

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON **XXVIII** : THE BELIEVER'S CALL TO OBEDIENCE — CHAP | 2: 1-2 |

The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct (12:1-15:13)

“The first eleven chapters of Romans have already made it clear that the life, which, according to 1.17, is the destiny of the man who is righteous by faith, is a life of obedience to God.

“Implied by the moral earnestness which marks the whole of [1.18-3.20], implied specially clearly by 3.8, this becomes explicit in chapter 6. **How can those whom God has mercifully decided to see as having died to sin go on living in it contentedly?** The only proper conclusion to be drawn from their baptism and what it signifies is that, instead of continuing to allow sin to reign as the undisputed master of their lives, they must — and can — rebel against the usurping tyrant, and henceforth present to God themselves as alive from the dead and their members to be instruments of righteousness. The latter part of the chapter (6.15-23) makes no fresh point, but rather brings out the significance of vv. 1-14 in a different way. Man's life is always, and inevitably, a serving of a master. It is either — and these two are, rightfully, mutually exclusive — a service of God and of righteousness, the end of which is eternal life, or a service of sin, the end of which is death. By the end of chapter 6 the truth that those who by God's mercy have been made partakers in Christ's death and resurrection have thereby been claimed decisively for obedience to God — for sanctification (6.19, 22) — has been made inescapably plain.

“And, despite superficial appearances and first impressions, chapter 7 in no way calls in question, but rather underlines, this truth. For, while it indicates that the rebellion against sin's tyranny is no easy matter but something with which the Christian is never done, so long as he is in the flesh, and reveals with relentless frankness the tension, with all its real anguish, in which he is involved and from which he cannot in this life escape, it also makes it clear that there can be no question of his laying down his arms and settling for peace. Standing as it does between chapters 6 and 8, 7.25 (*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I myself serve with my mind the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin*) is totally misunderstood, if it is taken to imply that the Christian may accept his continued sinning with complacency. The ground of Paul's thanksgiving is that, held though he is in this painful tension, he is, through Christ, in it in hope and not in hopelessness. And, while the latter half of the verse honestly acknowledges the fact that the Christian, so long as he remains in the flesh, remains in a real sense the slave of sin (cf. 7.14), its point is that he nevertheless, as one to whom God has given a righteous status in Christ, is altogether bound in his conscience to God's holy law.

“In chapter 8 the necessity of obedience is set forth in terms of the gift of the Spirit. To be in Christ is to be indwelt by His Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit, who establishes God's law in its true character and function as ‘unto life’ (7.10) and ‘spiritual’ (7.14), and whose pressure on our lives has set us free from the tyranny of sin and death (8.2). **One cannot have Christ without also having His Spirit (8.9); the gift of justification through Christ is not to be had in separation from the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification, for to separate these ‘would be, as it were, to rend Christ asunder.’ Christian obedience, then, is to live under God's law established in its true nature by the Spirit. And what this means is summed up in 8.15: ‘you have received the Spirit of adoption, by whose enabling we cry “Abba, Father”, ‘to call the true, holy God ‘Father’ with full sincerity and seriousness — this is to obey God's law, this is indeed the whole of Christian obedience. For to address God by the name of Father sincerely and with full seriousness involves seeking whole-heartedly to be and think and speak and do what is well-pleasing to Him, and at the same time to avoid all that is displeasing to Him.**

“But the obedience required of Christians is not just an obedience in principle. It is rather an obedience of thought and attitude, of word and deed, wrought out in concrete situations of life — and an obedience, moreover, which has to be wrought out by Christians who are far from being fully sincere or fully serious in their calling God ‘Father.’ Exhortations is therefore necessary — an exhortation which does not stop at the abstract and general, but is concrete and particular. It is such exhortation that we find in Romans 12.1-15.13.” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 592ff]

ARE THESE CHAPTERS “GENERAL CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION” OR DIRECTED TO ISSUES AT ROME? —

“One of the most striking features of Rom. 12:1-15:13 is the way in which its various themes resemble teaching that Paul gives elsewhere. The following chart outlines some of the main parallels:

The need for transformation by the renewing of the mind (12:1-2)	Eph. 4:17-24
The unity of the body of Christ despite its diversity of gifts (12:3-8)	1 Cor. 12; cf. Eph. 4:11-17
The central demand of love (12:9-21)	1 Thess. 4:9-12; 1 Cor. 13
Love as the fulfillment of the law (13:8-10)	Gal. 5:13-15
The need for spiritual wakefulness in light of the Day of the Lord (13:11-14)	1 Thess. 5:1-11
Reconciliation between ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ Christians over issues of food (14:1-15:13)	1 Cor. 8-10

Significantly, the only section of 12:1-15:13 not included in the list above, Paul's demand for submission to government (13:1-7),

has significant parallels with the teaching of Jesus (cf. Mark 12:13-13 and parallels) and with early Christian instruction (cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-14). Other parallels with Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the early church are found throughout these chapters. Many scholars conclude from these parallels that Paul in Rom. 12:1-15:13 is simply rehearsing typical early Christian ethic emphases with little concern for the specific situation of the Romans Christians. Moreover, this emphasis on the gospel's provision for obedience in daily life fits with Paul's overall purpose in Romans, the explanation and defense of 'his' gospel. Against those who might object that the abandonment of the law as a code of conduct (cf. 6:14, 15; 7:1-6) leads to license, Paul argues that the gospel itself provides sufficient ethical guidance for Christians. Through the renewal of the mind that the gospel makes possible, Christians can know and do the will of God (12:2); and by following the dictates of love, they can accomplish all that the law itself demands of them (13:8-10).

"There is some truth in this picture, as the lack of reference to specific issues and the abbreviated, almost proverbial nature of some of the sections (e.g., 12:9-21) indicate. But there is also evidence that Paul is writing with at least one eye on the situation of the church in Rome. Romans 14:1-15:13 is almost certainly addressed to a specific problem in the Roman Christian community; and the lack of a clear parallel in Paul's other letters to his exhortation to obey government authorities (13:1-7) suggests that this passage, too, may have particular relevance to the Roman Christians. As is the case, then, with Romans as a whole, Paul in these chapters adapts his general description of the gospel and its implications for the situation he addresses in Rome." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 745ff]

OVERVIEW OF 12:1–15:13 — "Paul's exhortation falls into two parts: injunctions relating to Christian conduct generally in chaps. 12-13 and guidelines for a specific problem affecting the Roman community in 14:1-15:13. Paul's general exhortations in chaps. 12-13 are framed by texts that bring out the eschatological context in which Christians are to display in their redeemed character. *Paul here presupposes the 'realm transfer' imagery that he has used especially in Rom. 5-8 to describe the Christian's situation: transferred from the old realm of sin into the new realm of salvation, we are people who belong now to 'the day,' but who must still struggle against the forces of darkness since we still await the culmination of our salvation (13:11-14). Our task, then, is to conduct ourselves as those who belong to the day and to resist the pressure to conform to the old realm from which we have been saved (12:2).* The exhortations that fall between these two texts take up various issues of importance for the early Christian community, including, no doubt, the Roman community. The exhortations display various specific points of contact with one another but do not fall into any neat arrangement. Paul begins by encouraging Christians to assess their place within the community and their ministry to it accurately and soberly (12:3-8). There follows a series of short, proverbial, injunctions that loosely develop the theme of Christian love (12:9-21). Paul then enjoins obedience to governmental authorities (13:1-7) before turning back again to love, which he elevates as the virtue that provides for the true and complete fulfillment of all the commands of the law (13:8-10)." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 747]

The Heart of the Matter: Total Transformation (12:1-2)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Rom 12:1-2 KJV)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom 12:1-2 NIV)

I call upon you, therefore, brethren, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies a sacrifice — living, sanctified, acceptable to God — your intelligent service; and be not conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, for your proving what [is] the will of God — the good, and acceptable, and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2 Young's Literal Translation)

PIVOTAL PASSAGE — "Romans 12:1-2 is one of the best-known passages in the NT. Its fame is justified: here Paul succinctly and with vivid imagery summarizes what the Christian response to God's grace in Christ should be. The verses have a pivotal role in Romans. On the one hand, they look back at the arguments of chaps. 1-11. While Paul ultimately has in view all of these chapters, verbal and thematic links point to two texts as particularly significant. The first is **Rom. 1**, whose downward spiral of false and foolish worship (cf. v. 25) and corrupted minds (cf. v. 28) now finds its reversal in the Christians' 'reasonable' worship and renewed mind. The second is **Romans 6**, whose brief mention of the need for Christians to 'present' themselves (vv. 13 and 19) as those 'alive from the dead' (v. 13) is here reiterated and expanded. At the same time, 12:1-2 stand as the heading for all that follows in 12:3-15:13." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 748]

v 1 — THEREFORE — "'Therefore' must be given its full weight: Paul wants to show that the exhortations of 12:1-15-13 are built firmly on the theology of chaps. 1-11.... Most commentators think that Paul refers back to the argument of the entire epistle, but some think the reference is immediately to 11:35-36, to chaps. 5-8, or to chaps. 5-11." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 748]

