

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans

RELATIONSHIPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

“The Gospel in Shoe leather”

Introduction

TEXT: Romans 12:1-15:13

INTRODUCTION: The title and text of today’s sermon opens our minds to the possibilities of an everyday occurrence. That is the development and importance of relationships. The dictionary defines “relationship” as *the fact of being associated or connected in some way*.¹ Human beings are related to others by kinship (blood relation), common ancestry, a mutual interest, proximity (where you are) or state of being (who you are).

The word “righteous” infers a person’s standing with God. In order to be declared righteous, one must know the Lord in salvation, having their sins forgiven, being declared righteous by the only one who can forgive sin, cleanse us, and make such a declaration – Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul addresses the full scope of the believer’s relationships. We are focusing on the Epistle of Romans for this subject. Our approach to this study goes from a general understanding of Paul’s writing of the Book to a more direct and verse-by-verse view. For instance:

Sections of Romans

Chapters 1-8 Doctrinal
Chapters 9-11 Dispensational
Chapters 12-16 Duty

The Book of Romans speaks to the practical application of the theological understanding of doctrine. This application begins with Chapter twelve.

- I. CONSECRATION OF OURSELVES (12:1-2): Our Relationship to God
- II. COLLECTIVE USE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:3-8): Our Relationship to the Body of Christ – the Church
- III. CHRISTIAN STABILITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD (12:9-21): Our Relationship to Humanity (society)
- IV. COMPREHENSION OF BIBLICAL COMMANDMENTS (13:1-14): Our Relationship to Mandates of Law (higher powers, government, rulers, or ministers of God)
- V. CRITICAL MATTERS OF OUR CONFESSION (14:1-15:13): Our Relationship to the Brethren

¹ Funk and Wagnalls *Standard Desk Dictionary, Volume 2: N-Z* (Funk and Wagnalls Corporation (Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1996), 561.

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- A. Do not judge one another (14:1-12)
- B. Do not put an occasion to fall in a brother's way (14:13-23)
- C. Do edify our brother and imitate Christ (15:1-13)

CONCLUSION: [2 Corinthians 7:1](#) Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Perfecting holiness is an ongoing process; “let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit, and bring [*our*] consecration to completeness in the [*reverential*] fear of God.” (AMP)

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“The Believer’s Relationship to God”

TEXT: Romans 12:1-2

INTRODUCTION: The previous chapters of the Book of Romans show us the works of God toward men (i.e. creation/fall/redemption). Throughout history God has called His people to live distinctive, godly lives in a fallen and ungodly world. Since the Garden of Eden, it has always been a struggle to be holy. Unless the relationship with God is what it ought to be, the appeal of the world will not be rejected. Consecration requires surrender, sacrifice and sanctified living.

I. THE PLEA OF THE APOSTLE PAUL (12:1a): “I beseech:” earnest entreaty, beg, exhort

II. THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED BY THE APOSTLE PAUL (12:1b): “you and brethren”

A. Author: Paul – “I”

B. Audience: Brethren

1. Christians at Rome

2. Only Children of God can engage in such sanctification

III. THE PERSONALITY OF GOD (12:1c): “Mercies of God.” He is the Sovereign God of the universe whose mercies are new each day. His mercies are motivations for obedience.

1. [Lamentations 3:22-23](#) *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. (23) They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*
2. [Numbers 14:11-20](#) And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? (12) I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. (13) And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) (14) And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. (15) Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, (16) Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. (17) And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be

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great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, (18) **The LORD is long suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression**, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*. (19) Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. (20) And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

3. **Isaiah 63:7-9** I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, *and* the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward **the house of Israel**, which he hath bestowed on them **according to his mercies**, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. (8) For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children *that* will not lie: so he was their Saviour. (9) In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.
4. **Psalms 103:8-18** The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. (9) He will not always chide [to grapple, wrestle, to wrangle]: neither will he keep *his anger* forever. (10) He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. (11) For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him. (12) As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (13) Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (14) For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust. (15) *As for* man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. (16) For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. (17) **But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;** (18) To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

IV. THE PRESENTATION OF THE CHILD OF GOD (12:1d): “Present your bodies a Living Sacrifice (yielding – a temple term for bringing anything to God).” There must be a dying to self and living for God.

What is involved in yielding to God?

- Yielding means to stand beside and attentively do the Master's bidding.
- To be at the ready and at the disposal of the Master to aggressively carry out God's will.
- Surrender is more than the idea of giving up or signing over your rights, plans or desires to another, (**Romans 6:13** – “**yield yourselves to God . . . as those who are alive from the dead.**”)

Yield (**παραστήσατε**), Cf. Romans 6:13 Rev., present. The same word as before, but in a different tense.

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- The present tense, *be presenting*, denotes the *daily habit*, the giving of the hand, the tongue, etc., to the service of sin as temptation appeals to each.
- **Here the aorist, as in *Romans 12:1*, denotes an act of self-devotion once for all**, (Vine's Word Studies).
 - ✓ **AS those that are alive** (ὡς ζῶντας): The best texts read ὥσει as if alive. This brings out more clearly the figurative character of the exhortation.
 - From the dead** (ἐκ νεκρῶν): Note the preposition out of. See on *Luke 16:31*. "They would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead [out of death]."
 - ✓ **Your members AS instruments of righteousness**

- A. **Holy** – consecration is being thoroughly holy
 - 1. Sanctification: God calling and setting apart.
 - 2. Consecration: Man setting himself apart as sacred (e.g. dedication)
- B. **Acceptable unto God** – (The picture of the OT priests who are ceremonially clean for the service of God.)
- C. **Reasonable Service** – (spiritual worship): The contrast is drawn here to the external worship of the Jews who are mechanical, repetitious, and so tuned to tradition, they miss the point.

V. THE PATTERN OF THE WORLD (12:2a): "Be not conformed to this world* but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." *Do not fashion yourself after the pattern of this present evil age.*

- A. The **Reproof** of the World's Pattern – **conformity**: a derivative of <G4976> (schema); to *fashion alike*, i.e. *conform* to the same pattern (figurative): outward conformity, to fashion self according to world.

Definition of "the world" in this context:² There are two primary words in the Greek NT for world. In the following examples and texts, they are basically synonymous.

Kosmos: κόσμος (kos'-mos) universe, order, arrangement

Aion:* αἰών (ahee-ohn' or eye-own') an age or a period of time marked by its spiritual and moral characteristics.

² Randy Leedy, "In the World, but not of it," *God's Call to Distinctive Living* (Greenville, SC: BJU Seminary Conference Series, 2015), 16.

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1. **Negatively**
 - a. Not the physical creation
 - b. Not the whole human race
 - c. Not even unregenerate humanity, in and of itself
2. **Positively:** *Unregenerate humanity in its spiritual character*
 - a. Alienated from God (1 John 2:15-17)
 - b. Hostile toward God as He really is
 - c. Under Satan's dominion (John 8:44): "Ye are off your father, the Devil and the lust of your father ye will do."
 - d. Living for self-gratification rather than God's glory
3. **Scripturally (mentioned in the NT):** *While the world exists, God calls His people to be different.*
 - a. **John 17:6** I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me **out of the world**: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.
 - b. **John 17:16** They are **not of the world**, even as I am not of the world.
 - c. **2 Corinthians 6:17** Wherefore **come out from among them**, and be ye **separate**, saith the Lord, and **touch not the unclean thing**; and I will receive you,
 - d. **Galatians 1:3-4a** Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, **(4)** Who gave himself for our sins, that he might **deliver us from this present evil world**,
 - e. **Ephesians 5:11** And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*, (*Turn light on the darkness*).
 - f. **Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, **(12)** Teaching us that, **denying** ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;** **(13)** Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; **(14)** Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
 - h. **James 1:27** Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself **unspotted from the world**.

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- i. **James 4:4** Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be [wants to be] **a friend of the world** is the **enemy of God**.
- j. **1 John 2:15-17** **Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.** If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
(16) For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
(17) And **the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.**

B. The **Renovation** of the Believer's Mind by the work of the Holy Spirit

- 1. Transformation comes from a Greek word *metamorphoo* from which we get our English word *metamorphosis*. It means the **change** of one's form, shape, substances or structure into another by supernatural means. It is a complete transformation of character, purposes and circumstances.
- 2. Literally, *metamorphoo* stresses being **transfigured** inwardly in disparity to the conformation of the previous statement – *inward remodeling* in contrast.
- 3. The obligation here is to undergo a complete change which is accomplished by the power of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. The present continuous tenses indicate *a process of development for the Christian*.

VI. THE PROVING OF THE WILL OF GOD (12:2b): "That ye may prove . . ."

dok-im-ad'-zo – to test for the sake of approval; examine.

- A. **Good** – in contrast to evil. God will never lead you into something that is contrary to righteousness. James tells us that He is the Father of Lights and from Him comes every good and perfect gift.
- B. **Acceptable** – *well-pleasing*. It is that which is "fully agreeable, well suited."
- C. **Perfect** – signifying *that which reaches its end*, to finish, complete.

CONCLUSION: Again . . . **2 Corinthians 7:1** Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Perfecting holiness is an ongoing process; "let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit, and bring [*our*] consecration to completeness in the [*reverential*] fear of God." (AMP)

According to Paul's admonition to Titus beginning Chapter two, he must "speak to" [teach] the things that are befitting wholesome/sound doctrine. He was to exhort every culture and level within

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the flock concerning *the character and right living that identify true Christians*. Notice the language of Titus 2 . . . (The Greek words and Definitions are from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance)

That the aged men be *sober* (2:2) . . . νηφαλέος (nēphaleos: nay-fal'-eh-os) . . . [meaning watchful, alert, discreet], from the root word, nēphō: nay'-fo – [to abstain from wine, to keep sober.]

The aged women likewise . . . may teach the young women to be *sober* (2:3-4) . . . σωφρονίζω (sōphronizō: so-fron-id'-zo) [from the root word, so'-frone meaning **to be disciplined, to use self-control, to be moderate regarding passions, or opinions; temperate**].

Young men likewise exhort to be *sober minded* (2:6-7a) . . . σωφρονέω (sōphroneō: so-fron-eh'-o) . . . [to be of a sound mind; sane, moderate and temperate]

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live *soberly*, righteously, and godly, in this present world;** (2:12) . . . σωφρόνως (sōphronōs: so-fron'-oce) . . . [with sound mind]

“Good externals do not make up for bad internals.” The heart’s desire to be like the world is immoral.

O TO BE LIKE THEE³

O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer,
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus Thy perfect likeness to wear.

Chorus

O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee,
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art!
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

Verse Two

O to be like Thee! Full of compassion,
Loving, forgiving, tender and kind;
Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting,
Seeking the wan-d'ring sinner to find.

Verse Three

O to be like Thee! While I am pleading,
Pour out Thy Spirit, fill with Thy love;
Make me a temple meet for Thy dwelling,
Fit me for life and heaven above.

³ John W. Peterson, Compiler and Editor, *Great Hymns of the Faith* (Nashville, TN: Brentwood-Benson Publishing, Inc., 1968), 316

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RELATIONSHIPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

“The Believer’s Relationship to the Church – the Body of Christ”

The Collective Use of Spiritual Gifts

TEXT: Romans 12:3-8

INTRODUCTION: John MacArthur commenting on this passage in Romans 12 said, “The basis of **everything worthwhile** that a Christian *has* and *does*, from salvation to service, is the grace given to him by God.”⁴ The Apostle Paul admonishes the Christians at Rome to exemplify the proper attitude of true humility. *Humility is the immediate effect of self-surrender* (Cf. 12:1) and must continue as one avoids self-exaltation.⁵ This attitude particularly applies when working with other members within the body of Christ.

Grace is defined as God’s unmerited favor. Ephesians 2:8-10 tells us we are saved by grace. Our life of service to God can only be done by that same grace. From this section of Scripture in the Book of Romans, Paul expresses God’s grace through two factors.

I. GRACE FACTOR # ONE (12:3-5): There can be unity of members with various gifts and levels of talent within the same Body—A physical analogy.

A. **A Warning at First**, (12:3a): *not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think*

1. Paul is saying, [Not to have an exaggerated opinion of one’s own importance.] **AMP**
2. Paul is also saying, not to be self-conceited or have an arrogant attitude. The apostle is humble even in *relationship to his own apostleship, which was conferred on him solely on the basis of God’s grace, and on no merit or worth of his own.*⁶ – *Through the grace given unto me.*

Proverbs 6:16-19 [AMP] These six things the Lord hates, indeed, seven are an abomination to Him: (17) A proud look [*the spirit that makes one overestimate himself and underestimate others*], a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, [Ps. 120:2, 3.] (18) A heart that manufactures wicked thoughts and plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, (19) A false witness who breathes out lies [*even under oath*], and he who sows discord among his brethren.

⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press of the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1994), 157.

⁵ Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies: Romans in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 209.

⁶ John MacArthur, 157.

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B. **A Wisdom for Focus**, (12:3b): *think soberly*

1. *Think* – φρονέω—(phroneō: fron-eh'-o) meaning to exercise the mind, to entertain, have an opinion.
2. *Soberly* – σωφρονέω—(sōphroneō: so-fron-eh'-o) speaks of being of a sound mind; to be in your right mind or to exercise self-control. Pertaining to 12:3 . . .
 - a. Kittle says the following regarding Romans 12:3 and sōphroneō. Paul is using a play on words . . . when he tells his readers to think of themselves with sober judgment.⁷

“Not to be high-minded (hyperphronein) above what he ought to be minded (phronein), but to be minded (phronein) unto the being sober-minded (sophronein).”⁸

* The writer of the epistle expands his thoughts in (12:16): be not wise in your own conceits, [the opinion of yourself]. The **ERV**⁹ translates the phrase; don't think of yourself as smarter than everyone else, (Cf. **Proverbs 3:7**): be not wise in thine own eyes.
 - b. Joseph H. Thayer includes this insight in defining the word, “to put a moderate estimate upon one's self, to curb one's passions.”¹⁰

C. **A Wedge of Faith** [measure or degree], (12:3c): *according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (refer to the Appendix for examples of faith): μέτρον—metron—portion, measurement or degree – not saving faith but quantity of faith required to exercise our own particular gift.*

Measure of faith – metron expresses the **diversity** of the gifts that God gives to his people.¹¹

⁷ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament [TDNT]: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 1151.

⁸ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume III, The Epistles of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1886), 154.

⁹ **ERV** – The Easy-to-Read Version, the World Bible Translation Center, 2008

¹⁰ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 613.

¹¹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 591.

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D. **A Way to Function** (12:4-5): We all need to function according to God's sovereign design for us.

1. *Many members in One Body* (12:4a): Cf. Ephesians 4:4-7) * below

2. *All members but not all having the same office* (12:4b)

Office: prax'-is—**πρᾶξις**—praxis – practice, mode of acting, **function**.

3. *We are many but one body in Christ* (12:5a)

4. *Members one of another* (12:5b)

- **John 17:20-21** Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; (21) That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
- **1 Corinthians 12:12** For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.
- **1 Corinthians 12:14-27** For the body is not one member, but many. (15) If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? (16) And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? (17) If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? (18) But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. (19) And if they were all one member, where were the body? (20) But now are they many members, yet but one body. (21) And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. (22) Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: (23) And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. (24) For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: (25) That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. (26) And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. (27) **Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.**
- * **Ephesians 4:4-7, and 11-16** There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. . . . (11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of

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the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (14) That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: (16) From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

II. GRACE FACTOR # TWO (12:6-8): There can be Unity in the Body of Christ with a Diversity of Spiritual Gifts—a *spiritual analogy*.

Spiritual Gifts are given for function within the Body of Christ:

Differing: dee-af'-or-os – διάφορος: diaphoros (Hebrews 9:10 and Romans 12:6)

- “Varying in kind” (Thayer, 143).
- “Different but not superior” (Kittle, 1252).
- “We have often been called upon for the production of various persons” (Moulton & Milligan, 157).

Gifts: khar'-is-mah - charisma - χάρισμα

- Sometimes defined as virtues.
- Favor received without any merit of your own.
- Qualities or gifts of divine grace.
- In the AV, gifts denote “Extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the Church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit.” (Thayer, 667).

