

# Practicing Genuine Love

Romans 12:9-21  
SS Lesson for 08/19/2018

**Devotional Scripture:** Matthew 5:43-48

## OUTLINE

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OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

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*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

*Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

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Love by being approved by God and by seeking to please Him (1 Thess 2:3-6)

Love with a pure heart and in sincerity (1 Tim 1:5)

Love by faith accompanied by action (James 2:15-17)

Love not with words, but in truth and with action (1 John 3:18-20)

Love without deceit (1 Peter 2:1)

True love has no sin or deceit associated with it (Ps 32:2)

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## Introduction

### Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The admonishes and shows us a clear picture of how we, as Christians, should always be **Practicing Genuine Love**. The **study's aim** is to accept God's Word as the only reliable source of instruction in living the Christian life. The **study's application** is to set our minds on living according to God's Word.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Key Verse: Rom 12:9

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

**12:1-2.** The start of this practical section is indicated by Paul's exhortation **I urge** (the first word of v. 1 in the Gr. text). **Therefore** also shows a transition (cf. "therefore" in 3:20; 5:1; 8:1). The basis of Paul's exhortation is **God's mercy** (*oiktirmōn*, rendered "compassion" in 2 Cor. 1:3; Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12, and "mercy" in Heb. 10:28). God's compassion has been described in detail in the first 11 chapters of Romans. The content of Paul's urging is **to offer your bodies** (cf. Rom. 6:13) **as living sacrifices**. A Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In the KJV "offer" is translated "present" (Rom. 12:1) and "yield" (6:13, 16, 19). The word "bodies," mindful of the Old Testament sacrifices, represents the totality of one's life and activities, of which his body is the vehicle of expression. In contrast with Old Testament sacrifices this is a "living" sacrifice. Such an offering is **holy** (set apart) **and pleasing** (cf. "pleasing" in 12:2) **to God**. Furthermore, it is **spiritual** (*logikēn*; cf. 1 Peter 2:2) **worship** (*latreian*).

*Latreian* refers to any ministry performed for God, such as that of the priests and the Levites. Christians are believer-priests, identified with the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 7:23-28; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6). A believer's offering of his total life as a sacrifice to God is therefore sacred service. In the light of Paul's closely reasoned and finely argued exposition of the mercies of God (Rom. 1-11), such an offering is obviously a desirable response for believers. Paul then stated general implications of a believer's offering his life to God as a sacrifice. Such an offering represents a complete change in lifestyle, involving both a negative and a positive aspect. First, Paul commanded, **Do not conform** (lit., "Do not be conformed"; this Gr. word occurs elsewhere in the NT only in 1 Peter 1:14) **any longer to the pattern of this world** (*aiōni*, "Age"). Living according to the lifestyle of "the present evil Age" (Gal. 1:4; cf. Eph. 1:21) must now be put aside. Then Paul commanded, **But be transformed** (pres. passive imper., "keep on being transformed") **by the renewing of your mind**. The Greek verb translated "transformed" (*metamorphousthe*) is seen in the English word "metamorphosis," a total change from inside out (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). The key to this change is the "mind" (*noos*), the control center of one's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions (cf. Eph. 4:22-23). As one's mind keeps on being made new by the spiritual input of God's Word, prayer, and Christian fellowship, his lifestyle keeps on being transformed. Paul added, **Then you will be able to test and approve** (*dokimazein*, "prove by testing" [1 Peter 1:7, "proved genuine"], i.e., ascertain) **what God's will is—His good, pleasing** (cf. Rom. 12:1), **and perfect will**. These three qualities are not attributes of God's will as the NIV and some other translations imply. Rather, Paul said that God's will itself is what is good, well-pleasing (to Him), and perfect. "Good," for example, is not an adjective (God's "good" will) but a noun (God's will is what is good—good, i.e., for each believer). As a Christian is transformed in his mind and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God's will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God's will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.

