

Romans 12 - Living Sacrifice; Do Not be Conformed to the World; Service within the Church; Spiritual Gifts; Love One Another; Service within Society

VI. Service (Rom 12:1—15:13)

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 - (A) Duty to love (12:14-21)
 - (a) Bless persecutors (12:14)
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Introduction to Rom 12

Verses 1-2 can be the two verses in the Bible that will change your life more than you ever imagined. This is the challenge that begins to answer "So What?" Rom 12 deals with people's actions in response to God's actions. Rom 1-11 deals with God's actions for mankind, while Rom 12-16 deals with mankind's response. God's provision contrasts with man's responsibility to behave in a manner consistent with what God has done, is doing, and will do for him.

Rom 12-16 deals with behavior within the spheres of life where the believer lives: their relationship to God, to other members of the body of Christ, and to the civil state. There is a close similarity to the instruction God gave the Israelites through Moses for life in Israel. Here, Paul deals with the same areas of life: moral, religious and civil life. This section of Romans does not contain all of the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2), but each of the other NT books makes its unique contribution to our understanding of God's will for Christians.

Some of the ideas Paul expressed in Rom 12-16 are also expressed in another of Paul's epistles:

- Rom 12:1-2 — Eph 4:17-24
- Rom 12:3-8 — 1 Cor 12; Eph 4:11-17
- Rom 12:9-21 — 1 Thess 4:9-12; 1 Cor 13
- Rom 13:8-10 — Gal 5:13-15
- Rom 13:11-14 — 1 Thess 5:1-11
- Rom 14:1-15:13 — 1 Cor 8-10

Romans 12

VI. Service (Rom 12:1—15:13)

- (1) Service within the Church (12:1-13)
 - (A) Consecration to God (12:1-2)
 - (i) Importance (12:1a)

- (ii) Basis (12:1b)
- (iii) Character (12:1c)
- (iv) Reasonableness (12:1d)

1 Therefore I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

1 I therefore urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices that are holy and pleasing to God, for this is the reasonable way for you to worship.

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

- "Therefore" - the hinge on which the book of Romans turns. Paul now makes a transition from speaking about doctrine (Rom 1-11) to speaking about our daily practice (Rom 12-15:13) (Cf. Eph 4:1; Gal 5:1)

— This word transitions out of doctrine into practice; how doctrine becomes deed, how the Word within us becomes good works

— These good works don't save us...in fact they don't contribute anything to our salvation, but God desires to use our lives to serve Him by serving others

- "...I urge you" - speaks to the critical nature of what Paul is saying; it is a strong exhortation to do something

— He's not offering them a suggestion or recommendation; he's not telling them to try this out to see how it works

— He probably did not command believers because the attitude in which one presents himself to God is crucial. He did not want compliance because of a commandment, but because they (his readers) wanted to in response to what God had done for them. Thus, he made the appeal as strong as possible.

- "...brothers *and sisters*" - referring to believers; Paul is giving these commands to believers, not unbelievers. Rom 12:1—15:13 is not a section on how to get saved...it's a section of the book written to people who are already saved, to teach them how to live out the Christian life.

— Only believers have the opportunity and ability to live out what Paul is going to say in Rom 12:1—15:13

— Throughout this section of Romans, Paul is not talking about justification, he's talking about sanctification...how, once we are in faith, to grow into the image of Christ

— If you are not a Christian, you have no resources to help you live out the commands Paul is going to give. If you tell an unbeliever to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God,

they have no ability, and frankly no motivation, to do so.

— There is only one condition that an unbeliever can satisfy to obtain a right standing before God, and that is faith in Christ. But once that requirement is satisfied, that person now has the Holy Spirit indwelling them, they have a new nature, suddenly the truths that Paul described in Rom 6 become applicable to them and their sin nature has been defeated.

- "...by the mercies of God" - the basis by which we offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God

— The "mercies of God" are outlined in Rom 9-11. Paul has shown us, through the example of Israel, that God is 100% trustworthy 100% of the time, even in His dealings with apostate Israel.

— Because this is who God is, as a natural result of this reality, I can offer myself to Him...not to become a Christian because I already am a Christian, but to live a life that is pleasing to God through the power of the Holy Spirit and the new nature.

— Paul now says because you are now aware of the doctrinal and theological truths outlined in Rom 1-11, it should now invoke some type of reaction in the believer. We must respond to these truths, not to pay God back in some way because we can't.

— The response Paul is seeking is that we "deposit" ourselves before Jesus Christ and say that we are His now, take over every part of my life Lord, my relationships, my finances, my calendar, my time, my business, my job, and myself, because I'm laying all these things down at the altar and giving them to You, so that You can use them and me in a way that pleases You, that brings You glory.

— When we do this, our lives begin to be transformed in the image of Christ in practical terms...I start saying things I didn't used to say, I start thinking things I normally didn't think, I start developing a hunger for things that previously didn't interest me, and I start to have insights into things that I never knew before.

— This describes the Spirit filled life, the entire basis of which are the mercies of God, which Paul unfolded in Rom 1-11

- God looks at my sanctified life as a sacrifice: I deposit myself before the Lord, it's not my will anymore but Thy will, it's not my direction for my life, it's Your direction, and I submit under the resources of the Holy Spirit what God might produce in my life.

— We all think we're unqualified to be used of God, and we're right. But the reality is that God wants to use us more than we want to be used. God wants to produce eternal fruit for your life more than you want to produce eternal fruit. It's just a matter of us submitting to what He might have for us.

- "...present" - a decisive action; based on the "mercies of God" I have to make some type of decision...to present or not to present

— There is a crisis of the will happening between my new nature and my flesh (old nature). I'm saved, I'm going to heaven, but will I decide to allow God to produce what He wants through my life while I'm living on earth?

— I must make a decision to choose between presenting or not presenting myself to God. I'm saved either way, but the question is am I blessed. Do I allow God to bless me or not?

- "...your bodies" - God is interested in our physical body; in Rom 6:12-13 Paul told us to not allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies

— 1 Cor 6:20 says that we have been bought with a price...salvation didn't cost me anything, but it cost God everything. Paul goes on to say, Therefore, glorify God in your body.

— Since we were bought with a price, the Lord wants to take us to a place of sanctification. You've been thinking the way the world thinks for so long that your mind needs to change. As your mind is changed, your life will be changed.

— God doesn't want to give us a set of rules to "keep us in line" that our flesh has no ability to live up to because that is legalism or religion. Religion or legalism only makes the flesh try harder. God has a higher calling for us than that...He wants to empower us to understand who we are in Him, he wants us to understand the divine resources and walk in them on a moment-by-moment basis and suddenly we act differently, the motives of our heart are different, and we begin to walk in the middle tense of our salvation.

- "...living" - an oxymoron; how can a sacrifice be living? I thought sacrifices were dead.

— Our sacrifice is both living and dead: it's dead in the sense that I'm dead; it's no longer me who is in charge but God is in charge. It's living in the sense that God can now take my life and produce eternal fruit.

— Jesus said in John 12:24 that unless the kernel of seed dies, it cannot bring forth fruit. Unless I am willing to die to myself, to sacrifice my ambitions and my desires, God cannot produce the spiritual life in me that He seeks to produce.

— John the Baptist invokes the definition of a living sacrifice in John 3:30: "He must increase, and I must decrease."