THE MINISTRY OF OUR GIFTS

The spiritual gifts mentioned in the NT, primarily in Romans 12 and in 1 Corinthians 12, fall into three categories: *sign*, *speaking*, and *serving*.^{*} Before the NT was written, men had no standard for judging the truthfulness of someone who preached, taught, or witnessed in the name of Christ. The sign gifts authenticated the teaching of the apostles—which was the measure of all other teaching—and therefore ceased after the apostles died, probably even earlier. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, Paul explained in the Corinthian church, “by signs and wonders and miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12). The writer of Hebrews gives further revelation about the purpose of these special gifts: After [the gospel] was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will (Hebrews 2:3-4). Even during Jesus’ earthly ministry, the apostles “went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed” (Mark 16:20).

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First Corinthians was written about A.D. 54 and Romans some four years later. It is important to note that none of the sign gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:9-10—namely, the gifts of healing, miracles, speaking in tongues, and interpreting tongues—is found in Romans 12. The other two NT passages that mention spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:7, 11; 1 Peter 4:10-11) were written several years after Romans and, like that epistle, make no mention of sign gifts. Peter specifically mentions the categories of speaking and serving gifts (“whoever speaks” and “whoever serves,” verse 11) but neither the category nor an example of the sign gifts.

It seems evident; therefore, that Paul did not mention the sign gifts in Romans because their place in the church was already coming to an end. They belonged to a unique era in the church’s life and would have no permanent place in its ongoing ministry. It is significant, therefore that the seven gifts mentioned in Romans 12:6-8 are all within the categories of speaking and serving.¹²

* *Italics are my own*

Nine Guidelines that can be helpful in fulfilling the Purposes of our Spiritual Gifts.

- ✓ We should present ourselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).
- ✓ We should recognize that all believers, including ourselves, are gifted (Romans 12:3). Refer to the Appendix for a discussion on the misuse of gifts.
- ✓ We should pray for wisdom in the discovery and use of our gift (James 1:5)
- ✓ We should seek nothing else other than our own gift – don’t be distracted or envious of the gifts of others (Acts 8:18, 24).
- ✓ We must examine our own heart’s desire (1 Timothy 3:1).
- ✓ We should seek confirmation of our gift. Confirmation comes from God – the Spirit, and other believers will substantiate God’s gifts.
- ✓ We will see the blessing of God – God saw the potential in Gideon before Gideon did.
- ✓ We should serve His wholeheartedly.
- ✓ We should cultivate (exercise) the gift as it becomes obvious.

A. **Prophecy** – *let us prophesy according to the “proportion” of faith* (12:6b): prophēteia (prof-ay-ti'-ah): foretelling the future, prediction. “In the NT prophets were men who spoke under the immediate influence of the Holy spirit to communicate a doctrine, remind people of a duty, or give a warning (Cf. Acts 21:10-14 – Agabus speaking to Paul and his return to Jerusalem)

Peter is a New Testament character with this example.

1. The gift of prophecy identifies and exposes sin.
2. The gift of prophecy expresses thoughts and ideas verbally, especially in regard to issues seen as good and evil.
3. The gift of prophecy makes quick judgments on what is seen and heard.
4. The gift of prophecy has an amazing ability to sense when someone or something is not what it appears to be and reacts unsympathetically to dishonesty or deceit.

¹² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), page 168.

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5. The gift of prophecy has a tendency to be impulsive in actions and to be wholeheartedly involved in whatever is done.
6. The gift of prophecy can be painfully direct when correction is needed.
7. The gift of prophecy displays an ability to be very persuasive in defining what is right and what is wrong.

“There can be no exercise of gifts such as healing without faith, but there may be an inauthentic [not genuine but bogus] exercise of prophecy (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:29). The Greek word for proportion is ἀναλογία—*analogia*: meaning “correspondence.” In correspondence to one’s faith. Analogy in English means similarity, parallel, comparison, or correspondence.

The analogy of faith – “This is the only place where these words occur in the Bible, but they have been seen to teach what is usually described as the need to compare one Scripture with another so that a passage that is clearly understood throws light on one less clear. From this principle derive the additional guidelines of a necessary unity and non-contradiction in the Bible.”¹³ **THE FAITH** – implies that the prophet is bound by prior revelation. The Scriptures are not telling us that the prophet is limited by “his own” faith but by the THE faith.

Dr. Meyer is quoted as saying, “Those who prophesy are to interpret the divine revelation ‘according to the strength, clearness, fervor, and other qualities of the faith bestowed upon them; so that the character and mode of their speaking is conformed to the rules and limits which are implied in the proportion of their individual degree of faith.’”¹⁴ Proportion is defined by faith – *The measure of their faith works in relationship to the **manifestation** of their gift, (Cf. 12:3b and 6b).*

“In the NT, as in the Old, the prominent idea is not *prediction*, but the inspired delivery of warning, exhortation, instruction, judging, and making manifest the secrets of the heart, (Cf. 1 Corinthians 14:3, 24-25). The NT prophets are distinguished from teachers, by speaking under direct divine inspiration.”¹⁵ (Cf. Ephesians 4:11ff).¹⁶

Charles Hodge expresses it this way in his commentary on Romans: ‘The point of distinction between them [prophets] and the apostles, considered as religious teachers, appears to have been that the inspiration of the apostles was abiding, they were the infallible and authoritative messengers of Christ; whereas the inspiration of the prophets was occasional and transient. The latter differed from the teachers

¹³ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: Volume 4: The New Humanity, Romans 12-16* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), pages 1583-1584.

¹⁴ Marvin R. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), page 156.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Refer to the Appendix for a study and comments on Ephesians 4:11-12.

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(didaskaloi), inasmuch as these were not necessarily inspired, but taught to others what they themselves had learned from the Scriptures or from inspired men.”¹⁷

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: (7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (9) As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

- B. **Ministry** – *Let us wait on our ministering* (12:7a): The embrace of all kinds of **service** for the sake of Christ.

Literally, “ministry in our ministry” . . . the word is *διακονία*—dee-ak-on-ee'-ah (diakonia): used here in connection with *the service of the Christian Church*. From the word, diakonos: *defined as service, attendance, ministration, or aid*. There is no qualification here with service. If your gift is serving, just do it – serve!

Ministry is aimed at more action than word.

Ephesians 4:11-12 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: [A spiritual gift of service]

In Charles Colson’s book *The Body*, there are three quotations that stress service:

“**William Booth**, the founder of the Salvation Army, said to his missionaries to India: ‘Go to the Indian as a brother, which indeed you are, and show the love which no one can doubt you feel . . . eat, drink, dress and live by his side. Speak his language, share his sorrow.’

Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravians, told his missionaries: ‘Do not lord it over the unbelievers but simply live among them; preach not theology but the crucified Christ.’ (Theologian, hymn writer, missionary, founder of the Moravians, lived 1700-1760)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer¹⁸ said, ‘The church is herself only when she exists for humanity . . . She must take her part in the social life of the world, not lording it over men, but helping and serving them. She must tell men, whatever their calling, what it means to live in Christ, to live for others.’”¹⁹

¹⁷ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), page 389, Original edition 1835.

¹⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Christian pastor and theologian, was famous for contributing to a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler and resisting Germany's Nazi regime in other ways. He was then assassinated in a concentration camp in 1944.

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Timothy is our example here.

1. One with the gift of ministry will see areas of deficiency around them and work to meet those needs.
2. One with the gift of ministry will derive a great sense of satisfaction in working behind the scenes so others may be free to do more important things.
3. One with the gift of ministry has a tendency to disregard person comforts or health issues while serving others.
4. One with the gift of ministry may have difficulty saying “no” to opportunities resulting in an overload in a variety of projects thus become sidetracked, distracted or unable to complete the task. They are better at short-range projects in order to avoid the frustrations of long-range responsibilities.
5. One with the gift of ministry has a tendency to feel inadequate and unqualified for spiritual leadership. They look for confirmation from others regarding their service reassuring that their activity is necessary and satisfactory.
6. One with the gift of ministry enjoys the opportunity to provide for the comfort of others. They may display an ability to remember the likes and dislikes of the people they serve.

C. **Teaching** – Let us wait on our *teaching* (12:7b):

- Teaching occurs in all 5 of the NT lists concerning spiritual gifts.
- Ray Stedman says that in his opinion probably a third of all Christians have this gift and should be using it.
- Teaching is the preeminent gift of pastors – no one has the opportunity a pastor has for carefully studying and faithfully expounding the Bible.
- Teaching is hard work because we must learn ourselves before we teach.
- Presented by Paul just as he did with ministry – just do it!

Luke the Doctor, Disciple . . .

Teaching is aimed at a person’s understanding.

1. One with the gift of teaching has a need to confirm the truth of what is said, or what they read.
2. One with the gift of teaching may reserve their commitment to listen to someone until they validate their credentials. Are they an authority for one who can speak on this subject?
3. One with the gift of teaching delights in researching and reporting the findings on the subject at hand.
4. One with the gift of teaching emphasizes the importance of accuracy in their report. They may include a lot of detail and bore another who does not have the same eye, gift or desire. [Someone else may want you to cut to the chase and don’t give them the process that brought you to your conclusion.]

¹⁹ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: Volume 4: The New Humanity, Romans 12-16* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), page 1585.

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5. One with the gift of teaching will exercise diligence and endurance over the life of a project.

D. **Exhorting** – Let him wait *on exhortation [encouragement]* (12:8a): παρακαλέω (par-ak-al-eh'-o) to call on, to ask, to beseech, to exhort, to entreat, to comfort, to admonish someone to pursue some course of conduct.

Wait on *Exhortation* – **encouragement**, to call to one's side so to give assistance or aid.

1. Used in the NT of the Holy Spirit and His work of **comfort** (John 14-16).
2. The Latin influence is seen in the usage found in (1 John 2:1) **Advocate**, Lawyer.
3. To **stand by** a friend and really help them as they are hurting or needy (Cf. James 2:14-16). Exhortation is more active than verbal.
4. Barnabas was an encourager. In Acts 4:36 we are told of Barnabas whose name was Joses but he was called Barnabas because the name means “son of **consolation**/encouragement.” He stood alongside John Mark to encourage a weaker brother. Later Paul admonishes Barnabas to bring John Mark as one who is now useful in ministry (2 Timothy 4:11).

The Apostle Paul

Exhortation is aimed at the heart and will.

1. One with the gift of exhortation can visualize the steps of action in urging people toward spiritual maturity.
2. One with the gift of exhortation is motivational to others in the body of Christ and can speak on their level in order to help them achieve their potential.
3. One with the gift of exhortation can identify with people of different types and backgrounds in order to gain a wider hearing.
4. One with the gift of exhortation can bring harmony between diverse groups of Christians.
5. One with the gift of exhortation has an ability to welcome personal tribulation as a chief motivator of spiritual growth.

E. **Giving** – *Let him do it with simplicity* (12:8b): One who contributes to the needs of others.

- μεταδίδωμι – met-ad-id'-o-mee (to share, impart)
- Simplicity equals and emphasizes **generosity**. An issue of the final judgment.
- *Mental honesty* – the virtue of one free from pretense and hypocrisy.
- **Liberality** (Same root word – haplōs – frankly, sincerely, openly, simply as in James 1:5 – God gives wisdom *liberally and does not reproach*).

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1 Thessalonians 2:8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have **imparted** unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. (Not just resources, but investing ourselves).

Matthew

1. One with the gift of giving desires to give quietly without public notice.
2. One with the gift of giving has an ability to discern means of wise investments in order to be able to have more to give away.
3. One with the gift of giving depends greatly on the Lord's prompting and not a demonstration of man's appeal.
4. One with the gift of giving believes in making contributions which are meaningful, helpful and of value to the individual or entity.
5. One with the gift of giving can see the financial needs of someone which others may tend to overlook.
6. One with the gift of giving desires to use the example of giving as a way to motivate others to give.

- F. **Ruling** – Let him do it *with diligence* (12:8c): he who is placed in front or in a place of superintendence. *Diligence* is the Greek word *spoudazo*, to make haste, do one's best, take care and desire. The gift of **Leadership, administration and management**, (1 Tim. 3:5)

Nehemiah is our example of one who rose to the challenge of leadership in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

1. One with the gift of ruling has the ability to see the final, completed project.
2. One with the gift of ruling has the ability to break down a large task into smaller, more achievable tasks.
3. One with the gift of ruling can work independently of others in order to reach the goal. They have an ability to know what to personally take on and what to delegate to another.
4. One with the gift of ruling will inspire and encourage fellow team members by cheerfulness, praise and appropriate challenges.
5. One with the gift of ruling thoughtfully approaches a task to include the resources necessary to accomplish the right result.

- G. **Showing Mercy** – Let him do it *with cheerfulness* (12:8d). Mercy: el'-eh-os—**compassion**. Cheerfulness has the idea of readiness of mind. The application of cheerfulness is bestowed upon the visitor who is like a ray of sunshine or encouragement to the sick or afflicted; to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep. (Jude 22 – compassion, making a difference).

ἡλαρότης—(hilarotēs) hil-ar-ot'-ace— from which we get our English word, hilarity. Hilarious—merry (cheerful), encouraging, promising (being propitious). There is nothing worse than being in a room of visitors who do not have the gift of mercy. I think of the OT example of **Job's friends** who sit by and suggest inappropriate

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sympathy or impersonal counsel regarding one's dilemma. (We need a spirit of Joy in the church): Showing mercy brings joy to the environment of Christian fellowship.

The Beloved Disciple – *John* is our example here.

1. One with the gift of mercy has an ability to sense genuine love and has a vulnerability to being hurt by the lack of love and sensitivity in others.
2. One with the gift of mercy establishes close relationships with others aimed at a mutual commitment.
3. One with the gift of mercy will take up the offense of their friends who are mistreated or rejected by another. Sometimes, their reaction can be harsh.
4. One with the gift of mercy can be easily moved to tears or another emotion – reaching the depths of weep with those who weep and conversely, rejoicing with those who rejoice.
5. One with the gift of mercy has a tendency to remove the causes of emotional wounds rather than to look for the benefits of trials.

Kenneth Wuest translates this passage as follows: *Having therefore gifts differing according to the grace given us, whether (that of) prophecy, (prophesy) according to the proportion of faith, or serving, exercise that gift within the sphere of service, or teaching, within the sphere of teaching, or he who exhorts, within the sphere of exhortation, the one who distributes of his earthly possessions, in the sphere of an unostentatious simplicity, the one who is placed in a position of authority, with intense eagerness and effort, the one who shows mercy, with a hilarious abandon.* (page 213)

APPENDIX

Degrees of Faith:

This is not an exhaustive collection of verses on the subject of “degrees of faith,” only suggestive of the many ways to see the application of faith in the lives of people in Scripture.

- “Little Faith”

(Matthew 6:30) Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? (Cf, Luke 12:28)

(Matthew 8:26) And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

(Matthew 14:31) And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

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(Matthew 16:8) Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

- “Unbelief”

Matthew 17:20-21 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. (21) Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Mark 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

Mark 16:14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

(Romans 11:30) For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

(Romans 11:32) For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

(Hebrews 3:12) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

(Hebrews 3:19) (Children of Israel into the Land of Promise) So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

(Hebrews 4:6) Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

(Hebrews 4:11) Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

- “Strong in the Faith”

Romans 4:16-22 Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of **the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all**, (17) (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (18) Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. (19) And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: (20) He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; (21) And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. (22) And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

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- “All Faith”

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (2) And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. (3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

The Wrong Attitudes in the View of Spiritual Gifts²⁰

1. Using a prominent gift or any gift for that matter – boastfully, (1 Corinthians 12:21). If you are bragging or arrogant regarding your own spiritual gift or accomplishments, something is wrong.
2. Presenting yourself in a manner that depreciates yourself or gift in a false humility, (1 Corinthians 12:11-12; 19). This is a back-door approach to get praise from others. On the other end, when a person is clearly gifted above most Christians, it is tempting to feign humility when genuinely praised, thereby belittling what God has given to and is doing through him or her. All spiritual gifts are necessary and perfectly designed by God for His glorious purpose.
3. The attitude that claims a gift, especially the more impressive ones, which we do not possess. Bottom line – this is dishonest and deceptive. If God has not given you or I a particular gift, we should not feign or covet them.
4. The failure to use your gift out of shame, jealousy or resentment. To purposely disregard and neglect a spiritual gift is to disdain God’s sovereign grace, (1 Corinthians 12:15-16). We each can not the good, acceptable and perfect will of God for our lives – including His gifts.
5. The failure to use one’s gift at all, for whatever reason – whether out of neglect, bitterness, jealousy, shame, or simply indifference. Every spiritual gift of God is to be used to its fullest, because every gift is divinely ordained and meant to be divinely empowered and employed.

