

THE BELIEVER AND GOD

ROMANS 12:01–02

Introduction

The believer is to be devoted to God. Everything he is and has is to be dedicated to the worship and service of God. Anything less than total devotion is short of God's glory: it is sin. Therefore, when discussing the believer's relationship to God, Scripture is strong in its exhortation. Without equivocation, Scripture urges total devotion.

- I. Give your devotion, your energy, your thoughts to God (v. 1).
- II. Present your bodies to God (v. 1).
- III. Do not be conformed to this world (v. 2).
- IV. Be cleansed, transformed (v. 2).

I. Romans 12:01 Dedication and Commitment

Devotion is strongly urged. The word "therefore" launches a new subject for discussion. It connects what is about to be said to what has been said. What has been said is this:

- => The world desperately needs to get right with God (Rom. 1:18-3:20).
- => The way for the world to get right with God is now clearly revealed through God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The way is *justification*: believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and having God *count* one's faith as righteousness (Rom.3:21-5:21).
- => The believer in Christ can now be *sanctified*, that is, set apart to God and set free from sin to life eternal by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:1-8:39).
- => The believer or the church, not Israel, is now God's choice to carry the gospel of His Son to the whole world (Rom. 9:1-11:36).

This is the glorious message of how much God loves us and of what God has done for us. This is what is meant by "in view of God's mercy." The mercy of God is overflowing; it is beyond anything any person could ever desire. Just think about what God has done for us. God has...

- met our desperate need to get right with Him.
- provided the power to be set free from the terrible bondages of this life and to live eternally.
- given the most glorious purpose to life: that of proclaiming the news of God's Son, of how to be set free from sin and death and to live eternally.

Therefore, in light of God's mercy, of all this that God has done for us, we must devote ourselves to God. We must dedicate and commit ourselves to Him.

Note the words “I urge you” (*parakaleo*) — implore you, beseech you, beg you — devote yourselves to God. Note a significant point: what is about to be said is not being said to the world, that is, to the lost. It is being directed to *brothers in Christ*: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers.” Devotion to God is strongly urged. The believer is to do the things covered in the next three points of the outline.

II. *Romans 12:01 Dedication of Body*

The believer is to present his body to God. The importance of the human body cannot be overstated. The one thing upon earth that is abused more than anything else is man’s body. Man abuses, neglects, and ignores his body...

- by overeating
- by becoming inactive
- by being too active
- by cursing, fighting and killing
- by partaking of harmful substances
- by caring for the external abusing the internal
- by getting too much or too little rest

The list could go on and on, but just the mention of these few *sins* clearly strikes the point home. If there is an exhortation in Scripture that must be heeded by Christian believers, it is the exhortation of these two verses.

1. The believer is to present his body as a *living* sacrifice to God. Note three facts.
 - a. God demands the *believer’s body*. God is not only interested in man’s spirit; He is vitally interested in man’s body. His interest could not be any stronger nor made any clearer. This is clearly seen by contrasting the world’s view of the body with God’s view (see *Body*, Rom. 12:1).
 - b. The believer is to present his body *to God*. The dedication...
 - is not to be made to *self*, living as one wishes; doing one’s own thing.
 - is not to be made to *others*: living for family, wife, husband, child, parent, mistress, companion, sexual partner or employer.
 - is not to be to *something else*: houses, lands, property, money, cars, possessions, profession, recreation, retirement, luxury, power, recognition, fame.

The body is to be offered to God and to God alone. God demands the body, demands that it be presented to Him. God wants the body to be sacrificially living for Him.

- c. The believer is to present his body to God as a *living sacrifice*. Note the believer’s offering of his body is to be *sacrificial*. This is the picture of Old Testament believers taking animals and offering them to God as sacrifices. The believer is to make the same kind of sacrificial offering to God, but note the profound difference.

The believer's offering is not to be the sacrifice of an animal's flesh and blood. The offering and sacrifice of the believer is to be his body: he is to offer his body as a *living sacrifice*. A living sacrifice means at least four things.

- A *living sacrifice* means a constant, continuous sacrifice, not just an occasional dedication of one's body. A person does not sacrifice his body to God today, and then take his body back into his own hands and do his own thing tomorrow. A *living sacrifice* means that a person dedicates his body *to live for God and to keep on living for God*.
- A *living sacrifice* means a sacrifice of a person's body wherever the body is. A particular place is not needed. The sacrifice of the body is a living sacrifice; it can be made while the body is living right where it is. And the offering of a living sacrifice is to be made *right now* while the body is living.
- A *living sacrifice* means that the body sacrifices its own desires and lives for God. The body lives a holy, righteous, pure, clean and moral life for God. The body does not pollute, dirty nor contaminate itself with the sins and corruption's of the world: not the cravings of sinful man; nor the boasting of what he has or does; not the lust of the flesh, nor the lust of eyes. The believer's body is sacrificed for God and dedicated to live as He commands.
- A *living sacrifice* means that the body lives for God by serving God. It means that the body sacrifices and gives up its own ambitions and desires, and it serves God while upon this earth. The body gives itself to the work of proclaiming the love of God and of ministering to a world reeling in desperate needs. The body sacrifices itself to serve God and Him alone. The body is dedicated to God as a living sacrifice.

