

Ladies Bible Study

Week 19

(Week 18 in your lessons)

February 24, 2026



Romans 12:1-2 - "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. 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 opening appeal of this final section of the Romans Epistle is like the text of a sermon. Every phrase, every word is significant.

Who is the "I" whom the Spirit inspired to voice this appeal? It is none other than the Apostle Paul, who had placed himself at the divine disposal as a _____, a slave of Christ, with no will but his Lord's; who had willingly "suffered the loss of all things" for Christ, counting them but rubbish (Phil. 3:8). Sent to us through such an instrumentality, this appeal surely constitute nothing less than the Word of God to us, His children.

1. "I beseech"
2. "I beseech you"
3. "By the mercies of God"
4. "That ye present your bodies"
5. "A living sacrifice"
6. "Holy, acceptable unto God"
7. "Which is your reasonable service"

"And be not conformed to this world." In Gal. 1:4 we read that our Lord "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." Yet we are ever prone to adapt ourselves to our environment. Hence the Apostle's exhortation: "and be not conformed."

Many Christians suppose that they can better win the lost to Christ if they adapt themselves to their worldly environment and go along with their unsaved friends to show them that they are no different. But God says, "Be different. Be not conformed." Indeed, it is only as men see that we are different that they can be impressed with our testimony. Thus the Apostle continues:

"But be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind." II Cor. 3:18 expresses it beautifully. It is as we are occupied with Christ that we are "transformed into the same image from glory to glory." Thus this transformation takes place "by the renewing of your mind."

"... seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:9, 10).

"That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Be sure to take in the _____ of Paul's words here. He says in effect: "If you will present yourself to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him, you will prove for yourself that His will is good, and acceptable, and perfect" - for you! Looking back you will be able to say, "I could have wished for nothing better. I would have wanted it no other way." So graciously has God planned for our happiness, both temporal and eternal!

THE ONE BODY AND THE FUNCTIONS OF ITS MEMBERS

"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. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; Or he that exhorteth on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." - Rom. 12:3-8

Many commentators hold that verses 6-8 refer to the ministries of the elected or appointed officers of the church, but could there be an office of "mercy shower" (Ver. 8)? I believe this has to do with the various "offices," or functions, of a living body, the Body of Christ (Ver. 4).

After exhorting us to be "transformed by the renewing of [our] mind," the Apostle raises his finger, as it were, to make a very important statement to "every man" among us about this renewed mind and its relation to Christian service and, fellowship. Appealing to his Apostolic authority, he says:

"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" (Ver. 3).

In many Christian assemblies there are one or more individuals who have this problem. They overrate themselves, and this indeed does affect their general thinking. They are apt to think of themselves as quite intellectual, and this is bound to have an adverse effect upon the oneness of the assembly and upon their own ministry for Christ. Thus Paul earnestly exhorts "every man that is among you" not to overrate himself but to "think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Ver. 3).

The word "soberly" is very appropriate here, for generally in Scripture it stands over against intoxication, and even believers are sometimes prone to think intemperately, rather than realistically about their natural abilities. "Think soberly," says the Apostle, according to the measure of the faith which God, in His providence, has given you to use your gifts for Him. Paul himself was the greatest example of such temperate thinking (See I Cor. 2:1,4,5).

Rom. 12:4,5 clearly indicates that the Apostle says all this with the unity of the Body in view. As Ver. 3 begins with the word "For," so does Ver. 4. He is still pursuing the same thought.

There are many members in the human body, he says, yet all do not have the same office. Indeed, there is practically no _____ in the body. Yet all the members work with and for each other since all are mutually dependent upon one another. When one is injured, or in danger, the others immediately come to its aid. "So we, being many," he says, "are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Ver. 5). "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us," let each of us use his gift to the utmost advantage for the edification of the Body and the glory of God. This is the sense of verses 6-8.

Now that the Scriptures are complete, the gift of prophecy has passed away according to I Cor. 13:8. But prophecy was then in order, indeed it is placed first here, as it is in I Cor. 14:1. Thus the Apostle exhorts those who have this gift to use it "according to the proportion of faith," i.e., to proclaim what the Spirit has revealed to him, not permitting human pride to alter the Spirit's revelation in any way.

"Ministry" (Ver. 7) is simply service, aid. Is the reader's gift that of service, perhaps lowly service, to others or to the church? Then, says Paul, "Give yourself to it." Some joyously engage in loving service in the assembly for a time, but soon begin to feel that their position is inferior to that of others, to whom God has given other positions. This is a sad mistake, for God honors the most menial task done for Him. Indeed, it appears that He often honors these more than the more glamorous exploits.

Likewise he who has been given the gift of teaching should give himself to teaching, and he who has the gift of exhortation - also an important endowment - to exhortation (Vers. 7,8).