**12:3-5.** A believer's consecration to God and his transformed lifestyle is demonstrated in his exercising his spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. As an apostle of Christ (**by the grace given me**; cf. 1:5; 15:15-16) he warned his readers individually (**every one of you**), **Do not think of yourself more highly** (*hyperphronein*, "think higher") **than you ought**. An inflated view of oneself is out of place in the Christian life. Then Paul encouraged them, **But rather think** (*phronein*) **of yourself with sober judgment** (*sōphronein*, "sound thinking"), **in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you**. God has given each believer some faith by which to serve Him. By his involved word play on various forms of the verb *phroneō*, "to think," Paul emphasized that human pride is wrong (cf. 3:27; 11:18, 20) partly because all natural abilities and spiritual gifts are from God. As a result every Christian should have a proper sense of humility and an awareness of his need to be involved with other members of Christ's body. As Paul explained, a parallelism exists between a believer's physical **body** which has parts with differing functions and the community of believers **in Christ** as a spiritual **body** (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:11-12, 15-16). The point is that **each member** functions to serve the body, not the body to serve the members. The diversity of the **many** accompanies the unity of the body. Therefore it is important to think soundly about oneself and to evaluate properly God's gifts and their uses.

**12:6-8.** Paul then applied what he had just said (vv. 3-5) to the exercise of God-given abilities for spiritual service (vv. 6-8). He built on the principle, **We have different gifts** (cf. v. 4, "not all have the same function"; cf. 1 Cor. 12:4). The grace-gifts (*charismata*) are **according to God's grace** (*charis*). He listed seven gifts, none of which—with the possible exception of **prophesying**—is a sign gift. The Greek text is much more abrupt than any English translation; **let him** is supplied for smoother English. One's "prophesying" is to be done **in proportion to his faith**; a better translation would be "in agreement to the (not 'his') faith." That is, prophesying—communicating God's message, to strengthen, encourage, and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3)—is to be in right relationship to the body of truth already revealed (cf. "faith" as doctrine in Gal. 1:23; Jude 3, 20). The other six gifts mentioned here are **servicing... teaching... encouraging... contributing... leadership**, and **showing mercy**. Contributing to people's **needs** is to be done with generosity (*en haplotēti*), not skimpily (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13). Managing, leading, or administering (*proistamenos*, lit., "standing before"; cf. *proistamenous*, "who are over," 1 Thes. 5:12) is to be done **diligently** (*en spoudē*, "in eagerness, earnestness"), not lazily or halfheartedly. And bestowing mercy is to be done **cheerfully** (*en hilarotēti*, "in gladness"), not with sadness. Three of these seven gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (prophets, teachers, administration); two (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in Ephesians 4:11; and two (administering and serving) are listed in 1 Peter 4:10-11. Whatever one's gift, he should exercise it faithfully as a stewardship from God.

**12:9-10.** Paul began these specific exhortations with the key ingredient for success: **Love must be sincere.** This is God's love, which has been ministered to believers by the Holy Spirit (5:5) and must be ministered by them to others in the Holy Spirit's power. "Sincere" translates *anypokritos* (lit., "without hypocrisy"), also used of love (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22), of faith (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5), and of wisdom (James 3:17). This first command is followed by a pair of related basic commands—**Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.** Many Bible students consider these two clauses as explanatory of the sincerity of love, translating the verse, "Let love be unfeigned, abhorring the evil and cleaving to the good." Hating various forms of sin is frequently mentioned in Scripture (Pss. 97:10; 119:104, 128, 163; Prov. 8:13; 13:5; 28:16; Heb. 1:9; Rev. 2:6). Turning from evil is to accompany adhering to the good (cf. 1 Peter 3:11). Divine love is to be exercised with other believers. The Greek adjective *philostorgoi*, translated **devoted**, suggests family affection. As in Romans 12:9, the second clause in verse 10 can be understood as explaining the first command. Verse 10 may be translated, "With **brotherly love** have family affection for **one another**, in **honor** giving place to **one another**" (cf. Phil. 2:3, "consider others better than yourselves").