In summary, the believer is to dedicate his body to God as a living sacrifice in the home, church, school, office, plant, field, restaurant, club, plane, car or bus. No matter where the believer's body is, his body is to be sacrificed for God. Sacrificing to God is not something that is transacted in a church. Sacrificing to God is transacted in every act of the human body. The world, that is, the whole universe, is the sanctuary of God; and the believer's body is the temple of God. Therefore, every act of the believer's body is to be an act of service to God.

1 Cor 6:20 *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

2. The reasons why the believer is to present his body to God are twofold.
 - a. The dedication of the body to God is *acceptable* or pleasing (euareston) to God. The word means well-pleasing, approving and extremely satisfying to God. God accepts and joys and rejoices over a body that is dedicated and living for Him.

Thought 1. This is the very thing for which believers should seek: to be acceptable and well-pleasing to God. We should seek to cause Him to joy and to rejoice in our

bodies. Our bodies should be so dedicated — so pure and holy and clean, and so committed and involved in helping people — that God’s heart is just flooded with joy and rejoicing.

Thought 2. Note: the believer’s body is either causing God’s heart to feel pain and hurt or joy and rejoicing.

2 Cor 5:9 *So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*

b. The dedication of the body to God is the believer’s spiritual act of worship.

=> The word “spiritual” (logiken) means rational, intelligent, logical. It is an act of the mind thinking and figuring out what and how to do something.

=> the “act of worship” (latpeian) means worship, service, ministry.

The idea is that the believer is to use his mind in dedicating his body to the service and worship of God. He is to study the Scriptures, and intelligently think about how to best serve God as he walks through life day by day.

Thought 1. Note how this indicates a worship time in God’s Word and in prayer every day. The believer must be constantly seeking to know what is allowed and what is not allowed for his body. The believer’s body must know what it can eat, drink and do; therefore, rational and intelligent study and decisions must be made about what to allow the body to do. (What an enormous difference from the way most of us conduct our lives and treat our bodies in this life!)

ROMANS 12:01 BODY

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. **Romans 12:01***

The world’s view of the human body differs radically from God’s view. This is clearly seen by contrasting the two views.

1. Some persons treat the body as though it is all that matters in this world. They believe the body — its physical, mental and social development — is what life is all about. Therefore, they declare that man must take care of his body to the ultimate degree, developing and getting the most out of it. The developing process may range all the way from *body-building through weight-lifting to mental apprehension through concentrated study*. Some just view the body — its development, life and contribution to society — as the very purpose for the existence of man, as the very reason lying behind the evolutionary process of man’s being. (Note: this view is most often

held by the humanist, the disciplined and the stoics of society; however, there are *few persons* who hold to a *pure* view of the human body. Most persons cross this view with the next view so as to live as they choose when they choose.)

2. Other persons treat the body as though it matters little. It is reasonably or moderately important, but not of supreme importance. The supreme significance in life is the *spirit of living* and getting the most out of life. What a person does with the body matters little just so he takes reasonable care of it. *What matters is the enjoyment and pleasure of life, the spirit of living*, of really experiencing the most enjoyment possible. The attitude is “care for the body, yes, but be reasonable about its care. The body is not going to last forever, so do not let its care interfere with the enjoyment and pleasure of life. *Eat, drink and be merry* — just do not kill yourself. A few hours or months taken off a person’s life for over-indulging here and there do not matter that much. Do not take the fun out of life by over-stressing the body.” (Note: this view is most often held by the carnal, the undisciplined, and the Epicureans of society. However, remember the statement above: there are few persons who hold to a *pure* view of either position.)
3. God’s view of the human body differs radically from man’s view. God’s view of the body is *higher* and *more supreme* than man’s view. Scripture reveals several significant things about the human body.
 - a. When God created man, He created him in His own image (Gen. 1:27). That image rested in the human body. No matter what the *image* is, or what a person thinks the image is, it rested in the human body. An image is only a shadow. It is like the picture on a stamp: the picture is not the person; it is only an image of the person. However, it is an image, and it is a likeness. Just what is meant by the “image” may be disputed, but the arguments do not matter. Whatever the image is...
 - it was given to man by God.
 - it was a part of man, of his being, of his person, of his body.

The point is this: man’s body is of supreme importance to God. God gave the body the stamp of His very own image.

- b. When God sent His Son into the world, He chose to send Him in a human body.

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*
- c. When God’s Son was put to death and His body buried, God raised His body up from the grave and took His resurrected body into the spiritual world.

- d. Scripture teaches that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, that the body actually *houses* the presence of God's Spirit.

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

- e. Scripture teaches that the body has been created to exist eternally and that the body of man will actually be resurrected from the dust of the ground and recreated into a perfect body (1 Cor. 15:1-58; 1 Th. 4:14-18).
- f. Scripture teaches that the body is to be cared for to the ultimate degree, being developed and disciplined to the fullest.

=> The ultimate degree of physical discipline.

Rom 6:13 *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

=> The ultimate degree of mental discipline.

2 Cor 10:5 *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

=> The ultimate degree of social discipline.