Prophets

53+ Prophets Mentioned:

- 1) Abraham
- 2) Isaac
- 3) Jacob
- 4) Moses
- 5) Aaron
- 6) Joshua
- 7) Pinchas the High Priest
- 8) Elkanah (father of Samuel)
- 9) Eli the High Priest
- 10) Samuel
- 11) Gad
- 12) Nathan
- 13) King David
- 14) King Solomon

²⁰ MacArthur, 160, 161.

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- 15) Eido
- 16) Michiyahu ben Yimlah
- 17) Obadiah
- 18) Achiyah of Shiloh
- 19) Yahu ben Chanani
- 20) Azariah ben Oded
- 21) Chaziel son of Metaniah
- 22) Eliezer of Morisha
- 23) Hosea
- 24) Amos
- 25) Micah
- 26) Amotz
- 27) Elijah
- 28) Elisha
- 29) Jonah
- 30) Isaiah
- 31) Joel
- 32) Nahum
- 33) Habakkuk
- 34) Zephaniah
- 35) Uriah from Kiryat Yearim
- 36) Jeremiah
- 37) Ezekiel
- 38) Shmaya
- 39) Baruch
- 40) Neriah
- 41) Seriah
- 42) Mechasiah
- 43) Haggai
- 44) Zechariah
- 45) Malachi
- 46) Mordecai
- 47) Chanani
- 48) Oded
- 49) John the Baptist
- 50) Jesus Christ
- 51) Simeon (Luke 2:25-34)
- 52) Anna's unnamed husband (Luke 2:36-38): uncertain?
- 53) Simon, a disciple of Christ and prophet in Antioch, surnamed Niger (Acts 13:1)

10 Prophetesses:

- 1) Sarah (wife of Abraham, mother of all Jews)
- 2) Miriam (sister to Moses)
- 3) Deborah (the only female among the Judges)
- 4) Chanah (mother of Samuel)
- 5) Abigail

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- 6) ChulDAH
- 7) Esther (of Purim fame)
- 8) Philip's 4 daughters (Acts 21:9)
- 9) Anna (Luke 2:36-38): waited for the Salvation of God, met Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus in the temple.
- 10) Jezebel (Revelation 2:20): the self-styled, false prophetess

Other prophets, who may or may not have been in prophecy full-time, are mentioned in various places throughout Tanach, but their prophecies were not recorded, because their prophecies were only intended for themselves or for the generation who lived at that time. For example: King Saul dabbled in prophecy for a time, but what he was told, like the thousands of other unrecorded prophecies, is unknown. Elisha had a school of prophets.

There were many prophets and prophetesses whose prophecies were recorded for posterity in the Bible. John the Baptist and Jesus are prophets of the NT.

Ephesians 4:7-12 "And he gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers"

He – is the he who in the previous verses . . .

- ascended up on high
- led captivity captive
- gave gifts unto men
- descended to the lower parts of the earth

Gave –

- Within the body of believers, God has bestowed gifts.
- The exercise of these gifts plays a vital role in the maintenance of unity within this unique body.

1. **Description of the giving of gifts (4:7):** Every one of us is given grace according to then measure of *the gift of Christ*. (Every person is not given the same gift and same measure.) Six statements . . .

- Each person is a recipient of the gracious gift according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
- God not only gives each believer a gift but he also determines the amount of the gift.
- Each believer has received from Christ a measure of a gift to be used in a particular function in the body. (This is a harmony with Romans 12:6-8.)
- Since Christ measures out the gift, there should be no jealousy within the body.
- The difference of the gift does not determine the value and does not give grounds for self-exaltation.

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2. *Validation for the giving of gifts* (4:8)

- A Quotation from [Psalms 68:18](#) Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them*.
- Literally, “He captured the captives, he gave gifts to people.”
- Wherefore, “it” saith . . .

3. *Interpretation of the giving of gifts* (4:9-10)

Everyone of us – Paul included himself and did not exclude anyone

Grace – unmerited and undeserved favor and denotes divine enablement (a particular aspect of this noun is stressed. **In this context, it is a particular enablement given to each believer to empower them for ministry.** Thus the person is to use these gifts for God’s glory. According to (Matthew 28:18-20, Romans 1:4 – “Son of God with power”) Christ was given all authority and power in heaven and on earth; so He is the one who bestows gifts for ministry. (Cf. Romans 1:3-5).

THE DISTRIBUTION OF MINISTERIAL GIFTS (4:11-16):

Four points of focus on the gifts . . .

- I. **The Provision:** Gifted Persons (4:11)
- II. **The Preparation:** Process of Immediate/Present Ministry (4:12)
- III. **The Purpose:** Attain Perfection/Maturity: Completeness/Unity (4:13)
- IV. **The Point:** The ultimate goals remain – spiritual maturity, growth of the body and edifying of the saints in love. (4:14-16)

- I. **THE PEOPLE PROVIDED:** Gifted Persons (4:11): Paul is listing gifts and not offices or positions. In the NT, the word, “office” is never used in connection with gifts. By the use of the word “**to give**” in Romans 12:3, 6; 12:4-8; and 1 Cor. 12:7-8 indicates that it is a gracious gift of God to the church.

There are six distinctions between the gift and the office. (Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians*, page 540). It is not the filling of the Holy Spirit that distinguishes one believer from another. Spiritual gifts make us distinctive within the same body.

- 1) The office appears to be limited to . . .
 - Apostles (Acts 1:21-25)
 - Bishop/elder (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11)
 - Deacons (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:8-13)
 - Deaconesses (depending on your interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:11 or Romans 16:1 – “Pheobe, our sister, who is a **servant** of the church): the Greek word in the text is **διάκονος** (dee-ak'-on-os): deacon or deaconess,

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one who ministers, servant-leader. **A brief look at the Deaconess in the early church . . .**

- (1) The females were usually separate from the men. They were kept secluded, for the most part, and not permitted to mingle in society with men as is the custom now.
 - (2) It became necessary, therefore, to appoint aged and experienced females to instruct the young, to visit the sick, to provide for them, and to perform for them the services which male deacons performed for the whole church. It is evident, however, that they were confined to these offices, and that they were never regarded as an order of ministers, or allowed “to preach” to congregations; [1Timothy 2:12](#); [1Cor. 14:34](#).
- 2) Those selected to these positions or offices were either . . .
- Appointed (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5)
 - Elected by people based on qualifications (Acts 1:26; 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:1-13)
 - The gifts are sovereignly bestowed by the Lord (Ephesians 4:7; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:11, 18, 28)
- 3) Everyone has a gift (Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; Romans 12:4) but not everyone holds an office.
- 4) Marital status is mentioned for the offices of bishop/elder and deacons (1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5, 12; Titus 1:6) but no such qualification is mentioned for those gifted.
- The office of an elder or deacon appears to require a married person, never divorced (although there is room for discussion on “*husband of one wife*,” whereas, there is no such restriction on those who are given gifts.
 - A person who has a change in marital status does not lose his or her gift.
- 5) Those holding offices cannot be novices (1 Timothy 3:6, 10; Titus 1:8-9), whereas the gifts are given to each person regardless of age or maturity.
- 6) Certain offices must be held by men (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6), whereas those who have gifts may be either gender (e.g. Acts 21:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:5).
- A. **Some to be apostles** ([ἀπόστολος](#) – ap-os'-tol-os): this brings out the distinction that each gifted person has a particular function among the assembly of believers. **What do we mean by the term “apostle?”**

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1. By definition in **Classical Greek**, the word “apostle” means an individual; sparingly used as an envoy or emissary. It was used to describe a military expedition.²¹
2. According to Bible Explorer: from **Strong’s <G649>** (apostello); a delegate; specially an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ [“apostle”] (with miraculous powers): *apostle, messenger, he that is sent—* (Strong's Greek & Hebrew Dictionary). A delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders—(**Thayer**).
3. In the **OT** the word in the **LXX** is rendered as “to send” or “to send forth.” The idea not only includes the sending of the messenger but more importantly the authorization of the messenger. (e.g. Ahijah, the prophet was commissioned and empowered to deliver a difficult message to Jeroboam’s wife regarding her son and the future of Jeroboam’s descendants – 1 Kings 14:1-7ff).
 - The sending of the messenger. (You will see it again in the NT)
 - The authorization of the messenger.
4. In the **NT**, it is illustrated that **an apostle** was an official emissary of Jesus Christ, commissioned for the specific tasks of proclaiming authoritatively the message in oral and written form (Cf. 1 John 1:1-3). **The gift of apostleship was given for establishing and building up the churches.**

IN THE NT, THE EXPRESSION IS USED THREE WAYS:

- a. **The Twelve that Jesus named Apostles** (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13): Reference to an office . . . [Matthias was numbered with the twelve apostles – Acts 1:26]²²
 - Acts 1:21-22 indicates that to qualify as an apostle one must have been with the Lord, an association with Christ in his earthly ministry . . . “as He went in and out among us.”
 - Apostles were called to spread the message of Christ (*a fully authorized ambassador*: Jesus was sent by the Father; Jesus said to the apostles, “As the Father hath sent me, so send I you.”)
 - They were given authority, performed miracles and had Holy Spirit power (Acts 1:8).
 - Apostles were directly chosen or hand-picked by the Lord.

²¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 133-136, 397-404, 540-542.

²² Matthias whose name means “gift of God;” was a disciple chosen by a superstitious practice of casting lots. He was the 11 disciples’ choice to replace Judas Iscariot. There is no record of Matthias after his election. He was counted or numbered as one of the apostles, meeting the qualifications of apostleship as did the other men [i.e. Joseph, surnamed Justus]. Tradition says that Matthias was one of the seventy of Luke 10:1 and that he went to Ethiopia and labored there where ultimately he was martyred. (Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible*, page 233).

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- These Apostles were with Christ from his baptism until his ascension witnessing His resurrection from the dead (Acts 1:21-22; 4:33; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1).
- The word “apostle” is used to refer to the men divinely appointed as founders of the church (Cf. Luke 11:49-51; Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 2:2; 18:20; 21:14).

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) And **are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;** (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

** NOTE: There is no biblical evidence that the consortium of twelve apostles continued with successors after their death. There is no apostolic progression of this office. (Judas Iscariot died and the remaining eleven presented lots to select one from two good candidates. Matthias was numbered as one of the apostles—Acts 1:20-26).*

- b. **The Apostle Paul himself** (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:9) did see Jesus in his resurrection body (He was an apostle born out of due season recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:8). Paul declares that he was an official delegate of Jesus Christ with the purpose of propagating His message.

- Acts 18:9 – saw the resurrected Christ in a vision
- Romans 1:1 – “called to be an apostle”
- 1 Corinthians 1:1 – “called to be an apostle”
- 1 Corinthians 9:1 – “Am I not an apostle . . . have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?”
- 1 Corinthians 15:8 – “last of all he was seen of me . . . as one born out of due time. [ἐκ τρώμα – (ek'-tro-mah) – unborn fetus, miscarriage, abortion.] “I am the least of the apostles”
- 1 Corinthians 15:9 – “I am the least of the apostles . . . because I persecuted the church”
- Galatians 1:1 – “an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ”

**These first two examples are distinctive of the office not appointed by men but sent out by Jesus Christ. This kind is one who is sent out on a mission with fully delegated authority by his master, just as the original disciples were sent out.*

The role of an apostle

- ✓ The role of an apostle was as one sent out on a mission with full authority by the one that sent him.

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✓ The role of an apostle was to establish and build up churches

- Jesus was the founder of the church (Matthew 16:18)
- Apostles were to build on Him.
- Apostles and prophets were foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20)
- The church came into existence in the early part of the first century evidenced at Pentecost. The church was not built upon OT covenants and promises, and is not a continuation of Israel but something distinctive.
- Apostles and Prophets in Ephesians 2:20
 - There is only one article for both nouns. This does not identify the apostle and prophets as the same persons, but the one article may indicate that groups more or less distinct are treated as one (overlapping similarities and function).
 - The foundation laid is the doctrine preached by the apostles and prophets with Christ as the cornerstone of their doctrine (not just the teachings of Christ, 1 Cor. 3:10-11).
 - In the OT, prophets were to have 100% accuracy. In the NT, prophets were to be tested. If they were proven to be untrue words/false prophet. (1 Cor. 14:29-31; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1; Jude 11-16). Emphasis for the apostle is a divine commission. Emphasis for the prophet is in communication of divine revelation.
 - “This office, by its very nature, has long since disappeared from the church.”²³

c. ***The word “apostle,” in a broader sense, applied to other eminent, Christian leaders in New Testament times and the First Century church.***

- James-the Lord’s brother (1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:9)
- Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6, 9),
- Silvanus (1 Thessalonians 2:6),
- Timothy (1 Thessalonians 2:5-6)
- Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23),
- Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25),
- Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7),
- Barnabas (Acts 14:14)

²³ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, Volume V (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1983), 254.

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Most likely, these are persons endowed with the gift of apostleship. If there is any indication by Paul, *it seems then that the main function of an apostle is to establish churches in areas that have not been reached by others (Romans 15:20)*. They were God's messengers to open up new territories for Christ. These men had not been with Jesus in his ministry and did not witness his resurrection but they are listed as apostles – having the gift of apostleship. Ephesians tells us that there are (were) people in the church age that have the gift of apostleship (3:5-6). In light of the distinction between gifts and offices, there is no one alive today in the true “office” of apostle or prophet in that sense.

- B. **Some prophets** (προφήτης – prof-ay'-tace): One who preaches and expounds the Word of God under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit.
1. Endowed with the Holy Spirit; distinguished from teachers in their place in the church.
 2. For the purposes of edification, comfort and encouragement (1 Corinthians 14:3, 31).
 3. One who understands and communicates the mysteries and revelation of God to the church. They are foundational to the church and its doctrine. In the progression of the church age, we now have the completed canon of Scripture that instructs and edifies the church regarding the mysteries of God. Prophets are part of the church that is in heaven today and we are still under the current influence of their work and writings. Regarding apostles and prophets, the impact is still effective.
 4. *Jesus Christ was called a prophet* (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; Revelation 1:5²⁴), and the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:25).
- C. **Some evangelists** (εὐαγγελιστής – yoo-ang-ghel-is-tace'): a preacher of the gospel, a traveling missionary. Two NT examples:
1. Philip (Acts. 21:8f): who had four daughters who prophesied. We are also introduced to a prophet named Agabus.
 2. Paul tells Timothy to do the work of an evangelist which entails the preaching of the gospel (2 Timothy 4:5).
 3. The main thrust is “the gospel.” Evangelize the lost!
- D. **Some pastors and teachers** (ποιμήν - poy-mane' - διδάσκαλος – did-as'-kal-os): to tend as a shepherd of sheep; the leader of people; used metaphorically as a shepherd of people. The absence of a definite article connects these two under one gift (one

²⁴ Note the section in the Appendix on Prophet, Priest and King.

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article with two plural nouns*). A pastor must also *instruct* or teach the whole counsel of God.

1. This is the only combination gift listed.
2. The ποιμήν is also called, *captain, leader, chief* in classical literature. The gift of pastor means . . .
 - Ministering to troubled saints,
 - Exhorting and comforting all believers,
Administering the activities in the local assembly,
 - We are speaking of the function and not the office.
3. All pastors should be teachers but not all teachers are pastors.

