

Romans 12:1-2
Genuine Worship

Introduction: This begins what is often referred to as the practical or ethical section of Romans. Chapters 12—13 give directions for Christian conduct **generally**, and 14:1—15:13 deals with a **specific** problem that the Roman Christians faced and which all Christians share.

Francis Schaeffer said in his helpful book written in 1968, *The God Who is There*, “[I]n an age of synthesis, men will not take our protestations of truth seriously unless they see by our actions that we seriously practice truth and antithesis in the unity we try to establish and in our activities. Without this, in an age of relativity, we cannot expect the evangelical, orthodox Church to mean much to the surrounding culture or even to the Church’s own children, for what we try to say in our teaching and evangelism will be understood in the twentieth-century thought-form of synthesis. Both a clear comprehension of the importance of truth and a clear practice of it, even when it is costly to do so, is imperative if our witness and our evangelism are to be significant in our own generation and in the flow of history.”

1) Paul makes an appeal for Christians to make a sacrifice—12:1

- a) ¹ *I appeal* [parakale,w] *to you therefore* (in light of 1:18-11:36), *brothers*,
- b) How does Paul do this?
 - i) *by* [dia,] *the mercies* [oivktirmo,j] *of God*,
 - (1) God’s compassionate response to our misery.
 - (2) The plural “mercies” may be similar to the Hebrew emphasis on the greatness of His mercy or the depths of His compassion.
 - c) What does Paul expect from his readers?
 - i) What is expected? *to present* [aor. inf. pari,sthmi] (as a priest) *your bodies* (the physical body, but may include the whole self) *as a ... sacrifice* [qusi,a],
 - (1) Unlike the dead animal sacrifices in the temple.
 - (2) Other sacrifices for the believer to offer include:
 - (a) Service—Rom. 15:16
 - (b) Praise—Heb. 13:15
 - (c) Possessions—Heb. 13:16
 - (3) We have already heard this taught in Rom. 6:13, 19.
 - ii) What does this sacrifice look like?
 - (1) Constant dedication: *living* [za,w]
 - (2) Set apart for God: *holy* [a[gioj]
 - (3) Pleasing: *and acceptable* [euva,restoj] *to God*,
 - iii) Why should this sacrifice take place?
 - (1) *which* (sacrifice) *is your spiritual* [logiko,j] (rational, logical, deliberate) *worship* [latrei,a] (as a priest).
- d) **THE POINT:** a daily rededication is none too often.

2) Paul issues two commands to his readers—12:2

a) The commands

i) **Negative:** *²Do not be conformed* [pres. pass. impv. suschmati,zw]

(1) Avoid what standard? *to this world* [aivw,n],

(2) Peter tells us the same thing in 1 Pet. 1:14.

(3) We need to abandon the thought-patterns and values of our culture.

(4) The world has its own politics, art, music, religion, amusements, thought-patterns, and lifestyles, and it seeks to get everyone to conform to its culture and customs. It hates nonconformists—like Christ and His followers. (MacDonald)

ii) **Positive:** *but be transformed* [pres. pass. impv. metamorfo,w]

• A spiritual metamorphosis. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18.

(1) How does the transformation take place? *by the renewal* [avnakai,nwsij] *of your mind* [nou/j],

(a) Ongoing mental and spiritual conformity to God's truth, which is far more than a simple attitude adjustment.

(b) In other words, practical Christian living is stimulated by focused Christian thinking. (Barry Horner)

b) Why does Paul want them to do these two things?

i) Purpose: *that* [eivj] *by testing you may discern* [dokima,zw] *what is the will* [qe,lhma] *of God,*

ii) What does God's will look like? (three adjectives)

(1) Beneficial: *what is good* [avgaoq,j]

(a) It brings about spiritual growth

(2) Pleasing: *and acceptable* [euva,restoj]

(a) It expresses His nature

(3) Complete: *and perfect* [te,leioj].

(a) It cannot be improved on

iii) As a Christian is transformed in his mind and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God's will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God's will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God. (Witmer, BKC)

c) **THE POINT:** The Christian life is not intended to be composed of mindless rituals

3) Things we need to remember:

a) Don't give your life grudgingly to God, like a child forced to give up a toy to a brother or sister. (i.e. give it back!) Rather, give it freely and joyfully, as one exchanges rings on your wedding day.