**12:11-12.** Paul then provided a series of exhortations concerning a believer's personal attitudes, attitudes that will make him more attractive to others. In verse 11 the key thought is the last clause—**servicing** (*douleuontes*; *diakonian* in v. 7 is trans. "servicing") **the Lord**—and the first two clauses explain how a believer is to serve as the Lord's "slave" (*doulos*; cf. 1:1): **never... lacking** ("not shrinking, not hesitating, not being lazy") **in zeal** (*en spoudē*, "diligence," rendered "diligently" in 12:8), and being fervent in spirit. **Keep your spiritual fervor** is literally, "being fervent, or boiling (*zeontes*, used only here and in Acts 18:25 of Apollos) in the spirit" (either the Holy Spirit or one's inner life). These two commands also balance each other as negative and positive commands (cf. Rom. 12:9). As believers serve God as His slaves they should be enthusiastic and diligent. The three exhortations in verse 12 can be understood either as independent items or as additional descriptions of how believers should serve the Lord. They are to **be joyful in hope**, because their hope in Christ is the basis of their rejoicing (5:2-5; 1 Peter 1:6-9). **In affliction** (*thlipsei*, "distress, trouble, pressure"; cf. Rom. 8:35) believers are to be **patient** (*hypomenontes*, "being steadfast, having endurance"; cf. 5:3). Also Christians should continue **in prayer** to God for wisdom, guidance, and strength (cf. 1 Thes. 5:17). Being **faithful**, NIV's translation of *proskarterountes*, should be rendered "persisting in" or "devoted to" (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:42; Col. 4:2).

**12:13.** Returning to Christians' responsibilities to other believers, Paul exhorted them, **Share with God's people who are in need** (lit., "sharing [*koinōnountes*, 'having in common'] the needs of the saints"). This characterized the Jerusalem church (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 34-37). This concern also motivated the church in Antioch (Acts 11:27-30) and the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-27) to give to the church in Jerusalem. In the same vein the apostle commanded, **Practice hospitality** (lit., "pursuing friendliness to strangers"). Both ministries, meeting needs and being hospitable, involve helping others.

**12:14-16.** Paul's exhortations in this section relate to a believer's reactions to the actions and emotions of others, whether Christians or not. The hatred displayed in persecution usually evokes response in kind, but Paul commanded, **Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse** (cf. Matt. 5:44). Perhaps Paul thought of Stephen (Acts 7:59-60) and of Jesus Christ (Luke 23:34). They both modeled these words and responded to persecution even to death by praying for God's forgiveness of their persecutors. Christians should be able to empathize with others, both believers and unbelievers. Paul commanded, **Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.** Related to this is the next command, **Live in harmony with one another** (lit., "having the same attitude toward one another"; cf. Rom. 15:5; Phil. 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8). Being in harmony with other Christians is basic to being able to empathize with them. This idea is then presented in negative and positive details: **Do not be proud** (lit., "not thinking highly" of yourself; cf. Rom. 11:20; 12:3) and **be willing to associate with people of low position** (cf. James 2:1-9). These orders are summarized in the command, **Do not be conceited** (lit., "Do not become wise concerning themselves"; cf. Prov. 3:7; Rom. 11:25), an attitude that makes empathy impossible.

**12:17-18.** The exhortations in verses 17-21 relate primarily to believers' relationships with unbelievers, speaking as they do of those who do evil toward believers (v. 17) and are the "enemy" of believers (v. 20). The Old Testament principle of justice was "eye for eye" (Ex. 21:24), but Paul commanded, **Do not repay anyone evil for evil** (cf. 1 Peter 3:9). On the positive side Christians are **to do what is right** (*kala*, "beautiful," used here in the ethical sense of good, noble, and honorable). Paul then commanded believers, **Live at peace with everyone** (cf. "live in harmony with one another," Rom. 12:16). But recognizing that limits exist, Paul included the words, **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you.** Harmony with others may not always be achievable, but believers should not be responsible for that lack of peace (cf. Matt. 5:9).