* “After a study of the grammatical structure of one article followed by two plural nouns separated by a *kai* (as here –meaning ‘that is’), Wallace suggests that the first is the subset of the second and thus ‘all pastors are to be teachers, though not all teachers are to be pastors.’”²⁵

4. Twice NT writers portray Jesus Christ as the “shepherd” [ποιμήν] of believers (Cf. Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25). These gifted people who are qualified and appointed as pastors today are under-shepherds of Christ . . . feeding the flock of God . . . taking the oversight thereof.

* In our context, the reference here is to the function with no reference to an office.

Ephesians 4:11 AMP And His gifts were [*varied; He Himself appointed and gave men to us*] some to be apostles (special messengers), some prophets (inspired preachers and expounders), some evangelists (preachers of the Gospel, traveling missionaries), some pastors (shepherds of His flock) and teachers.

Ephesians 4:11 GW He also gave apostles, prophets, missionaries, as well as pastors and teachers **as gifts to his church**.

II. THE PREPARATION OF THE SAINTS TO MINISTER, (4:12): Process given for Immediate/Present Ministry.

This word causes us to keep our eye on the process/**Perfecting** (*preparation*) of the Saints – not the end result (4:12a): three prepositions; the last two are different. The main verb in verse 11 is the word, “gave” [ἔδωκεν]. The first preposition of verse 12 [*pros*] gives the purpose to the main verb in verse 11 while the other two prepositions (*eis*) denote direction

²⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: an Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2002), page 544.

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or goal. Paul states therefore that Christ gave gifted people for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints with the goal of providing the work of the ministry, which in turn has the final goal of building up the body of Christ.

The gifted persons serve as foundational gifts that are used for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints to minister. Thus every person in the body of Christ participates in the work of the ministry.

Defining the word “**perfecting:**” **καταρτισμός** – (kat-ar-tis-mos’):²⁶

- Used once as a noun in the NT, so in context it refers to the **preparation** of the church for becoming perfect or complete. The **preparation** includes instructing and equipping believers so that they may minister effectively in the church. There is no inclination in the passage of restoration from a disordered or lawless state.
- It means a *complete furnishing*.
- Rarely used in the NT but found in Classical Greek around the first and second century A.D. within medical practices of setting a limb or bone or the restoration of a shoulder.
- In the days of the apostles, it was a word employed to describe “the things for the furnishing of the guest-chamber,” [e.g. in modern days describing a motel room, a furnished apartment or prophet’s chamber].
- Used to describe the choice and **preparation** of the yarn or thread used in horizontal and vertical weaving for an expensive garment [a cloak worth 18 silver dr.]
- The verb, **καταρτίζω** - kat-ar-tid'-zo: is found (13) in the NT, describing *the repair and mending of fishing nets* (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19), *to restore a fallen brother* (Galatians 6:1; 1 Peter 5:10), *to prepare* (Romans 9:22 – “fitted/prepared/headed for destruction;” Hebrews 10:5 – “prepared”), *to put into proper order, complete, furnish or equip* (1 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Hebrews 13:21), *to perfect* (Matthew 21:16), or *to be instructed or trained* (Luke 6:40).

A. For the Work of **Ministering** (4:12b): preparing other saints for the work of service.

1. The word used here is **διακονία** - dee-ak-on-ee'-ah: *relief, give aid or service*. “The ‘work of service’ (diakonia) is not the work of the deacons but rather the service of all saints. Paul is talking about God equipping Christians in general for *spiritual service*,* not about His instituting the office of a deacon.”²⁷ That is dealt with in other passages.

²⁶ James Hope Moulton, and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-literary Sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), page 332. The weft is threaded through the warp using a "shuttle", air jets or "rapier grippers." Hand looms were the original weaver's tool, with the shuttle being threaded through alternately raised warps by hand. Inventions during the 18th century spurred the Industrial Revolution, with the "picking stick" and the "flying shuttle" (John Kay, 1733) speeding up production of cloth. The power loom patented by Edmund Cartwright in 1785 allowed sixty picks per minute. A useful way of remembering which is warp and which is weft is: 'one of them goes from weft to wight'. (Wikipedia definition of “warp and woof or weft”)

²⁷ John MacArthur, *The Master’s Plan for the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1991), page 231. * The gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11-12 do not involve offices. The person who has the gift of teaching, for example does not have to be a pastor/teacher to exercise his gift. The gifts are related to callings and assignments, not just offices. (pages 230, 231)

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2. From **δίακονος** - dee-ak'-on-os: translated as *servant, minister of God*. The *minister of God* [a policeman, a soldier or a political figure who isn't necessarily a Christian]. (Cf. Romans 13:3-4)
 3. Serving the Lord by ministering one-to-another. The various usages in the NT refer to **food service** and **waiting tables** (Acts 6); staffing a wedding reception in Cana (John 2:5, 9); preparing and serving food exemplified by Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:39); and non-specific food service for others (John 12:2; Luke 10:40; Luke 17:8).
- B. For the **Edifying** of the Body of Christ. (4:12c): *building up* is the ultimate goal.
1. This describes *a living and growing organism composed of believers* not an inanimate object such as a buildings. **οικοδομή**— (oy-kod-om-ay'): to build a house. **To build up** – *oikos*: house and *doma* or *demo*: to build.
 2. This building which is under construction is a body.
 3. The Gifts are not for self-edification.

III. THE PURPOSE FOR GIFTS OF THESE GIFTED MEN: (4:13) *Attain Maturity/Completeness/Unity [locally and universally]*

“There is no unity; there can be no unity, apart from the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from His work and especially apart from the redemption which is through His blood. That is essential to the only unity in which the NT is interested, and which it defines so clearly.”²⁸

Speaking of the NT and the development of the context of Ephesians, its essential teaching is that conduct is always the outcome of truth and of teaching. One's practice and behavior are the result of the application of doctrine which has already been laid down in Chapters One through Three.

- A. To the Unity of the Faith (4:13a): Attaining the end goal. There must be an effort used to preserve unity.
- ... And the Knowledge of the Son of God (4:13b)
- B. Unto a Perfect/**Mature** Man (4:13c): Grow up in Him
- C. Unto the **Measure** of the Stature of Christ (4:13d): the completeness found in Him.

²⁸ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Basis of Christian Unity: An Exposition of John 17 and Ephesians 4* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, June, 1962), page 20

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IV. THE POINT OVERALL (4:14-16): In order that we may grow up, making increase in the body of Christ, and edify the saints in love.

A. Negatively (4:14):

1. Avoid Spiritual Instability: tossed to and fro (the whirlwind, tornado, Cf. James 1:6)
2. Don't be deceived
 - a. By the sleight of men (in the deceit, a roll of the cube or dice)
 - b. by cunning craftiness (dishonesty, cheating)
 - c. Self-deception (added)
 - d. Sinful-deception (added)

B. Positively (4:15)

1. Speaking *the truth in love* (some people want to avoid the truth)
2. May grow up into him in all things

C. Overview (4:16)

1. The effectual working in the measure of every part,
2. Maketh increase in the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Jesus Christ: Our Prophet, Priest and King

Jesus Christ, our Lord operated in the divinely ordained *munus triplex*, the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. This is why He is called “the faithful witness” (as Prophet); “the firstborn of the dead” (as Priest); and “the ruler of kings on earth” (as King) in **Revelation 1:5**. *In the threefold office of Christ, we are granted our freedom from sin.*

As **Prophet**, Jesus pronounced an end to all our sin. In the Old Testament, the prophet was the mouthpiece of God to the people. In fact, the prophet often prefaced his words by saying, “Thus says the Lord.” As God’s mouthpiece, the prophet spoke the words of indictment against the people for their sin (Isa. 1:4) and called them to repentance (v. 18). The prophet pronounced the forgiveness and pardon of God (Isa. 40:1–2). Jesus, as the final and sufficient Prophet, has done all of these for us. He came not just proclaiming the Word of God; He is the Word of God (John 1:1). He came to the world because of sin (Matt. 1:21). He proclaimed our need to repent and believe on Him (Mark 1:15). And He proclaimed our pardon and forgiveness for sin (Col. 1:14).

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As **Priest**, Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice for all our sin. In the Old Testament, the high priest was the mediator between the holy God and His sinful people. As mediator, the high priest entered the Holy Place and offered a sacrifice to God on behalf of the people once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:34). He sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat “because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins” (Lev. 16:16). This he did year after year after year. Christ, as our Mediator and High Priest, not only *offered* the sacrifice (once and for all), but He *is* the sacrifice. Like the high priest of old, Christ entered the Holy Place, but unlike the high priest, He entered to offer Himself. He had to enter only one time, for He sprinkled His own blood on the mercy seat. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us:

Hebrews 9:11-14 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (12) Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

As **King**, Jesus rules in such a way as not to allow sin to reign over us any longer. In the Old Testament, the monarchy was established for the peace, prosperity, and welfare of the nation. The prototype king was David. No king was ever as beloved as he was. He was God’s vice-regent among the people. With David on the throne, the nation of Israel could say, “All is well.” Few things comfort a nation more than having a ruler of righteousness and strength sitting on the throne of power. It was said of David that he “reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people” (2 Sam. 8:15). However, we have a King greater than David. Christ came in the line of David as David’s son and yet also as David’s Lord (Matt. 22:42–45). He is “the ruler of kings on earth” (Rev. 1:5) and “King of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16), including David. He rules with perfect justice and equity. As our King, He has fought our battles and now rules in such a way that sin never can reign over us (Rom. 6:7–14).²⁹

Romans 6:11-14 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. (13) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (14) For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

²⁹ An excerpt from an article entitled, Blood Work written by Anthony Carter. Featured on Ligonier Ministries.

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RELATIONSHIPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS “CHRISTIAN STABILITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD” Our Relationship to Humanity (Society)

TEXT: Romans 12:9-21

INTRODUCTION: The title and text of today’s sermon opens our minds to the possibilities of an everyday occurrence with people from all walks of life. That is the development and importance of relationships. The dictionary defines “relationship” as *the fact of being associated or connected in some way*.³⁰ Human beings are related to others by kinship (blood relation), common ancestry, a mutual interest, proximity (where you are) or state of being (who you are).

The word “righteous” infers a person’s standing with God. In order to be declared righteous, one must know the Lord in salvation, having their sins forgiven, being declared righteous by the only one who can forgive sin, cleanse us, and make such a declaration – that is Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul addresses the full scope of the believer’s relationships. We are focusing on the Epistle of Romans for this subject. Our approach to this study goes from a general understanding of Paul’s writing of the Book to a more direct and verse-by-verse view. For instance:

Sections of Romans

Chapters 1-8	Doctrinal
Chapters 9-11	Dispensational
Chapters 12-16	Duty

The Book of Romans speaks to the practical application of the theological understanding of doctrine. This application begins with Chapter twelve.

Review:

- I. **Consecration of Ourselves** (12:1-2): Our Relationship to God
- II. **Collective use of Spiritual Gifts** (12:3-8): Our Relationship to the Body of Christ – the Church
- III. **Christian Stability in the Contemporary World** (12:9-21): Our Relationship to Humanity (society)
- IV. **Comprehension of Biblical Commandments** (13:1-14): Our Relationship to Mandates of Law (higher powers, government, rulers, or ministers of God)
- V. **Critical Matters of our Confession** (14:1-15:13): Our Relationship to the Brethren
 - A. Do not judge one another (14:1-12)
 - B. Do not put an occasion to fall in a brother’s way (14:13-23)
 - C. Do edify our brother and imitate Christ (15:1-13)

³⁰ Funk and Wagnalls *Standard Desk Dictionary, Volume 2: N-Z* (Funk and Wagnalls Corporation (Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1996), 561.

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This passage begins and ends with choice statements regarding “Good.”

The use of the word “be.”

- Let love **be** without dissimulation (12:9):
- **Be** kindly affectionate one to another (12:10)
- **Be** of the same mind one toward another (12:16a)
- **Be** not wise in your own conceits (12:16b)
- If it **be** possible, as much as lieth within you, live peaceably with all men (12:18a)
- **Be** not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (12:21)

THE SALT OF THE EARTH: A LIGHT ON A HILL

When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, He stressed the significance of human relations from a Christian influence. We are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-15). Likewise, the Apostle Paul stresses the impact of believers with all men. What is your impact on the world around us? Our text of Romans 12:9-21 describes our impact. How are we to be. Our Christian love should be . . .

1. **BE GENUINE** – Let love be without dissimulation: without hypocrisy (12:9): **ἀνυπόκριτος** (anypokritos: ahn-POK-ree-toss) meaning hypocrisy, unfeigned or sincere. From **ὑποκρίνομαι** (hoop-ok-RIN-om-ah-ee) meaning to pretend, act: play a part. (**Love: General**)

ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος – **hē agapē anypokritos** – *Let love [be] sincere. Love has the power to transform every type of human relationship.* It is the secret ingredient to Christian conduct. The Holy Spirit infuses our Christian love (Galatians 5:22): the fruit of the Spirit is love . . .

- a. Put away **Dissimulation** that exhibits a double standard (Being without pretense).
- b. Possess **Discrimination** that exists between good and evil (The ability to see inequity).

“The Scriptures still afford new things to those who search them. No place is like my study . . . no company like good books, especially the book of God.”

Matthew Henry

- i. **Abhor** that which is evil (12:9b): **ἀποστύγέω** (apostygeō: ap-os-too-geh'-o) hate, detest.
[*loathe all ungodliness, turn in horror from wickedness*] AMP
- ii. **Cleave** to that which is “good” (12:9c): **κολλάω** (kollaō: kol-lah'-o) glue, to stick, join.

Hebrews 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age [mature (NASB)], *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

2. **BE DEVOTED** to each other like a loving family – give preference and show respect (12:10): **six statements . . . Love is the principle that regulates our actions within the Christian society.**

Romans 12:10 (GW) *Be devoted to each other like a loving family.* Excel in showing respect for each other. (**Love: Limited**)

Romans 12:9-18 (Wuest) “Love, let it be without hypocrisy. Look with loathing and horror upon that which is pernicious. Stick fast to that which is good. In the **sphere** of brotherly love have a family affection for one another, vying with one another in showing honor; *with respect* to zeal, not lazy; fervent in the **sphere** of the Spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in the **sphere** of hope; patient in

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tribulation; *with respect* to prayer, persevering in it continually; *with respect* to the needs of the saints, being [one who shares] with them, eager for opportunities to show hospitality. Be constantly blessing those who are constantly persecuting you; be blessing and stop cursing. Be rejoicing with those who are rejoicing, and be weeping with those who are weeping; having the same mind towards one another, not setting your mind upon lofty things, but associating yourselves with lowly things and lowly people. Stop being those who are wise in their own opinion, requiring to no one evil in exchange for evil, taking thought in advance with regard to things that are seemly in the sight of all men. If it is possible so far as it depends upon you, with all men be living in peace.”³¹

- a. **In honor**, preferring one another (12:10): to lead the way for others, to show - προηγέομαι. Caution: Human nature has a natural desire to excel. “In seeking to achieve pre-eminence we often embitter our own lives and those of others. . . . In Christian fellowship* the same redirection of our craving to excel is manifested. [In courtesy] we can **outdo one another in showing honor**; each is quicker to recognize worth in and give recognition to others than he is to make claims on his own behalf.”³² (* Italics are my own) Look on the interests [things] of others.
- b. **In humility**, serving the Lord (12:11): δουλ·εὐ·ὁ: to be in bondage, service (doulos – slave); A voluntary bond slave of Jesus Christ
 - i. Not slothful in business (12:11a): ὀκνηρός (oknēros: ok-nay-ros') expressed as *hesitant to act, disinterested, lagging or lazy*; as one who becomes weary in waiting; *not lacking in enthusiasm*; *not lagging behind in diligence*.
 - ii. Fervent in spirit (12:11b): for ζέω zeo – to burn; be passionate; deeply committed to something or someone; “be aglow with the Spirit” – (RSV)
- c. **In hope**, rejoicing (12:12a): χαίρω (chairō: khah'ee-ro) cheerful, happy. What is biblical hope? 1680 *elpís* (from *elpō*, “to anticipate, welcome”) – properly, expectation of what is sure (certain); *hope; trust and confidence*. (Webster’s Dictionary definition of OPTIMISM follows. Prayerful Christians are optimists. We are to [BE JOYFUL in Hope!](#)
 - i. The belief that good ultimately predominates over evil in the world.
 - ii. A disposition or tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome.