Mat 22:39 *"And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"*

Mat 7:12 *"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."*

- g. Scripture teaches that the body is to enjoy life to the fullest.

John 10:10 *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

In summary, Scripture teaches that the human body is of supreme importance to God; therefore, man should take care of his body as well as is humanly possible. The body does not exist for this life alone; it has a far more supreme purpose than to exist for a few years and then cease to be. The body of man has been created by God to be resurrected and to live eternally.

Rom 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. □*

III. **Romans 12:02 Conforming to the World**

The believer is not to be conformed to this world.

1. The word “conform” (sunschematizo) comes from the root word *schema* which means fashion, the outward form, the appearance of a man. It is the appearance of a person that changes from day to day and year to year. A man dresses differently for work than he does for an evening out. A man looks different as a young man than he does as an older man. His schema, his fashion, his outward appearance differs.
2. The word “world” (aion) in the simplest of terms means the world itself and everything in it, for it is all corruptible. The world, including the heavens and earth and all therein, is aging, deteriorating and dying; and it will pass away. The world is not perfect: not in being, order, morality or justice.
3. The believer is not to conform to this world. Now note something: the world, the very fashion and appearance of the world...
 - seems to be lasting, permanent and unending
 - seems to offer the very best of everything: pleasure, enjoyment, happiness, fulfilment, satisfaction, completeness

However, the fashion and appearance of the world is a lie, a mask, a masquerade. Even the very *spirit of the world* has within it the seed of corruption. The seed of corruption is seen in the acts of the world and its nature, in the terrible spirit of...

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| • selfishness | • conflict | • greed | • ignorance |
| • anger | • deterioration | • hatred | • death |
| • bitterness | • sickness | • godlessness | • disease |
| • savagery | • cursing | • division | • pride |
| • war | • disorder | • deceitfulness | • suffering |

Note two significant facts, facts that desperately need to be heeded by the world as well as by believers.

- a. The world itself and everything in it shall pass away.

1 Cor 7:31 *For this world in its present form is passing away.*

2 Cor 4:18 *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

2 Pet 3:10-14 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. (see vv. 3-14)*

1 John 2:17 *The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

Rev 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

Isa 24:4 *The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish.*

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

James 1:10 *But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower.*

James 4:14 *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*

1 Pet 1:24 *For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall."*

1 Chr 29:15 *We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.*

Job 7:6 *"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope."*

Job 9:25 *"My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away without a glimpse of joy."*

Psa 39:5 *You have made my days a mere hand-breadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath.*

Psa 49:12 *But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish.*

Psa 78:39 *He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.*

Psa 102:25-26 *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.*

Psa 103:14 *For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

Psa 103:15-16 *As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.*

Isa 2:22 *Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?*

Isa 40:6-7 *A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass."*

Isa 64:6 *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

b. The believer is not to conform, that is, fashion himself after the world...

- not to follow the fellowship of the world.

2 Cor 6:17-18 *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

Luke 2:34 *Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against."*

- not to follow the fashion, the evil desires and lusts of the world.

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

1 Pet 1:14 *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.*

- not to follow the ways of this world.

Eph 2:2 *In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

- not to follow the god of this world, Satan.

2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

- not to follow the leaders of this world.

1 Cor 2:6-8 *We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

- not to follow the false security of the world.

Mat 24:38-39 *"For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."*

1 Th 5:2-3 *For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

- not to follow after the deceitful wealth of this world.

Mat 13:22 *"The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful."*

- not to live in pleasure on earth.

James 5:5 *You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.*

- not to follow the crowd of the world.

Exo 23:2 *"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong."*

IV. Romans 12:02 Be Transformed Inwardly

The believer is to be transformed (metamorphousthe). The Greek root of the word is *morphe*. *Morphe* means the real being of a man. It is the very nature and essence, the inseparable part, the unchanging shape of a man. The man in evening clothes looks different than he does in work clothes, but he is still the same man inwardly. The elderly man is the same man inwardly that he was as a young man.

What the Bible is saying is clearly evident: the believer must undergo a radical change within his inner being in order to escape the world and its doom. The believer must be transformed and changed inwardly. His real self — his very nature, essence, personality, inner being, his inner man — must be changed.

1. How is a man transformed within his inner person? The Bible declares as simply as can be stated, “by the renewing of your mind.” The believer’s mind is to be renewed (*anakainosis*), which means to be made new, readjusted, changed, turned around, regenerated.
 - a. The mind of man has been affected by sin. It desperately needs to be renewed. The mind is far from perfect. It is *basically worldly*, that is...
 - selfish • self-centred • self-seeking
 - centred on this world • centred on the flesh • centred on this life

Scripture is clear about the corruption of man’s mind. The human mind has been tragically corrupted by man’s selfishness and sin.

=> Man’s mind has become futile in his thinking, *vain*, empty and futile in its *imaginations*.

Rom 1:21 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

=> Man’s mind has become depraved.

Rom 1:28 *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.*

=> Man’s mind has become unspiritual, carnal and hostile to God.

Rom 8:7 *The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.*

=> Man’s mind has become blinded by Satan: he cannot see the light of the gospel.

