process begins the moment we get saved and it continues on through our entire lives until we go to be with the Lord! In other words, the new nature that God has placed in our hearts will manifest itself in our lives!



And look at the contrast here. The world is brainwashing people to follow them, to their way of thinking! But the Holy Spirit wants to, in a sense, wash our brains by *the cleansing of the Word*. (Ephesians 5:26)

Then Paul speaks of “**that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**” What is he talking about?

He is talking about the doctrine we know, the Word of God. And yes, we may know it but many times it is not seen in our lives, we have the head knowledge of what God wants, but because we refuse to surrender, to apply it to our lives, we are not being transformed into the image of God, but we are being conformed into the image of this world!

To live in the will of God is to know all that God has for us, to yield ourselves as a sacrifice unto Him, resisting to be conformed to this world but submitting to the transforming power of God in our lives – it is reading and applying the Word of God. You see, as we do it is then you will be able to prove what the will of God is for your life, to live holy lives unto Him as He shows us. Are you willing to submit and be transformed or to resist and be conformed?

And here it is in a nutshell, you might say. Every day, if we are going to prove our devotion and dedication to God, we are to . . .

***Present our bodies as a living sacrifice to Him!*** (which would include our eyes, ears, mouths, hands, feet)

***Be transformed by the renewing of our mind!*** (thinking)

***Give Him our will!***

Now, before we move on, let me read to you the J. B. Phillips translation of Romans 12:1-2, it is powerful. This is what he wrote,

“With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give Him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the Plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.”

I like that!

So we have seen what we are to do daily as we go out into the world, then what? That is what Paul is going to show us next. Putting these things into practice, living them out! What God is doing on the inside will be manifested outwardly in our actions and in our words!

### VERSE 3

This is an important place to start, humility. And the reason being is that Paul is going to speak on putting these things into practice, a section on Spiritual gifts.

But, before Paul speaks of these various gifts, he speaks on humility, that God has given each of us a measure of faith by which we can serve Him and as we serve Him we minister to the body of Christ, not exalting ourselves or thinking we are something special. These are grace gifts, we don’t deserve them, but God graciously gives them to us.

Please understand this, you can never be too small for God to use you, but you can be too big! Thus, we need to humble ourselves before God and He will lift us up. May we not forget that!

I love how Paul is now going to put things into perspective for us as he speaks of Christians as being part of the body of Christ and how we need to use the gifts that God has given to us for the betterment of the body. To build up and not tear down or divide!

#### VERSES 4-5

This is how it should be, but, tragically, many times it is not! You see, there is the body of Christ in its totality, which speaks of all believers. And yet there are the individual churches that make up the body of Christ on a local level. Within that body are many members that have different gifts that are to be used for the betterment of the body. The Holy Spirit gives these grace gifts that we don't deserve for us to use, not to put on a shelf or glory in.

As one person put it, "When the Spirit of God is free to work in a church, there is diversity." Not in a bad way, but a good way!

Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 12, "**There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all . . . But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.**" I Corinthians 12:4-7, 11.

You see, when a body is functioning properly, when it is healthy, each part does what it is called to do.

Think of it like this. When you cut yourself and start to bleed, the clotting mechanism in the blood comes into action to prevent you from bleeding to death.

Also, the white blood cells are activated to prevent any infection from getting a foothold in the body.

Imagine, if you would, if those clotting factors said, “Hey, I am sick and tired of always coming to the rescue when bozo here does something stupid. Let someone else get involved, I’m taking a rest!”

If that were to occur, you would bleed to death no matter how small the cut was! Why is that? Because of the action or non-action of one, the entire body was affected and not in a good way!

Now let’s apply that to the body of Christ because that is the picture that Paul is painting for us here. We are not in competition with each other, but we complement each other!

Too often it is the other way around as we let pride drive us instead of the Spirit of God! You see, we are here to help each other, and to keep the body here at Calvary Chapel healthy; we need to exercise the gifts that God has given to us.

Now for those who hop from one church to another, they are not helping the body to function, they are many times like a parasite drawing from the body but never giving back.

Others feel they have no gifts, I disagree, you just don’t use what God has given to you!

And if you are using your gift and you are causing division, problems wherever you go, then you are not using them correctly.

You see, the gifts are for building up, encouraging, comforting, correcting when needed, always for the betterment of the body!

Yes, individually members with one another and yet, part of one body in Christ!

And think about this. When you look at the body of Christ; we are His hands, His feet, His mouth, His ears and-so-on, as this story illustrates for us,

After World War II, a group of German students volunteered to help rebuild an English cathedral that had been severely damaged by German bombs.