— Once we believe this and begin to do it, God accepts it as a living and holy sacrifice

- "...sacrifice" - we cannot augment Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice. We can't add anything to it to make it better or more complete. We are unable to add a single thing to what Jesus has done.

— But now that I'm in Christ and have received what He has done for me in faith, I can worship Him. The Bible calls these "spiritual sacrifices." These are not sacrifices to pay God back, they don't add anything to our salvation (justification), but rather these are worshipful responses to God out of gratitude and thankfulness because we're so overwhelmed by the truth of Rom 1-11. What else can we do in response other than worship Him in a Spirit of gratitude.

— There are many ways we can present a sacrifice of worship to God: praise and worship through singing (Heb 3:15); our good works (Phil 2:17); financial giving (Heb 13:16).

— So when I take this body and deposit it before the Lord as a sacrifice to Him, not to pay Him back and not to earn something from Him, God receives that as a holy and living sacrifice

- "...spiritual service of worship" - Paul says that this spiritual sacrifice is a reasonable, logical way for us to worship...

— The normal response to truth, with the depth of which Paul has discussed it in Rom 1-11, is a worshipful heart toward God, a heart that comes to God and says I can't believe what you've done for me

— When we present our bodies as living and holy sacrifices, when we give God full control over ourselves, so that He can use us to carry out His will and produce in us the characteristics of Christ, this is a reasonable act of worship to God

— What is the correct motive in our heart to serve God and give up our lives to Him?

— Is it fear? Do you fear that at any moment, if you aren't doing the right thing, that God is going to yank the carpet out from under you and you'll lose your salvation (Arminianism)? Do you live your life to keep yourself in a position so as to not displease God because you're afraid that He's going to take your salvation away?

— Or is your motivation not that if you don't perform good works you'll lose your salvation but that if you don't perform good works you maybe were never saved to begin with (Calvinism)?

— The end result of both of these systems is a wrong motive for service or a wrong motive to worship. It is doing what God wants us to do out of fear, not out of love and gratitude. In one case it is the fear of losing what you once had, and in the other case it is fear that you never really had what you thought you had.

— But Paul is talking about something completely different: he's talking about the certainty we have in Jesus Christ. A certainty that is certain because it comes directly from the mouth of God. A certainty that is so certain that He will even keep His promises to the nation that crucified His Son.

— So we serve God, we worship God out of a heart of thanksgiving and gratitude for what He has done for us. If you're serving God because you're afraid of God, your service won't be very effective anyway because you're doing the right thing with the wrong motive.

— God is waiting for this attitude of gratitude for what He has done to well up inside of us where we submit to God's will...then God says Ok, now we're in business. I will now show you what I can do in and through your life that I've always wanted to do.

— It's a day of decision...the day of decision to come to Christ was a great day. But this is a different day of decision...it's a day of decision for people who have been in Christ for years

and yet have never really worshipfully responded to God by presenting our bodies as living sacrifices to Him.

(b) Specific manifestation in the believer's life (12:2)

Paul now gives the believer a second way to consecrate ourselves to the Lord.

(i) Negative exhortation (12:2a)

(ii) Positive exhortation (12:2b)

(iii) Goal (12:2c)

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

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

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but continuously be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may be able to determine what God's will is—what is proper, pleasing, and perfect.

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

- The first verse deals with making the commitment; the second deals with maintaining it

— The first verse calls for an explicit act; the second commands a resultant lifelong process...an act of presentation, then the duty of transformation

- "...do not" - an active verb; I have to do something in order to not be conformed to the world

— I don't have to do anything to come to Christ except exercise faith, but I do have to do something once I'm in Christ to exercise some kind of effort to keep my mind from being suffocated by the world system

— I do this by avail myself to the divine resources Paul taught about in Rom 6 and 8, and I appropriate those resources on a moment by moment basis. As a Christian, if I don't take the time to learn of my divine resources, then appropriate them by faith moment by moment, it's just a matter of time before my mind will be conformed to the image of the world system and not to the image of the God who bought me at a huge cost.

— If the sanctification of the believer was automatic, Paul's instruction to not be conformed to the world would be irrelevant. If I woke up every day with no chance of the world conforming me to itself simply because I'm saved, because of the sovereignty of God, Paul's command here is useless and unnecessary.

— But that view of God's sovereignty is warped, and unbiblical, I must wake up every day and put on Christ, being ready, willing and able to appropriate the resources God has

provided so that I do not become conformed to this world and I can deflect all of the arrows of Satan (Cf. Eph 6:10-18)

- "...conformed" - *syschēmatizō*, to fashion oneself according to; to keep oneself "unspotted" from the world (James 1:27); a looser translation says "do not let the world squeeze you into its mold"

— The world, powered by Satan, seeks to get us to adopt its value system instead of God's value system

— Unfortunately, many Christians alienate their affections from God because they keep one foot in the world. They believe Gen 1-11, but they also believe Darwin, so they take a worldly philosophy and mix it with the Bible.

— We need to be careful that we're not slowly conformed to this world by mixing in bits and pieces of the world's philosophy into our interpretation of the Bible or our thoughts about who God is

— Pastors may do this by saying Yes, I believe that the Lord will build His church, but I also need to rely on marketing and management principles to increase attendance. I need to take what a secular guru is saying, mix it with what I read in Scripture, and that's how my church will grow.

- "...world" - *aiōn*, a system of thought and philosophy which excludes God and alienates our affections from Him (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Tim 4:10)

— Definition: whatever makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange

— The world system is satanically controlled and energized (2 Cor 4:4; Cf. Luke 4:5-7) ever since the Fall in Eden (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph 2:2)

— The instruction is for believers to not allow the times or the age you live in force you to think and behave according to its schemes

— The world tries to squeeze us into its mold, pressuring Christians to live in a worldly way and conform to its ways of thinking and acting. So believers should continually be renewing our minds, returning mentally to the decision to dedicate ourselves to God, and consistently reaffirming that decision.

— This continual rededication to God will result in the transformation of the Christian into Christ's image (8:29; Cf. Mark 9:2-3). A daily rededication is not too often.

— This re-programming of our minds does not take place overnight, but is a lifelong process through which our way of thinking resembles more and more the way God wants us to think.

— This won't change until Rev 11:15...when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our God and His Christ

- "...transformed" - *metamorphousthe*, present tense, passive voice, imperative mood: "keep on being transformed." The present tense indicates a continuing responsibility, in contrast to the aorist tense in v1 that stresses a decisive act.