2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

=> Man’s mind has become futile in his thinking, empty.

Eph 4:17 *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.*

=> Man’s mind has become focused upon earthly things.

Phil 3:18-19 *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*

=> Man’s mind has become alienated from God and an enemy to God.

Col 1:21 *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.*

=> Man’s mind has become unspiritual, fleshly.

Col 2:18 *Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.*

=> Man's mind has become corrupted, defiled.

Titus 1:15 *To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.*

b. The mind is renewed by the *presence and the image* of Christ in the life of the believer. When a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as His Lord, the man is *spiritually...*

- born again (Jn. 3:3-8; 1 Pet. 1:23)
- made into a new self or new man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10)
- made into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17)
- given the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16; see vv. 9-15)
- changed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; see Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; Col. 3:10; 1 Jn. 3:2)

What this means is a most wonderful truth, and it is easily seen. When a person receives Jesus Christ into his life, he receives the *mind and the image* of Christ as well. Christ places His mind into the believer's mind; that is, Christ changes the believer's mind to focus upon God. In addition, He stamps His image upon the person. Whereas the believer's mind and image used to be centred upon the world, they are now centred upon spiritual matters. The believer's mind and image are renewed, changed, turned around and regenerated to focus upon God. However, it is critical to remember that only Christ can renew the human mind and image. Only Christ can implant *the mind and image of Christ* within a person. Only Christ can give His thoughts and the spirit to *live out* His thoughts to a person.

c. The believer is to live a transformed life; that is, he is to walk day by day *renewing his mind more and more*. He is to allow the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit) to focus his mind more and more upon God and spiritual things.

=> The believer is to love the Lord with all his mind.

Mat 22:37 *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."*

=> The believer is to keep his mind upon spiritual things, not unspiritual, carnal things.

Rom 8:5-6 *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

- => The believer is to demolish arguments: cast down imaginations and every pretension that interrupts his knowledge of God and to captivate every thought for Christ.

2 Cor 10:3-5 *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

- => The believer is not to let his mind be led astray.

2 Cor 11:3 *But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

- => The believer is not to gratify the cravings of his sinful nature, his sinful desires and thoughts.

Eph 2:3 *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

- => The believer is not to live as the world lives, in the futility of their thinking.

Eph 4:17 *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.*

- => The believer is to be made new in the attitude of his mind.

Eph 4:23 *To be made new in the attitude of your minds.*

- => The believer is to let the mind of Christ be in him by walking humbly before God and men.

Phil 2:5 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*

- => The believer is to think only upon the things that are excellent or praiseworthy.

Phil 4:8 *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

- => The believer is to live by the laws of God which God has put into his mind.

Heb 8:10 *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

- => The believer is to arm himself with the same mind as Christ in bearing suffering.

1 Pet 4:1 *Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.*

2. The reason why the believer is to be transformed is extremely significant. The believer must approve (dokimazo) the will of God. The word “approve” means both to *find* and to *follow* God’s will. This is certainly understandable. If a person’s mind is not renewed and focused upon God...

- how can the person ever find or discover or know the will of God?
- how can the person ever follow or obey or do the will of God?

The only conceivable way a person can ever *find* and *follow* God’s will is to focus and keep his mind upon God and upon the things of God.

Note also how the will of God is described. Meditating upon the threefold description stirs a person to crave after God’s will. God’s will is said to be...

- good (agathon): beneficial, rich, bountiful, suitable, moral.
- pleasing (euareston): acceptable, satisfactory, welcomed.
- perfect (teleion): without error or mistake, flawless, complete, absolute, free from any need, short of nothing, completely fulfilled.

In summary, victory over the world is gained by the believer renewing his mind more and more. The believer must focus his mind upon God and the things of God. He must...

- focus His mind upon living and moving and having his being in God.
- learn to concentrate upon God and the things of God.
- mentally practice the presence of God.

Very practically, the believer must do exactly what Scripture says. Note the clarity and life-changing instructions in these passages. What an enormous impact is made upon lives when they actually follow the Word of God in these instructions!

Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.

Isa 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.

Rom 8:6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. ■

THE BELIEVER AND HIMSELF

ROMANS 12:03–08

Introduction

After looking at the subject of the believer and God, the believer needs to look at the subject of himself. He needs to see what the exhortation of God is to him personally. God directs two forceful charges to the believer personally.

- I. Think highly of yourself, but not too highly (vv. 3-5).
- II. Use the gifts God has given you (vv. 6-8).

I. Romans 12:03–05 Humility

The believer is to think of himself, but not too highly. The exhortation is directed to “*every one* of you.” Every believer needs to work at humility. There is a tendency within many persons to think too highly of themselves. Too many become conceited, prideful and arrogant. They become *puffed up* with their own...

- | | | | |
|--------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| • importance | • wealth | • looks | • possessions |
| • popularity | • opinions | • education | • position |
| • ability | • goodness | • performance | • title |

There are too many who esteem themselves too highly and who think of themselves as *better* than others. God stands against such *puffed up* attitudes.