But is "giving" a "gift" (Ver. 8)? Yes, it is a gift which all believers should "covet earnestly."

Giving should never be done ostentatiously, however, or with pretense. Rather it should be done "with simplicity. I have observed in ministry that those who contribute most faithfully and sacrificially do so with simplicity, while others are so accustomed to spending upon themselves or to hoarding their God-given riches that they never acquire the gift of giving. This is a great pity in the light of II Cor. 8:9.

"He that ruleth" (Ver. 8). The Greek here means to stand in front, to lead (not the same as episkopos, bishop or overseer). This, says the Apostle, should be done "with diligence," i.e., with "earnest care." This is important since so much leading in Christian assemblies is done in a careless, haphazard fashion, so that the service lacks what it should supply in _____.

Finally, "he that showeth mercy" should do so "with cheerfulness" (Ver. 8). Showing mercy with a sanctimonious spirit robs it of the very quality of mercy. Let mercy, then, be tendered with a cheerful attitude, whether shown to the guilty or to the needy.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY WITH REGARD TO HIMSELF AND OTHERS

This part of the Epistle to the Romans is as truly about grace as are Chapters 5 and 8. Here we have grace in its outworking, God's grace shining through the believer. The careless reader may see here only a list of exhortations, but to the earnest, diligent student of Scripture it is a blessed passage indeed. As Verses 3-8 deal with Christian service, the remainder of the chapter deals with Christian conduct.

The first thing that strikes us as we examine these verses is that the characteristics here commended are diametrically _____ to those the world considers important. Love, humility, patience, hope, prayer, longsuffering - these are not exactly what the world recommends for success! With the world it is rather self-confidence, aggressiveness, insistence upon one's rights, etc. But somehow the unregenerate man cannot see that this is precisely the reason why the world is in its present deplorable condition, with greed, strife, hate, rebellion and violence threatening to undo us. Let us then consider thoughtfully and prayerfully what God would have us, His dear children, be and do.

"Dissimulation" in Ver. 9 is, of course, hypocrisy. In the world about us there is much veneer, much sheer hypocrisy, in human relations. Mrs. Smith tells Mrs. Jones how very happy she is to see her again and how very lovely she looks today, and walks away grumbling to herself about the one woman she cannot bear! And many men do the same in other ways. "Don't let this be so among you," says the Apostle: "Let love be without dissimulation." And Peter agrees in those beautiful words of I Pet. 1:22: "Love one another with a pure heart fervently."

The words "abhor" and "cleave," in Ver. 9, are also most significant. Notice how thoroughly opposite they are. Don't even touch the one; consider it abhorrent, but cling tightly to the other so as not to let it go! The same idea is found in II Tim. 2:22: "Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness...." Flee from the one as for your life, but pursue the other as you would a quarry in the hunt.

The exhortation to "abhor that which is evil" and "cling to that which is good" should be prayerfully considered by Christians who too readily conform to this world, constantly flirting with those things that dishonor God, to see how close they can come to them.

In Ver. 10 the Apostle goes from agape love (Ver. 9) to "brotherly love." In the Greek it is Philadelphia, which differs from agape in several subtle respects. Perhaps the word "brotherly" will best help us to grasp the meaning of the term here. The love of brother to brother is not exactly the same as that of husband to wife (cf. Eph. 5:25, where it is agape) but it is strong nevertheless, and believers should be thus "kindly affectioned" toward each other, gladly _____ the other where honor is concerned. In Phil. 2:3 we have the same basic exhortation:

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

Indeed, we have an outstanding example of this quality in the attitude and conduct of two noted Christian gentlemen: Apollos, and Paul himself.

Apollos, an "eloquent" man, and "mighty in the Scriptures," had evidently been greatly used of God to bring blessing to the Corinthian believers. Soon, however, there arose divisions among the Corinthians as to whom they should follow: Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Christ (I Cor. 1:12). To correct this situation Paul wrote to the Corinthians rebuking them for their narrow-minded attitude and assuring them that there was no rivalry between him and Apollos, the two mainly concerned, at the same time _____ them that believers are now one body in Christ, the blessed truth which he had taught them at the first.

While there was indeed no rivalry between him and Apollos, the fact remained however, that Apollos had unwittingly "stolen the hearts" of the believers there, as it were, placing Paul in the shade. Yet with all this we read in I Cor. 16:12 that Paul "greatly desired" Apollos to return to Corinth to minister the Word there. What selflessness! And Apollos showed the same humble spirit, for the passage goes on to say that "his will was not at all to come at this time." Evidently he was determined not to take advantage of his popularity at Corinth. This was "brotherly love" indeed, and grace in action!