BESEECH, EXHORT — "The English verb 'exhort' captures well the nuance of the Greek παρακαλέω [parakaleō] in contexts such as this. Its semantic range lies somewhere between 'request' and 'command': *an exhortation come with authority, but the authority of a preacher who is the mediator of God's truth rather than the authority of a superior issuing a command.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 748f]

THROUGH THE MERCIES OF GOD — “‘Through the mercies of God’ underscores the connection between what Paul now asks his readers to do and what he has told them earlier in the letter that God has done for them. All that Paul has written in the letter thus far may be summed up under the heading of the mercy of God in action. Paul just summarized that universal mercy of God (11:30-32) and expressed praise to God for it (11:33-36). Now he calls Christians to respond. *The preposition ‘through’ is better translated here ‘because of’ (TEV) or ‘in view of’ (NIV): it indicates not the means by which Paul exhorts but the basis, or the source, of the exhortation* (‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers, *in view of* God’s mercy – NIV). Ultimately Paul is simply the instrument through whom ‘the mercy of God’ is itself exhorting us. As Paul puts it in 2 Cor. 5:20, he is an ‘ambassador for Christ,’ one through whom God himself exhorts his people. *What Paul calls for in v. 1 — and, by extension, in all of 12:2-15:13 — is no more (and no less!) than the appropriate and expected response to God’s mercy as we have experienced it. Yet this response is no simple ‘tit for tat’ bargain, as if we grudgingly ‘pay God back’ for what he has done for us. For God’s mercy is not a matter of past benefits only, but it continues to exercise its power in and through us. That God’s mercy does not automatically produce the obedience God expects is clear from the imperatives in this passage. But God’s mercy manifested in his Spirit’s work of inward renewal (see v. 2) does impel us toward the obedience that the gospel demands.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 749f]

“Paul here teaches us that men will never worship God with a sincere heart, or be roused to fear and obey Him with sufficient zeal, until they properly understand how much they are indebted to His mercy.... Paul, however, in order to bind us to God not by servile fear but by a voluntary and cheerful love of righteousness, attracts us by the sweetness of that grace in which our salvation consists. At the same time he reproaches us with ingratitude if, having had experience of so kind and liberal a father, we do not in return strive to dedicate ourselves wholly to Him.” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 596]

PRESENT YOUR BODIES AS A SACRIFICE — *“We experience God’s mercy as a power that exerts a total and all-encompassing claim upon us: grace now ‘reigns’ over us (5:21). It is therefore entirely fitting that our response is to be one that is equally total and all-encompassing: the presentation of our entire persons as a sacrifice to God. ... Paul’s use of sacrificial imagery here fits a pattern found throughout the NT. Christians no longer offer literal sacrifices; for Christ has fulfilled and thus brought to an end the OT sacrificial system. But the centrality of sacrifice in ancient religion made it a natural and inevitable vehicle for the early Christians to express their own religious convictions. At the same time, the NT use of cultic language has an important salvation-historical and polemic function, claiming for Christianity the fulfillment of those institutions so central to the OT and to Judaism. Christians offer no bloody sacrifice on an altar; but they offer ‘spiritual sacrifices’ (1 Pet. 2:5), such as the ‘sacrifice of praise to God, which is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name’ (Heb. 13:15). In Rom. 15:16, Paul describes his own missionary work in cultic terms (see also Phil. 2:17; and note Phil. 3:3 and 4:18). In Rom. 12:1, however, the sacrifice we offer is not some specific form of praise or service, but our ‘bodies’ themselves. It is not only what we can give that God demands; he demands the giver. ‘Body’ can, of course, refer to the physical body as such, and the metaphorical associations with sacrifice make it an appropriate choice here. But Paul probably intends to refer to the entire person, with special emphasis on that person’s interaction with the world. Paul is making a special point to emphasize that the sacrifice we are called on to make requires a dedication to the service of God in the harsh and often ambiguous life of this world.”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 750f]

LIVING, HOLY, WELL-PLEASING TO GOD — “Paul qualifies the sacrifice that we offer with our bodies with three adjectives.... All three follow the noun they modify, θυσία [thusia, ‘sacrifice’], as I have brought out, somewhat awkwardly, in my translation: *‘to present your bodies as a sacrifice — living, holy, and well pleasing to God.’* [This emphasis is also picked up in Young’s literal translation: *‘to present your bodies a sacrifice — living, sanctified, acceptable to God’*] But by putting the first adjective, ζῶσαν [zōsan, ‘living’] before the noun, many English translations (e.g., KJV; NIV; NASB; NRSV) give it a prominence that Paul does not.... Each of the three continues the sacrificial metaphor. Many commentators, noting the points of comparison with Rom. 6, giving ‘living’ a theological sense, ‘as those who have been brought to new spiritual life’ (cf. 6:11, 13). This would make good sense if the adjective modified ‘our bodies,’ But it does not; it modifies ‘sacrifice.’ This being the case, *it is more likely to refer to the nature of the sacrifice itself: one that does not die as it is offered but goes on living and therefore continues in its efficacy until the person who is offered dies. ‘Holy’ is a regular description of sacrifices; it implies here that the offering of ourselves to God involves a being ‘set apart’ from the profane and a dedication to the service of the Lord. Such a sacrifice is ‘well pleasing to God.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 751]

OUR ‘LOGIKĒN’ WORSHIP — “The meaning of the word λογικῆν [logikēn] is notoriously difficult to pin down.... Considering [the] background and the context, we arrive at four main possibilities for the connotation of logikos here:

- **‘spiritual,’ in the sense of ‘inner’:** a worship that involves the mind and the heart as opposed to a worship that simply ‘goes through the motions’
- **‘spiritual’ or ‘rational,’ in the sense of ‘appropriate for human beings as rational and spiritual creatures of God’:** a worship that honors God by giving him what he truly wants as opposed to the depraved worship offered by human beings under the power of sin (see Rom. 1:23-25)
- **‘rational,’ in the sense of ‘acceptable to human reason’:** a worship that ‘makes sense,’ as opposed to the ‘irrational’ worship of God through the offering of animals
- **‘reasonable,’ or ‘logical,’ in the sense of ‘fitting the circumstances’:** a worship that is appropriate to those who

have truly understand the truth revealed in Christ

This last connotation, while probably implied, does not go far enough, ignoring too much of the rich background of the term that we have sketched. The third is also a questionable explanation, assuming as it does that the OT sacrificial system, for instance, was, or would have been, viewed by Paul as an irrational form of worship. Choosing between the first two alternatives is difficult and perhaps not necessary. *Certainly Paul does not suggest, as the reference to ‘bodies’ makes clear, that true Christian worship is a matter only of inner attitude. But the inner attitude is basic to acceptable worship, as Paul makes clear in v. 2 by stressing the ‘renewing of your mind.’ And it is just this involvement of the mind, renewed so that it can again understand God aright, that makes this worship the only finally appropriate and true worship. In light of this, and recognizing that each of the usual translations ‘spiritual’ (NIV; NASB; NRSV) and ‘reasonable’ (KJV) misses an important part of the meaning, it would be best to follow the TEV and translate ‘true worship.’* [Moo, Romans, pg 752f]

WORSHIP — “The word ‘worship’ continues the cultic imagery of the verse. Paul probably chooses the term deliberately to create a contrast between the Jewish and Christian form of worship. For Christians, there is no more ‘cult’ or ‘sacrifice’ in any literal sense. While the Jew looked to the Jerusalem temple and its cult as the center of worship, the Christian looks back to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Christians are all priests (1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), forming together the temple where God now reveals himself in a special way. But Paul does not ‘spiritualize’ the cult; rather, he extends the sphere of the cultic into every dimension of life. *Thus the Christian is called to a worship that is not confined to one place or to one time, but which involves all places and all times: Christian worship does not consist of what is practiced at sacred sites, at sacred times, and with sacred acts.... It is the offering of bodily existence in the otherwise profane sphere. Chrysostom comments: ‘And how is the body, it may be said, to become a sacrifice? Let the eye look on no evil thing, and it hath become a sacrifice; let thy tongue speak nothing filthy, and it hath become an offering; let thine hand do no lawless deed, and it hath become a whole burnt offering.’ Regular meetings together of Christians for praise and mutual edification are appropriate and, indeed, commanded in Scripture. And what happens at these meetings is certainly ‘worship.’ But such special times of corporate worship are only one aspect of the continual worship that each of us is to offer the Lord in the sacrifice of our bodies day by day.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 753f]