- Root of the English word "metamorphosis," a total change from inside out (Cf. 2 Cor 3:18)
- Once I come to Christ, there needs to be a transformation in my life; that is God's will. The Holy Spirit is the unidentified "transformer" (8:9-11; Cf. Matt 17:1-2; 2 Cor 3:18; 6:17-18; 7:1; Col 3:9-10; 1 Thess 5:23; Titus 3:5).
- Whether this transformation ever happens in my life is primarily up to me, but nevertheless it is God's will that every believer be transformed
- This transformation happens as I become aware and put into practice the divine resources that God has given me on a moment by moment basis
- "...renewing" - I need to unlearn old thought patterns and learn new thought patterns; renewing your mind is the alternative to conformity with the pattern of the world
- Our minds have been under the influence of Satan and this world for so long, with so many wrong ways of thinking, that when we become Christians, or when recommit ourselves to the Lord after a period of backsliding, we drag a lot of those mental issues with us into our Christian experience.
- If you had a "works mentality" while you were not a Christian, thinking that you were a good person because you did "good" deeds, you'll drag that thinking into your Christian experience
- If you had an anger problem before you came to Christ, you are now a Christian with an anger problem
- If you were an anxious worrier before you were saved, you'll be an anxious worrier after you're saved...until you renew your mind
- It's not until we make progress in our sanctification that we begin to think new things and do away with old thought patterns that this wrong (before Christ) thinking starts to decrease. We need to recalibrate our mind to thinking like God thinks, not thinking like the world thinks.
- How do we renew our minds? Through the Scripture (Joshua 1:8; John 17:17; 1 Tim 3:16). We need to get Scripture into our minds so that we can think about it, contemplate it, and understand it, then obey it so that we will do what is in it. If you want to live the way God wants you to live, to have the sphere of influence He wants you to have, then the Bible has to be a critical part of our intake. The mind independent from the Word of God will not be renewed; it will just keep thinking the way its always thought.
- You're a blood-bought saint, going to heaven, but your mind is not conformed so you are neutralized in the Christian life and you'll live an average, ho-hum Christian life, with no real effectiveness, and you'll receive no real reward.
- Fellowship with other believers will renew your mind (Heb 10:25); going to a Bible teaching small group or Bible study will help renew your mind. Hanging out with the right people will conform your mind (2 Cor 6:14-16). Entering into close relationships with

unsaved people will make it all the more difficult for your mind to be renewed and transformed.

- "...mind" - *nous*, the battle begins and ends in the mind (Prov 23:7), the control center of one's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions; "get your head in the game" a coach might yell to his players

— The battle for our mind is lost when we stop looking at life through the divine perspective and we instead look at life through the human perspective (Cf. Num 13:33), and we forget the God who saved us. When we do this, we lose the battle before it's even fought.

- So if I begin to walk out this spiritual life, what is the end product? Paul is glad you asked...

- "...prove" - refers to discernment; when our mind is renewed, it has the capacity to discern the will of God

— We clarify what God's will is for us by rededicating ourselves to God often. God's will becomes blurred when our commitment to Him wavers (Cf. Eph 5:8-10; James 1:6-8).

— The more informed we are about God's Word, the more clearly His will comes into focus in every area of our life

— Total commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is a prerequisite for experiencing God's will

— In context, Paul is referring to the general will of God for all believers (Ps 119:105)

- "...good...acceptable...perfect" - three adjectives that describe God's will

Christians often want God to tell us His will for us, but we try to reserve the right to decide whether His will pleases us. If His will seems good, we will do it; if we do not like it, we will not do it. But that is "the pattern of this world." Developing a Christian way of thinking never happens with a deliberate surrender. Only when we start living God's way will we find out how good God's way really is. In other words, only "living sacrifices...pleasing to God" learn how "good, pleasing and perfect" God will really is.

Rom 12:1-2 make the quip "God is my co-pilot" near blasphemy. It does not give God His proper place in our lives

(B) Use of spiritual gifts (12:3-8)

(a) Exhortation toward humility (12:3)

(i) Basis for humility (12:3a)

(ii) Content of humility (12:3b)

(iii) Reason for humility (12:3c)

3 For through **the grace given to me** I say to everyone among you not to **think** more highly of himself than he ought to **think**; but to **think** so as to have sound judgment, **as**

allotted to each a measure of faith.

3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

3 For by the grace given to me I ask every one of you not to think of yourself more highly than you should think, rather to think of yourself with sober judgment on the measure of faith that God has assigned each of you.

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

- Before Paul embarks on a discussion of spiritual gifts, he gives us a strong exhortation on humility

— Paul had experience with Christians who were proud because of their spiritual gifts (Cf. 1 Cor 12:14-31; 13:4; 4:12,20)

— Why would Paul preface his discussion of spiritual gifts by talking about humility?

1. Because the gifts of the Holy Spirit must be used within their proper divinely ordained sphere.
 - God has given believers spiritual gifts, but He has also divinely ordained the sphere of influence in which they should be exercised
 - If someone has a self-serving mindset and doesn't want to function within the sphere that God has ordained, that would be the same as one part of your human body going off and doing it's own thing
 - God doesn't need people to serve the way they want to, independent of the sphere of influence that God has given them, independent of the proper functioning of the body of Christ
 - In 1 Cor 12-14 you see people operating in this manner...the gifts they had were legitimate and genuine, but they don't have Christlikeness in how they are serving/practicing their gifts. The Corinthians didn't want to follow the divine guidelines for practicing spiritual gifts that God has set up.
 - In order to prevent this, Paul tells them to operate in love (1 Cor 13). One day, spiritual gifts will disappear but love will never disappear, so don't focus on the gifts of the Spirit but focus on the fruit of the Spirit.
 - Before we move in our practice of spiritual gifts, we have to move in our practice of humility. If we are not humble in terms of our service, we are not functioning in the way the body is supposed to work.
2. The practice of spiritual gifts is to benefit others in order to edify the church.

- When God gave you your spiritual gift(s), he didn't have you in mind...He had others in mind, those who would be blessed with your gifts (1 Cor 12:7; 14:26; Cf. John 13:15)
 - Each one of the gifts as you learn about them always has a focus or target one someone else, never ourselves (mercy, encouragement, teaching, helps, etc.)
 - You'll never be more happy in your life than when you're serving God through the exercise of your gifts
- "...the grace given to me" - the basis for our humility
- Paul was astounded not only that God saved him, but that after saving him God chose to use him. It was that God wanted to use Paul, after considering his past persecution and murder of believers in the church, that amazed him.
- Paul talks about his salvation experience and subsequent calling by God in 1 Cor 15:8-10; 1 Tim 1:12-16
- Paul was the "least of the apostles" and was "not worthy to be called an apostle" because of his persecution of the church. Paul says he was the least qualified person ever to get saved. Paul thought that after God saved him, He should have put him in the corner because he was not fit for use.
- But Paul says that God's grace, His unmerited, undeserved favor, is so deep, so rich, that God wanted to use Paul's life to bless other people
- When we understand that, where is there room for boasting (1 Cor 4:7). If everything we have comes from the grace and favor of God, how on earth can I ever boast in what I have?
- "...think" [3x] - *phroneo*, not let one's opinion of himself exceed the bounds of modesty
- The verb has to do with forming a right estimate of something
- God places such emphasis on thinking rightly about ourselves because we so easily fall prey to pride
- Humility is to look at ourself rightly and honestly, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we deserve
- We need to honestly appraise how God has made us, how God has gifted us, and how God wants to use us
- As he wrote this, Paul probably had Lucifer in mind...a worship leader in heaven (Ezek 28:12-17), in a position of service to God
- Once the motives of our heart are corrected, we can operate and exercise our spiritual gifts as God has intended
- We are a product of the Holy Spirit's work from beginning to end, including our spiritual gifting
- "...as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" - used by Reformed theology (Calvinism) to teach that before an unbeliever can come to faith in Christ, God must first

regenerate that person and give them the gift of faith. However, this interpretation is out of context with the entire chapter, which is spiritual gifts.

— The faith given by God here is granted to believers (Cf. 1 Cor 12:9); it does not refer to salvific faith (the faith needed for salvation, Eph 2:8), but the spiritual gift of faith

— What Paul is saying here is that the spiritual gift(s) you received at the point of faith was accompanied by a measure of faith in order for you to use it/them. This is not talking about a faith that an unbeliever supposedly receives (according to Calvinism) from God without believing anything.