1. Think of yourself, but think *soberly* (sophronein). The word means to be balanced, sane, in one’s right mind. Therefore, the exhortation is to think of oneself wisely and accurately, making a sane and well-balanced evaluation of one’s person and abilities. An evaluation of oneself should be made, but it should be a sober and sane judgment, not an insane, imbalanced judgment. Note how strong this is: thinking too highly of oneself is an insane thought. Thinking that one is more important than someone else is insane behaviour. Every person is important to God: every person is meaningful and significant to God’s kingdom, no matter who the person is.
2. The reasons why we are to live humbly before others are clearly spelled out.
 - a. What we are and have has come from God. It is God who has given each believer “the measure of faith.” The word “faith” in the context of these verses means a *working faith*. It includes both...
 - the gifts and abilities God gives to a person
 - the faith and drive or confidence to use the gifts

Very simply, a *working faith* is the ability and drive within a person to get to it and to serve God, to make his contribution to life and society. Another way to say the same

thing is this: the measure of faith (v. 3) and the proportion of faith (v. 6) mean the spiritual gift and power which God gives to each believer for his special task on earth. Very simply, everything a person is and has comes from God. Nothing comes from man himself. Therefore, no person has reason to think too highly of himself.

James 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

1 Cor 4:7 *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*

Note another fact as well: what we have received from God is *only a measure*. No person has a full measure of anything. No person is perfected in any area. We all age, deteriorate and decay. We all have to move aside eventually for others, no matter what our abilities and contributions. We have no reason to think too highly of ourselves.

Eph 4:7 *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

- b. God gifts *every person*, not just one person nor just a few persons. Note that God deals to *every person* a measure of faith. No person or persons have a monopoly on any gift or ability. Every single believer has been gifted by God; not a single believer has been omitted by God. One believer is as important to God as any other believer, no matter who the believer may be. There is no room for pride and arrogance in the Kingdom of God, no place for thinking that one is more important than others. Such thoughts are insane.
- c. Genuine believers are *one body* in Christ. This is the most beautiful picture of the body of Christ in Scripture; and because of its effectiveness, it is often used (see 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12f; 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 4:4, 15-16; 5:22f; Col. 1:18, 24).

Believers can be compared to the human body. The human body has many parts or members, and no two members have the same function. So it is with believers. Believers are many, yet they are one body *in Christ*. Every single believer has a distinct function to fulfil in the world, yet he is a member of all other believers. It should be noted that the believer's union is not organizational. It is not the same kind of unity that exists in a civic or social club, which is a unity based upon such things as friendship, preference, neighbourhood, profession, human need, opinion or organization. The union between genuine believers is born of the Spirit of God, of a true *spiritual birth and union*. It is a union that is in constant and intimate fellowship with God and that draws its life and purpose and meaning and significance from God. The union between genuine believers is a union that is *quickened and made alive* by a common Spirit, a Spirit that truly lives, the Holy Spirit of God Himself.

The point is clearly stated: all members do not have the same *function* (praxis). God has set the believer in the world for a specific purpose, and God has gifted the believer

with whatever measure of faith is needed to fulfil his function. The believer is a member or a part of the whole body, with each member having his task to perform. There is no room for self-elevation, pride or arrogance — no room for thinking too highly of self. The believer does not stand alone in the world. Every believer has a measure of faith to do his task, and every member is needed to get the task done. Therefore, no believer has the right to think of himself more highly than any other believer. Every single believer is important to the *body of Christ*. Every believer is needed to complete, fulfil and perfect the body. The body becomes handicapped without the active functioning of every member. Every member is very important.

The point is this: believers are to evaluate and know themselves well. They are to know who they are and the gifts which God has given them. They are to evaluate the measure of faith God has given and they are to be honest and accurate in their evaluation. They are not to over evaluate nor to under-evaluate. A believer's judgment about himself must be accurate and wise in order to accomplish his task upon earth.

Thought 1. Only as we know ourselves — accurately, honestly and truthfully — can we make the contribution we should to our families, jobs, society, church and the world. Only as we serve to our full capacity can we fulfil our task on earth.

=> If we think too highly of ourselves, we attempt too much and end up failing.

=> If we think too little of ourselves, we never do as much as we could nor make the contributions that we could have made.

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Luke 14:10 *“But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honoured in the presence of all your fellow guests.”*

Luke 22:26 *“But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.”*

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

1 Pet 5:5 *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

Prov 22:4 *Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honour and life.*

Prov 29:23 *A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honour.*

Thought 2. God gifts the believer with a certain measure of spiritual gifts; therefore, the believer is to use whatever measure of faith he has to use his gifts for God. However, the believer should always be praying for more and more faith.

Luke 17:5 “Lord, increase our faith!”

Mark 9:24 [Lord], “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Rom 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

II. Romans 12:06–08 *Spiritual Gifts*

The believer is to use the gifts God has given him. The word *gift* (charisma) means the very special ability given to the believer by God. Note that the gift is from God; it is not a natural talent. The believer could not have attained nor secured the ability himself. It is a spiritual gift; that is, it is given by the Spirit of God for spiritual purposes. It is given to the believer so that he can fulfill his task on earth.

Note also that the gifts are said to be given “according to the grace given us”. This means that the gifts are given after we come to know the *grace* of God. This is part of our *heritage in Christ*, the glorious privilege...