As work progressed, they became concerned about a large statue of Jesus, whose arms were outstretched and beneath which was the inscription: ‘Come unto Me.’ They had particular difficulty trying to restore the hands, which had been completely destroyed.

After much discussion, they decided to let the hands remain missing and changed the inscription to: ‘Christ has no hands but ours.’”

God can use whatever He wants, but He has chosen to use man to be His representative here on this earth, may we serve Him faithfully!

- Source Unknown

Now as Paul starts speaking of these gifts here in Romans they are primarily the speaking and serving gifts, as well as in Ephesians chapter 4.

In I Corinthians they are more of the sign gifts, the ones that people tend to focus on the most, but all these gifts are important and need to be exercised in the local body of believers.

#### VERSES 6-8

Now let me say this before we deal with these spiritual gifts. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 12:11, **“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”**

This is so important. Did you notice that these gifts are not exercised or given as *“I will!”* No, it is the Holy Spirit that gives to us the gifts we need in the situations that we are facing.

Knowing this should be an insurmountable barrier to pride in the exercise of spiritual gifts. However, we see that 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.

Today we have everyone and anyone saying, “*Thus says the Lord*” and the Lord never said such things. Which, I guess leads us to the first gift that Paul speaks of, *prophecy!*

Now, when we think of prophecy we think of foretelling or speaking of things that will come to pass before they happen.

But I see this gift as primarily, but not exclusively used as we forth-tell the things of God, proclaiming the Word of God to people. And according to I Corinthians 14:3 we are told, “**But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.**” As we speak forth the Word of God it will edify, exhort and comfort people!

Also, Peter tells us “**If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**” I Peter 4:11.

And Paul tells us in II Timothy 4:2, “**Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**”

So the gift of prophecy, not the office of a prophet, is a supernatural ability to speak forth the Words of God, which may or may not have a predictive nature to it.

Then Paul comes to the second spiritual gift, and it is the gift of *ministry*, not a title but it speaks of action, it speaks of service unto others.

It is as Paul said in Philippians 2:3-4, “**Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**” It is serving others not out of compulsion but out of love, even when it seems they don’t deserve it!

The third spiritual gift that Paul speaks of is that of *teaching*, not just speaking forth the Word of God, but now explaining, applying it to our lives. Not all teachers are pastors, but all pastors are teachers, at least they should be or what are they sharing with their people? Thus, teaching is a supernatural gift of the Spirit!

The fourth spiritual gift that Paul speaks of is that of *exhortation* or the gift of stirring people to go on, encouraging them to keep going, to take those steps of faith. The word “**exhort**” in the Greek is PARAKALEO and it is made up of two different Greek words, PARA, which means, “by the side of” and KALEO, which means, “to call.”

Thus, the word “**exhort**” means “to call by the side.” It can be translated helper, counsel, urge, comfort, encourage in the faith.

When Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit He called the Holy Spirit the PARAKELETOS, which has the same basic use, to comfort, to come to one’s side to help and thus, we are to do the same.

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 10:24-25, “**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**” You see, it speaks of getting people to move, to spur them on, that is the gift of exhortation.

The fifth gift that Paul speaks of is that of *giving* and it speaks of a supernatural giving of oneself.

I know that people freak out when they hear a pastor speak of giving and the reason they freak out is because of the abuse they see in some churches. But the Bible speaks of giving. Let me show you what I mean.

In II Corinthians 9:6-7 Paul speaks of a cheerful giving, as he wrote, **“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”**

And we see a great example of this gift being exercised in the believers in Macedonia in II Corinthians 8:1-5 where Paul tells us, **“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”** The gift of giving not only speaks of the giving of our money, but our time, our talents, and-so-on.

The sixth gift that Paul speaks of is that of *leadership or administrations*. And the idea is that of not only setting the course but also persevering on, not giving up.

So often people are just plain lazy, they procrastinate, the work does not get done. That is not leadership. Here, this supernatural gift is one that will set the example for others to follow and spur them to go as the leader goes!

And let me also say this. When things get tough, when things don't go the way you want, a true leader will keep on going. He does not give up because he is not serving man, but the Lord and as he serves the Lord the people are ministered to. It is not easy, but it truly is needed in the church today!



Lastly, the gift of *mercy*, the showing of sympathy, compassion to a person and bringing them the comfort of God.

Also notice that as this gift is exercised it is done with a cheerful heart, not one that complains on how merciful they are to people!