— One could object in principle that if faith can be a gift for believers, then it could also be divinely imparted to those who have yet to believe in Christ. In theory this is true; but since there are no verses that teach this, it must be denied.

- "...measure of faith" - not how much faith someone can muster, but the amount of faith God has given each person at the point of faith (after regeneration, not before) for the purpose of utilizing their spiritual gift(s)

— The type or number of spiritual gifts God has given each person does not reflect the maturity or worth of that person in God's eyes

— This isn't faith in God for our salvation/justification, rather since the context is spiritual gifts, it is using the faith we have, the same faith used for our justification, to keep trusting God in the use of our spiritual gift(s) (Cf. James 2:14)

— You already have faith as a believer, now keep trusting Him as you live out your life through good works and exercising your spiritual gifts

(b) Reason for humility (12:4-5)

(i) Body analogy (12:4)

4 For just as we have many parts in one body and all the body's parts do not have the same function,

4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,

4 For we have many parts in one body, but these parts do not all have the same function.

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

- The body of Christ is setup to function just like the human body...

— The human body parts take instructions from the brain, the head; likewise, the body of Christ takes instructions from Jesus Christ, the Head of the church

— Our various body parts work together to get things done...hands work with arms, shoulders and back. Feet work with knees and hips and legs. The arm doesn't decide one day to identify as a leg, and vice versa.

— This all goes back to humility...if the attitude of humility and humble service is not present, the body of Christ cannot operate properly

(ii) Application to Christ's body (12:5)

5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and **individually parts of one another**.

5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

5 In the same way, even though we are many people, we are one body in the Messiah and individual parts connected to each other.

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

- There are many sick and dysfunctional churches out there. Their problems are related to this passage...not depositing themselves at the foot of Christ, with an attitude of humility, overwhelmed that God ever wanted to save them, but wants to use them.

— They lose sight of humility, become territorial, conflict originates, dissension occurs, the church is neutralized and worthless

- We need to understand that the gifts of the Spirit are different than the fruit of the Spirit

— Before we can move in the gifts of the Spirit, we need to have the fruit of the Spirit

— The Corinthians were not lacking in any spiritual gift (1 Cor 1:7), their problem was a lack of the fruit of the Spirit. They were trampling each other down pursuing their own agendas.

- "...individually parts of one another" - all members of the Church belong to each other; as members of each other, we cannot work effectively independent of one another.

— The Church is not a loose collection of individuals ("members") each doing our own thing (Cf. 1 Cor 12). We are each a key piece of the whole.

— The point is that each member functions to serve the body, not the body to serve the members. Members of the body, when exercising their gifts, contribute to the common welfare.

— When you don't develop and exercise your spiritual gifts, you are disenfranchising the Body (Cf. 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4:11-12,15-16)

Key Ideas to Understand About Spiritual Gifts

- Spiritual gifts are given in order to edify the church (1 Cor 12:7; 14:12,26; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Peter 4:10)
- Spiritual gifts are diverse (1 Cor 12:4-6)
- Spiritual gifts are not to be confused with the fruit of the Spirit (1 Cor 1:7)
- Spiritual gifts are Spirit empowered abilities for service (John 13:15)
- Believers obtain their spiritual gifts at the moment of salvation (Heb 2:4; Rom 8:9)
- Spiritual gifts can be neglected (Matt 25:25-26; 1 Tim 4:14)
- Awareness of our spiritual gifts render us accountable (Matt 25:19; Rom 14:12)

- Spiritual gifts are not always the same as an office (elder, deacon, etc.)
- Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural abilities or talents
- Spiritual gifts do not cancel the basic duties of all believers
- Every believer has at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10)

The NT provides five lists of spiritual gifts with at least 22 different gifts listed (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11).

(c) Spiritual gifts (12:6-8)

(i) Reality of the gifts (12:6a)

(ii) Enumeration of the gifts (12:6b-8)

6 However, since we have **gifts** that **differ** according to the **grace** given to us, **each of us is to use them properly**: if **prophecy, in proportion to one's faith**;

6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

6 We have different gifts based on the grace that was given to us. So if your gift is prophecy, use your gift in proportion to your faith.

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

- "...gifts" - *charismata*, spiritual gifts are Spirit-empowered abilities to serve (John 13:15); *charismata* is related to "grace" (*charis*). Grace is God's unmerited favor, so *charismata* are undeserved gifts of God's grace.

— God gives to us a supernatural ability, through the Holy Spirit, to serve God in a special and unique way

— The gifts are all aimed at other people, which is why we must move in the arena of character and the fruit of the Spirit before God will bring us to fullness in the gifts

— We receive gifts at the point of salvation, and God decides who gets what gifts (Heb 2:4). Many times these gifts lie dormant until God puts us into a situation where our gifting comes out.

- "...differ" - spiritual gifts are diverse (1 Cor 12:4-6); our gifts differ because God gives spiritual gifts according to His purpose and pleasure

— The body analogy...if I had two thumbs on the same hand, one of the thumbs would be unnecessary

— If I desire someone else's gift, I'm making myself irrelevant; I have gifts that differ from other people, and I need to understand the distribution of gifts and keep in mind the body analogy

- "...grace" - *charis*, unmerited/undeserved favor; something we receive that we do not deserve

— When we're saved, God accrues something, which we do not deserve, to our account. Part of this "grace package" that we receive. Both our justification and our spiritual gifts are part of the grace of God, and received in this "package" at the point of faith.

— When we understand this grace package properly, it prevents boasting. God has designed salvation in such a way that we have no right to take any credit for it (Rom 3:27; Eph 2:9). In the same way, God distributes gifts to believers based on His sovereign will, in a way that allows for no boasting.

- "...each" - every believer receives at least one spiritual gift at the point of faith; this idea is taught in numerous passages (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10)

— When we understand this, it changes our idea of church and its purpose. Many people's idea is that the pastor is the minister, but the fact is every believer is in the ministry.

— The Bible teaches the idea of the priesthood of all believers

- "...use" - exercise; God gave us a gift so that we might use it (1 Peter 4:10)

— Spiritual gifts can be neglected (1 Tim 4:14; Matt 25:25-26); the parable of the talents teaches that the man who hid his talent in the ground was afraid

- "...prophecy" - the ability to proclaim God's truth without compromise; calling people back to a standard of holiness (Cf. 1 Cor 12:28)

— The gift of Prophecy is defined as receiving revelation from God and proclaiming it to others, has ceased. That was a foundational gift that was in operation in the first century, but ceased with the closing of the canon.

— The gift of Prophecy today is not a person who receives revelation from God directly, then proclaims it as divine revelation, but rather a preacher and proclaimer, not of new truth, but of finite/known truth as found in Scripture.

- "...in proportion to *one's* faith" - better translated: "in agreement to the faith"

— All of the spiritual gifts must be used by faith, but especially the gift of prophecy

— See [Gifts of the Holy Spirit](#) for a list of Spiritual Gifts and the Attributes of Spiritual Gifts.

7 if **service**, in the *act of* serving; or the one who teaches, in the *act of* **teaching**;

7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

7 If your gift is serving, devote yourself to serving others If it is teaching, devote yourself to teaching others.

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

- "...service" - *diakonia*, serving or ministering to the practical needs of other believers; deacons have the gift of service (Acts 6:1-7)

— God calls all believers to serve others. Some receive this gift in special measure in order to lead others in this work. Jesus was a deacon (Matt 20:28).