- of being given a very special task upon earth.
- of being given purpose and meaning and significance in life.
- of being given a very special gift or gifts to fulfil our task on earth.

Now, what are the gifts? Several are singled out in this passage (see 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 12:12-31; 13:1-13; Eph. 4:7-16).

1. There is the *gift of prophecy*. In the Old Testament the gift of prophecy was the gift to proclaim and explain the will of God. The proclamation dealt with past, present and future events. However, in the New Testament, the gift of prophecy changes dramatically. The prophet is seldom seen predicting the future. Instead, he is seen proclaiming what has taken place in the Lord Jesus Christ and what has been *revealed by Christ* concerning future events. His function is to edify, exhort and comfort. The Scripture is clear about this.

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

The prophet is the man who proclaims and explains the Word of God...

- the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself
- the written Word, the Holy Scripture

Having said this, it should be noted that prophecy is the gift of speaking under the inspiration of God's Spirit. It includes both prediction and proclamation, and neither one should be minimized despite the abuse of the gift.

There is no question, the gift to predict events has been abused to the point of the ridiculous. However, the abuse of a gift does not eliminate the gift: the Spirit of God does sometimes give believers a glimpse into coming events in order to prepare and strengthen them to face the events.

However, the major function of prophecy is clearly stated by Scripture, and the fact should be learned by all believers:

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

Thought 1. Note a crucial point. A prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ must first know Jesus Christ before he can proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ. How can a man tell the world about Someone when he does not know the person himself?

2. There is the *gift of serving* (diakonia). The word is often used of a servant or of a person who serves and ministers to others in the most practical ways. Therefore, the meaning would be the very special ability to serve, minister, aid, help and assist others — to assist them in such a way that they are *built up* and truly helped. It is the most practical of gifts. Most of us know a few people who are always willing and who are unusually gifted to help others when help is needed. All of us can help, and all of us can develop our willingness and ability to help, but there are some believers who are unusually gifted with the very special gift of serving.

Mat 10:42 "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Gal 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Phil 2:5-7 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

3. There is the *gift of teaching* (didaskon). Teaching is the ability to explain, root and ground people in the truth. The Word of God not only needs to be proclaimed by the prophet, but it must also be explained by the teacher. People must be guided and rooted in all the truths of the Word day by day, week by week and year by year. This is the teacher's task.

Thought 1. How desperately the church needs good, solid leaching. People are walking out the back door of the church almost as fast as they are coming in the front door, all because they are not rooted and grounded in Christ.

1 Cor 12:28 *And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.*

Eph 4:11 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.*

Mat 28:20 *“And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

4. There is the gift of *encouragement* (parakalesei). This is the very special ability to excite, motivate, advise, exhort, comfort and warn people. The dominant factor would be the motivation and encouragement of people, the ability to stir people to make a decision for Christ and to grow in Him. It is the gift that arouses people to get up and get busy fulfilling their task for the Lord.

2 Tim 4:2 *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.*

Titus 1:9 *He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

Titus 2:11-15 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

5. There is the *gift of giving* (metadidomi). This simply means the giving of one's earthly possessions such as money, clothing and food. Note that in listing this particular gift, Scripture adds a point: it tells how the person is to give. He is to give *generously* (haplotetes). The word has several ideas. It means...
- to give with sincerity and in simplicity.
 - to give with singleness of heart and without show.
 - to give liberally and generously.

The point is this: God gives some persons the special gift to make money in order to have plenty to help others and to spread the gospel around the world. These persons...

- must give and give generously. God gave them the gift of making money in order to have enough to fulfil the will of God for the world. Therefore, they must give liberally.
- must not hoard and bank and misuse their gift of wealth.
- must not give grudgingly and complainingly about having to give.
- must not give to attract attention or to heap honour upon themselves.
- must not give to boost their own egos and pride.

Mat 6:3 *“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”*

1 Cor 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.*

2 Cor 9:7 *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

6. There is the gift of *leadership* (proistemi). This means the ability of leadership, authority, administration, government. Note that this person is to lead with *diligence* (spoude): with haste, zeal, desire and concentrated attention. There is no room for laziness, complacency and irresponsibility in the Kingdom of God and His church. The leaders are the ones who are to blaze the path for the flock of God, and they are to do it with zeal, hard work and iron determination.

Rom 12:11 *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.*

1 Pet 5:2-3 *Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

7. There is the *gift of mercy* (eleon). This is a person who is full of forgiveness and compassion, pity and kindness toward others. Note that the merciful person is to show mercy with a *cheerful* (hilarotes) heart. The word means kind, cheerful, joyful. The person with the gift of mercy...
- is not to forgive grudgingly.
 - is not to hesitate in forgiving others.
 - is not to show mercy in an annoyed spirit.
 - is not to show mercy in a spirit of criticism and rebuke toward the person who needs help. (This often happens when the person is down and out because of unemployment, lack of education or some other unfortunate circumstance.)

The believer who has the spirit of mercy is to show mercy with a cheerful and joyful heart, doing all he can to lift up the person needing mercy.