Ver. 11 actually has nothing to do with business matters as we think of business. Rather it refers to whatever needs to be done. In that which God has given us to do we should not be slothful in zeal, but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." What good will intellectual acumen, or eloquence or any other human faculty do to bring needed blessing to the hearts of those with whom we come into contact, if these God-given abilities are not coupled with a warm, zealous, fervent spirit, by one who is sincerely "serving the Lord"?

How beautifully the three parts of Ver. 12 go together! "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." The world knows nothing of rejoicing in hope! They merely keep hoping for the best, not knowing of the "hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19). They hope - if they ever think about it - that God will finally deal kindly with them, but are ignorant of the hope of the Bible, that eager _____ of things surely to come to pass.

Should we be called upon to endure "tribulation," we should do so with "patience," indeed, tribulation is used, in the providence of God, to teach us patience. Thus:

"... we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

"And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

"And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

And all the while we are to continue "instant in prayer." Never in Paul's epistles are we instructed to pray for long periods of time. Rather the Apostle bids us to be "instant in prayer." Is there a problem? Pray about it, instantly, now! Does a servant of God come to mind? Pray for him-now, while you are thinking of him.

Do you need light on the Word? or guidance for your life? or special grace for a difficult situation? Pray - now.

Ver. 13 has to do with _____ of heart. Note, he does not promote reckless extravagance. He speaks of "distributing to the necessity of saints," i.e., to saints in need. Note too that the emphasis is on the saints. Otherwise we could all speedily go bankrupt! On the five occasions when Paul urges generosity it is always generosity to the saints. He himself took up great "collections" from the Gentile churches to provide for the needs of "the poor saints which [were] at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:26). He does not mean that we should be unmindful of the sufferings of humanity, but simply that our first responsibility is toward our brethren in Christ. Gal. 6:10 states it well:

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

This is the answer to the social gospel of the neo-evangelicals and liberals. Many of these think that the Church's first order of business is to relieve the world's physical and material needs. Thus millions are being given financial aid whether or not they are willing to work (cf. II Thes. 3:10) and regardless of how they spend the funds they receive. Meanwhile less and less of the Church's finances are used to bring our God-given message of grace to the teeming millions, rich and poor, who are without Christ and without hope. Our material aid, then, should go first to relieve "the necessity of saints," so that together we may be the better able to meet the still greater need, the spiritual need, of the multitudes about us who are lost.

The words "given to hospitality" continue in this vein. The believer should be "given to" hospitality, quick to take some friend or stranger into the warmth and fellowship of his household, especially another believer. We do not ignore the fact that this is becoming more difficult in our day, when soaring inflation practically forces some wives to take on secular employment just so that the family may be adequately provided for. Doubtless God understands this as He understands the difficulties associated with obedience to other Scriptural exhortations. Nevertheless it is a pity that in these hectic days old-fashioned _____ has become almost non-existent and we have lost much by bidding it, or having to bid it, farewell. Every believer, surely, should have a hospitable spirit, seeking opportunities to receive others into the home for Christian fellowship. Bishops, or overseers in the church especially, says the Apostle, should be "lovers of hospitality" (Titus 1:8).

Probably referring to possible persecution from those without, but still dealing with our own attitude of heart as believers, the Apostle goes on to say:

"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not" (Ver. 14).

In I Pet. 2:23 we read of our Lord, that,

"... when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not..."

And Paul says the same of himself in I Cor. 4:12:

"... being reviled we bless; being persecuted we suffer it."

This self-denial is a virtue that the world, doubtless, scorns above all, but which God honors and blesses.

Verse 15 is a beautiful passage on Christian _____. Talk about psychology! Here you have sanctified psychology! How many of us, even among pastors and Christian workers, need to learn that one does not comfort a burdened heart by merely being jolly, nor does one bring blessing to a glad heart by being "a wet blanket"! Sympathy is a sharing, an understanding, of another's feelings and this is exactly what this verse is about. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice," says the Spirit-inspired Apostle, "and weep with them that weep." This is the gracious outworking of what we find in I Cor. 12:26 concerning the Body of Christ:

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or [if] one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.,

And Ver. 16 (of Rom. 12) naturally follows:

"Be of the same mind one toward another," i.e., let love and trust and sympathy and interest be mutual.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4).

This is most important, for we are all prone to be self-centered, taking little interest, if any, in the things that concern others. And the Apostle goes on to press this home in the light of his original exhortation in Ver. 3: "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

Even apart from Christianity this is wise counsel. Prov. 26:12 says:

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit; there is more hope of a fool than of him."

How very much the Apostle has to say in his epistles about high-mindedness! How often he warns against conceit! And how, here, he _____ our pretense in looking down on men of low estate!

Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Ver. 17). Note the "no man." We should not even recompense evil for evil to the ungodly. Paul emphasizes this in I Thes. 5:15;

"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Ver. 17). Paul himself was a good example of this. Not only was his integrity impeccable, but there were occasions when, for the sake of his ministry, he made sure that others had reason to know this to be so, especially where financial matters were concerned.

As we know from Rom. 15:25,26, Paul was even now about to go to Judaea with an offering "for the poor saints ... at Jerusalem." Poor saints - at Jerusalem? Yes, and this confirmed the _____ of Paul's apostleship and message. When the Pentecostal program was in force we read of these same saints: "Neither was there any among them that lacked" (Acts 4:34), but now this program was fast passing from the scene and, having sold their houses and lands for the common good (Acts 4:34,35) the Judaeans now found themselves in great distress. Thus Paul, fulfilling his agreement with the leaders of the church at Jerusalem (Gal. 2:10), had initiated a massive effort to raise funds for these needy saints. The Gentile churches of Macedonia and Achaia (Rom. 15:26), along with those of Galatia (I Cor. 16:1) and others, were all taking part in this great love-offering.

This undertaking placed upon Paul a great responsibility, thus, for the sake of his testimony, he arranged to make certain that no one could ever question his financial integrity in this matter. When he wrote to the church at Corinth about this he had already "given order to the churches of Galatia" (I Cor. 16:1) as to the procedure.

They were to be taking up offerings, preparing for Paul's arrival (with delegates from other cities). Then, he said, "whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem" (I Cor. 16:3). Mark well, the Corinthian church was to submit written approval of the delegates they selected to go to Jerusalem with their offering. And then he adds, most modestly: "And if it be now that I go also, they shall go with me" (Ver.4). Of course, they could go separately!

Surely Paul would be the one to oversee the transportation of the great offering from all the Gentile churches to the Judaeans. Was not he the promoter of this whole undertaking? Ah, but it must not be forgotten that only recently some there had even questioned his apostleship. Thus he did not take even the above for granted but, in a delicately-worded suggestion, in which he still rightly maintains his role as leader, he says, "If it be meet [appropriate] that I go also, they shall go with me."

In II Cor. 8:20,21 he again refers to the care which he exercised in seeing to it that this great offering reached Jerusalem without any possibility of blame ever being attached to him or the others who delivered it:

"Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

A great lesson, this, in fiscal responsibility, and a _____ example of the importance of his own words here in Rom. 12:17: "Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

The Apostle concedes, of course, that even the most sincere conduct and motives may be misunderstood, or even deliberately misinterpreted, thus he continues:

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

When it is impossible to live peaceably with others, he implies, at least be sure that the difficulty does not lie with you. And then, with a touching expression of his love for them, to soften hurt feelings over wrongs done them by others, he brings his exhortation to a conclusion:

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

"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.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Vers. 19-21).

It is natural, with most of us, to resist wrath and to resist the person who would do us wrong. But this would come perilously close to _____ the very attitude our adversary displays - and that would be wrong. Rather let us back away from our adversary's wrath; give him room. "Give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." It would be a mistake to take our problems out of His hands just because we are angry.

This is something I have personally had to deal with and would venture to say most of you have as well. I have been hurt so deeply by those who call themselves "Christians." Why is it that we are the worst to each other? But I have their Christmas cards up in my office and I pray for them every time I see it. Because it does nothing good for me to be bitter and want revenge. I take rest in the fact that God is in control and that He sees everything and knows my heart.

In Ver. 20, the Apostle quotes from Prov. 25:21,22 which, however, adds the words "and the Lord shall reward thee"! In feeding your enemy when he is hungry and giving him drink when thirsty, you will heap "coals of fire on his head," a metaphor for the remorse caused by repentance.

So artists melt the sullen ore of lead,
By heaping coals of fire upon its head.
In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow,
And, pure from dross, the silver runs below.

How appropriate are the Apostle's words: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Ver. 21). If we resist and challenge those who would persecute us we will only be overcome of evil. But if we make friends of our enemies we will have overcome evil with good.

Indeed, this is how God "destroyed" His chief enemy on earth, Saul of Tarsus. He saved him, thus robbing the opposition of its leader and making of Saul the great Apostle Paul, the herald and the _____ example of His grace to sinners.

Aloud we sing the wondrous grace
Christ to His murderers bare;
Which made the tort'ring cross its throne,
And hung its trophies there.
Jesus, this wondrous love we sing!

And whilst we sing, admire!
Breathe in our souls, and kindle there
The same celestial fire.
Swayed by Thy dear example, we
For enemies will pray
With love their hatred-and their curse
With blessings - will repay.

-Author unknown