Romans 12:3-8
Unity and Diversity in Interdependence

Introduction:

1) The critical issue of interdependence is addressed—12:3-5

- a) How is it addressed? **Graciously:** ³ *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you ...*
 - i) Every member of the Roman congregation needs to listen to this.
- b) How can we encourage interdependence?
 - i) **Negative; reject subjective pride:** *not to think of himself more highly [u`perfrone,w] than he ought [dei/] to think [frone,w],*
 - (1) There is a necessary form of thinking for everyone.
 - (2) Everyone is tempted to think they are the center of their own world.
 - ii) **Positive; embrace objective moderation:** *but to think [frone,w] with sober judgment [swfrone,w],*
 - (1) *each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*
 - (a) The sovereignty of God in bestowing the same faith to all believers is assumed. (cf. Phil. 1:29; 2 Pet. 1:1)
 - (2) They were to think of God's gift to them to be used for God's glory and the good of others, not in competition with others.
- c) What does interdependence look like (from the human body)—12:4-5
 - i) **Plurality:** ⁴ *For as in one body we have many members,*
 - ii) **Diversity:** *and the members do not all have the same function,*
 - iii) **Application:** ⁵ *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

2) Explanation of the individual spiritual gifts—12:6-8

- a) Make use of the grace-gift you have: ⁶ *Having gifts [ca,risma] that differ according to the grace [ca,rj] given to us, let us use them:*
- b) Seven specific grace-gifts addressed in two groups:
 - i) Group one—12:6b-8a
 - (1) *if [ei;te] prophecy [profhteia], in proportion [kata, o` avnalogia] to our faith;*
 - (a) Communicating God's word.
 - (b) Faith could be either:
 - (i) The objective, outward, revealed faith we hold in common.
 - (ii) The subjective, inward, exercised faith of the individual.
 - (2) ⁷ *if [ei;te] service [diakonia], in [e,n] our (the) serving [diakonia];*
 - (a) Serving the practical needs of God's people
 - (3) *[ei;te] the one who teaches [didaskalia], in [e,n] his (the) teaching [didaskalia];*
 - (a) Interpreting and transmitting God's truth

- (4) [ei;te] ⁸ *the one who exhorts* [parakale,w], *in* [e,n] *his* (the) *exhortation* [para,khsij];
- (a) Comforting and urging God's people
 - (b) Martin Luther adds: "The difference between teaching and exhortation is this, that teaching is directed to those who do not know, while exhortation applies to those who do know."
- i) Group two—12:8b
- (1) *the one who contributes* [metadi,dwmi], *in* [e,n] *generosity* [a`plo,thj];
 - (a) Meeting the needs of God's people
 - (2) *the one who leads* [proi?,sthmi], *with* [evn] *zeal* [spoudh,];
 - (a) Leading and managing God's people entrusted to you, whether at home or at church.
 - (3) *the one who does acts of mercy* [evlea,w], *with* [evn] *cheerfulness* [i`laro,thj].
 - (a) Showing God's kindness toward God's people (cf. 12:1)
- c) Three primary views of spiritual grace-gifts.
- i) **All** gifts are for today.
 - ii) **Some** gifts are for today.
 - iii) **No** gifts are for today.

3) What we need to remember:

- a) A believer's consecration to God and his transformed lifestyle is demonstrated in his (serving others) in the body of Christ. (John Witmer)

Romans 12:9-21
Something Everyone Can Do by God's Grace

Introduction:

1) Love for others within the local church—12:9-13

- A series of participles used as a series of 13 gentle exhortations.

a) Express both important facets of love—12:9-10

- i) Genuine: ⁹ *Let love* [avga,ph] *be genuine* [avnupo,kritoj] (unhypocritical).
 - (1) What does pure love look like? Practical discernment.
 - (a) *Abhor* [avpostuge,w] *what is evil* [ponhro,j];
 - (i) Thom Schreiner writes: True virtue is not passive about evil but has an intense revulsion against it. Evil is not tolerated but is despised as that which is injurious and wicked.
 - (b) *hold fast to* [kola,w] *what is good* [avgaoqo,j].
 - (2) Love is not genuine when it leads a person to do something evil or to avoid doing what is right—as defined by God in his Word. (Douglas Moo)
- ii) Affectionate: ¹⁰ *Love* [filo,storgoj] (be tenderly affectionate toward) *one another with brotherly affection* [filadelfi,a].
 - (1) How? *Outdo* [prohge,omai] (take the lead for) *one another in showing honor* [timh,].

b) Be consumed—12:11

- i) Be ambitious: ¹¹ *Do not be slothful* [ovknhro,j] *in zeal* [spoudh,],
- ii) Be eager: *be fervent* [ze,w] *in (the) spirit* [pneu/ma] (Spirit would be better),
 - (1) Like Apollos (Acts 18:25).
- iii) Be focused: *serve* [douleu,w] *the Lord* [ku,rioj].
- iv) S. Lewis Johnson wrote, Consider the greatness of the work, the greatness of the enemy of the souls of people, the brevity of the time in which we are able to work (the night soon comes when no one can work), and the extreme gravity of the issues involved, life and death.