V 2 — THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VERSES 1 AND 2 — It is difficult to precisely determine the exact relationship this verse has with the preceding. Some take the verses to be parallel but separate exhortations (e.g., “*Verse 1 is directed mainly to Jewish Christians while verse 2 to Gentile Christians;*” or “*Verse 1 focuses on the external / bodily service while verse 2 focuses on the internal / mind*”). Moo considers verse 2 subordinate to verse 1, giving the means by which we can carry out the exhortation of verse 1. “We can present our bodies to the Lord as genuinely holy and acceptable sacrifices only if we ‘do not conform to this world’ but ‘are transformed by the renewing of the mind.’” [Moo, Romans, pg 755]

DO NOT CONFORM TO THIS SINFUL, DYING AGE — “*‘This world,’ literally, ‘this age,’ is the sin-dominated, death-producing realm in which all people, included in Adam’s fall, naturally belong. But it is ‘to deliver us from the present age’ that Christ gave himself (Gal. 1:4); and those who belong to Christ have been transferred from the old realm of sin and death into the new realm of righteousness and life (Rom. 5:17, 21; 6:2-6, 14, 17-18, 22; 7:2-6; 8:2, 9). But this transfer, while decisive and final, does not isolate us from the influence of the old realm. For while belonging to the new realm, we continue to live, as people still in the ‘body,’ in the old realm. Paul’s command that we ‘not conform to this world,’ then, builds on the theology of Rom. 5-8 (and of Rom. 6 especially) and calls on us to resist the pressure to ‘be squeezed into the mold’ of this world and the ‘pattern’ of behavior that typifies it.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 755]

“CONFORM” AND GREEK GRAMMAR — Forgive the technicalities but I believe some enjoy this added information. If we get nothing else out of these comments, it is interesting to see how nuanced Bible translation may become. “Because the verb ‘conform’ is in the present tense, many scholars think that Paul wants his readers to ‘stop conforming’ to this world. But Paul’s generally positive attitude toward the Romans’ spirituality (cf. 15:14) makes this doubtful. Also uncertain is the voice of the verb and its significance. It could be passive — ‘do not be conformed’ (KJV; NASB; NRSV) — or middle, with a reflexive idea — ‘do not conform yourselves’ (TEV) — but, perhaps most likely, whether middle or passive in form, it has a simple (‘intransitive’) active significance — ‘do not conform’ (NIV; REB; NJB).” [Moo, Romans, pg 755] *After reading some of these details and how Bible translators / commentators / Greek scholars differ in opinions, it makes one wonder why there is so much fighting over Bible translations! Are some of these “nuances” really worth causing division?*

RENEWING OF YOUR MIND — “‘Renewing of your mind’ is the means by which this transformation takes place. ‘Mind’ translates a word that Paul uses especially to connote a person’s ‘practical reason,’ or ‘moral consciousness.’ Christians are to adjust their way of thinking about everything in accordance with the ‘newness’ of their life in the Spirit. This ‘re-programming’ of the mind does not take place overnight but is a lifelong process by which our way of thinking is to resemble more and more the way God wants us to think.” [Moo, Romans, pg 756f]

“PROVE, APPROVE” THE WILL OF GOD — “*In Rom. 1:28 Paul has pointed out that people’s rejection of God has resulted in God’s giving them over to a ‘worthless’ mind: one that is ‘unqualified’ in assessing the truth about God and the world he has made. Now, Paul asserts, the purpose of our being transformed by the renewing of the mind is that this state might be reversed; that we might be able to ‘approve’ the will of God. ‘Approving’ the will of God means to understand and agree with what God wants of us with a view to putting it into practice [as one translator puts it, ‘discover in order to carry*

out’].” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 757]

THE GOOD, ACCEPTABLE, PERFECT — That Paul means here by ‘the will of God’ his moral direction is clear from the way Paul describes it: this will is that which is ‘good,’ ‘acceptable [to God],’ and ‘perfect.’ The three adjectives are probably in apposition to ‘the will of God’ rather than descriptions of it. This is suggested in most translations:

“Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (NIV)

“for your proving what [is] the will of God — the good, and acceptable, and perfect” (Young’s Literal translation)

“so that you can approve what is the will of God, that is, what is good, well pleasing, and perfect” (Moo’s translation)

GUIDANCE FROM THE RENEWAL OF OUR MINDS — “Paul’s teaching about the Christian’s source for finding the moral will of God in this verse deserves attention. Paul has made it clear earlier in the letter that the Christian no longer is to look to the OT law as a complete and authoritative guide for conduct (see Rom. 5:20; 6:14, 15; 7:4). What, Paul’s first readers and we ourselves today might ask, is to be put in its place? Paul answers: the renewed mind of the believer. *Paul’s confidence in the mind of the Christian is the result of his understanding of the work of the Spirit, who is actively working to effect the renewal in thinking that Paul here assumes (cf. Rom. 8:4-9). And it is important to note that Paul’s confidence in our ability to determine right and wrong is not unbounded. He knows that the renewal of the mind is a process and that as long as we are in these bodies we need some revealed, objective standards against which to measure our behavior. Hence Paul makes clear that Christians are not without ‘law,’ but are under ‘the law of Christ’ (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:19). This ‘law’ has its heart in Jesus’ own teaching about the will of God, expanded and explicated by his appointed representatives, the apostles. But Paul’s vision, to which he calls us, is of Christians whose minds are so thoroughly renewed that we know from within, almost instinctively, what we are to do to please God in any given situation. We need ‘law’; but it would be to betray Paul’s call to us in these verses to substitute external commands for the continuing work of mind-renewal that is at heart of God’s New Covenant work.*”

[Moo, *Romans*, pg 757f]

Humility and Mutual Service (12:3-8)

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom 12:3-8 KJV)

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Rom 12:3-8 NIV)

For I say, through the grace that was given to me, to every one who is among you, not to think above what it behoveth to think; but to think so as to think wisely, as to each God did deal a measure of faith, for as in one body we have many members, and all the members have not the same office, so we, the many, one body are in Christ, and members each one of one another. And having gifts, different according to the grace that was given to us; whether prophecy — ‘According to the proportion of faith!’ or ministration — ‘In the ministration!’ or he who is teaching — ‘In the teaching!’ or he who is exhorting — ‘In the exhortation!’ he who is sharing — ‘In simplicity!’ he who is leading — ‘In diligence?’ he who is doing kindness — ‘In cheerfulness.’ (Rom 12:3-8 Young’s Literal Translation)

“The main point of this paragraph is the command in v. 3: Christians are ‘to regard themselves with sober judgment.’ The discussion of the diversity of gifts and their uses within the one body of Christ in vv. 4-8 provides the basis for this command. Understanding that Christians belong to one another in one body and have in common the same grace of God (v. 5) and faith (vv. 3, 6) will help to stifle exaggerated ideas about one’s own status or ministry. And recognition of the significant contribution made by each member of the body of Christ will prevent one from thinking too highly (or too lowly) of him- or herself.