Mat 5:7 *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”*

Luke 6:36 *“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*

Hosea 12:6 *But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.*

Micah 6:8 *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. ■*

THE BELIEVER AND OTHER BELIEVERS

ROMANS 12:09–13

Introduction

How should the believer relate to other believers? How should he treat believers and behave toward them? This subject is of vital concern to Christ.

- I. Love sincerely (no hypocrisy) (vv. 9-10).
- II. Serve the Lord (v. 11).
- III. Conquer trials (v. 12).
- IV. Meet needs unselfishly (v. 13).

I. *Romans 12:09–10 Brotherhood, Love*

The believer is to love sincerely without hypocrisy. The word “sincere” (anupokritos) means without hypocrisy, without playacting. It means that a person does not just say, “I love you,” but he actually loves. He sincerely loves; he honestly and truthfully loves. The love being spoken about is love for all men and not only for believers. The believer must never pretend, be hypocritical, play-act or have an ulterior motive when dealing with others. He must show love and respect, interest and attention, care and concern; but he must not show it from an impure motive:

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| => to seek gain | => to gain an advantage | => to gain position |
| => to gain attention | => to fulfil a duty | => to push self forward |
| => to court favour | => to boost self | |

The believer must love others with a pure and sincere love, being completely free of selfish motives. He must love others for themselves because they are fellow human beings who have the same emotional and spiritual needs which he has, needs which can only find their fulfilment in Christ. He must love them because God loves them and because they desperately need to know that Jesus Christ has come to earth to reveal God’s love to all men. The believer’s dealings with all men must be in love: a sincere love, a love without hypocrisy and double-dealing.

2 Cor 6:3, 6 *We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path... in sincere love.*

2 Cor 8:8 *Test the sincerity of your love.*

1 John 3:18 *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

There are four very practical ways the believer is to demonstrate his love for other men. Remember that the love being commanded is love for all men, for the lost as well as for other believers.

1. The believer is to love by hating evil. The word “hate” (apostugountes) is extremely strong. It means to despise with intense feeling, to loathe, to look upon with horror. Love desires the very best for people; therefore, love hates evil, for evil destroys human life. The believer stands against evil, doing all he can to fight...

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| • hunger and poverty | • hurt and pain |
| • drunkenness and drugs | • cursing and bitterness |
| • suggestive and enticing dress | • unjust and improper |
| • hoarding and divisiveness | • disease and suffering |
| • ignorance and godless education | • off-coloured and dirty talk |
| • family divisiveness and divorce | • selfishness and greed |
| • immorality and destructive sex | • corruption and death |

The list could go on and on. The point is that the believer must love, and he shows his love by hating and fighting against that which is evil.

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere.*

1 Cor 10:6 *Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.*

1 Th 5:22 *Avoid every kind of evil.*

James 4:17 *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

1 Pet 3:11 *He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

Job 28:28 *“And he said to man, ‘The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.’”*

Psa 34:14 *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.*

Psa 97:10 *Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.*

Prov 4:27 *Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

Prov 14:16 *A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hot-headed and reckless.*

Zee 7:9-10 *This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.’*

2. The believer is to love by clinging to that which is good. The word “cling” (kollomenoi) means to join or fasten together, to attach, to cement or glue together. The believer is to desire only the very best — all the good possible — for people. He is

to cling to the good and to work for everyone to know and experience the good. The believer shows that he truly loves people by holding fast and working for the good.

Luke 6:35 *“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”*

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

Gal 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

1 Tim 6:18 *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

Heb 13:16 *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

1 Pet 2:15 *For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.*

3. The believer is to love by loving his brothers in Christ, by being kind and devoted toward them. The word “devoted” (*philostorgoi*) means the love existing between family members. This charge is dealing with the Christian family, the brothers and sisters within the church. We are to love each other by being kind and devoted. We are a family of children who have actually been adopted by God as His sons and daughters (2 Cor. 6:17-18; Gal. 4:4-6; Rom. 8:16-17). Therefore, the believer is to live as a family member with his brothers and sisters; he is to live being both kind and devoted. Note: there is no dissension or divisiveness in love. The church is to live in love, and living in love is peace.

John 13:34-35 *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Rom 12:10 *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.*

1 Cor 13:4 *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.*

Eph 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Phil 2:1-2 *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*

Col 3:12 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

2 Pet 1:5-7 *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*

4. The believer is to love by giving preference to other believers. The word “honour” (time) means to reverence, respect, esteem. The charge is clear: the believer is to take the lead in esteeming and expressing respect for others. Imagine a church full of believers with each taking the lead in esteeming and honouring the other. What a picture of true love and care, of real warmth and tenderness, of great strength and manliness.

Thought 1. How needed this exhortation is in the church and among believers! How many are hurt — how many have launched out to stir up trouble — how much divisiveness has been caused because a brother or sister was...

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| • overlooked | • not given a position | • not honoured |
| • not given a right | • not esteemed | • not given a place |
| • not thanked | • not shown appreciation | • not recognized |

Rom 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Rom 12:10 *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

1 Cor 10:33 *Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*

1 Cor 10:24 *Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

II. Romans 12: 11 Service, Ministry

The believer is to serve the Lord. The charge is threefold.