c) Persevere in difficulties—12:12

- i) Joyful confidence: ¹² *Rejoice* [cai,rw] *in hope* [evlpi,j],
- ii) Sympathetic thoughtfulness: *be patient* [u`pome,nw] (with each other) *in tribulation* [qli/yij],
- iii) Prayerful devotion: *be constant* [proskartere,w] *in prayer* [proseuch,].

d) Meet the needs of others—12:13

- i) People you know well: ¹³ *Contribute to* [koinwne,w] *the needs* [crei,a] *of the saints* [a[gioj]
 - (1) Needy **saints** are everywhere—the unemployed, those who have been drained by medical bills, forgotten preachers and missionaries in obscure places, and senior citizens whose resources have dwindled. (William MacDonald)

- ii) People you don't know well: *and seek* [diw,kw] *to show hospitality* [filoxeni,a].

2) Love for unbelievers outside the local church—12:14-21

a) Seek only the good—12:14

- This echoes the teaching of Jesus: Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28
- i) Positive: ¹⁴ *Bless* [euvloge,w] *those who persecute* [diw,kw] *you;*
- ii) Positive: *bless* [euvloge,w]
- iii) Negative: *and do not curse* [katara,omai] *them.*

b) Adjust your empathy appropriately—12:15

- i) Joy: ¹⁵ *Rejoice* [cai,rw] (celebrate) *with those who rejoice* [cai,rw],
- ii) Sorrow: *weep* [klai,w] (mourn) *with those who weep* [klai,w].
- iii) Which one do you find harder to do?

c) Being a nice neighbor starts in your brain—12:16

- i) Positive: ¹⁶ *Live in harmony* [auvto,j fronew] *with one another.*
- ii) Negative: *Do not be haughty* [uyhloj frone,w]
- iii) Positive: *but* [avlla,] *associate* [sunapa,gw] *with the lowly* [tapeino,j] (people?, things?).
- iv) Negative: *Never be wise* [fro,nimoj] *in your own sight.*

- (1) The story is told of D. L. Moody meeting a young man who bragged, “You know, Mr. Moody, I am a self-made man.” To which Mr. Moody responded, “Young man, you have relieved the Almighty of a great responsibility.”

d) Don't retaliate—12:17a

- i) ¹⁷ *Repay* [avpodi,dwmi] *no one evil for evil* [kako,j avnti, kako,j],

e) Be harmonious—12:17b-18

- i) *but give thought* [frone,w] *to do what is honorable* [kalo,j] *in the sight of all.*
- ii) ¹⁸ *If* (1st class condition) *possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably* [eivrhneu,w] *with all.*
- iii) Christians should never be belligerent or cantankerous.
- iv) As E. F. Harrison wrote, “if disharmony and conflict should come, let not the responsibility be laid at your feet.”
- v) As S. Lewis Johnson reminds us, there is an objective sense in which we will never be a peace with the world. But there is also a subjective sense in which we should not be the cause of conflict.

f) Address the needs you are aware of—12:19-20

- i) Negative: ¹⁹ *Beloved, never avenge* [evkdike,w] *yourselves,*
- ii) Positive: *but* [avlla,] *leave it* [di,dwmi to,poj] *to the wrath* [ovrgh,] *of God,*
- iii) Supported from the Law (Deut. 32:35): *for it is written, “Vengeance* [evidi,khsij] *is mine, I* (emphatic) *will repay* [avntapodi,dwmi], *says the Lord.”*
- iv) Supported from the Writings (Prov. 25:21-22): ²⁰ *To the contrary* [avlla,], *“if* (3rd class condition) *your enemy is hungry, feed him; if* (3rd class condition) *he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap*

burning coals (of God's future judgment? Of shame? Of repentance?) *on his head.*"

(1) This is more than non-retaliation but rather active kindness.

g) **Do the good**—12:21

i) Negative: ²¹ *Do not be overcome* [nika,w] *by* (the) *evil* [kako,j] (done to you by your enemies),

ii) Positive: *but* [avlla,] *overcome* [nika,w] (the) *evil* [kako,j] *with* (the) *good* [avgaqo,j] (you can do to others).

(1) As illustrated in 12:20.

3) Things to remember:

a) Right conduct can flow only from right being and thinking. (S. L. J.)