What place does this teaching have within Rom. 12? And what prompts Paul to include it here? No specific relationship with vv. 1-2 is evident, but this call to Christian unity is certainly one important manifestation of the transformation in thinking that should

ap-po-si-tion — noun: a placing side by side or next to each other. Used in grammar as a construction in which a noun or noun phrase is placed with another as an explanatory equivalent, both having the same syntactic relation to the other elements in the sentence; for example, *Jones and the painter in The painter Jones was born in Boston.*

characterize the believer. Perhaps Paul is especially concerned that believers not take too individualistic an approach to transformation. Thus he wants us to recognize that *the transformation of character is seen especially in our relationships with one another*. Paul may, then, have included this teaching here simply because it was an important part of his understanding Christian behavior, as the parallels with 1 Cor. 12 and, to a lesser extent, Eph. 4:1-16, suggest.” [Moo, Romans, pg 758f]

V 3 — PAUL USES HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY TO GIVE CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSFORMED LIFE — “By connecting this new paragraph to vv. 1-2 with a ‘for,’ Paul suggests that the exhortations he now gives are concrete instances of the transformed way of life to which the believer is now called. In light of Paul’s reference to his apostolic status in the phrase ‘through the grace given to me,’ ‘I say’ must refer to an authoritative request, parallel to ‘I exhort’ in v. 1. Paul addresses this admonition not to any specific group or kind of person in the Roman community, but to ‘every person’ among them. (Contrast 11:13-32, where Paul scolds the Gentile Christians for arrogance.)” [Moo, Romans, pg 760]

THINK BEYOND ... THINK ... THINK ... SOBER-MINDED — Paul uses a play on words to make his point, all centered on the simple word ‘think’ with two compound forms: ‘think beyond’ and ‘sober thinking.’ *“This verb, which is a favorite of Paul’s ... connotes not so much the act of thinking in itself (the intellectual process) but the direction of one’s thinking, the way in which a person view something. In this verse, it is clear that Paul is using the verb to denote the way in which a person views him- or herself. In contrast to the overestimation of ourselves to which we are so prone, Paul insists that we are to view ourselves in a ‘sober’ manner — in accordance with a true and objective estimate, the product of a ‘renewed mind’ (12:2).”* [Moo, Romans, pg 760]

GOD HAS ‘MEASURED TO EACH ONE A MEASURE OF FAITH’ — For us to have a true estimate of ourselves requires we have an accurate and objective standard by which to measure ourselves. This is given us by God in a ‘measure of faith.’ This could have two interpretations:

- **different “measures” of faith God has assigned each believer** — This is possible since it fits the context of the spiritual gifts which follows (especially the ‘proportion of faith’ in v. 6), and matches the use elsewhere by Paul (in 2 Cor. 10:13). But Moo argues this “strains” the interpretation of faith. “This faith might refer, as it has throughout Romans thus far, to the basic Christian response to the gospel. But it is difficult to think that Paul would consider this faith as given by God in different measures to Christians. Recognizing this, many supporters of this interpretation think that the faith Paul refers to is, or relates especially to, the differing capacities God gives to people for their service of the community. But this interpretation of the word ‘faith’ is questionable; and, in any case, Paul has not prepared us for the use of this word in Romans.... [Taken in such a manner] ‘measure of faith’ becomes then almost equivalent to one’s ‘gift.’” [Moo, Romans, pg 761]

- **our saving faith = the “measure of faith” which is the standard by which Christians are to regard themselves** — “Our faith *is* the measure. On this view God has not given a different measure to each Christian but has given to each Christian the same measure.... *‘Measure of faith,’ then, should be compared in this paragraph not to the many different ‘gifts’ that God distributes to believers, but to the one common grace from which they all stem (v. 6). It is that faith which believers have in common as fellow members of the body of Christ that Paul here highlights as the standard against which each of us is to estimate himself.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 761]

Cranfield agrees with the latter interpretation, “measure of faith” meaning *“a standard (by which to measure, estimate, himself), namely, his faith.”* *“A congregation, the members of which were carefully calculating their relative importance according to the amount of faith which they possess, would have little chance of being a happy one.... Every member of the church, instead of thinking of himself more highly than he ought, is so to think of himself as to think soberly, measuring himself by the standard which God has given him in his faith, that is, by a standard which forces him to concentrate his attention on those things in which he is on precisely the same level as his fellow-Christians rather than on those things in which he may be either superior or inferior to them — for the standard Paul has in mind consists, we take it, not in the relative strength or otherwise of the particular Christian’s faith but in the simple fact of its existence, that is, in the fact of his admission of his dependence on, and commitment to, Jesus Christ. When Christians measure themselves by themselves (or by their fellow-Christians or their pagan neighbors), they display their lack of understanding (cf. 2 Cor. 10:12), and are sure to have too high (or else too low) an opinion of themselves; but, when they measure themselves by the standard which God has given them in their faith, they then — and only then — achieve a sober and true estimate of themselves as, equally with their fellows, both sinners revealed in their true colours by the judgment of the Cross and also the object of God’s undeserved and triumphant mercy in Jesus Christ.”* [Cranfield, Romans, vol 2 pg 614ff]

V 4, 5 — THE METAPHOR OF THE BODY — “In these verses Paul uses the imagery of the human body to bring out both the diversity and the unity of the Christian community. Paul’s comparison of the church to a body is familiar from his other letters. He first uses the comparison in 1 Cor. 12, and it is found in its most developed form in Ephesians and Colossians.... Paul’s use of the metaphor in this text has most in common with 1 Cor. 12:12-31. In both these passages Paul compares individual Christians to ‘members’ of the human body. And it is not only the basic metaphor that 1 Cor. 12 and this text have in common; Paul also applies the metaphor to the same basic issue. As in 1 Cor. 12, where Paul uses the body metaphor to (among other things) rebuke the arrogance of some members of the body who prided themselves on possessing more important gifts (vv. 22-26),

so here in Rom. 12 Paul uses the metaphor to back up his exhortation that believers not think more highly of themselves than they should. Paul sketches the basis for his comparison in v. 4 ('just as'): 'we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function.' Verse 5 then draws the conclusion ('so also'): 'we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.' *Paul, working from the assumption of the unity of the body, argues for the need to recognize a healthy diversity within that one body.... [I]t is the diversity of gifts and the temptation to comparison and false pride that comes with that diversity that is his chief concern.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 762f]

v 6 – 8 —

	<i>variously translated as:</i>	<i>Paul's exhortation</i>
προφητείαν (prophēteian)	prophecy	"if prophecy, according to the analogy of faith"
διακονίαν (diakonian)	service, ministry, ministration	"if service, in service"
διδάσκων (didaskōn)	(he that) teaches	"if one is a teacher, in teaching"
παρακαλῶν (parakalōn)	(he that) exhorts, encouraging	"if one is an exhorter, in exhorting"
μεταδιδούς (metadidous)	(he that) imparts, giveth, sharing, shares with others, contributing to the needs of others	"one who shares with others, in simplicity"
προιστάμενος (proistamenos)	(he that) takes the lead, leadership, ruleth, presides	"one who presides, with diligence"
ἐλεῶν (eleōn)	[he that shows] mercy, doing kindness	"one who shows mercy, in gladness"

PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO USE OUR GIFTS — Paul continues by discussing how Christian's gifts are used to edify the body, echoing his teaching in 1 Cor. 12. *What follows is not merely a list of gifts; Paul is exhorting each believer to use his or her own gift diligently and faithfully to strengthen the body's unity and help it to flourish.* "Believers possess different *charismata* ('gifts'); but each one is the product of God's *charis* ('grace'), which all believers have in common. Again Paul stresses the combination of diversity within unity that makes the church so rich and strong. *But if the gifts are to bring these positive benefits, they must be used rightly — not for self-aggrandizement (cf. v. 3) but in accordance with their true nature. It is this that Paul focuses attention on in the series of exhortations in vv. 6b-8.*

"Two of the gifts Paul mentions in these verses — prophecy and teaching — are also found in other lists of gifts in Paul [prophecy in 1 Cor. 12:7-10, 28 and Eph. 4:11; teaching in 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11]. The gifts in v. 8, however, have no linguistic equivalent in the other lists, although the ministries they denote could well correspond to, or overlap with, some of the gifts listed elsewhere. These texts suggest that Paul, and presumably the early church generally, recognized a small number of well-defined and widely occurring gifts along with an indefinite number of other less-defined gifts, some of which may not have been manifest everywhere and some of which may have overlapped with others." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 764]

DIFFERENT GIFTS SOVEREIGNLY BESTOWED — *"The wide variety of the gifts is grounded in the one grace shown to all; for God's grace, His undeserved love in action, while it is one and the same for all, is free and sovereign, and it bestows different gifts on different persons. The gifts are given for the fulfilment of different functions, and, according to Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 12.31), they differ in value, in importance. But the reception of a greater gift does not carry with it any right to regard oneself, or to be regarded by others, as personally superior to one's fellow-Christian who has only received a lesser gift. While the gifts differ in dignity, the persons of the recipients are — by the measure of faith — of equal dignity, being alike objects of the same judgment and mercy; and the believer, in so far as he is truly a believer, will never forget that his gift is God's free gift, in no way something merited by himself."* [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 619]