Lamentations 3:21-26 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. (22) It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. (23) They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. (24) The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. (25) The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. (26) It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.
- d. **In hostility/tribulation**, enduring (12:12b, 14-15): the prospect exists of persecution, affliction; PATIENT: ὑπομένω (hypomenō: hoop-om-en'-o) to stay or remain under trials.

³¹ Kenneth Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Iowa Falls, IA: Riverside Book and Bible House with special arrangement with William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), pages 373-374. [Font changes in the quoted material are for emphasis and from this author].

³² George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Bible, Volume IX* (New York, NY and Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1954), page 586.

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- i. Bless them that persecute you [cause affliction]: bless and curse not (12:14)
 - ii. Rejoice with them that do rejoice (12:15a)
 - iii. Weep with those who weep (12:15b)
 - e. **In holy prayer, persevering** (12:12c): **BE PERSISTENT** in prayer
 - i. Continuing Instant: pros·kar·te·re'ō (*Making the most fervent and intense application to the throne of grace for the light and power of the Holy Spirit; without which you can neither abhor evil, do good, love the brethren, entertain a comfortable hope, nor bear up patiently under the tribulations and ills of life. — Adam Clarke's Commentary*)
 - ii. Consistent and fervently persistent, being steadfast.
 - iii. Constant and diligent to a task. “Neither joy nor patience is the expression merely of a happy disposition; both are rooted in and growing from prayer.”³³
 - f. **In hospitality, distributing** to the necessity of saints (12:13): **κοινωνέω** (koinōneō: koy-no-neh'-o) from **<G2844>** (koinonos); “to share in” community with others, an active participation between the giver and receiver³⁴ (object or subject) :- communicate, distribute, be partaker; be eager for opportunities to show hospitality.
3. **BE FRIENDLY** and In accord with one another in the Body of Christ (12:16a): *Harmony*
- a. Same mind one toward another
 - b. Mind not high things
 - c. Condescend to men of low estate (the humiliated, depressed)

Philippians 2:2-3 Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. **(3)** *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Proverbs 17:17a A friend loveth at all times,

Proverbs 18:24 A man *that hath* friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend *that* sticketh closer than a brother.

Matthew 11:19 Jesus is the friend of sinners. (He was criticized for eating with publicans and sinners)

John 15:13-15 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. **(14)** Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. **(15)** Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

³³ Ibid, page 590.

³⁴ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1930, reprinted in 1972), page 351.

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4. **BE HUMBLE:** in the Habit of Humility (12:16b): “Be not wise in your own conceits:” not conceited (Cf. 12:3; Prov. 3:7; Job 12:2): Don’t be self-centered; you don’t have all the wisdom there is.

Proverbs 3:5-7 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (7) Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

Job 12:2-3 AMP (Job’s answer): No doubt you are the [*only wise*] people [*in the world*], and wisdom will die with you! (3) But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these [*of God’s wisdom and might*]:

James 1:5 KJV If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

5. **BE HONEST AND UPRIGHT** (12:17)
- a. Recompense to no man evil for evil; [Don’t *give back or repay, retaliate*]
 - b. Provide things honest in the sight of all men: *beautiful, virtuous, and good*.
6. **BE PEACEFUL:** at peace with all men (12:18): “as for as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all men” – Kenneth Wuest.
- a. A peacemaker between factions
 - b. At peace with God over your actions and responses.
 - c. Vengeance belongs to God (12:19): *vindication and retribution: revenge belongs to God*.
 - d. Victory can be yours in right responses (12:20).

True Religion consists of the following according to Psalm 34:13-14 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. (14) Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and **pursue it**.

7. **BE GOOD** and overcome evil (12:21)
- a. Be not overcome with evil: **νικάω** (ni-kah’o) subdue, conquer, prevail, and gain the victory.
 - b. “Overcome evil with prevailing good.” Our objective is not to be an easy mark for evil but to gain the victory over evil.

“In hope, rejoicing; in tribulation, enduring; in prayer, persevering.” Each of these exercises helps the other. If our “hope” of glory is so assured that it is a rejoicing hope, we shall find the spirit of “endurance in tribulation” natural and easy; but since it is “prayer” which strengthens the faith that begets hope and lifts it up into an assured and joyful expectancy, and since our patience in tribulation is fed by this, it will be seen that all depends on our “perseverance in prayer.”

(JFB)

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CONCLUSION: [2 Corinthians 7:1](#) Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Perfecting holiness is an ongoing process; “let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit, and bring [our] consecration to completeness in the [reverential] fear of God.” (AMP)

APPENDIX

“Let love be without hypocrisy . . . Kindly Affection”

Concerning that part of our duty which respects our brethren, of which we have many instances, in brief exhortations. Now all our duty towards one another is summer up in one word, and that a sweet work, *love*. In that is laid the foundation of all our mutual duty; and therefore the apostle mentions this first, which is the livery of Christ's disciples, and the great law of our religion: *Let love be without dissimulation*; not in compliment and pretence, but in reality; *not in word and tongue only*, [1Jo 3:18](#). The right love is love unfeigned; not as the kisses of an enemy, which are deceitful. We should be glad of an opportunity to *prove the sincerity of our love*, [2Co 8:8](#). More particularly, there is a love owing to our friends, and to our enemies. He specifies both.³⁵

- I. TO OUR FRIENDS. He that hath friends must show himself friendly. There is a mutual love that Christians owe, and must pay.
 - a. **An affectionate love** ([Rom 12:10](#)): *Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, philostorgoi* - it signifies not only love, but a readiness and inclination to love, the most genuine and free affection, kindness flowing out as from a spring. It properly denotes the love of parents to their children, which, as it is the most tender, so it is the most natural, of any, unforced, unconstrained; such must our love be to one another, and such it will be where there is a new nature and the law of love is written in the heart. This kind affection puts us on to express ourselves both in word and action with the greatest courtesy and obligingness that may be. - *One to another*. This may recommend the grace of love to us, that, as it is made our duty to love others, so it is as much their duty to love us. And what can be sweeter on this side heaven than to love and be beloved? He that thus watereth shall be watered also himself.
 - b. **A respectful love**: *In honor preferring one another*. Instead of contending for superiority, let us be forward to give to others the pre-eminence. This is explained, [Phi 2:3](#), *Let each esteem other better than themselves*. And there is this good reason for it, because, if we know our own hearts, we know more evil by ourselves than we do by anyone else in the world. We should be forward to take notice of the gifts, and

³⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the New Testament: Volume 7 – Acts 20 to Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, reprinted 1983 by Baker Book House Company from an edition originally published under the title *An Exposition of the New Testament* by William Mackenzie, London in 1886-1888), pages 331-338.

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graces, and performances of our brethren, and value them accordingly, be more forward to praise another, and more pleased to hear another praised, than ourselves; *tē timē proëgoumenoi* - *going before, or leading one another in honor*; so some read it: not in taking honor, but in giving honor. “Strive which of you shall be most forward to pay respect to those to whom it is due, and to perform all Christian offices of love (which are all included in the word honor) to your brethren, as there is occasion. Let all your contention be which shall be most humble, and useful, and condescending.” So the sense is the same with [Tit 3:14](#), *Let them learn, proistasthai* - *to go before in good works*. For though we must prefer others (as our translation reads it), and put on others, as more capable and deserving than ourselves, yet we must not make that an excuse for our lying by and doing nothing, nor under a pretence of honoring others, and their serviceableness and performances, indulge ourselves in ease and slothfulness. Therefore he immediately adds ([Rom 12:11](#)), *Not slothful in business*.

- c. **A liberal love** ([Rom 12:13](#)): *Distributing to the necessities of saints*. It is but a mock love which rests in the verbal expressions of kindness and respect, while the wants of our brethren call for real supplies, and it is in the power of our hands to furnish them. [1.] It is no strange thing for saints in this world to want necessities for the support of their natural live. In those primitive times prevailing persecutions must needs reduce many of the suffering saints to great extremities; and still the poor, even the poor saints, we have always with us. Surely the things of this world are not the best things; if they were, the saints, who are the favorites of heaven, would not be put off with so little of them. [2.] It is the duty of those who have wherewithal to *distribute*, or (as it might better be read) to *communicate* to those necessities. It is not enough to draw out the soul, but we must draw out the purse, to the hungry. See [Jam 2:15](#), [Jam 2:16](#); [1Jo 3:17](#). *Communicating* - *koinōnountes*. It intimates that our poor brethren have a kind of interest in that which God hath given us; and that our reliving them should come from a sense and fellow-feeling of their wants, as though we suffered with them. The charitable benevolence of the Philippians to Paul is called their communicating with his affliction, [Phi 4:14](#). We must be ready, as we have ability and opportunity, to relieve any that are in want; but we are in a special manner bound to communicate to the saints. There is a common love owing to our fellow-creatures, but a special love owing to our fellow-Christians ([Gal 6:10](#)), *Especially to those who are of the household of faith*. *Communicating*, *tais mneiais* - *to the memories of the saints*; so some of the ancients read it, instead of *tais chreiais*. There is a debt owing to the memory of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises - to value it, to vindicate it, to embalm it. Let the memory of the just be blessed; so some read [Pro 10:7](#). He mentions another branch of this bountiful love: *Given to hospitality*. Those who have houses of their own should be ready to entertain those who go about doing good, or who, for fear of persecution, are forced to wander for shelter. They had not then so much of the convenience of common inns as we have; or the wandering Christians durst not frequent them; or they had not wherewithal to bear the charges, and therefore it was a special kindness to bid them welcome on free-cost. Nor is it yet an antiquated superseded duty; as there is occasion, we must welcome strangers, for we know not the heart of a stranger. *I was a stranger, and you took me in*, is mentioned as one instance of the mercifulness of those that shall obtain mercy: *tēn philoxenian diōkontes* - *following or pursuing hospitality*. It intimates, not only that we must take opportunity, but that we must seek

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opportunity, thus to show mercy. As Abraham, who sat at the tent-door ([Gen_18:1](#)), and Lot, who sat in the gate of Sodom ([Gen_19:1](#)), expecting travelers, whom they might meet and prevent with a kind invitation, and so they entertained angels unawares, [Heb_13:2](#).

- d. **A sympathizing love** ([Rom_12:15](#)): *Rejoice with those that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep.* Where there is a mutual love between the members of the mystical body, there will be such a fellow-feeling. See [1Co_12:26](#). True love will interest us in the sorrows and joys of one another, and teach us to make them our own. Observe the common mixture in this world, some rejoicing, and others weeping (as the people, [Ezr_3:12](#), [Ezr_3:13](#)), for the trial, as of other graces, so of brotherly love and Christian sympathy. Not that we must participate in the sinful mirth or mourning of any, but only in just and reasonable joys and sorrows: not envying those that prosper, but rejoicing with them; truly glad that others have the success and comfort which we have not; not despising those that are in trouble, but concerned for them, and ready to help them, as being ourselves in the body. This is to do as God does, who not only has *pleasure in the prosperity of his servants* ([Psa_35:27](#)), but is likewise *afflicted in all their afflictions*, [Isa_63:9](#).
- e. **A united love:** “*Be of the same mind one towards another* ([Rom_12:16](#)), that is, labor, as much as you can, to agree in apprehension; and, wherein you come short of this, yet agree in affection; endeavor to be all one, not affecting to clash, and contradict, and thwart one another; but keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, [Phi_2:2](#); [Phi_3:15](#), [Phi_3:16](#); [1Co_1:10](#); to *auto eis allēlous phronountes* - *wishing the same good to others that you do to yourselves*,” so some understand it. This is to love our brethren as ourselves, desiring their welfare as our own.
- f. **A condescending love:** *Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate*, [Rom_12:16](#). True love cannot be without lowliness, [Eph_4:1](#), [Eph_4:2](#); [Phi_2:3](#). When our Lord Jesus washed his disciples' feet, to teach us brotherly love ([Joh_13:5](#); [Joh_13:34](#)), it was designed especially to intimate to us that to love one another aright is to be willing to stoop to the meanest offices of kindness for the good of one another. Love is a condescending grace: *Non bene conveniunt - majestas et amor* - *Majesty and love do but ill assort with each other*. Observe how it is pressed here. [1.] *Mind not high things*. We must not be ambitious of honor and preferment, nor look upon worldly pomp and dignity with any inordinate value or desire but rather with a holy contempt. When David's advancements were high, his spirit was humble ([Psa_131:1](#)): *I do not exercise myself in great matters*. The Romans, living in the imperial city, which reigned over the kings of the earth ([Rev_17:18](#)), and was at that time in the meridian of its splendor, were perhaps ready to take occasion thence to think the better of themselves. Even the holy seed were tainted with this leaven. Roman Christians, as some citizens do upon the country; and therefore the apostle so often cautions them against high-mindedness; compare [Rom_11:20](#). They lived near the court, and conversed daily with the gaiety and grandeur of it: “Well,” saith he, “do not mind it, be not in love with it.” [2.] *Condescend to men of low estate* - *Tois tapeinois sunapagomenoi*. First, It may be meant of *mean things*, to which we must condescend. If our condition in the world be poor and low, our enjoyments coarse and scanty, our employments despicable and contemptible, yet we must bring our

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minds to it, and acquiesce in it. So the margin: *Be contented with mean things*. Be reconciled to the place which God in his providence hath put us in, whatever it be. We must account nothing below us but sin: stoop to mean habitations, mean fare, mean clothing, mean accommodations when they are our lot, and not grudge. Nay, we must be carried with a kind of impetus, by the force of the new nature (so the word *sunapagomai* properly signifies, and it is very significant), towards mean things, when God appoints us to them; as the old corrupt nature is carried out towards high things. We must accommodate ourselves to mean things. We should make a low condition and mean circumstances more the centre of our desires than a high condition. Secondly, It may be meant of *mean persons*; so we read it (I think both are to be included) *Condescend to men of low estate*. We must associate with, and accommodate ourselves to, those that are poor and mean in the world, if they be such as fear God. David, though a king upon the throne, was a companion for all such, [Psa_119:63](#). We need not be ashamed to converse with the lowly, while the great God overlooks heaven and earth to look at such. True love values grace in rags as well as in scarlet. A jewel is a jewel, though it lie in the dirt. The contrary to this condescension is reproved, [Jam_2:1-4](#). *Condescend*; that is, suit yourselves to them, stoop to them for their good; as Paul, [1Co_9:19](#), etc. Some think the original word is a metaphor taken from travellers, when those that are stronger and swifter of foot stay for those that are weak and slow, make a halt, and take them with them; thus must Christians be tender towards their fellow travellers. As a means to promote this, he adds, *Be not wise in your own conceits*; to the same purport with [Rom_12:3](#). We shall never find in our hearts to condescend to others while we find there so great a conceit of ourselves: and therefore this must needs be mortified. *Mê ginesthe phronimoi par' heautois* - "Be not wise by yourselves, be not confident of the sufficiency of your own wisdom, so as to despise others, or think you have no need of them ([Pro_3:7](#)), nor be shy of communicating what you have to others. We are members one of another, depend upon one another, are obliged to one another; and therefore, *Be not wise by yourselves*, remembering it is the merchandise of wisdom that we profess; now merchandise consists in commerce, receiving and returning."