Mercy truly is an action word; it is not passive as we reach out to others in the love of God. Again, this is a supernatural gift of the Spirit as a person gives to others the mercy of God, shows them the love of God!

Let me show you what mercy is not or how this is not how it should be seen. We are told,

A Christian lady once said, “When my mother became old and needed someone to care for her, my husband and I invited her to come and live with us. I did all I could to make her comfortable. I cooked for her, did her washing, took her out in the car, and generally cared for all her needs. But while I was going through the motions outwardly, I was unhappy inside. Subconsciously I resented the interruption of our usual schedule. Sometimes my mother would say to me, ‘You never smile anymore. Why don’t you ever smile?’ You see, I was showing mercy, but I wasn’t doing it with cheerfulness.”

Now in saying that, some may come to the conclusion that since they don’t have a certain gift, it negates them from acting a certain way.

I disagree for Paul said in Colossians 3:12-17, not speaking of spiritual gifts but spiritual living, **“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”**

Notice, what you put on, what you fill your life with will be manifested in your actions and thus, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and His nature will flow from you!

#### VERSE 9

As we have seen, Paul spoke of giving ourselves to God as a living sacrifice.

Then Paul speaks of the spiritual gifts that have been freely given to us for the body of Christ to function in a healthy manner.

Now Paul is going to speak of how we as Christians are to behave and he starts out with our love not being hypocritical, no hypocrisy, but sincere, genuine!

The idea here is like this. Some may say, “I love you, I’ll pray for you!” when in reality they are thinking, “You are a jerk and I can’t wait for you to go!” That is not genuine, that is not sincere and thus, we need to surrender to God and allow Him to work in us so that He can work through us!

Again, may the spirit and not the flesh guide your mind and thus, if it is, what will flow from your mouth will match up and you will not be living in hypocrisy!

And let me say this. It is easy to get caught up with the dirty jokes, the rude remarks, bad behavior as we are hanging out with others, but you are being transformed, not conformed to this world. Thus, hate that which is evil and cling to that which is good!

It is as Paul said in Philippians 4:8-9, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”** In other words – ***CLING TO WHAT IS GOOD!***

#### VERSES 10-13

Do we as Christians have good manners or are we obnoxious around people?

Are we lazy or diligent in the work that God has called us to do?

Is our heart boiling over with the things of God or is it just simmering or cold as we serve the Lord?

Again, walking as God has called us to walk, in holiness and in sincerity!

And listen to what Paul said in regard to our service, **“serving the Lord.”** Did you notice that he did not say, ***“Serving Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc!”*** He did not say, ***“Serving pastor Joe!”*** He did not say, ***“Serving myself!”*** No, he said, **“serving the Lord.”**

If you lose sight of that, you will serve for a short time and then you will get burned out and drop out. I have seen it over and over again and it is not pretty. ***SERVE THE LORD!***

Now, in verse 12 Paul speaks of hope and in the dark times can we rejoice because our hope is in the Lord who will see us through?

Can we wait upon Him during times of tribulation, learning to be patient?

Are we prayer warriors or do we shoot up prayers as a last-ditch effort?

Do we have a love for strangers or just the close group we associate ourselves with?

We need to!

You see, Jesus said in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

Again, just practical thoughts and it is like Paul is just firing them out there for us to evaluate alongside our lives so that we may correct what needs to be corrected.

The nineteenth century Englishman Robert C. Chapman wrote: “Seeing that so many preach Christ and so few live Christ, I will aim to live Him.”

Did he accomplish that in his lifetime?

His friend, J. N. Darby said of him: “He lives what I teach.”

Also, William Arnot, the popular nineteenth century English author, had this legacy that he left behind regarding his life: “His preaching is good. His writing is better. His living is best of all.”

May people say that about us as we live for the Lord, may we live what we believe!

You see, you are not going to be able to give to people what you yourself have not received or are not living.

Paul put it this way in II Corinthians 1:3-7, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.”**

We do struggle with loving people who are unloving to us. We want them to get what they deserve. But think about that one. Did God give to us what we deserve? Not at all, thus, extend to others that same love and forgiveness that God has extended to you and that is what Paul speaks of in the next verse.

#### VERSE 14

That is hard but that is what God calls us to do; it is not just a suggestion.

Jesus put it this way in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:43-48, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”**

Let me say this. We can extend to people brotherly love, that is an earthly love. But we can't extend to them Agape love or unconditional love apart from the Spirit of God working in our lives. It is a supernatural love! And since the Spirit of God indwells us, there is no excuse for not blessing people!