PROPHECY: PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S TRUTH — "It may be significant that the first example is that of the gift of prophecy, since it occurs in second position in 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11 (where 'apostles,' not found here, comes first). As 1 Cor. 14 especially reveals, Paul prized this gift very highly. NT prophecy could include predictions of the future (cf. Acts 11:28; 21:10-12), but this was not its essence. More broadly, rather, NT prophecy involved proclaiming to the community information that God had revealed to the prophet for the church's edification (see esp. 1 Cor. 14:3, 24-25, 30). The truth revealed by the prophet did not come with the authority of the truth taught by the apostles, for prophetic speech was to be scrutinized by other prophets (1 Cor. 14:29-32)." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 765]

ACCORDING TO THE PROPORTION OF FAITH — As with the "measure of faith" discussed above, this could have several interpretations. It could be subjective, the amount of faith of each believer which differs in "quantity" from one believer to another. Others (the majority of commentators?) understand faith as the objective body of truth, and that prophets here are to judge all they say against the faith of Christianity. Both Moo and Cranfield understand "faith" in its usual sense: the basic Christian faith and that "the analogia of faith" is essentially the same as the "measure of faith." "[E]ach is to prophesy 'in accordance with the *analogia* of faith.' *Analogia is a term drawn from the world of mathematics and logic, where it denotes the*

correct proportion or right relationship [Josephus says that the porticos on the temple in Jerusalem were in ‘right proportion’ to the temple as a whole]. Prophesying, Paul is saying, is to be in ‘right proportion’ to faith.... [F]aith refers, as usual, to basic Christian faith and that ‘the *analogia* of faith’ is essentially the same as the ‘measure of faith’ in v. 3: the standard implied in one’s own belief in Christ. Prophets, Paul is saying, are to make sure that their utterances are in right proportion to their faith in Christ.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 766] “It may be suggested that the simplest and most satisfactory interpretation — particularly if our explanation of v. 3 is correct — is ‘according to the standard of faith’, ‘in agreement with faith’: ***the prophets are to prophesy in agreement with the standard which they possess in their apprehension of, and response to, the grace of God in Jesus Christ — they are to be careful not to utter (under the impression that they are inspired) anything which is incompatible with their believing in Christ.***” [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 621]

TEACHING — “Paul mentions the gift of ‘teaching’ in two of his other lists of gifts (1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Eph. 4:11), and in both places it is listed immediately after ‘prophecy.’ ... While both prophecy and teaching are speaking gifts that are intended to exhort the church, they are distinguishable. ‘Prophecy,’ as we have seen, has a revelatory basis: the prophet speaks the words that God ‘puts into his mouth.’ Teaching, on the other hand, involves the passing on of the truth of the gospel as it has been preserved in the church. Again, Paul is concerned that those who have the gift of teaching faithfully use that gift.... The sense of the special ministry of teaching becomes especially evident in the Pastoral Epistles; see esp. 2 Tim. 2:2; also 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:10; Tit. 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10. 1 Tim. 3:2 and 5:17 suggest that elders / overseers are especially active in teaching.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 767]

EXHORTER — “The word translated ‘exhorter’ could also be translated ‘comforter,’ or ‘encourager’ (NIV, TEV). But coming immediately after ‘teacher,’ the word probably denotes the activity of urging Christians to live out the truth of the gospel.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 767]

ONE WHO SHARES: DO SO GENEROUSLY, STRAIGHTFORWARDLY AND WITHOUT ULTERIOR MOTIVES — “‘The one who shares’ could denote one who distributes the resources of the church as a whole or one who shares his or her own resources with those less fortunate. A decision between the two is difficult, but perhaps the qualification ‘in simplicity’ fits better the situation of one who is sharing one’s own goods. ‘Simplicity’ translates *haplotēs*, a word that means ‘singleness’ (of purpose; hence ‘simplicity’; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22). However, when used of giving, the meaning of the word shades over into ‘generosity,’ that is, a giving that displays a singleness of heart and intent (2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13). Either meaning fits the present context very well. But it might be better to stick with the basic and well-attested meaning ‘simplicity.’ Paul is encouraging the one who gives to others to do so straightforwardly and without ulterior motives.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 768]

ONE WHO RULES: DO SO WITH EAGERNESS, DILIGENCE — “The word may denote a person who presides over something or a person who comes to the aid of others. Noting that Paul sandwiches this gift between two others that refer to giving, some commentators argue for the latter meaning. But the meaning ‘give aid’ is not well attested for this verb, and Paul does not appear to use the verb with this meaning elsewhere. Probably, then, we should translate ‘one who presides.’ But presides over what? Paul does not say, and this leads a few scholars to think that Paul may intend to denote any person who is in a position of leadership, whether that be in the home or the church. Others try to do justice to the context by arguing that Paul is referring to those persons who presided over the charitable work of the church. But Paul twice elsewhere uses this verb to denote the ‘leaders’ of the local church (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17). It is probably this ministry, usually associated with the elders / overseers (see 1 Tim. 5:17) that Paul has in mind here. Paul exhorts the leaders in the community to pursue their calling with ‘eagerness’ or ‘diligence.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 768f]

SHOW MERCY: DO SO WITH CHEERFULNESS — This is the only place that Paul uses this word of human beings. The word could be connected with the important Jewish pious activity of almsgiving (providing materially for the poor; cf. Matt. 6:3) but should probably be understood in a very general sense: any act of mercy such as visiting the sick, caring for the elderly or disabled, and providing for the poor. “Those who are active in such ministry should be especially careful, Paul advises, to avoid a grudging or downcast attitude, but they should strive to minister with ‘cheerfulness.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 769]

Love and Its Manifestations (12:9-21)

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do

The love unfeigned: abhorring the evil; cleaving to the good; in the love of brethren, to one another kindly affectioned: in the honour going before one another; in the diligence not slothful; in the spirit fervent; the Lord serving; in the hope rejoicing; in the tribulation enduring; in the prayer persevering; to the necessities of the saints communicating; the hospitality pursuing. Bless those persecuting you; bless, and curse not; to rejoice with the rejoicing, and to weep with the weeping, of the same mind one

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:9-21 KJV)

not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:9-21 NIV)

toward another, not minding the high things, but with the lowly going along; become not wise in your own conceit; giving back to no one evil for evil; providing right things before all men. If possible — so far as in you — with all men being in peace; not avenging yourselves, beloved, but give place to the wrath, for it hath been written, 'Vengeance [is] Mine, I will recompense again, saith the Lord;' if, then, thine enemy doth hunger, feed him; if he doth thirst, give him drink; for this doing, coals of fire thou shalt heap upon his head; Be not overcome by the evil, but overcome, in the good, the evil. (Rom 12:9-21 Young's Literal Translation)

“Four features of this passage are particularly noteworthy:

- **Its style.** Paul fires off a volley of short, sharp injunctions with little elaboration....
- **Its loose structure.** There are few conjunctions or particles to indicate the flow of thought, and it is often not clear on what principle (if any) Paul has organized his various admonitions....
- **The theme of the passage.** Many commentators content themselves, therefore, with a very general heading: for example, ‘Maxims to Guide the Christian Life.’
- Finally, **the text reflects several diverse texts and traditions:** the OT (vv. 16c, 19c, 20), the teaching of Jesus (vv. 14, 17, 18, and 21, especially), early Christian instructions to new converts, and various Jewish and even Greek ethical and wisdom sayings.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 771f]

v 9 — “SINCERE LOVE” — “The opening words are not explicitly linked to anything in the previous context, and there is no verb in the Greek. *Paul says, literally, ‘sincere love.’* These words are the heading for what follows, as Paul proceeds in a series of participial clauses to explain just what sincere love really is. Yet the addition of an imperative verb in all major English translations — for example, NRSV: ‘let love be genuine’ — is not off the mark. As in the similar phrases in vv. 6b-8, Paul’s purpose is to exhort, not simply to describe. *Love for others, singled out by our Lord himself as the essence of the OT law (Mark 12:28-34 and parallels) and the central demand of the New Covenant (John 13:31-35), quickly became enshrined as the foundational and characteristic ethical norm of Christianity. The love of Christians for others was grounded in, and enabled by, the love of God expressed in the gift of his Son (see esp. John 13:34 and 1 John 4:9-11). Paul has already in Romans reminded us of this love (see 5:5-8). The early Christians chose a relatively rare term to express the distinctive nature of the love that was to be the foundation of all their relationships: agapē. This is the term Paul uses here, the definite article (in the Greek) signifying that he is speaking about a well-known virtue. In fact, so basic does Paul consider love that he does not even exhort us here to love but to make sure that the love he presumes we already have is ‘genuine.’ In urging that our love be genuine, Paul is warning about making our love a mere pretense, an outward display or emotion that does not conform to the nature of the God who is love and who has loved us. ...* The noun ἀγάπη [agapē] is rare in nonbiblical Greek before the 2d-3d centuries A.D. It occurs 20 times in the LXX, 11 times with reference to love between humans and especially for love between men and women, but also with reference to God’s love and our love for wisdom. The verb ἀγαπάω [agapaō], on the other hand, was much more common in NT times (over 250 occurrences in the LXX), denoting all kinds of relationships. Claims, therefore, that the word ἀγάπη [agapē] is distinctly Christian, or that it denotes a distinctive Christian virtue, are not accurate; it is better to say that the early Christians chose the word (perhaps because of unwanted nuances in other words for ‘love’ in Greek) to convey their particular understanding of the nature of true love.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 774f]