- g. **A love that engages us, as much as lies in us, to live peaceably with all men,** [Rom_12:18](#). Even those with whom we cannot live intimately and familiarly, by reason of distance in degree or profession, yet we must with such live peaceably; that is, we must be harmless and inoffensive, not giving others occasion to quarrel with us; and we must be gall less and un-revengeful, not taking occasion to quarrel with them. Thus must we labor to preserve the peace, that it be not broken, and to piece it again when it is broken. The wisdom from above is pure and peaceable. Observe how the exhortation is limited. It is not expressed so as to oblige us to impossibilities: *If it be possible, as much as lies in you*. Thus [Heb_12:14](#), *Follow peace*. [Eph_4:3](#), *endeavoring to keep*. Study the things that make for peace. - *If it be possible*. It is not possible to preserve the peace when we cannot do it without offending God and wounding conscience: *Id possumus quod jure possumus* - *That is possible which is possible without incurring blame*. The wisdom that is from above is first pure and then peaceable, [Jam_3:17](#). Peace without purity is the peace of the devil's palace. - *As much as lieth in you*. There must be two words to the bargain of peace. We can but speak for ourselves. We may be unavoidably striven with; as Jeremiah, who was a man of contention ([Jer_15:10](#)), and this we cannot help; our care must be that nothing

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be wanting on our parts to preserve the peace, [Psa_120:7](#). I am for peace, though, when I speak, they are for war.

- II. **TO OUR ENEMIES.** Since men became enemies to God, they have been found very apt to be enemies one to another. Let but the centre of love be once forsaken, and the lines will either clash and interfere, or be at an uncomfortable distance. And, of all men, those that embrace religion have reason to expect to meet with enemies in a world whose smiles seldom concur with Christ's. Now Christianity teaches us how to behave towards our enemies; and in this instruction it quite differs from all other rules and methods, which generally aim at victory and dominion; but this at inward peace and satisfaction. Whoever are our enemies, that wish us ill and seek to do us ill, our rule is to do them no hurt, but all the good we can.
- a. **To do them no hurt** ([Rom_12:17](#)): *Recompense to no man evil for evil*, for that is a brutish recompense, and befitting only those animals which are not conscious either of any being above them or of any state before them. Or, if mankind were made (as some dream) in a state of war, such recompenses as these were agreeable enough; but we have not so learned God, who does so much for his enemies ([Mat_5:45](#)), much less have we so learned Christ, who died for us when we were enemies ([Rom_5:8](#), [Rom_5:10](#)), so loved that world which hated him without a cause. - “*To no man; neither to Jew nor Greek; not to one that has been thy friend, for by recompensing evil for evil thou wilt certainly lose him; not to one that has been thine enemy, for by not recompensing evil for evil thou mayest perhaps gain him.*” To the same purport, [Rom_12:19](#), *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves*. And why must this be ushered in with such an affectionate compellation, rather than any other of the exhortations of this chapter? Surely because this is intended for the composing of angry spirits, that are hot in the resentment of a provocation. He addresses himself to such in this endearing language, to mollify and qualify them. Anything that breathes love sweetens the blood, lays the storm, and cools the intemperate heat. Would you pacify a brother offended? Call him dearly beloved. Such a soft word, fitly spoken, may be effectual to turn away wrath. *Avenge not yourselves*; that is, when anybody has done you any ill turn, do not desire nor Endeavour to bring the like mischief or inconvenience upon him. it is not forbidden to the magistrate to do justice to those that are wronged, by punishing the wrong-doer; nor to make and execute just and wholesome laws against malefactors; but it forbids private revenge, which flows from anger and ill-will; and this is fitly forbidden, for it is presumed that we are incompetent judges in our own case. Nay, if persons wronged in seeking the defense of the law, and magistrates in granting it, act from any particular personal pique or quarrel, and not from a concern that public peace and order be maintained and right done, even such proceedings, though seemingly regular, will fall under this prohibited self-revenging. See how strict the law of Christ is in this matter, [Mat_5:38-40](#). It is forbidden not only to take it into our own hands to avenge ourselves, but to desire and thirst after event that judgment in our case which the law affords, for the satisfying of a revengeful humor. This is a hard lesson to corrupt nature; and therefore he subjoins, [1.] A remedy against it: *Rather give place unto wrath*. Not to our own wrath; to give place to this is to give place to the devil, [Eph_4:26](#), [Eph_4:27](#). We must resist, and stifle, and smother, and suppress this; but, *First, To the wrath of our enemy*. “Give place to it, that is, be of a yielding temper; do not answer wrath

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with wrath, but with love rather. *Yielding pacifies great offences*, [Ecc_10:4](#). Receive affronts and injuries, as a stone is received into a heap of wool, which gives way to it, and so it does not rebound back, nor go any further.” So it explains that of our Savior ([Mat_5:39](#)), *Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*. Instead of meditating how to revenge one wrong, prepare to receive another. When men's passions are up, and the stream is strong, let it have its course, lest by an unseasonable opposition it be made to rage and swell the more. When others are angry, let us be calm; this is a remedy against revenge, and seems to be the genuine sense. But, *Secondly*, Many apply it to the wrath of God: “Give place to this, make room for him to take the throne of judgment, and let him alone to deal with thine adversary.” [2.] A reason against it: *For it is written, Vengeance is mine*. We find it written, [Deu_32:35](#). God is the sovereign King, the righteous Judge, and to him it belongs to administer justice; for, being a God of infinite knowledge, by him actions are weighed in unerring balances; and, being a God of infinite purity, he hates sin and cannot endure to look upon iniquity. Some of this power he hath trusted in the hands of the civil magistrates ([Gen_9:6](#); [Rom_13:4](#)); their legal punishments therefore are to be looked upon as a branch of God's revenging. This is a good reason why we should not avenge ourselves; for, if vengeance be God's, then, *First*, We may not do it. We step into the throne of God if we do and take his work out of his hand. *Secondly*, We need not do it. For God will, if we meekly leave the matter with him; he will avenge us as far as there is reason or justice for it, and further we cannot desire it. See [Psa_38:14](#), [Psa_38:15](#), *I heard not, for thou wilt hear*; and if God hears what need is there for me to hear?

- b. **We must not only do no hurt to our enemies, but our religion goes higher, and teaches us to do them all the good we can.** It is a command peculiar to Christianity, and which does highly commend it: *Love your enemies*, [Mat_5:44](#). We are here taught to show that love to them both in word and deed.
 - i. **In word:** *Bless those who persecute you*, [Rom_12:14](#). It has been the common lot of God's people to be persecuted, either with a powerful hand or with a spiteful tongue. Now we are here taught to bless those that so persecute us. *Bless them*; that is,
 - 1. *First*, “Speak well of them. If there be any thing in them that is commendable and praiseworthy, take notice of it, and mention it to their honor.”
 - 2. *Secondly*, “Speak respectfully to them, according as their place is, not rendering railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness.” And,
 - 3. *Thirdly*, We must wish well to them, and desire their good, so far from seeking any revenge. Nay,
 - 4. *Fourthly*, We must offer up that desire to God, by prayer for them. If it be not in the power of our hand to do anything else for them, yet we can testify our good-will by praying for them, for which our master hath given us not only a rule, but an example to back that rule,

[Luk_23:34](#) - *Bless, and curse not*. It denotes a thorough good-will in all the instances and expressions of it; not, “bless them when you are at

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prayer, and curse them at other times;" but, "bless them always, and curse not at all." Cursing ill becomes the mouths of those whose work it is to bless God, and whose happiness it is to be blessed of him.

- ii. **In deed** ([Rom 12:20](#)): "*If thine enemy hunger, as thou hast ability and opportunity, be ready and forward to show him any kindness, and do him any office of love for his good; and be never the less forward for his having been thine enemy, but rather the more, that thou mayest thereby testify the sincerity of thy forgiveness of him.*" It is said of Archbishop Cranmer that the way for a man to make him his friend was to do him an ill turn. The precept is quoted from [Pro 25:21](#), [Pro 25:22](#); so that, high as it seems to be, the Old Testament was not a stranger to it. Observe here,
 1. *First*, What we must do. We must do good to our enemies. "*If he hunger, do not insult over him, and say, Now God is avenging me of him, and pleading my cause; do not make such a construction of his wants. But feed him.*" Then, when he has need of thy help, and thou hast an opportunity of starving him and trampling upon him, then *feed him* (*psômize auton*, a significant word) - "*feed him abundantly, nay, feed him carefully and indulgently:*" *frustulatim pasce* - *feed him with small pieces*, "*feed him, as we do children and sick people, with much tenderness. Contrive to do it so as to express thy love. If he thirst, give him drink: potize auton* - *drink to him*, in token of reconciliation and friendship. So confirm your love to him."
 2. *Secondly*, Why we must do this. Because in so doing thou shalt heap *coals of fire on his head*. Two senses are given of this, which I think are both to be taken in disjunctively. *Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head*; that is, "Thou shalt either,"
 - a. "*Melt him into repentance and friendship, and mollify his spirit towards thee*" (alluding to those who melt metals; they not only put fire under them, but heap fire upon them; thus Saul was melted and conquered with the kindness of David, [1Sa 24:16](#); [1Sa 26:21](#)) - "*thou wilt win a friend by it, and if thy kindness have not that effect then,*"
 - b. "*It will aggravate his condemnation, and make his malice against thee the more inexcusable. Thou wilt hereby hasten upon him the tokens of God's wrath and vengeance.*" Not that this must be our intention in showing him kindness, but, for our encouragement, such will be the effect. To this purpose is the exhortation in the last verses, which suggests a paradox not easily understood by the world, that in all matters of strife and contention those that revenge are the conquered, and those that forgive are the conquerors.
 3. "*Be not overcome of evil*. Let not the evil of any provocation that is given you have such a power over you, or make such an impression upon you, as to dispossess you of yourselves, to disturb your peace,

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to destroy your love, to ruffle and discompose your spirits, to transport you to any indecencies, or to bring you to study or attempt any revenge.” He that cannot quietly bear an injury is perfectly conquered by it.

4. “But overcome evil with good, with the good of patience and forbearance, nay, and of kindness and beneficence to those that wrong you. Learn to defeat their ill designs against you, and either to change them, or at least to preserve your own peace.” He that hath this rule over his spirit is better than the mighty.

III. **To conclude**, there remain two exhortations yet untouched, which are general, and which recommend all the rest as good in themselves, and of good report.

- a. **As good in themselves** ([Rom 12:9](#)): *Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.* God hath shown us what is good: these Christian duties are enjoined; and that is evil which is opposite to them. Now observe,
 - i. We must not only do no evil, but we must *abhor that which is evil*.
 - ii. We must hate sin with an utter and irreconcilable hatred; have an antipathy to it as the worst of evils, contrary to our new nature, and to our true interest - hating all the appearances of sin, even the garment spotted with the flesh.
 - iii. We must not only do that which is good, but we must cleave to it. It denotes a deliberate choice of, a sincere affection for, and a constant perseverance in, that which is good. “So cleave to it as not to be allured nor affrighted from it, cleave to *him that is good*, even to the Lord ([Acts 11:23](#)), with a dependence and acquiescence.” It is subjoined to the precept of brotherly love, as directive of it;
 - iv. We must love our brethren, but not love them so much as for their sakes to commit any sin, or omit any duty; not think the better of any sin for the sake of the person that commits it, but forsake all the friends in the world, to cleave to God and duty.
- b. **As of a good report** ([Romans 12:17](#)): “Provide things honest in the sight of all men;” that is, not only do, that which is amiable and creditable, and recommends religion to all with whom you converse.” ([Cf. Philippians 4:8](#)). These acts of charity and beneficence are in a special manner of good report among men, and therefore are to be industriously regarded by all that consult the glory of God and the credit of their profession.

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RELATIONSHIPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Comprehension of Biblical Commandments

Our Relationship to the Government and to Fellow Citizens

(Higher powers, **the Mandates of the Law**, Rulers, or Ministers of God)

TEXT: Romans 13:1-14

INTRODUCTION:

In the context of Romans 13, Paul reminds believers that Rome was the imperial capital, the place of the empire's civil authority. The intended audience in that First Century was aware of both a citizenship of that shameful city in the days of Nero, as well being citizens of Christ's kingdom (Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:13). "This text is the key NT passage on the subject [of the Christian's relationship to his government]." ³⁶

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, **supplications, prayers, intercessions**, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; **(2)** For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. **(3)** For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; **(4)** Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Titus 3:1-2 Put them in mind to **be subject** to principalities and powers, **to obey** magistrates, to be ready to every good work, **(2)** To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

1 Peter 2:13-17 **Submit** yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; **(14)** Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. **(15)** For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: **(16)** As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. **(17)** Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Some evangelical pastors and other Christian leaders have turned from emphasizing the gospel to emphasizing politics, from emphasizing the Word of God to emphasizing coalitions to "impact culture." Some Christians expect the government to be not only the church's ally but its primary partner. But the state is temporal and affects only things that are temporal. It is a foolish and wasteful stewardship that devotes a great deal of time trying to bring people better morality—which at best is transient—but little time bringing them the gospel, which offers eternal life. It really does not matter whether people go to hell as policemen or prostitutes, judges or criminals, pro-life or pro-abortion. The moral will persist with the immoral. [*bad examples in government have been a perpetual struggle throughout history – Psalm 2*] **Our task is the proclamation of the gospel.** Neglecting it is the spiritual equivalent of a skilled heart surgeon abandoning his profession to become a make-up artist, spending his time making people look better rather than saving lives. The mission of the church is not

³⁶ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, General Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1983), page 490.

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to change society—although that is often a beneficial by-product of faithful ministry and living—but to worship and serve the Lord and to bring others to saving faith in Him.³⁷

Although addressed as “the king of Tyre,” the being that Isaiah 14:4; and Ezekiel 28:12-14 referred to could only be Satan. Reading the Scriptures, it becomes clear that, although human government was instituted by God and fulfills, to some extent, His plan for maintaining order on the earth, many governments, if not most, are under the influence of Satan and are a means of promoting and perpetuating satanic activity.³⁸

- Christians should express their beliefs through voting for the best qualified political candidate.
- Christians should be informed and supportive of sound legislation.
- Christians should be part of doing good in our society.
- Christians should be grateful in prayers of thanksgiving to God for civil freedom to worship, to preach and teach the gospel and to live our lives without restriction. That is a nice privilege, *but it is not necessary to the effectiveness of the gospel or to spiritual growth*. There are many believers today spiritually thriving with less freedom, who endure great trials and tribulation.

Galatians 6:9-10 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. **(10)** As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Titus 3:1-2 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, **(2)** To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. (Cf. *Psalms* 2:1-12)

I. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL AUTHORITY (13:1-7):

Looking at this section of Scripture, there is no grammatical connection to what precedes or what follows, so some scholars have deduced that these first seven verses are an interpolation, [interruption] between 12:19-21 and 13:8. Author, J.C. O'Neill says of the passage: “*These seven verses have caused more unhappiness and misery in the Christian East and West than any other seven verses in the NT.*” James Kallas to some extent agrees that these verses are explained better as an interpolation.³⁹ Either way, we cannot dismiss their premise.

³⁷ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), page 208.

³⁸ Ibid, page 219.

³⁹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), page 457.

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A. **Know your Responsibilities** (13:1, 6-7): Believers have a citizenship in heaven and a citizenship on earth; thus giving us a dual responsibility toward each place.

1. We are to *submit* ourselves to “governing authorities” (13:1): Let every soul be **subject** . . . higher **power**

ὑποτάσσω—hypotassō, (hoop-ot-as'-so): under **obedience**; subordinate; **subject**.

ἐξουσία—exousia, (ex-oo-see'-ah): ruling authority, jurisdiction, **power of choice**, liberty of action, the right given by law, the blending of knowledge/power. The common usage of the word involves legal documents like wills or contracts to denote the “claim,” or “right” or “control,” one has over anything.⁴⁰ Translated **“power”** 69 times in the NT; used six times in Romans (here and also 9:21); five times in Romans 13.

τάσσω—tassō, (tas'-so): to arrange or put in its place,⁴¹ assign, **ordain**, set.

- a. Jesus made it clear that we have a responsibility to human government, (Luke 20:19-26): *Christ is teaching in the temple and refers to the parable of the vineyard; the owner’s son was killed by the husbandmen of the vineyard.*

Luke 20:25 And he said unto them, **Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.**

- b. God ordained government in the beginning.
 - **Genesis 9:6** Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.
 - **Exodus 18:13-26, verse 13** And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. (Father-in-law, Jethro gives a good suggestion)
 - **Exodus 20:1-17** – the Ten Commandments
 - **1 Timothy 2:1-3** I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; **(2)** For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet

⁴⁰ James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1930, reprinted 1972), page 225.

⁴¹ Ibid, page 626.