— However, a person who isn't a deacon can still have the gift of service; a gift is not always the same as an office. A gift is an ability that God gives us to do something for Him;

an office is an official recognition within the church that a person is gifted in some area.

— Best demonstrated by Jesus in the Upper Room while He washed the disciples' feet (John 3:15). The disciples' Creator and Redeemer bent down to wash each of their feet.

- "...teaching" - the ability to *clearly* explain what God has already revealed in His Word (1 Cor 12:28; 14:6)

— It is the ability to organize the truth and present it in a clear manner, so an audience can understand. It is the ability to communicate spiritual truth.

— Many people (i.e. professors) have knowledge, but don't have the gift of teaching

— Teaching is the ability to "put the cookies on the bottom shelf"; the key word in this gift is "clearly"

— Sometimes correlated/accompanied by the gift of knowledge, which is the ability understand complex biblical truths (1 Cor 8:1). When you have someone with both the gift of teaching and the gift of knowledge, you will learn a lot from that person.

— This gift is similar to Prophecy, but again is not proclaiming or teaching new, unrevealed truth, but rather is teaching the revealed Word of God.

— Teaching is all about accuracy and clarity. It's about taking God's Word and accurately explaining it so that anyone can understand and comprehend.

— The gift of teaching can be displayed in numerous ways: preaching behind a pulpit, through writing, through a small group, and even one-on-one (Cf. Priscilla and Aquilla teaching Apollos, Acts 18:26).

— There are many ways to practice the gift of teaching that don't involve occupying a pulpit on Sunday morning...Sunday School, children's church, youth or young adult ministry, small groups, Bible studies, and there is 1:1 discipleship. You can also "teach" through writing books, pamphlets, tracts, blogs, articles, podcasts, etc.

— Spiritual gifts don't eliminate the need for preparation...

8 or the one who exhorts, in the *work of exhortation*; the one who **gives**, with generosity; the one who is in **leadership**, with diligence; the one who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.

8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

8 If it is encouraging, devote yourself to encouraging others. If it is sharing, share generously. If it is leading, lead enthusiastically. If it is helping, help cheerfully.

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

- "...exhortation" - *paraklesis*, helper, advocate, mediator; someone called in alongside another to help out; from the Greek root meaning "encouragement"; it is the supernatural ability to encourage others in the body of Christ.

- Exhortation is the divine ability to get people to apply the truth, so they will act on it. You're far more encouraged after talking to these people than you were before talking to them.
- We easily become self-absorbed and calloused to the needs of others, but the same Holy Spirit who encourages us also empowers us to come alongside others to encourage them
- "Teaching" appeals to the mind; "exhortation" appeals to the will
- Barnabas had this gift (Acts 4:36)
- Christians are constantly being worn down by the world, the flesh and the devil. The body of Christ needs the gift of exhortation like we need air to breathe.
- One of the greatest strategies that Satan throws at Christians is discouragement, where you think why should I do what God has called me to do because nothing is happening
- It's easy to be discouraged in our gifts, to become weary in well doing; we get our eyes off of God and onto our little problems. How we need people to come alongside and encourage and lift up believers.
- "...gives" - the ability to give material goods and financial resources with joy so that the needs of the Lord's work are met
- This gift excels above just normal giving, which all Christians are called to do. Believers should financially support the ministries that minister to them. Even Christ's ministry was supported financially (by women, Luke's Gospel tells us).
- People who have this gift view their money, home, and net worth not as their own, but the Lord's, and they see themselves as simply a "channel" by which God gives to them so they can give to a particular ministry. They view this as God not giving "to" them, but rather God giving "through" them.
- Giving to meet people's needs is to be done with generosity, not skimpily (2 Cor 8:2; 9:7,11,13)
- Giving should be practiced with singleness of heart, free of mixed motives (Cf. Acts 5:1-11), and from our own funds, not the funds of others. The giving of other people's money should be done wisely and prayerfully.
- The idea is not so much that we should give lavishly, but that we should give single-mindedly, whole-heartedly, to please the Lord
- These people bless others through meeting their needs in secret, and they do it cheerfully (2 Cor 9:7)
- "...leadership" - the ability to cast an organizational vision and motivate others toward the fulfillment of that vision
- The rudder that guides the ship; an advertising and marketing, as well as leadership gift. This person has the ability to cast a compelling vision for something that people naturally gravitate toward to help that vision reach fruition.

- Similar and often confused with Administration (Cf. 1 Cor 12:28). Administration is more of a project manager, while Leadership is more of a person who “casts a vision.” Those with the gift of Leadership are often not good administrators.
- Those with the gift of Leadership are good at getting people to understand the higher level goal of something, to see the end game, the result, which in turn gets people on board and excited to participate.
- The organizational goal of the church, ultimately, is the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20)
- There are qualifications for leadership (1 Tim 3:1-7), the most basic qualification is a Christlike attitude (a person controlled by the Spirit on a moment-by-moment basis)
 - "...mercy" - the ability to devote energy toward helping those in pitiable conditions
- Those with the gift of mercy naturally gravitate to those who are hurting, those who are wounded either emotionally, spiritually, physically, financially, or psychologically
- The perfect example of mercy, again, is Jesus (Matt 9:26). He felt compassion for people who were distressed and dispirited, like sheep without a shepherd. Having these thoughts welling up in your mind when you see helpless people, you may have the gift of mercy.
- These people simply allow Jesus Christ to extend His ministry through them because if there is one thing we learn about Jesus in the Gospels is that He displayed incredible mercy, He always gravitated to those who were hurting: the lepers, the outcasts of society, even a Samaritan woman (Matt 20:34)

Additional information on spiritual gifts:

Additional resources on spiritual gifts:

[Spiritual Gifts, 18 Observations on](#)

[Spiritual Gifts, What are the?](#)

[Spiritual Gifts - General Notes](#)

[Spiritual Gifts, How Do We Discover Our?](#)

(C) Love to one another (12:9-13)

(a) Within the church (12:9-13)

9 Love must be free of hypocrisy. Detest what is evil; cling to what is good.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

9 Your love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

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

- "Love"- *agapē*, a selfless devotion to someone else; it is the love that Christ demonstrated toward us

— This should be our attitude toward our brothers and sisters in Christ

— Every time Paul addresses spiritual gifts, he also speaks to the love that every believer is to demonstrate (Cf. 1 Cor 12-14; Eph 4:1-16,32; 5:1-2,21-23)

— This command acts as a heading for the entire list of exhortations that follow

- "...free of hypocrisy" - *anypokritos*, love with hypocrisy is to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, but not demonstrating it through action. It's an inward emotion or a word, but is never manifested in action.

— In this passage (v9-13) Paul describes how we should manifest our love, essentially loving with hypocrisy, in a practical and pragmatic and authentic way. If we follow Paul's instructions here, we will be demonstrating love with genuineness, with authenticity, not just saying "I love you" but living it out.

— In this passage, Paul gives us 10 ways in which true love within the Church will naturally manifest itself. How do we walk out this new life we've have in Christ...Paul says that as we become prompted by the Holy Spirit, 10 things will begin to show up in our lives automatically.