LOVE “WITHOUT HYPOCRISY” — “The Greek word ἀνυπόκριτος [anupokritos] literally means ‘without hypocrisy,’ e.g., not playing the part of an actor on the stage. Paul’s indebtedness to general early Christian teaching is evident here again since the same adjective is applied to love in 2 Cor. 6:6, 1 Tim. 1:5, and 1 Pet. 1:22 (it also occurs in 2 Tim. 1:5, describing faith, and in Jas. 3:17, describing ‘wisdom from above’).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 775]

“The point of [‘without hypocrisy’] is not that love is to be frank and to tell the truth even though it may be unpalatable, but that it is to be the real thing, genuine and not counterfeit. The fact that Paul twice uses this word with reference to [love] (here and in 2 Cor. 6.6) suggests that he was aware of the danger in this connexion of deceit and — even more serious — of self-deceit, a danger of which the modern champions of ‘Not law but love’ seem often to be unaware.... Cf. Calvin: ‘It is difficult to express how ingenious almost all men are in counterfeiting a love which they do not really possess. They deceive not only

others, but also themselves, while they persuade themselves that they have a true love for those whom they not only treat with neglect, but also in fact reject.' The recognition that the state of the man who believes that he is loving, when he is not, is even worse than that of the man who pretends to be loving, knowing that he is not, is important." [Cranfield, *Romans*, vol 2 pg 631]

TWO STRONG EXHORTATIONS CONNECTED WITH "SINCERE LOVE" — "In the second part of v. 9, we find two more exhortations, each put in the form of a participial clause. Why Paul chooses to express these admonitions with participles continues to be debated, but it may be that he does so in order to indicate the close relationship of the exhortations with the original demand for 'genuine love.' *'Genuine love,' Paul is saying, will 'abhor what is evil' and 'cling to what is good.'* Both verbs are very strong: 'abhor' could also be translated 'hate exceedingly,' and 'cling' can be used to refer to the intimate union that is to characterize the marriage relationship. *'Genuine' Christian love, Paul is suggesting, is not a directionless emotion or something that can be only felt and not expressed. Love is not genuine when it leads a person to do something evil or to avoid doing what is right — as defined by God in his Word. Genuine love, 'the real thing,' will lead the Christian to that 'good' which is the result of the transformed heart and mind (v. 2).*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 776]

V 10 — BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER IN BROTHERLY LOVE — "After introducing all the exhortations in vv. 9-21 with a call for sincere love, Paul now narrows his focus, admonishing Christians to be 'devoted' (*philostorgoi*) to one another in 'brotherly love' (*philadelphia*). Both key terms in this exhortations, which share the *philo-* stem, convey the sense of family relationships. *Paul here reflects the early Christian understanding of the church as an extended family, whose members, bound together in intimate fellowship, should exhibit toward one another a heartfelt and consistent concern.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 777]

HONOR ONE ANOTHER ABOVE YOURSELVES — "The general meaning of the second exhortation in this verse is clear enough: *Christians are to be anxious to recognize and give credit to other believers.... Paul is calling on Christians to outdo each other in bestowing honor on one another; for example, to recognize and praise one another's accomplishments and to defer to one another.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 777f]

V 11 — DO NOT BECOME LAZY IN REGARDS TO OUR LOVE AND ESTEEM FOR EACH OTHER — The first exhortation could relate to the second part of the verse. Moo argues otherwise. "But, as we have seen, the style of this exhortation has more in common with the exhortations in v. 10. Probably, then, we should relate Paul's warning about laziness in zeal to his call for us to love and esteem one another in v. 10. *Paul does not specify the object of the unflagging zeal that he calls for, but we should perhaps think of the 'rational worship' to which we are called. The temptation to 'lose steam' in our lifelong responsibility to reverence God in every aspect of our lives, to become lazy and complacent in our pursuit of what is 'good, well pleasing to God, and perfect,' is a natural one — but must be strenuously resisted.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 778]

SERVE THE LORD THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT — "Paul might here be urging Christians to maintain a strong and emotional commitment to the Lord in their own spirits [Godet; Murray]. But the spirit to which Paul refers is more likely, in light of the parallel reference to the Lord in v. 11c, the Holy Spirit [Calvin; Cranfield; Dunn]. On this view, *Paul is exhorting us to allow the Holy Spirit to 'set us on fire': to open ourselves to the Spirit as he seeks to excite us about the 'rational service' to which the Lord has called us.*

"The exhortations to 'serve the Lord' might at first sight seem like an anticlimax, too obvious and too broad to have any real application. But a closer look at the context suggests otherwise. The encouragement to be 'set on fire by the Spirit' is, as church history and current experience amply attest, open to abuse. Christians have often been so carried away by enthusiasm for spiritual things that they have left behind those objective standards of Christian living that the Scriptures set forth. This, it seems is Paul's concern; and he seeks to cut off any such abuse by reminding us that being set on fire by the Spirit must lead to, and be directed by, our service of the Lord. It is not the 'enthusiasm' of self-centered display (such as characterized the Corinthians) but the enthusiasm of humble service of the Master who bought us that the Spirit creates within us." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 778f]

V 12 — THE NATURAL PARTNERS OF HOPE, ENDURANCE AND PRAYER — "The three admonitions in this verse are closely related in both style and content. For hope, endurance, and prayer are natural partners. Even as we 'rejoice in hope,' gaining confidence from God's promise that we will share the glory of God, we recognize the 'down side': the path to the culmination of hope is strewn with tribulations. Paul, ever the realist, knows this; and so here, as he does elsewhere, he quickly moves from hope to the need for endurance. At the same time, we realize that our ability to continue to rejoice and to 'bear up under' our tribulations is dependent on the degree to which we heed Paul's challenge to 'persist in prayer.' (Note that Paul moves from hope to endurance to prayer also in Rom. 8:24-27)." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 779]

V 13 — FELLOWSHIP (NOT WITH CHRISTIANS BUT) WITH THE "NEEDS" OF CHRISTIANS — "Paul concludes his first series of exhortations with a call for Christians to put into practice the love and concern for one another that he has mentioned earlier (v. 10). In the first exhortation Paul uses the verbal form of the very familiar NT *koinōnia*, 'fellowship.' *Paul, however, is not urging us to have fellowship with the saints, but to have fellowship with, to participate in, the 'needs' of the saints. These 'needs' are material ones: food, clothing, and shelter. Therefore, the fellowship we are called to here is the sharing of our material goods with Christians who are less well-off.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 779f]

GO OUT OF OUR WAY TO PROVIDE HOSPITALITY — “Another dimension of Christian love is the practice of hospitality. The need to give shelter and food to visitors was great in the NT world, there being few hotels or motels. And the need among Christians was exacerbated by the many traveling missionaries and other Christian workers. Hence the NT frequently urges Christians to offer hospitality to others (see 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9). *But Paul does more than that here; he urges us to ‘pursue’ it — to go out of our way to welcome and provide for travelers.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 780]

V 14 — CALL ON GOD TO BESTOW FAVOR ON THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU — “A break in the passage occurs here, marked by a change in both style and topic (from relations among Christians in vv. 10-13 to relations of Christians with non-Christians in v. 14). There is a verbal connection with v. 13: ‘pursue [hospitality]’ and ‘persecutors’ translate the same Greek verb. More important, however, is the thematic connection with v. 9: *blessing persecutors is one manifestation of that ‘sincere love’ which shuns evil and clings to the good. And it is certainly one of the most striking exhibitions of that transformed way of thinking which is to characterize believers (v. 2). In the Scriptures, ‘blessing’ is typically associated with God; he ‘possesses and dispenses all blessings.’ To ‘bless’ one’s persecutors, therefore, is to call on God to bestow his favor upon them. Its opposite is, of course, cursing — asking God to bring disaster and / or spiritual ruin on a person. By prohibiting cursing as well as enjoining blessing, Paul stresses the sincerity and single-mindedness of the loving attitude we are to have toward our persecutors.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 780]