**12:19-21.** Referring again to the negative (cf. v. 17a) Paul then exhorted his readers **not to take revenge** after they are misused. Instead they should **leave room for God's wrath** (lit., "for the wrath"), because God has promised to avenge His people: **It is Mine to avenge, I will repay** (Deut. 32:35; cf. Heb. 10:30). David's refusal to kill Saul on two occasions when it seemed that God had delivered Saul into David's hands is a classic biblical example of this principle. In light of God's promise to execute vengeance, a Christian should therefore **feed his enemy** and quench his thirst—in short, respond to his evil with Christian love. Heaping **burning coals on his head**, along with the first part of Romans 12:20, is a quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22. The coals on the head may refer to a ritual in Egypt in which a person showed his repentance by carrying a pan of burning charcoal on his head. Helping rather than cursing an enemy may cause him to be ashamed and penitent. As Paul summarized, **Do not be overcome by evil, giving in to the temptation to retaliate, but overcome evil with good** (cf. Matt. 5:44, "love your enemies"). Again positive and negative commands are put together (cf. Rom. 12:9, 11, 16-20).

### **Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

This text follows Paul's great exhortation of Romans 12:1-2 for believers to become living sacrifices, worshipping God by being transformed in spiritual renewal, refusing to be pressed into the mold of this world. So what follows is all about living out this overarching commitment. There are three exhortations in Romans 12:9 that flow from this decisive surrender of our lives to Christ. The first exhortation is to exercise genuine love. We are told to practice love "without dissimulation." "Dissimulation" is a word that points to hypocrisy and fakery rather than genuineness and sincerity. Our love is to be real and authentic. Romans 12 outlines many aspects of genuine love as it is to be shown to others; it includes kindness (vs. 10), giving and hospitality (vs. 13), seeking to bless even those who persecute us (vs. 14), showing concern about the ups and downs of others (vs. 15), striving for harmony with others, and, finally, seeking peace, not vengeance, with our enemies (vss. 17-21). All these evidences of love are to manifest the love of God outward, to be a blessing to others, even those who have not been a blessing to us. That is true, biblical love. The believer's love is motivated by the presence of the Lord Jesus within. It is not motivated by what someone deserves or earns based on their treatment of us. Going along with this is another commitment—an abhorrence of evil. How can we become loving people if we are not turning away from evil? Evil actions are injurious to others. Evil is not an abstract idea but describes all the ways that people harm one another in a fallen world. We are to abhor any and all of those ways in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We are to resist unloving behavior and practice genuine love, even toward those who may themselves be guilty of unloving actions and behavior. A third commitment is to cleave to what is good. The term for "cleave" is a strong term, meaning to hold fast. It is used literally of adhesives and figuratively of powerful commitments like marriage (Mark 10:7) and joining with the body of Christ (Acts 9:26). Romans 12:21 adds that by holding to that which is good, we are actually able to overcome evil. All three commitments fit together in our lives so that we can enter and engage the world around us with a powerful and loving spirit. Evil and unloving behavior abounds in our world. We see everything from cases of abuse within families and bullying in schools to the larger systemic problems of international terrorism, human trafficking, and the cruelty of ethnic cleansing. There seems to be no end to evil. The world is crying out for love—genuine love. Where does it come from? It must come from Christian people, those who surrender their lives to Jesus and hear and do what He has commanded. Such love includes an active seeking out of opportunities to make a difference in people's lives. Such an effort will make an impact on the world. Genuine love is a great contrast to what we see in this world. May God energize our love!

### ***Lesson Introduction and Background***

#### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

It is easy to despair over the prevalence of evil. One result of expanded media coverage is that we seem to get extensive coverage of an endless parade of tragedies from all over the world. The stories range from cruelty to kittens to beheadings of Christians. Media outlets never seem to tire of presenting the latest in human depravity, so much so that we can become numb to its significance. While we might imagine we have entered a new age of tragedy, the truth is that we have been in it for a long time. Maltbie Babcock, a nineteenth-century minister, knew this all too well. He and his wife, Katherine, had two sons, but both died as infants. Babcock found solace in taking long walks in nature and in writing poetry. These two came together in a public way when one of his poems was published and set to music after his death. The combination became the beloved hymn "This Is My Father's World." Often recognized for its appreciation of God's creation, the lyrics also draw an important conclusion in stating "that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet." We only escape the

results of sin and evil when we get to Heaven. Even so, the apostle Paul, like Babcock, encourages us not to sink into despair. Evil will not prevail in the end. In our lesson this week, we see Paul address the problem of evil in a direct and practical manner.