- "...Detest what is evil" - "detest" = hate; in the first part of the verse, Paul tells us to love, then the next sentence tells us to "hate." His point is that "love" and "hate" are not opposite...they actually go together.

— We are called to "hate" anything that comes between us and God, that interrupts our relationship with God, and we are to hate anything that comes between our relationship with other believers.

— The Bible never gives us permission to hate people, but it commands us to hate anything that would derail our intimacy with God or in our relationship with other believers

— Jesus hates things too (Rev 2:6). Notice that Jesus didn't hate the Nicolaitans, but He hated the *deeds* of the Nicolaitans (Cf. Matt 23; 2 instances of turning over tables in temple courtyard)

— Love naturally involves hating certain things; you can define what you love by what you hate

— The world defines love as an open sentimentality and tolerance to everything. This is the antithesis of love according to the Bible.

— If you can look at sin squarely in the face and not be angered by its presence in some sense, then you are clearly not inspired or motivated by the Holy Spirit. If you can drive by an abortion clinic, knowing what they are doing in there, and not be sickened and have hatred well up inside of you, not for the people but for the sin, then you are not being guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

- "...cling to what is good" - I don't just hate what is evil, but I cling to what is good

— I hate the things that will destroy my marriage, my finances, my family, my relationships...but I embrace/cling to those things which build up my marriage, my finances, my family, my relationships

- 1 Thess 5:21: but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good
- It's not enough to just hate something, you have to replace it with something that is better. This is how I know I'm walking about the concept of *agapē* love within the context of the church.

What God is seeking in the believer is not a single worthy act, but a continuing quality of life.

10 **Be devoted to one another** in brotherly love; **give preference to one another in honor,**

10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

10 Be devoted to each other with mutual affection. Excel at showing respect for each other.

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

- Verses 10-13 show love (*agapē*) in action...

- "Be devoted to one another" - there are 19 "one anothers" in the Bible (Rom 12:10 [2x], 16; 14:13; 15:5,7,14; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:2,32; 5:21; Phil 2:3; Col 3:9,13; 1 Thess 5:12; James 5:16; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:9,10; 5:5)

— So it would appear that the Lord is serious about us walking out our faith in the context of the church/community of believers. We are to focus on how we walk out these truths in our practical sanctification.

— If a believer is not engaged in a community of other believers, they cannot practice these "one anothers" and thus are outside of the will of God for them in their practical sanctification

- "...give preference to one another" - giving preference means to regard others as more important than yourself (Cf. Phil 2:3)

— If Christians did this one thing, a lot of problems within marriage and families would disappear, a lot of problems within other relationships would disappear, and a lot of problems within churches would disappear

— I am to love others just as I love myself. Self-love for us comes naturally...you don't need to spend time learning to love yourself, you don't need to be taught how to love yourself.

— Our problem is not loving ourselves, it's transferring that love that we have for ourselves to others. Paul says that if you're going to be walking out love in your church or community of believers, if you're going to love without hypocrisy, you're going to give preference to others over yourself.

- "...honor" - to respect someone on a true evaluation of their worth

- Giving recognition and appreciation to those who deserve it is a concrete way of expressing love
- Phil 2:4: do not *merely* look out for your own personal *interests*, but also for the *interests* of others.
- These exhortations are at the *end* of this epistle: they rely on the foundation that has been set. They can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. They cannot be produced in the flesh.

11 not **lagging behind** in **diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord**;

- 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
- 11 Never be lazy in showing such devotion. Be on fire with the Spirit. Serve the Lord.
- 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
- "...lagging behind" - *okneros*, sluggish, lazy, backward
- It is natural for Christians to slack off in their diligence in serving the Lord after they have been Christians for some time
- Apollos (Acts 18:24-25) and Paul are examples of believers who maintained fervent diligence in His service
- "...diligence" - consistency, faithfulness
- In other words, I don't serve the Lord only when I want to, only when I can do it my own way; I am committed as a growing Christian regardless (Cf. 2 Tim 4:2)
- External factors are irrelevant when it comes to serving the Lord with diligence/consistency
- "...fervent in spirit" - with a spirit of fervency; where do I get this fervency? from the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit empowers us, energizes us, motivates us to serve God's people in a supernatural way (Cf. Rom 8:11). As we learn to tap into the Holy Spirit, we will discover that He has a vast reservoir of energy and power to give to us to serve God's people that we have never known before.
- "...serving the Lord" - serving the Lord naturally leads us into the realm of serving others
- Every spiritual gift that God has given to every believer has the specific purpose to bless someone else: the gift of teaching has as its target the person who needs to be taught/wants to learn; the gift of hospitality has as its target the person who needs to feel at home or needs comfort; the gift of leadership has as its target the person who wants to be led in accomplishing something. Every spiritual gift has as its target someone else.

12 **rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer**,

- 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,
- 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in trouble, and persistent in prayer.

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

- "...rejoicing in hope" - "hope" is the knowledge of our future in God is so bright that it sustain you in every trial, struggle and tribulation that you happen to be under

- Our blessings in Christ are so great, and eternal, that any momentary and light affliction we may encounter while on earth are insignificant and small by way of comparison

- Rejoicing means that whatever life throws at us, we remain joyful

- Joy and happiness are very different...

- "happiness" comes from the root *hap*, which means happenstance or luck; it refers to our circumstances. We're happy if our circumstances are good; we're not happy if our circumstances just fell apart.

- This is a dangerous place to live because we live in a fallen world, and our circumstances are not always going to be perfect. We're never promised perfect circumstances in life.

- God promises us something much better than circumstance-oriented happiness...He promises us "joy" that no matter what our circumstances are, however dire or negative, because I can know that at the end of the day, I know that I'm going to win.

- "...persevering in tribulation" - "tribulation" = problems, trials, difficulties, hurts, setbacks

- The Lord has promised us very clearly that in this world, we will encounter tribulation (John 16:33). This is a promise from God that can't be found in those little promise books in the Christian bookstore. They only have the "happy" promises.

- It is through "many tribulations" that we will enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). You're guaranteed a ticket into heaven, but there will be some bumps along the way.

- 1 Peter 4:12 says that tribulations should not surprise us like it's something strange. Peter wrote this during the first imperial persecution of the church by the Roman government, which was led by an insane madman named Nero.

- "persevering" - not quitting or giving up (Cf. James 1:12)

- If you look at all of the primary characters in the Bible, they endured tremendous hardship and tribulation: Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Jesus Himself, Peter, and Paul.

- "tribulation" - *thilipsis*, generally has 3 meanings in Scripture:

1. It can refer to "tribulation" or "trouble" generally (here; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3)

2. It can refer to the entire seven years of Daniel's 70th Week ("the beginning of sorrows") (Jer 30:7-9; Dan 9:24-27; 12:1)

3. It can refer to the second half of Daniel's 70th Week (Matt 24:21)

- "...devoted to prayer" - prayer is communication with God; it is one of the biggest privileges we have as believers, that at any time day or night, we can, with the righteousness that has been imputed to us through the death of Christ, enter into prayer with omniscient and omnipotent God who created us, loves us, and redeemed us.