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and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (3) For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior;

- c. Higher Powers: Civil authority does not mean “absolute authority” for it is *delegated* by God. God is the only Absolute Authority.
 - Anything in the mandate given by an authority that contradicts God exceeds its lawful purpose. Civil authorities do not always get it right. We must obey God rather than man, (*Daniel and the Hebrew Children; Peter and other apostles; Paul and Silas*).

Acts 5:27-29 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, (28) Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. (29) Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

- If it plainly directs subjects to actions that are wrong, that is another matter; in which we choose to follow God and suffer a consequence.
- d. No power but of God: When the good king, Uzziah died, the future looked bleak for Judah through the eyes of Isaiah, but we read of the different perspective when the prophet has a vision of the heavenly throne. God was still present and in power.

Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. (2) Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. (3) And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

- e. The powers that be are ordained of God.

- 2. We are to *pay* our taxes (13:6): *tribute* [cf. Luke 20:19-26; Prov. 3:9]: “*increase*”

Proverbs 3:9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

- 3. We are to *give honor* and *respect* to all those to whom it is due (13:7): Cf. 12:10

Proverbs 3:27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*.

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Romans 13:7 (AMP) Render to all men their **dues**. [Pay] taxes to whom taxes are **due**, revenue to whom revenue is **due**, respect to whom respect is **due**, and honor to whom honor is **due**.

B. **Know the Repercussions.** (13:2-5)

1. Because of the **power** behind the throne (13:2): God has established human governments, so to disobey human laws is to disobey God.

Romans 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

2. Because of the **punishment** from the throne (13:3-5): God has also decreed that lawbreakers should be punished by those representing human government. (Cf. Exodus 34:7b)

3. Because of the **practice** of prayer before the throne of God.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; (2) For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (3) For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; (4) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

II. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GENERAL PUBLIC (13:8-14): Fellow Citizens

A. **Continue to Love** (13:8-10): God's love seeks and satisfies.

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law." (NIV)

1. Love *satisfies* the Law of God (13:8).

Matthew 22:34-40 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. (35) Then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying, (36) Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? (37) Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.** (38) **This is the first and great commandment.** (39) **And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** (40) **On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.** (Cf. Mark 12:28-34 [answering the scribe], these two passages are considered statements of the core of Christian ethics)

2. Love *seeks* the best for one's neighbor (13:9-10).

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- B. **Continue to Look** (13:11-12a): The Realization - We need to know the Lord's coming is near.
1. Time is running out (13:11a, 12a): *Buy up the opportunities* - Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5 [Paul's urgency]
 - a. Christ's return is the start of a new day (James 5:8; Romans 8:23; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5)
 - b. The present time while Christ is absent - Satan at work as the night (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2)
 - c. Time equals the "character of the age." *καίρος* versus *χρόνος*.
 2. The time of salvation is near (13:11b): Each passing day brings us closer to our ultimate deliverance from this life, this body and this world of sin.
 - a. Salvation spoken of in the past

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.
 - b. Salvation spoken of in the present

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.
 - c. Salvation spoken of in the future

Romans 5:8-9 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."
- C. **Continue to Live in the Light** (13:12b-14)
1. Awaken out of sleep (13:11): "our slumber"

Soldiers need to be alert and equipped for battle (Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8)
 2. Cast off the works of darkness (13:12a):
 - a. *put aside the deeds of darkness in the present life!*
 - b. *A decisive and deliberate action must be done.*

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c. Illustrated as removing a garment.

“Do not plan for sin; give it no welcome; offer it no opportunity. Kick the sin off your doorstep and you won’t have it in the house.”⁴² (Leon Morris quotes K.J. Foreman)

3. **Put on the armor of light** (13:12b)

John 12:36; Ephesians 5:8, 14; Colossians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 John 1:7, 2:10.

4. **Walk honestly, as in the day** (13:13a)

5. **Put on the Lord Jesus Christ** (13:14a): *Clothe yourself with . . .*

a. At salvation we were clothed with Christ and

b. Robes of righteousness (Galatians 3:27)

6. **Make no provision for the flesh** (13:14b): Do not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

To plan out specific ways to gratify sinful flesh is “wrong and out of bounds.”⁴³

Four main Objectives are:

- Pray continually to Jehovah God as Jesus did. (Matt. 6:9-15):

Matthew 6:9-13 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. (10) Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (11) Give us this day our daily bread. (12) And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (13) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-3)

- Study the Bible on a daily basis and become acquainted with the truth, (Josh.1:8): *Meditate day and night. (God’s World view, and His position on marriage, murder and sin).*
- Gather together to worship Jehovah with fellow Christians. (Heb.10:24,25): *Forsake not the assembly*

⁴² Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), page 474. Reference to a quote from K.J. Foreman: *Romans, I & II Corinthians* (London, 1962).

⁴³ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, General Editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishers, 1983), page 492.

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- And preach and teach others about God's Kingdom! (Matt. 28:19,20): *Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel*

CONCLUSION:⁴⁴

GOD CAN CHANGE THE HEART OF OUR LEADERS

In 1879, archeologists discovered a remarkable little item in an area now known as Iraq (i.e. historically, Babylon). Just 9 inches long, the Cyrus Cylinder records something that King Cyrus of Persia did 2,500 years ago. It says that Cyrus allowed a group of people to return to their homeland and rebuild their “holy cities.”



Figure 1: From 538-539 B.C., the iconic Cyrus Cylinder In November, 2012 toured five museums in the US being on loan from the British Museum and sponsored by the Iran Heritage Foundation – “a key document on the history of the world.”

It’s the same story told in Ezra 1. There (Ezra 1:1-4) we read that “the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia” to make a proclamation (1:1). And in that proclamation, Cyrus said he was releasing the captives in Babylon to go home to Jerusalem, re-establish their homes, and rebuild their temple (1:2-5).

But there’s more to the story. Daniel confessed his sins and his people’s sins and pled with God to end the Babylonian captivity (Daniel 9). In response to Daniel’s prayer, God sent an angel to speak to Daniel (9:21). Later He moved Cyrus to release the Hebrews. (Cf. Jeremiah 25:11-12; 39:10).

Together, the Cyrus Cylinder and God’s Word combine to show us that the king’s heart was changed and he allowed the exiled Hebrews to go home and worship. This story has great implications for us today. In a world that seems out of control, we can rest assured that God can move the hearts of leaders. We read in Proverbs 21:1 that “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord.” And Romans 13:1 says that “there is no authority except from God.” The Lord, who is able to change our hearts as well as the hearts of our leaders, can be trusted for He is sovereign and in control. Let’s ask Him to work.

⁴⁴ OBD.org Devotional for July 4, 2015 written by Dave Branon.

Ezra is one of the OT books that deals with the Israelites’ return to the land of promise after their exile in Babylon. Along with the books of Nehemiah and Haggai, it focuses on rebuilding Jerusalem, the once proud capital of the southern kingdom. Ezra’s role as a scribe was to rebuild the religious life of the Israelites through the Law of Moses. In **Nehemiah**, the focus is on rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem to once again make it a safe haven for the people. **Haggai’s** focus some years later was on the importance of rebuilding the temple, the center of the Israelites’ national life. [Three books with three different perspectives of the same period]

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APPENDIX A

Review:

Sections of Romans

Chapters 1-8 Doctrinal
Chapters 9-11 Dispensational
Chapters 12-16 Duty

- I. **Consecration of Ourselves** (12:1-2): Our Relationship to God
- II. **Collective use of Spiritual Gifts** (12:3-8): Our Relationship to the Body of Christ – the Church
- III. **Christian Stability in the Contemporary World** (12:9-21): Our Relationship to Humanity (society)
- IV. **Comprehension of Biblical Commandments** (13:1-14): Our Relationship to Mandates of Law (higher powers, government, rulers, or ministers of God)
- V. **Critical Matters of our Confession** (14:1-15:13): Our Relationship to the Brethren
 - A. Do not judge one another (14:1-12)
 - B. Do not put an occasion to fall in a brother's way (14:13-23)
 - C. Do edify our brother and imitate Christ (15:1-13)

APPENDIX B

Friday, June 26, 2015, The Supreme Court made a 5 to 4 decision legalizing same-sex marriage in all 50 states of the US. Our friend and good brother, Mark Minnick, preached two messages in response to the Supreme Court ruling on same sex marriage the following Sunday. Dr. Minnick offers a biblical perspective in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision. That Friday's decision is a "watershed event that will shape the history of our nation and the world." Below is a summary of the ten points Dr. Minnick made in his messages:⁴⁵

- 1. **Adopt God's worldview unreservedly**, Psalm 2 (Human history is full of man casting off God's restraints.)
- 2. **Root your position on marriage immovably**, Genesis 1, 2
- 3. **Accept God's law about homosexuality unquestionably**, [1 Timothy 1:8-11](#); [Lev. 18:22](#)



⁴⁵ Dr. Mark Minnick, Mount Calvary Baptist Church www.mountcalvarybaptist.org, "A Christian Perspective on the Supreme Court's Ruling on Same-sex Marriage," (2 messages).

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4. **Remember God's judgments fearfully**, Gen 19 (Sodom and Gomorrah is referenced nine times in the NT, from Matthew to Revelation: [Matt. 10:15](#); [11:23](#), [24](#); [Mark 6:11](#); [Luke 10:12](#); [17:29](#); [2 Peter 2:6](#); [Jude 1:7](#); [Revelation 11:8](#). Those in Sodom and Gomorrah indulged in gross immorality and went after or practiced strange and unnatural desires.)

5. **Repent of judging hypocritically**, [Romans 2:1-5](#)

Therefore thou art ^ainexcusable, ^bO man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for ^cwherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. ² But ^dwe are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. ³ And thinkest thou this, ^bO man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or despisest thou ^ethe riches of his goodness and ^fforbearance and ^glongsuffering; ^hnot knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? ⁵ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart ⁱtreasurest up unto thyself wrath against ^kthe day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

6. **Evangelize all people hopefully**, [1 Timothy 2:1-5](#)

I ¹exhort therefore, that, first of all, ^{bd}supplications, ^{bd}prayers, ^cintercessions, *and* ^dgiving of thanks, be made for all men; ² ^eFor kings, and *for* ^fall that are in ¹authority; that we may lead a ^gquiet and peaceable life in all godliness and ^hhonesty. ³ ⁱFor this is good and acceptable in the sight of ^kGod our Saviour; ⁴ ¹Who will have all men to be saved, and ^mto come unto the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For ⁿthere is one God, and one ^omediator between God and men, ^pthe man Christ Jesus;

7. **Suffer for Christ patiently**, [1 Peter 4:12-19](#) [Respond wisely (*as serpents*) and harmlessly (*as doves*)].

¹² Beloved, ^sthink it not strange concerning ^tthe fiery trial ^uwhich is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: ¹³ But ^vrejoice, inasmuch as ^wye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, ^xwhen his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If ye be ^yreproached ^zfor the name of Christ, ^{aa}happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: ^bon their part ^che is evil spoken of, but on your part ^dhe is glorified. ¹⁵ But ^elet none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as ^fan evildoer, or as ^ga busybody in other men's matters. ¹⁶ Yet if *any man suffer* as ^ha Christian, let him not be ashamed; but ⁱlet him glorify God ^jon this behalf. ¹⁷ For the time *is come* that ^kjudgment must begin at ^lthe house of God: and ^mif it first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that ⁿobey not the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And ^oif the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall ^pthe ungodly and ^qthe sinner appear? ¹⁹ Wherefore let them that suffer according to ^rthe will of God ^scommit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful ^tCreator.

8. **Correct gently**, [2 Tim. 2:23-26](#)

²³ But foolish and unlearned ^fquestions ^gavoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. ²⁴ And ^hthe servant of the Lord must not strive; but be ⁱgentle unto all *men*, ^japt to teach,

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¹¹patient, ²⁵in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; ²⁶if God peradventure will give them repentance ²⁷to the acknowledging of the truth; ²⁸And *that* they may ²⁹recover themselves out ³⁰of the snare of the devil, who are ³¹taken captive by him at his will.

9. *Embrace our pilgrim status fully, 1 Peter 2:11*

¹¹Dearly beloved, ¹²I beseech you ¹³as ¹⁴strangers and ¹⁵pilgrims, ¹⁶abstain from ¹⁷fleshly lusts, ¹⁸which war against the soul;

10. *Know confidently that the Lord will rescue the godly:* Conditions repeated in the Last Days -

² Peter 2:5-11 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; (6) And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; (7) And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (8) (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;) (9) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: (10) But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. (11) Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

Jude 1:14b-19 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, (15) To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. (16) These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. (17) But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; (18) How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. (19) These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

A statement by Attorney Barbara Weller of the Gibbs Law Firm . . .

STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive, covenantal union, as delineated in Scripture.

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We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexual conduct, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, any use of pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church. (Genesis 1:27-28; Genesis 2:18-25; Exodus 20:14; Matthew 19:3-12; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13:4).

Human Sexuality: This one is a shorter statement.

“We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex.

We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)”

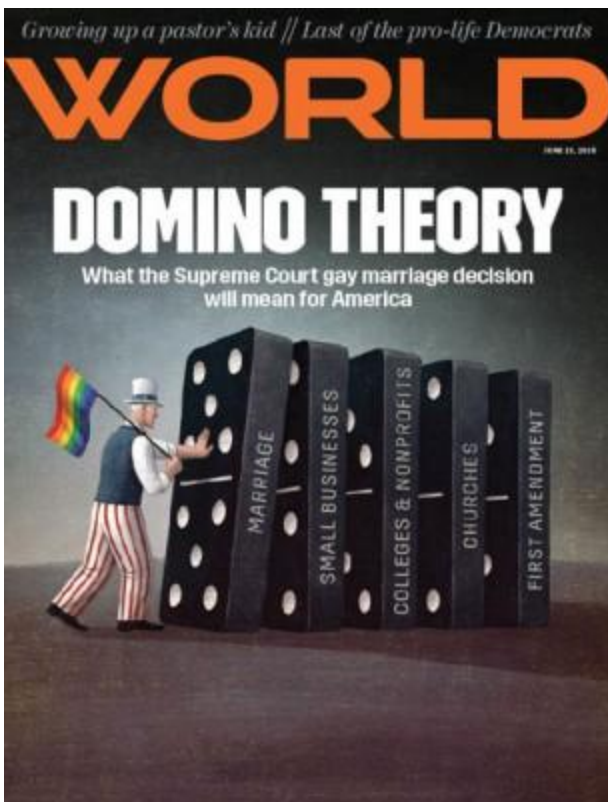


Figure 4 World Magazine Cover, June 23, 2015



Figure 2 Supreme Court Building with Gay Flag



Figure 3 Rainbow White House in disgrace

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans

RELATIONSHIPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Critical Matters of Our Confession of Faith

Our Relationship to the Brethren

TEXT: Romans 14:1-15:13

INTRODUCTION: As we saw in the preceding chapter, *the duty of the Christian to the state is submission*. He is to obey the law, he is to pay his taxes, and he is to show respect to those in authority. Also Chapter 13 was specific on *a believer's relationship to his neighbor*. He is to pay his bills, he is not to commit adultery, kill, steal, bear false-witness, or covet what another person has. In fact, he is to love his neighbor as himself (the second greatest commandment). The believer is to be honest, and he is to avoid reveling,⁴⁶ drunkenness, strife, and jealousy. The Bible is very clear on these things.