The ancient Greek philosophers pondered questions of morality in their writings. In their discussions, they considered categories of goodness and evil. The authors of the Bible provided their own teachings on these subjects. The Greek word for goodness occurs five times in the New Testament: Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3, 5 (twice). The translations are “goodness” three times, “excellent” once, and “praises” once. The philosopher Plato, writing 400 years before the New Testament authors, believed in four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, and courage. These four were still held in esteem in the city of Rome in the century before Paul wrote Romans. This is clear from the writings of the Roman statesman Cicero (106-43 BC). We also find them in Wisdom of Solomon 8:7, a Jewish writing of the period: “If a man love righteousness her labours are virtues: for she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude.” For Paul, goodness, or virtue, was more than just a philosophical matter. Today’s lesson looks at a passage in Romans in which the apostle becomes intensely practical. Romans 12 begins with Paul calling followers of Jesus to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (12:2). Transformed to what? What does a transformed life look like? The first 11 chapters of Romans are filled with wonderful but heavy doctrinal instruction. With chapter 12, Paul turns his attention squarely to the practical side of living the Christian life. The teachings in chapter 12, especially in the portion found in our printed text, are almost like proverbs: brief, self-contained statements. Many are similar to Jesus’ teachings as found in the Sermon on the Mount.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

*(NOTE: The lesson points and cross-references were adapted from previous SS Lesson dated 04/17/2005)*

### **Living a Life of Love (Rom 12:9-15)**

- 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.
- 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;
- 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
- 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;
- 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
- 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
- 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

#### **Love without hypocrisy (9)**

*Love by putting God's word into practice (Ezek 33:31)*

31 My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.

*Love by being approved by God and by seeking to please Him (1 Thess 2:3-6)*

3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. 4 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. 5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. 6 We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.

*Love with a pure heart and in sincerity (1 Tim 1:5)*

5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

*Love by faith accompanied by action (James 2:15-17)*

15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

*Love not with words, but in truth and with action (1 John 3:18-20)*

18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence

*Love without deceit (1 Peter 2:1)*

1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

*True love has no sin or deceit associated with it (Ps 32:2)*

2 Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

## **Honor others (10)**

*Honor others by serving them (Matt 20:26-28)*

26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

*Honor others by seeking their interests (Phil 2:3-4)*

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

*Honor others by giving them honor they are due (Rom 13:7)*

7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

*An example of honoring others is honoring parents (Eph 6:2)*

2 "Honor your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise-

*Honor others by welcoming them in the Lord with great joy (Phil 2:28-30)*

29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

*Honor those whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17)*

17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

## **Serve others (11-12)**

*Serve others in love (Gal 5:13)*

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

*Serve wholeheartedly (Eph 6:7)*

7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

*Serve others with the gifts God has provided (1 Peter 4:10)*

10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

*Serving others makes one great (Mark 10:43-44)*

43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

*Serve others by trying to build them up (Rom 15:1-3)*

15:1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

*Serve others by carrying their burdens (Gal 6:2)*

2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

## **Help others (13)**

*Help others by having regard for the weak (Ps 41:1-3)*

Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble. 2 The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. 3 The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness.

*Help others by sharing possessions (Acts 4:32-35)*

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. 34 There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

*Help others by materially blessing through contributions to the poor (Rom 15:25-27)*

26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.