V 15 — GENUINE LOVE IDENTIFIES WITH OTHERS’ JOYS AND SORROWS — Verse 15 changes the style again as well as returning to relations with fellow Christians in vv. 15-16. “Indeed, identifying with others in both their joys and their sorrows is an appropriate way for Christians to demonstrate the sincerity of their love to non-Christians as well as Christians. But Paul’s exhortation here seems to pick up his assertion about the mutual and intimate relations of the members of the body of Christ in 1 Cor. 12:26: ‘And if one member suffers, all the members suffer together.’ *Love that is genuine will not respond to a fellow believer’s joy with envy or bitterness, but will enter wholeheartedly into that same joy. Similarly, love that is genuine will bring us to identify so intimately with our brothers and sisters in Christ that their sorrows will become ours.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 782]

V 16 — “The transition from v. 15 to v. 16 is a natural one: the mutual sympathy that Paul calls for in v. 15 is possible only if Christians share a common mind-set. The ‘one another’ language of v. 15 picks up the same theme from v. 10, while the use of the root *phron-* (‘think’) in all three admonitions in this verse reminds us of Paul’s demand for the right kind of ‘thinking’ among Christians in v. 3. These parallels make it clear that v. 16 is about the relations of Christians with one another (so Calvin; Godet; Dunn).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 782]

HAVE THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHERS THAT SPRING FROM A RENEWED MIND — “Paul’s first exhortation uses language that he uses elsewhere to denote unity of thinking among Christians (cf. 15:5; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2; 4:2). However, his wording here suggests not so much a plea for Christians to ‘think the same thing among one another,’ but to ‘think the same thing toward one another.’ Paul’s point might then be that Christians should display the same attitude toward all other people, whatever their social, ethnic, or economic status. However, while Paul might emphasize here the outward display of our ‘thinking,’ it does not force us to adopt a meaning for the basic phrase that is different from its sense in its other occurrences in Paul. He is calling us to a common mind-set. Such a common mind-set does not mean that we must all think in just the same way or that we must think exactly the same thing about every issue, but that we should adopt an attitude toward everything that touches our lives that springs from the renewed mind of the new realm to which we belong by God’s grace (see v. 2).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 782f]

PRIDE: THE BARRIER TO UNITY — “As Paul recognizes elsewhere (see esp. Phil. 2:2-4), the biggest barrier to unity is pride. Therefore, Paul next warns us about ‘thinking exalted things,’ that is, ‘thinking too highly of ourselves.’ Our overly exalted opinion of ourselves, leading us to think that we are always right and others wrong and that our opinions matter more than others, often prevents the church from exhibiting the unity to which God calls her.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 783]

“BUT WITH THE LOWLY BE CARRIED AWAY WITH” — “The positive antidote to such pride, Paul says, is association with ‘the lowly.’ It is not certain what Paul means by this positive exhortation. The adjective ‘lowly’ could be neuter, in which case Paul might be urging Christians, in contrast to being haughty, to devote themselves to humble tasks (e.g., ‘accept humble duties,’ TEV; Some think that Paul might be directing this exhortation especially to ‘enthusiasts,’ who were interested only in the more spectacular and glamorous aspects of Christian experience and service). But ‘lowly’ could also refer to persons, in which case Paul would be exhorting believers to associate with ‘lowly people,’ that is, the outcasts, the poor, and the needy (so Godet, Cranfield; [The Greek word used here, *tapeinos*], does not refer to an inner attitude of ‘humility’ but to external status of circumstances. The OT has much to say about God’s special concern for such people, a concern that we, children of the Father, are to exhibit. See, e.g., Judg. 6:15; Ps. 10:18; 34:18; Isa. 14:32; 49:13; Zeph. 2:13; cf. Jas. 4:6). A decision between these two options is impossible to make; both fit the context well and both are paralleled in the NT. But in either case Paul emphasizes the degree of our involvement with ‘the lowly’ by using a verb that could be translated ‘be carried away with,’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 783f]

DO NOT USE OURSELVES AS THE STANDARD FOR WISDOM — “The word *phronimos* [‘wise’] in the final exhortation in the verse continues the rhetorically striking use of the root *phron-* [‘think’]. The person who is *phronimos* is characterized by ‘thinking’ and is therefore ‘wise.’ *The quality denoted by the word is therefore a positive one. It becomes negative only when*

the standard by which we judge our wisdom is our own. It is this subjectivity and arrogance that Paul warns us about here: 'do not be wise in your own eyes.'" [Moo, Romans, pg 784]

v 17 — DO NOT RETALIATE AGAINST OUR PERSECUTORS — “After two verses that exhort Christians about their relations to one another, Paul concludes his delineation of the manifestations of ‘genuine love’ (v. 9a) with admonitions about the attitude Christians are to adopt toward non-Christians (vv. 17-21). As in v. 14, where Paul first touched on this topic, *his focus is on the way Christians are to respond to non-Christians who persecute and in other ways ‘do evil’ to us. Thus the prohibition of retaliation in v. 17a expands on Paul’s warning that we are not to curse our persecutors in v. 14b. Here again, Paul’s dependence on Jesus’ teaching is clear. For not only did Jesus exhort us to love and pray for our enemies; in the same context he also warns us not to exact ‘eye for eye, and tooth for tooth’ (Matt. 5:38).*” [Moo, Romans, pg 784]

PLAN TO DO GOOD — “In a pattern similar to that in vv. 14 and 16, the negative prohibition ‘Do not repay evil for evil’ is paired with a positive injunction: ‘Take thought for what is good in the sight of all people.’ *The verb ‘take thought’ is probably emphatic: ‘Doing good to all is something planned and not just willed.*’ The translation ‘in the sight of all people’ is disputed; many commentators, doubting that Paul would allow non-Christians to set the standard for what Christians do, prefer to translate ‘Take thought to do good things to all persons.’ But there is no clear parallel for this interpretation of the Greek word involved. Cranfield suggests a different alternative: that Paul is urging us to display ‘in the sight of all people’ the good things that we do. Non-Christians do not set the standard for ‘the good’; they are the audience. But this, also, is an unusual way to translate the Greek. We should, then, take Paul’s words at face value: *he wants us to commend ourselves before non-Christians by seeking to do those ‘good things’ that non-Christians approve and recognize. There is, of course, an unstated limitation to this command, one that resides in the word ‘good’ itself. For Paul would certainly not want us to have forgotten that the ‘good’ that he speaks of throughout these verses is defined in terms of the will of God (v. 2).*” [Moo, Romans, pg 785]

v 18 — “The close relation between this exhortation — ‘If possible, to the extent that it depends on you, be at peace with all people’ — and the last one in v. 17 is obvious: both urge Christians to pursue behavior that will have a positive impact on ‘all people.’ *Jesus himself commended ‘peacemakers’ (Matt. 5:9) and urged his followers to ‘be at peace with one another’ (Mark 9:50, where ‘one another’ probably refers to people generally rather than to the disciples only). Although much less clear than the allusions in vv. 14, 17, and 21, this may, then, be another allusion to the teaching of Jesus.... [Paul’s] encouragement to Christians to bless persecutors (v. 14) and not repay evil for evil (v. 17a) assumes that Christians are in conflict with the world around them. To a considerable extent, Paul recognizes, such conflict is inevitable: as the world hated Jesus, so it hates his followers (John 16:33). Paul acknowledges that much such conflict is unavoidable by adding to his exhortation to ‘be at peace’ the double qualification ‘if possible, to the extent that it depends on you.’ But Paul does not want Christians to use the inevitability of tension with the world as an excuse for behavior that needlessly exacerbates that conflict or for a resignation that leads us not even to bother to seek to maintain a positive witness.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 785f]

v 19 — FORGIVE OTHERS AS WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN — “After this excursus in which Paul exhorts Christians to relate positively to the world (vv. 17b-18), Paul returns to admonish us about the way we are to react to the pressure that the world brings upon us. *‘Do not avenge yourselves’ moves one step beyond ‘do not repay evil for evil’ (v. 17a). Confronted with someone who is wronging us, we might be tempted to harm our adversary by doing a similar wrong to him. But the temptation becomes more subtle when we seek to ‘baptize’ such a response by viewing it as a means by which to execute a just and deserved judgment on our oppressor. Perhaps because he understands the strength of this temptation, Paul remind us that we are ‘beloved’: people who have quite undeservedly experienced the love of God.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 786]