#### VERSES 15-16

Try to get into the persons mind, have compassion on them, which in the Greek carries with it the idea of getting into the skin of another, feel as they feel!

That tells me you have to get close to that person, you have to talk with them, spend time with them!

Also, keep yourself humble; don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to!  
How important that is for us to keep in perspective!

You see, the problem for us is that our tendency is to be jealous when others rejoice, and to pass by when they mourn. God's way is to enter into the joys and sorrows of those around us. May we learn this and then do it!

And let me share this with you, what the world is like and how we, as Christians, should be the exact opposite! We are told,

Indifference, non-commitment, disengagement, no sharing or caring . . . meals eaten with hi-fi headsets turned up loud, even separate bedrooms, each with a personal telephone, TV, and turntable, private toilet, and an it's none-of-your-business attitude. No hassle . . . no conflict . . . no accountability. No need to share. Or reach out. Or give a rip. Just watch the numbers and look at nobody.

- Charles Swindoll, Think It Over . . . Indifference

That was from a few years back, but you get the idea and we do it with cell phones, computers and many other things that distance ourselves from others! May we share with people the love of Christ as we love them!

### VERSES 17-18

This tells me that it may not always be possible to live at peace with people but don't use this as an excuse.

It is not because of your actions; it is that they refuse to!

The great black scientist, George Washington Carver once said, "I will never let another man ruin my life by making me hate him."

Good advice! Try to live at peace with people, do all you can!

VERSES 19-20

As I have said, we love to give people what they deserve, that is the heart of man and it is wrong. God will deal with everyone, even us!

It is as one writer put it, “God has long ago settled the whole matter about exacting justice from wrongdoers. Not one of them will escape. Perfect justice will be done in every case and will be done perfectly. If any of us interfered, it would be the height of presumption.”

(Lenski)

What we see here is that Paul tells us we are to care for our enemies, we are to give to them what they need to live, and it will be like heaping coals of fire upon their head.

And some of you are thinking, “Good, I’ll heap those coals high on your head!”

That is not the point.

Paul may be referring to an ancient Egyptian custom that when a person wants to demonstrate a public repentance, he would carry a pan of burning coals upon his head. Thus, by our doing good, it may cause them to see their evil and repent. In other words, love them to death!

I think Paul is using this a little differently in that we are the ones to bless them with the coals of fire.

And think about it. If someone is doing wrong and you bless them, it will in embarrass them and hopefully get them to repent, a kind of “burning shame” to the unconventional kindness that was given to them.



One writer put it like this,

In Paul's day, when a fire went out in a home, it was difficult to reignite it. Therefore, if someone's fire went out, the women would carry live coals in clay jars upon their heads to share with the person who had no fire. Thus, the implication here was not of burning one's enemy, but of warming him in order to ultimately win him to the kingdom."

"Heaping **burning coals on his head**, along with the first part of Romans 12:20, is a quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22. . . ."

A great example of this is given to us in I Samuel chapter 24 where David is on the run from King Saul and as they are hiding in a cave, Saul enters the same cave to take care of some personal business, not knowing David and his men are in there.

David could have killed Saul, but he didn't and as Saul left, David came out and spoke of how he honored the King, not taking his life when he could have.

The response of Saul to the heaping of these coals upon his head by David, being kind to Saul is given to us in I Samuel 24:17-21, **“Then he said to David: ‘You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Therefore swear now to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father’s house.’”**

That is *AGAPE LOVE THAT LED TO REPENTANCE!*

#### VERSE 21

How true this is. We can allow evil to overcome us if we stew in a situation, if we refuse to let it go, if we refuse to do good.

In other words, “If you keep picking at that scab, it will never heal!” I think you understand that.

Darby said, “If my bad temper puts you in a bad temper, you have been overcome of evil.”

A great example of what should be done regarding evil is given to us by Abraham Lincoln. You see, Massachusetts’s congressman, Thaddeus Stevens, wanted to completely crush the south after the Civil War. But Abraham Lincoln wanted to make peace, to heal the wounds and forgive.

But Thaddeus Stevens slammed his fist down on the table and said, “Mr. Lincoln, I think enemies ought to be destroyed!”

Abraham Lincoln very quietly responded and said, “Mr. Stevens, don’t I destroy my enemy when I have made him my friend?”

You see, destroy the enemy with the love of God, point them to Jesus and make them your friend, a child of God. May we learn from Lincoln’s example!

As we have seen, this is how we are to walk, to apply the things of God to our lives, and by the power of God’s Spirit we will be able to live that way.

And may we destroy our enemies with love and kindness by turning them into brothers and sisters in Christ.