- He communicates to me primarily through His Word, but I communicate to Him through this awesome privilege I have called prayer
- "devoted" - prayer should be a priority for every believer (Cf. Dan 6:10)
- We pray, but we tire of praying and neglect prayer when we most need it. Jesus was aware of this weakness, which is why He taught often about prayer. In nearly every instance of Jesus' teaching on prayer, His point was simply that we should pray and never give up (Luke 18:1).
- Often prayer is a last resort...when a problem comes, I immediately try to fix it in my own power. I dredge up energy in the flesh to rectify a situation, and when that plan fails, we then resort to prayer. Daniel, however, a man of prayer, did the opposite...as soon as a problem arose in Daniel's life, he went to the Lord in prayer.
- Prayer is our greatest resource when we feel stress and strain (Phil 4:6-7)
- Same progression from hope, to perseverance, to prayer in 8:24-27
- We are not simply "to pray"; the command is to be "devoted in prayer." It should have a very high (highest?) priority in our lives.

13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

13 Supply the needs of the saints. Extend hospitality to strangers.

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

- "...contributing to the needs of the saints" - God gives us resources financially and in other ways specifically so that we can meet the needs of the saints

— "contributing" - different than "giving" in v8: "contributing to fellow believers"; entering into the *fellowship* of others' needs, as our opportunity to help. Fellowship (*koinoneo*) means:

1. To come into communion or fellowship with, to become a sharer, be made a partner
2. To enter into fellowship, join one's self to an associate, make one's self a sharer or partner; a fiduciary (Cf. Prov 19:17; Luke 6:38)

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

— God often does not give *to* us, but He gives *through* us. He uses us as a channel or vehicle to distribute His resources to other believers.

— As we financially give to the Lord, we are truly walking out *agapē* love

- This financial giving is not "tithing"...as you study tithing in the OT, there are actually three tithes:

— Two tithes were collected annually and the third was collected every third year; the total percentage given ("tithed") was 23.33%, not 10% as is commonly taught today

— What the NT teaches us is the principle of grace giving, which is the concept Paul describes in 2 Cor 8-9. There are eight principles of grace giving: [from Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions and Eternity*]:

1. Generously (Ex 36:3-7) - giving for the tabernacle building
 2. Regularly (1 Cor 16:2a) - consistency
 3. Voluntarily (2 Cor 9:7a) - not under compulsion
 4. Joyfully (2 Cor 9:7b) - cheerfully
 5. Worshipfully (Acts 10:1-4) - i.e. Cornelius; the Lord called his giving an act of worship
 6. Proportionately (1 Cor 16:2b) - give as the Lord has prospered
 7. Sacrificially (2 Cor 8:3) - give until it hurts
 8. Quietly (Matt 6:1-4) - in secret, unannounced
- "...practicing hospitality" - the ability to make guests feel comfortable and at home (Cf. 1 Peter 4:9)
- The books of 2 John and 3 John give us examples of hospitality
- In 2 John, the problem was that heretics and false teachers were coming into homes, taking advantage of hospitality (the early church met in homes). John urged believers to not provide hospitality to these people whose doctrine was off base.
- In 3 John, the problem was that hospitality was not being shown to believers whose doctrine was correct

(2) Service within society (Rom 12:14—13:14)

(b) Within society (12:14-21)

Paul now moves from Sunday morning (our attitude and actions toward other believers within the church, 12:1-13) to Monday morning (our attitude and actions toward unbelievers in the world, 12:14-21).

(a) Bless persecutors (12:14)

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

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

14 Bless those who persecute you. Keep on blessing them, and never curse them.

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

- We live in a world that does not like nor accept the things we believe. As we seek to live for God in a fallen world, we automatically incur resistance. People will say slanderous and unkind things about us, and behave in an unloving manner.

— So how do we as believers react and deal with these attitudes? Paul gives us five things to do in this passage (v14-21):

1. Bless persecutors (v14)
2. Empathize with all (v15)

3. Associate with the lowly (v16)
4. Promote grace and peace (v17-18)
5. Conquer evil with good and not revenge (v19-21)

— We don't do these things in our own power and strength, but in the power of the Holy Spirit

— As we understand these commands, it's clear that God has put a great call on our lives...we are not just to love those who are friends, who accept what we say and do, but we're to love those who are opposed to everything we say, think, or do. We are to love the unlovable.

- "...persecute" - *dioko*, opposition from the unsaved world; when you live out the principles of Christ in the fallen world, you will become the object of persecution (2 Tim 3:12)

— Jesus gave the same instruction to bless those who persecute you (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27-28)

- "...bless and do not curse" - love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27-28); Paul lived this out himself (1 Cor 4:12)

— This is the greatest apologetic we have: our lives, modeled after Jesus Christ (Luke 23:34). This is not normal human behavior; it sets us apart completely from the way the world acts and thinks (normal worldly reaction, Luke 9:51-56). Even Paul got into the flesh a bit when dealing with persecutors (Acts 23:1-4).

— Loving those who hate us is so attention-drawing because it is completely the opposite of our natural human tendencies. So if this is the opposite of my normal human reaction, how do I do it? You don't do it...the Holy Spirit does it through you (Gal 2:20).

— The same Spirit who said "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" is present inside of you, and gives us that same power to bless those who hate us. The same words came out of Stephen's mouth as he was being stoned to death (Acts 7:60). He said this because he was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:55).

— Jesus Christ was living His life in Stephen, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and Stephen was loving those who hated him

- The religious left will use this verse to argue that Christians should not own guns to protect themselves (contrary to Jesus' instruction in Luke 22:36) and should not fight in the military. But this is not the context of this passage. Paul here is not talking about assault, he's talking about insult (an attack on your character).

(b) Empathize with all (12:15)

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

15 Rejoice with those who are rejoicing. Cry with those who are crying.

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

- We are to meet people where they are: if they are happy, we are happy/rejoicing with them, but if they are sad or down, we meet them there as well (weep with them)

— This verse describes empathy: sympathy is to feel compassion or pity for another; empathy is to make the other person's situation your own.

— Empathetic people identify so closely with others that they allow what has happened to others to affect them also

— Believers should share both the joys and sorrows of their neighbors, especially fellow believers (1 Cor 12:26; Phil 4:14)

— Jesus' first miracle (turning water to wine, John 2) was performed while rejoicing with those who rejoice; His greatest miracle (raising Lazarus, John 11) was performed while weeping with those who wept.

— Heb 13:3 tells us to remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them; in Job 30:25 Job is saying why he thinks he's a righteous man when he wept with them whose life is hard

(c) Associate with the lowly (12:16)

16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but **associate with the lowly**. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

16 Live in harmony with each other. Do not be arrogant, but associate with humble people. Do not think that you are wiser than you really are.

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

- All three phrases of this verse speak to humility

- "...associate with the lowly" - contrary to how the Corinthians or the readers of James' epistle were treating the unfortunate

— The Corinthians only associated with the "beautiful people"; the reader's of James' epistle were treating those of higher economic means better, and those without means poorly (partiality)

— Whatever a person's problem is (poor health, financially poor, mental illness, etc.) we should associate with them, meet their needs. Jesus modeled this for us, regularly meeting with and dining with tax collectors, prostitutes, and the poor and diseased (Cf. Matthew, Zaccheus, Samaritan woman).

— Our ministry is not to the beautiful people, not to those with potential, not to the up-and-comers, not to those whose futures are bright, not to those who are in the upper socio-economic strata...it is to all people, including the lowly and less fortunate.

(d) Promote grace and peace (12:17-18)

17 **Never repay evil for evil to anyone.** Respect what is right in the sight of all people.