GIVE WAY TO “THE” WRATH — “Rather than taking justice into our hands, we are to ‘give place to wrath.’ Paul does not explicitly say whose wrath this is, and it is possible to think that he refers to the wrath of the adversary, or our own wrath, or the wrath executed by governmental authorities (see 13:4). But Paul certainly intends to refer to the wrath of God, as the definite ‘the wrath’ and the OT quotation that follows show. *It is not our job to execute justice on evil people; that is God’s prerogative, and he will visit his wrath on such people when he deems it right to do so. The prohibition of vengeance is found in both the OT and Judaism, but it tends to be confined to relations with co-religionists. Paul’s prohibition of vengeance even upon enemies is an extension of the idea that reflects Jesus’ revolutionary ethic.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 786f]

GOD’S PROPHETIC ANNOUNCEMENT: “I WILL AVENGE” — “Paul buttresses his exhortation to defer to God in matters of retributive justice with an OT quotation highlighting God’s determination to exact vengeance. The words are from Deut. 32:35, but the theme is quite widespread., and it might be that Paul has in view some of the other texts enunciating this theme as well (see, e.g., Jer. 5:9; 23:2; Hos. 4:9; Joel 3:21; Nah. 1:2). This may explain the cumbersome addition at the end of the quotation, ‘says the Lord,’ since these words appear in some of the prophetic announcements of God’s vengeance.” [Moo, Romans, pg 787]

v 20 — “Paul continues quoting the OT: the exhortation in v. 20 is a straightforward rendering of Prov. 25:21-22a. Paul was probably drawn to this text for several reasons. First, the reference to the ‘enemy’ may have attracted his attention since the teaching of Jesus on which he depends throughout these verses exhort us to ‘love our enemies’ (Matt. 5:43 = Luke 6:27). Second, feeding and giving water to our enemy is similar to the action Jesus recommends as the expression of this love: turning the other

cheek; giving our shirts to those who ask for our coats; giving to those who beg from us (cf. Luke 6:29-30). And, third, such a response to our enemies is a practical way of putting into action our ‘blessing’ of those who persecute us (v. 14) and a specific form of ‘doing good in the sight of all people’ (v. 17b).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 787f]

“HEAPING COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD” — This is one illustration I have never understood, but I am comforted by the fact that it appears no commentator has a better grasp of its meaning than I! But while we do not know the specific meaning, its general implication is understood and is good counsel ... although it may be twisted by some:

One writer once heard of a woman involved in bitter quarrels with her husband. Seeking counsel, she was asked, “*Have you tried heaping coals of fire on his head?*” She replied, “*No, but I tried a skillet of hot grease!*”

There are a variety of ways this is understood, some of which are quite imaginative:

- **“warm the enemy’s heart and lead him to repentance”** — One bible study source on the web offered this explanation: “By putting coals of fire on your enemy’s head you may warm him up and change his mind and heart. Coals of fire are carried from one house to another in the Bible land villages. One person gets up early in the morning and builds a fire. A boy then takes the burning coals on a piece of pottery, balanced on top of his head to all the houses in the village. This is really a pleasant task for the boy because when the morning is cold, he is warmed up by the coals as he goes from house to house.” [www.redbay.com/ekkllesia/gladcoal.htm; Feb 18, 2005]
- **“as burning coals melt metal, so it will melt our enemies’ hearts”** — “Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head; that is, ‘Thou shalt either,’ 1. ‘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, 1 Sam. 24:16; 26:21) — ‘thou wilt win a friend by it, and if thy kindness have not that effect then,’ 2. ‘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 verse, 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.” [Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, vol 6 pg 465]
- **“something will happen, either for good or evil”** — Calvin’s comments: “As we are not willing to lose our toil and labor, he shows what fruit will follow, when we treat our enemies with acts of kindness. But some by coals understand the destruction which returns on the head of our enemy, when we show kindness to one unworthy, and deal with him otherwise than he deserves; for in this manner his guilt is doubled. Others prefer to take this view, that when he sees himself so kindly treated, his mind is allured to love us in return. I take a simpler view, that his mind shall be turned to one side or another; for doubtless our enemy shall either be softened by our benefits, or if he be so savage that nothing can tame him, he shall yet be burnt and tormented by the testimony of his own conscience, on finding himself overwhelmed with our kindness.” [*Calvin’s Commentaries: Romans*; vol. 19, pg 476]
- **“coals of fire” = something intolerable which produces strong effects** — From the editor’s notes at the bottom of Calvin’s comments on this passage: “It seems to be a sort of proverbial saying, signifying something intolerable, which cannot be borne without producing strong effects: such is represented to be kindness to any enemy, to feed him when hungry and to give him drink when thirsty, has commonly such a power over him that he cannot resist its influence, no more than he can withstand the scorching heat of burning coals. Of course the natural tendency of such a conduct is all that is intended, and not that it invariably produces such an effect; for in Scripture things are often stated in this way; but human nature is such a strange thing, that it often resists what is right, just, and reasonable, and reverses, as it were, the very nature of things.” [*Calvin’s Commentaries: Romans*; vol. 19 pg 476]
- **God’s awesome presence, esp. to his judgment** — “The Greek for the phrase ‘coals of fire’ occurs only two other times in the LXX, neither of which is metaphorical (Isa. 47:14; Prov. 6:28). However, when used metaphorically in the OT, the words ‘coal’ and ‘fire’ usually refer to God’s awesome presence, and especially to his judgment. Paul may then view our giving of food and water to the enemy to be means by which — if such actions do not lead to repentance — the enemy’s guilt before the Lord will be increased, leading in turn to an increase in the severity of his or her judgment. Paul, of course, would not mean, on this view, that we are to act kindly toward our enemy with the *purpose* of making his or her judgment more severe. Paul would simply be noting that our good actions can have this result.... This view was widespread in the early church (cf., e.g., Chrysostom), but has not been popular recently.... The major difficulty with the view is that it does not fit well in the context. In vv. 17-21, Paul has been urging that Christians avoid a spirit of retaliation; yet, however qualified, this first interpretation comes close to encouraging just such an attitude. Moreover, the teaching of Jesus from which Paul draws so much of what he says in these verses contain no such idea.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 788]

Obviously the exact meaning of this proverb has been lost for centuries since even the church fathers had difficulties explaining Paul’s meaning. Moo therefore gives what is generally most accepted among commentators: **“Most modern commentators have ... concluded that Paul views ‘coals of fire’ as a metaphor for ‘the burning pangs of shame’ (some scholars have traced the metaphor to an Egyptian practice of carrying a tray of burning coals on one’s head as a sign of contrition). Acting kindly**

*toward our enemies is a means of leading them to be ashamed of their conduct toward us and, perhaps, to repent and turn to the Lord whose love we embody. While the linguistic basis for this view is not all that one would wish, it is probably the best alternative. Paul is giving us a positive motivation for acts of kindness toward our enemies. He does not want the prohibition of vengeance (v. 19) to produce in us a ‘do-nothing’ attitude toward our persecutors. However, Paul is not claiming that acts of kindness toward our enemies will infallibly bring repentance; whatever degree of shame our acts might produce, they may be quickly pushed aside and produce even greater hostility toward both us and the Lord. ... This view was also popular in the early church, being held by, e.g., Origen and Augustine. Almost all modern commentators hold some form of this view. Calvin, however, claims that the image connotes shame, with the result of that shame — greater degree of guilt or repentance — not being specified. Cranfield holds a somewhat similar view. Some commentators have cited the targum in favor of a positive interpretation, since it adds to the verse in Proverbs the words ‘and will make him your friend.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 788f]*

v 21 — “Paul rounds off his series of admonitions about the Christian’s response to hostility with a final, general summons: ‘Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with the good.’ The double use of the word ‘evil’ links this verse with v. 17a in a chiasmic arrangement. *Evil can overcome us when we allow the pressure put on us by a hostile world to force us into attitudes and actions that are out of keeping with the transformed character of the new realm. Paul urges us to resist such temptation. But, more than that, sounding a note typical both of this paragraph and of the teaching of Jesus that it reflects, he urges us to take a positive step as well: to work constantly at triumphing over the evil others do to us by doing good. By responding to evil with ‘the good’ rather than with evil, we gain a victory over that evil. Not only have we not allowed it to corrupt our own moral integrity, but we have displayed the character of Christ before a watching and skeptical world.* Here, Paul suggests at the end of this important series of exhortations, is a critical example of that ‘good’ which Paul exhorts us to display in this section of the letter (see 12:2).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 789f]