However, there are introduced here areas that are not so black and white when dealing with conflicting convictions. The relationship is expressed in the text as the forbearance of a weaker brother with regard to opposing views. Paul's solution falls naturally into three stages.⁴⁷

1) *Not . . .*

- *Peer pressure*
- *Second-hand convictions*

2) *Not . . .*

- *Judging*
- *Despising*
- *Destroying*

3) *Not . . .*

- *A Stumbling block*
- *An Occasion to fall*

1) **The Matter of Conscience**

Each man must be fully satisfied in his own mind that his approach to the problem is biblically right. i.e., the claims of **conscience** are sovereign. Vague suspicions are no substitute for a clear understanding of the issue, and second-hand convictions are of very little help, (14:5b): "*be persuaded in your own minds*"

2) **The Manner of Constraint**

The second principle lays a **constraint** on each individual. We are to refrain from judging, and must not be quick to condemn those who differ from us. They are not answerable to us for the standards which their conscience lays upon them. In that regard, they are responsible to God, who gives an increasing insight into truth to those who ask it (14:13a): "*Let us not therefore judge one another anymore*"

3) **The Malpractice for Consideration**

The third stage sets forth our duty in more positive terms. The strong are not to place temptations in the way of the weak. Have a **consideration** of others. Some are relatively free from any restraining forces that act as a moral barrier, (different degrees of spiritual growth). They may be very fragile, new converts or immature in the faith. The strong must not use their Christian liberty for the undoing of the weaker person (14:13b): "*but judge this, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*"

⁴⁶ **reveling**: Proverbs 23:20 and 28:7, (being loose morally, unrestrained) then Luke 15:13 (defines riotous as debauchery, without restraint of law, prodigal). The NASB translates 2 Peter 2:13 riotous living as reveling. Webster also defines reveling as drunkenness, painting the town, boisterous festivity).

⁴⁷ Gerald R. Cragg: Expositor, Nolan Harmon: Editor, *The Interpreter's Bible, Volume IX: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible in Twelve Volumes* (New York, NY and Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1954), pages 613-614.

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1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: **(8)** So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

THERE MUST BE A CONNECTION WITH OTHERS BEFORE YOU CAN COMMUNICATE A CONVICTION IN ORDER TO EFFECT CHANGE/CONVERSION.

Receive as into one's fellowship . . . take to yourselves others weak in faith but not on the basis of argument on differences of opinion and debate.

I. EVALUATING THE CONVICTIONS OF OTHERS – DO NOT JUDGE ONE ANOTHER (14:1-12): **Reconciling the Conflict of *Convictions*:** Cf. Appendix B [There is a **negative tone** in this passage – 23 times the words “not, neither or nor” are used in 14:1-15:13] Someone may ask for your counsel on a matter at which time you may share your opinion along with biblical truth. The admonition here does not exclude all areas for scrutiny. The Bible does say to judge righteous judgment (Cf. John 7:24): Verse 24 is a warning against superficial judgment; reserve your comments until after a thorough examination of the information. Later in 15:14, Paul says he believes they are competent to counsel one another.

A. **We are not to criticize others' understanding of what is a lawful, religious observance when it conflicts our own** (14:1-8): Defined as one who is legalistically holding to a strict adherence to the letter rather than the spirit of the law; the judging of conduct in terms of adherence to precise laws regarding matters of uncertainty.

Key instructions in the text:

Judge not: κρίνω (kree'-no) – to decide mentally or judiciously; to pronounce an opinion or judgment.

Despise not: ἐξουθενέω (ex-oo-then-eh'-o)—to set at naught, to esteem least, to regard as worthless or disdain. What is your **attitude** toward the person with an opposing view?

Concerning one who is “weak in faith”⁴⁸ (Observe Acts 6:7 where it says a “great company of priest were obedient to the faith.” i.e. Marking a contrast between faith in Christ vs. Christian doctrine.) ὀσθενέω—as-then-eh'-o—feeble, diseased, weak, sick.

⁴⁸ Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament: Volume III* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), pages 166-167.

Observe Vincent's note: “Weak in the faith” is probably referring to a class of Jewish Christians with Essenic tendencies. The Essenes were one of the three religious parties which divided Judaism at the time of Christ's coming, the Pharisees and Sadducees being the two others. They formed a separate community, having all things in common. They were celibate and ascetic, living chiefly on vegetables and supplying all their wants by their own labor. They were the strictest Sabbatarians, even restraining the necessities of the body on the Sabbath-day. They had a tendency to sun-worship, and addressed prayers to the sun at daybreak. They denied the resurrection of the body, but believed in the immortality of the soul.

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1 [Thessalonians 5:14](#) Now we exhort you, brethren, **warn** them that are unruly, **comfort** the feeble-minded, **support** the weak, be patient toward all *men*.

1. The **Reception** (14:1, 3b): Acceptance
2. The **Reservation** (14:1-6): not **doubtful disputations** (discussions debate, and thoughts regarding another's discernment, *differences of opinion*). The AMP expresses it this way – *but not to criticize his [the weaker brother's] opinions or pass judgment on his scruples or perplex him with discussions*.

Disputation: [Διάκρισις](#)—Discernment, “thinking-through or over;” a moral or ethical consideration or standard that acts as a restraining force or inhibits certain actions.

- a. Don't judge in matters of diet (14:1-4, 6b): Some feel it is wrong to eat meat or any food that has been offered in sacrifice to an idol. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 8-10)
- b. Don't judge in matters of the Lord's doulos [bondslave/servant] (14:4)
- c. Don't judge in matters of days (14:5-6a): Some feel certain days are more sacred than others. The example would be a Jew insisting that a Gentile observe the Sabbath and other Jewish Festival Days.

(Reference Appendix C for Chapter 14 in GW Translation)

3. The **Reason** (14:7-8): Both weaker and stronger believers belong to the Lord (received – “accepted”): Christian love helps to reconcile the difference of two consciences.
 - a. All must **stand** before God.
 - b. All must **love** one another.

B. **We are not to corrupt others by our liberty** (14:13-23): w/out *hindrances/stumbling blocks*

1. The *mature Christian* is not to put . . .
 - a. A stumbling block (14:13-18): to stub or trip up, to beat as a wave upon the shoreline eating away the beach (continual wearing down a person's resistance); a root or tree stump over which someone trips.
 - b. An *occasion to fall* speaks of a trap or snare (intentional or not) in a person's pathway.

Ascetic practices: a person who dedicates his or her life to a pursuit of contemplative ideals and who practices extreme self-denial or self-mortification for religious reasons; a person who leads an austere simple life, especially one who abstains from the normal pleasures of life or denies himself or herself material satisfaction.

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Note: “Stumbling” and “falling” are used figuratively as an occasion of apostasy, a serious accusation.

- 1) He is not to permit good and lawful things to be viewed as evil and lawless (14:13-16)
 - 2) He is not to forget that **love** is more important than personal liberties (14:17-18).
2. The mature Christian is to become a stepping stone (14:19-23): concepts introduced with the word, “let.”
- Let not him that eateth despise him which eateth not (14:3)
 - Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind (14:5b)
 - Let us not therefore judge one another anymore (14:13)
 - Let not your good be evil spoken of (14:16)
 - Let us therefore follow after the things that make (14:19)
 - Let everyone of us please his neighbor (15:2)
- a. Pursue: Follow after
- 1) Things that make for peace (14:19a)
 - 2) Things wherewith one may edify another (14:19b)

Follow On,

*Words by William O. Cushing
Great Hymns of the Faith, page 398*

*Down in the valley with my Savior I would go,
Where the flowers are blooming and the sweet waters flow;
Everywhere He leads me I would follow, follow on,
Walking in His footsteps till the crown be won.*

*Down in the valley with my Savior I would go,
Where the storms are sweeping and the dark waters flow;
With His hand to lead me I will never, never fear,
Dangers cannot fright me if my Lord is near.*

*Down in the valley or upon the mountain steep,
Close beside my Savior would my soul ever keep;
He will lead me safely in the path that He has trod,
Up to where they gather on the hills of God.*

Refrain:

*Follow, Follow, I would follow Jesus,
Anywhere, everywhere, I would follow on,
Everywhere He leads me I would follow on.*

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- b. Destroy not . . .
 - 1) Him for whom Christ died (14:15b)
 - 2) The work of God (14:20a)
- c. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin
- d. Evil, Conscious offenses . . .
- e. Let not your good be evil spoken of.

II. EVERY BELIEVER WILL BE JUDGED BY THE SAVIOR, (14:9-12)

- A. ***The foundation for this judgment*** (14:9): It is based on the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. [1 John 2:1-2 tells us Christ is our Advocate (*par-ak'-lay-tos*): intercessor, consoler or advocate].
- B. ***The forbearance in light of this judgment*** (14:10): love, tolerance and patience.
- C. ***The features of this judgment*** (14:12).
 - 1. Every knee will bow (14:11a)
 - 2. Every tongue will confess (14:11b)
 - 3. Every man will give an account to the Lord (14:12)

III. EDIFY OUR BROTHER AND IMITATE CHRIST (15:1-13): A key word in this section is "**hope.**" vv. 4, 13

- A. My burden (15:1a): Bear the infirmities [scruple of conscience; bear with the failings of the weak; carry the doubts] of the weaker person.
- B. My pleasure (15:1b-3): Three statements
 - 1. Not to please ourselves (15:1b)
ἀρέσκω *ar-es'-ko*: to be agreeable.
 - 2. Let everyone of us please our neighbor for his good to edification.
 - 3. For Christ pleased not himself.
- C. My admonition (15:3-5)

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1. Through Christ's example (15:1, 3): He put others first: "reproaches"
2. Through "edification" (15:2): to build from the ground up
3. Through "patience" (15:4b): cheerful, hopeful *endurance*
4. Through "comfort of the scriptures" (15:4b)
5. Through "likeminded" behavior (15:5-12): Jews and Gentiles
 - a. One toward another v. 5
 - b. Glorify God v. 6
 - c. Accept one another v. 7
 - d. Christ confirmed the promises to the Jews v.8
 - e. Christ confessed by Paul to the Gentiles vv. 9-12
- D. My expectation (15:4b, 13): "hope" expressed in Paul's benediction
 1. The Scriptural application (15:4b): *Comfort of the Scriptures*
 2. The Spirit's abundance (15:13): "abounding"
 - a. Filled to overflowing
 - b. Power of the Holy Ghost.

CONCLUSION: There are three principles of Conduct for Christians

- Conviction – 14:5
- Conscience – 14:22
- Consideration – 15:1-2

APPENDIX A

Review:

Sections of Romans

Chapters 1-8 Doctrinal
Chapters 9-11 Dispensational
Chapters 12-16 Duty

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Chapters 12-16

1. **Consecration of Ourselves** (12:1-2): Our Relationship to God
2. **Collective use of Spiritual Gifts** (12:3-8): Our Relationship to the Body of Christ – the Church
3. **Christian Stability in the Contemporary World** (12:9-21): Our Relationship to Humanity (society)
4. **Comprehension of Biblical Commandments** (13:1-14): Our Relationship to Mandates of Law (higher powers, government, rulers, or ministers of God)
5. **Critical Matters of our Confession** (14:1-15:13): Our Relationship to the Brethren

APPENDIX B

Cf. Matthew 7:1-5

Matthew 7:1-5 Judge not, that ye be not judged. (2) For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (3) And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (4) Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? (5) Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Article by Nijay Gupta⁴⁹

NOT TO JUDGE

This verse curbs our desire to take God's place in judgment. Just weeks before the end of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln quoted Matthew 7:1 when delivering his second inaugural presidential address: "Let us judge not, that we be not judged." When Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner pressed Lincoln to hang Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America, Lincoln quoted this verse twice: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." When we try to completely reject and condemn someone else, we usurp God's position as the perfect judge. James speaks of this concept when he writes, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?" (James 4:12)

There is also a reminder in the use of the phrase "judge not" to show care and mercy when criticizing someone else. Jesus teaches us that when putting someone else's life under a microscope, we can expect that God will do the same to us. If we take that idea seriously, then we will show compassion because we desire compassion from God.

⁴⁹ Dr. Nijay Gupta, *Bible Study Magazine*, September/October 2015 Edition, page 42-43. Nijay K. Gupta holds a PhD from the University of Durham. He currently teaches biblical studies at Eastern University.

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TO JUDGE

Yet, it would be a mistake to think that Jesus and the New Testament writers did not think we should ever judge each other. Jesus tells his disciples that, in the new age, “you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28). This verse uses the verb “judge” (krino, κρίνω)— the same word used in Matthew 7:1 – in the sense of “overseeing.” In John 7:24 Jesus tells the crowds, “stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.”

First Corinthians 6:1-11 provides insight into Paul’s understanding of Christians’ responsibility to judge one another. In this passage, Paul chastises the believers in Corinth for turning inner-church grievances into public lawsuits. Paul’s concern was not that they were suing one another *per se*, but that they could not settle their differences within the church (1 Corinthians 6:1). He asks them, “Do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?” (6:2). Paul’s portrays judgment as a way of taking responsibility for the community and ensuring fair treatment.

THE PROBLEM OF HYPOCRISY

Although Matthew 7:1-5 is about judgment, it’s also about hypocrisy. Jesus goes on to say, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? . . . You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (7:3-5).

Jesus is calling those in positions to dispense judgment to be self-critical. This passage is one of several in Matthew’s Gospel that address the idea of hypocrisy. For instance, Jesus had previously taught his followers not to broadcast their charitable acts “as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others” (6:2). He had also labeled as hypocrites those who prayed loudly in public so that others would notice them (6:5) and those who fasted to draw attention to their weakness as a show of their piety (6:16-17). Toward the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus calls out the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, comparing their lives to dishes whose outsides are squeaky clean but whose insides are filthy with greed (23:25).

The problem with hypocrites is that they cannot see other people’s problems clearly because their discernment is skewed by their own sin. Jesus doesn’t call his followers to give up judging completely; he tells them to remove the plank – remove the sin that is skewing their discernment – and then help the other person carefully, prayerfully, and humbly.

LIVING OUT THE LESSON

The next time we hear the phrase “Judge not,” we should pause to evaluate the intent of the message. If someone is using the phrase in the sense of “mind your own business,” then they are simply repeating a popular misunderstanding of Jesus’ words. But if they mean, “Be careful when you judge,” then it might be worth listening to what they have to say.

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APPENDIX C

Romans 14:1-23 (GW) Welcome people who are weak in faith, but don't get into an argument over differences of opinion. (2) Some people believe that they can eat all kinds of food. Other people with weak faith believe that they can eat only vegetables. (3) People who eat all foods should not despise people who eat only vegetables. In the same way, the vegetarians should not criticize people who eat all foods, because God has accepted those people. (4) Who are you to criticize someone else's servant? The Lord will determine whether his servant has been successful. The servant will be successful because the Lord makes him successful. (5) One person decides that one day is holier than another. Another person decides that all days are the same. Every person must make his own decision. (6) When people observe a special day, they observe it to honor the Lord. When people eat all kinds of foods, they honor the Lord as they eat, since they give thanks to God. Vegetarians also honor the Lord when they eat, and they, too, give thanks to God. (7) It's clear that we don't live to honor ourselves, and we don't die to honor ourselves. (8) If we live, we honor the Lord, and if we die, we honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. (9) For this reason Christ died and came back to life so that he would be the Lord of both the living and the dead. (10) Why do you criticize or despise other Christians? Everyone will stand in front of God to be judged. (11) Scripture says, "As certainly as I live, says the Lord, everyone will worship me, and everyone will praise God." (12) All of us will have to give an account of ourselves to God. (13) So let's stop criticizing each other. Instead, you should decide never to do anything that would make other Christians have doubts or lose their faith. (14) The Lord Jesus has given me the knowledge and conviction that no food is unacceptable in and of itself. But it is unacceptable to a person who thinks it is. (15) So if what you eat hurts another Christian, you are no longer living by love. Don't destroy anyone by what you eat. Christ died for that person. (16) Don't allow anyone to say that what you consider good is evil. (17) God's kingdom does not consist of what a person eats or drinks. Rather, God's kingdom consists of God's approval and peace, as well as the joy that the Holy Spirit gives. (18) The person who serves Christ with this in mind is pleasing to God and respected by people. (19) So let's pursue those things which bring peace and which are good for each other. (20) Don't ruin God's work because of what you eat. All food is acceptable, but it's wrong for a person to eat something if it causes someone else to have doubts. (21) The right thing to do is to avoid eating meat, drinking wine, or doing anything else that causes another Christian to have doubts. (22) So whatever you believe about these things, keep it between yourself and God. The person who does what he knows is right shouldn't feel guilty. He is blessed. (23) But if a person has doubts and still eats, he is condemned because he didn't act in faith. Anything that is not done in faith is sin.