17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

17 Do not pay anyone back evil for evil, but focus your thoughts on what is right in the sight of all people.

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

- How can a sinful person love and keep peace with other sinful people? Paul answers that question in v17-21:

- "Never repay evil for evil to anyone" - we shouldn't treat people with justice, but instead treat them with grace

— The old adage "don't get mad get even" stops the moment you begin to walk out the principles of the Christian life

— It is not treating people with justice (giving them what they deserve) or with mercy (withholding something they deserve)...but it is dispensing to them grace (giving them something that they do not deserve)

— We should do this because we are beneficiaries of God's infinite grace; we are who we are in Christ because we have received His grace, thus we should dispense this same grace to other people

— In Matt 18:21-35 Jesus taught Peter about forgiveness (70x7), then told a parable of a slave who owed his master a huge amount of money. The master wanted payment but the slave begged and the master forgave the debt. But then that same slave who was forgiven went to someone who owed him a small amount of money and choked him and threw him in prison demanding payment. When the original master learned this, he reinstated the debt the slave owed to him and put him under torture until it was repaid.

— It is inconsistent for someone who has received the unmatched grace of God to treat someone else with justice. God has forgiven us a huge debt that could never be repaid. How then could we even think to not give grace to someone who owes us such a small amount in comparison.

18 If possible, **so far as it depends on you**, be at peace with all people.

18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live in peace with all people.

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

- Two qualifiers to living in peace with others: "if possible" and "as far as it depends on you"

— Paul strongly advocated being a "peacemaker" but he did not promote peace at any price. Exceptions may include: if truth is at stake (Gal 2:11).

- We cannot exchange truth, violate purity or condone injustice for the cause of peace
- However, a believer should never be an instigator of trouble under normal circumstances
- Matt 5:9: **Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.**
- You can easily tell an immature Christian by the fact that they are in conflict with everyone around them. They pick fights that don't need to be picked; they argue about things that don't warrant arguments. But those who are walking in the Spirit have the ability to walk in peace with all men.
- "...so far as it depends on you" - this implies that, despite our best efforts, it won't always be possible to walk in peace with all men
- It may be someone else who is the aggressor; someone else may come against you when you've done nothing to deserve it. In fact Jesus told us that this would happen (Matt 10:34-36). There are conflicts that we find ourselves in that we did not bring upon ourselves. Jesus Christ was the perfect manifestation of God's love, yet people no matter where He went had some sort of problem with Him, which He did not bring upon Himself. This is the natural reaction of the unsaved mind to the truth of God's Word.
- Paul is saying that if you're in conflict with someone, don't let it be a personal power struggle or self-centered squabble of some kind. Let people come into conflict with you because of the love of God that is dispensed from your life.

(e) Conquer evil with good and not revenge (12:19-21)

- 19 Never take your own revenge, **beloved**, but **leave room for the wrath of God**, for it is written: "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.
- 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.
- 19 Do not take revenge, dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me. I will pay them back, declares the Lord."
- 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
- If hostilities erupt, the Christian should never retaliate; instead, they should trust God to right the wrong (Cf. 1 Sam 24; 26). We must give up the right to personal revenge.
- Long ago, God promised to take care of His people when others wronged them (Deut 32:35-36)
- We have a responsibility to defend the weak and pursue justice, but we should not retaliate, but instead trust God when others attack us personally
- David's refusal to kill Saul on two occasions when it seemed that God had delivered Saul into David's hands is a classic Biblical example of this principle.
- In Rom 13, Paul argues that Christians should generally obey civil authorities because God set up civil government as His instrument through which He takes vengeance during

the interim period between the Flood and the Second Coming. It (civil government) is the instrument He uses to restrain evil until the Tribulation, when the "man of lawlessness" leads the world into total corporate rebellion against God, resulting in His direct intervention.

- "...beloved" - a critical word in this verse...only applies to Christians; unbelievers, those without the indwelling Holy Spirit, have no capacity to live out this verse, they have no ability to not take revenge upon themselves

— It is only through the power of the Spirit within us that we have the ability not to seek personal vengeance. But this is impossible for the unbeliever.

- "...leave room for the wrath of God" - quoting from Prov 20:22; 24:29; Deut 32:35

— Chuck Smith once said, I learned a long time ago that if I don't seek personal vengeance, God does a very good job of settling accounts. God is much better at dealing with injustices than we are. When we allow our personal feelings or hurts to drive us to seek justice, to settle the score, to even things out, we're not leaving room for the wrath of God.

— The thought of leaving vengeance to God seems foolish to the world (and sometimes to Christians)

— But this verse does not say to not avenge ourselves except in some conditions or extreme circumstances. The command is unconditional. That means never. Spiteful attempts to get even are not Christian (Matt 5:38-39; 1 Thess 5:15; 1 Peter 3:8-10).

— But the moment we release the need to get even, to implement justice, we take them off of our hook and put them on God's hook...and that's a dangerous place for an unbeliever to be. At that point, God's in charge and overseeing their retribution, not us.

— At that point, God begins to deal with people in a supernatural way: sometimes He convicts them of their sin, sometimes He dispenses grace to them, maybe He takes them through a season of discipline

Heb 10:31 also quotes Deut 32:35, just as Rom 12:19. These are the only two verses in the NT that do not quote from either the Hebrew Bible or the LXX. In both cases, the author (in Romans, Paul; in Hebrews, unknown) is using his own rendering of the text. The author of Romans quotes it the same way as the writer to Hebrews. This is really not a big deal, except that it provides some evidence that Paul was also the writer of Hebrews.

20 "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM; IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP **BURNING COALS** ON HIS HEAD."

20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

20 But "if your enemy is hungry, feed him. For if he is thirsty, give him a drink. If you do this, you will pile burning coals on his head."

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

- Quoted from Prov 25:21-22...

- "...BURNING COALS" - lots of debate on what these are...Ryrie Study Bible says: burning pangs of shame and guilt, which may lead the sinner/aggressor to repentance

— When a Christian doesn't have the expected human response in kind, a special kind of conviction happens in the heart of the offender

-- When we leave room for God to take revenge on a person in our place, this verse almost makes it seem that we are to feel sorry for that person; they deserve our kindness because they have no idea what is coming their way.

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

21 Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.

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

- As a Christian, evil is trying to dominate and control you. Once we become angry, we give the devil a foothold/opportunity in our lives (Eph 4:26-27).

— Satan can use a Christian just as easily as he can use a non-Christian to accomplish his purposes (Matt 16:21-23)

— Once bitterness, anger, or unforgiveness begins to sit in our hearts and fester, Satan now has a foothold, an angle to work in your life because that anger cannot stay inside of us...it will come out some way and some how

— People were not designed by the Creator that our internal anger can continually be suffocated...it will come out. And 9 times out of 10, it comes out on an innocent party. A parent unleashes on a child because of something that happened at work. A wife unleashes on her husband because of what someone said about her.

— Evil is trying to dominate you, but you must dominate it. How do you dominate it? You love the unlovable, you dispense grace to those who don't deserve it. But when we forgive as we have been forgiven, the inroad that Satan has in our life disappears.

— We live in an angry, hateful society because people have been hurt, and as the saying goes "hurt people hurt people." All of us have been hurt, but yet we have the ability in Christ to not let sin control us when we understand that we are the recipients of divine grace. Thus it is inconsistent for us, the recipients of this divine grace, to treat someone else with justice.