1. Do not lag in zeal; do not be lacking in zeal. The word “lacking” (okneros) means to be lazy, slow-moving, sluggish, lethargic, complacent, hesitating, delaying. The word “zeal” (spoude) means diligence, earnestness. The exhortation is clear: the believer must...

- Not be lazy or slow-moving in zeal.
- Not be sluggish or lethargic in diligence.
- Not be hesitating or delaying in earnestness.

The believer just cannot approach life in a lackadaisical, easy-going, slow-moving fashion. The world is reeling in pain, with millions starving and suffering due to man's selfishness and sin, hoarding, disease, war, death — and the list could go on and on. The believer must not give in to sluggishness and complacency. He must serve the Lord with all diligence and zeal and earnestness. He must be enthusiastic in his service.

Rom 12:11 *Never be lacking in zeal.*

Eph 4:28 *He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

2 Th 3:10-12 *For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.*

Heb 6:12 *We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

Prov 14:23 *All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

Prov 19:15 *Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.*

Prov 20:13 *Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare.*

Eccl 9:10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.*

2. Be on fire — spiritually. The word "fervour" (zeo) means to be hot, to boil, to set aflame. The believer's spirit is to be hot, that is, boiling and flaming for Christ. The believer must have a holy zeal for Christ. He must be aflame in his service for Christ. Why? The world is reeling under the weight of desperate need and dying without Christ and being doomed to an eternity separated from God.

Rom 12:11 *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.*

1 Cor 14:12 *So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.*

Heb 5:11-12 *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!*

2 Tim 1:6 *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

2 Pet 1:10 *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.*

2 Pet 1:13 *I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body.*

2 Pet 3:14 *So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

3. Serve the Lord. The idea is that we are to be focusing upon the Lord in all we do. It is Him whom we serve. We live in order to serve Him; that is, our very purpose for being on earth is to minister for Him and His kingdom.

Rom 12:11 *Serving the Lord.*

Col 3:23-24 *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

Heb 12:28 *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*

Eph 6:5-7 *Slaves [employees], obey your earthly masters [employers] with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.*

2 Cor 12:9-10 *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Deu 10:12 *And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Psa 2:11 *Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.*

III. Romans 12:12 Conquering Trials, Hope and Prayer

The believer is to conquer trials. While on earth the believer will face problems, difficulties, troubles, trials, tests, tribulations, traumas, ordeals, sufferings and pain. Nevertheless, the believer has an *overcoming resource*. He can conquer the trials of life by doing three critical things.

1. The believer is to rejoice in hope. His hope is God — God’s presence, concern and care. The believer knows that God will do one of two things: either *remove* the trial or deliver him *through* the trial. The believer knows he does not have to face trials alone, that no situation is hopeless. The believer is the eternal optimist: his hope is in the eternal God. Therefore, he not only hopes in the delivering power of God, he joys and rejoices in the hope God has given him.

Rom 12:12 *Be joyful in hope.*

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.*

1 Pet 1:6-9 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

1 Pet 4:12-13 *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

2 Cor 6:10 *Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*

Heb 10:34 *You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. (see Acts 5:41; 16:23-25)*

2. The believer is to endure trials. The word “patient” (hupomenontes) means to endure, remain, persevere, abide, bear up bravely. The believer actually experiences a surge of fortitude from Christ when trials confront him.

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

Phil 4:13 *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Eph 3:16 *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.*

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

3. The believer is to continue in prayer. The phrase “faithful in” (*proskartereo*) means to give constant attention to; to be devoted and attentive to; to give unceasing care to; to wait steadfastly upon, to persevere. Very simply, the believer overcomes trials by giving constant attention to God and waiting upon His delivering power. The believer stays in constant communion with his Lord, depending upon Him to supply the strength to walk through the trials of daily living.

Rom 12:12 *Patient in affliction.*

Mat 7:7-8 *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” (see vv. 9-11)*

Mat 26:41 *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”*

Luke 18:1 *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*

John 16:24 *“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”*

Eph 6:18 *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

1 Th 5:17 *Pray continually.*

1 Chr 16:11 *Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.*

IV. Romans 12:13 Stewardship, Ministry

The believer is to meet the needs of people unselfishly. Two very simple demands are made of believers.

1. The believer is to give generously, to share with those in need. He is to “share” (*koinoneo*), that is, to give and distribute in order to meet their needs.

Rom 12:13 *Share with God’s people who are in need.*

Rom 15:25-27 *Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.*

Rom 16:1-2 *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.*

Acts 4:34-35 *There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.*

Acts 11:29-30 *The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.*

2 Cor 8:1-4 *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.*

2 Cor 9:1-2 *There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.*

2. The believer is to practice hospitality. He is to open the door of his home to believers who are in need.

=> The overseer or minister must practice hospitality.

1 Tim 3:2 *Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.*

Titus 1:8 *Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.*

=> All believers must open their door — even to strangers in need.

Heb 13:2 *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*

=> All believers must use hospitality as a means to minister and use it without grumbling.

Rom 12:13 *Practice hospitality.*

1 Pet 4:9 *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

=> Widows in particular are to use hospitality as a means to minister.

1 Tim 5:10 *And is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds. ■*