*Help others by giving of oneself first to God (2 Cor 8:1-5)*

8:1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

*Help others by supplying their needs (2 Cor 9:12-13)*

12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

*Help others by continually being consistent in help (Heb 6:10)*

10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

## **Bless others (14-15)**

*Bless others by sharing with them (Heb 13:16)*

16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

*Bless others by taking advantage of every opportunity to do good to all people (Gal 6:10)*

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

*Bless others by not expecting repayment (Matt 5:44-48)*

44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

*Bless others by doing to them as you would want to be done to you (Luke 6:28-31)*

28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

*Bless others by being kind to them (1 Thess 5:15)*

15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

*Bless others by repaying insults with good (1 Peter 3:9)*

9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

### **Living a Life of Peace (Rom 12:16-21)**

16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

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

### **Peace through humility (16)**

*We should take the example of Jesus and submit ourselves to humbleness (Phil 2:5-7)*

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

*Humbleness is a requirement of God (Mic 6:8)*

8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

*Those who are humble enjoy the presence of God (Isa 57:15)*

15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

*Humbleness means to be submissive to God and those in authority over us (1 Peter 5:5)*

5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

*Saints should live with humility (Eph 4:2)*

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

## **Peace through unity (16)**

*Unity through God composing the members of the body (1 Cor 12:24-28)*

God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

*Unity in Christ (Phil 2:1-4)*

2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

*Unity through baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:12-13)*

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

*Unity into one faith (Eph 4:4-6)*

4 There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

*Unity that lets the world know that Jesus was sent by God (John 17:23)*

23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

*Unity through the Church (Eph 4:10-13)*

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

*Unity through love (Col 3:14)*

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

## **Peace through peacefulness (17-18)**

*Peaceful by aiming for peace (2 Cor 13:11)*

11 Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

*Peaceful through promotion of peace (Prov 12:20)*

20 There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace.

*Peaceful through peacemakers (Matt 5:9)*

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

*Peaceful through overcoming the world (John 16:33)*

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

*Peaceful through being controlled by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:6)*

6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

### **Peace through not seeking revenge (19)**

*Do not seek revenge, but love your neighbor (Lev 19:18)*

18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

*Do not seek revenge or try to pay back (Prov 24:29)*

29 Do not say, "I'll do to him as he has done to me; I'll pay that man back for what he did."

*Do not seek revenge because it is God's role to avenge (Deut 32:35)*

35 It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."

*Do not seek revenge because God is a jealous and avenging God (Nah 1:2-3)*

2 The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. 3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet.

*Do not seek revenge because God does the judging (Heb 10:30-31)*

30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

*Do not seek revenge, instead bless those who have harmed you (1 Peter 3:9)*

9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

### **Peace through loving enemies (20-21)**

*Love enemies by praying for them (Matt 5:43-45)*

44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

*Love enemies by doing good to them (Luke 6:35-36)*

35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

*Love enemies by loving them as we love ourselves (Rom 13:8-10)*

9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

*Love enemies by serving them (Gal 5:13-14)*

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

*Love enemies as we have been taught by God (1 Thess 4:9)*

9 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

*Love enemies by defending them and sharing with them (1 John 3:16-19)*

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### **Concluding Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

#### **The Grace of God Reflected in Relationships (12:9-21)**

Nowhere does the contrast between the world's way of thinking and the transformed mind become more apparent than in verses 9-21. Here we see the new mind illustrated in Paul's pointed guidelines for human relationships.

**True Love** (vv. 9-10). The love of the world seems to be amoral, often immoral. The love we see reflected in the television screen is a love of infidelity. This is not true love at all. True love is not divorced from morality. True love clings to what is good and hates evil. Situation ethics informs us that pre-marital sex is good if practiced in love. The biblical kind of thinking tells us that it cannot be love if it is outside the bonds of marriage.

Love expresses itself in the church by devotion to one another. It holds the other in honor, and gives to the other the place of preference. True love seeks the good of our brother, even at our own expense. The world's love seeks personal gratification, even at the expense of others.

**Endurance and Diligence** (vv. 11-12). Christian character is contrasted with that of the world in that it endures hardship and difficulties. "... not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer," (Romans 12:11,12). There should be a diligence and zeal in our lives not typical of others. While Christians serve God with zeal, the world-at-large views them as fanatics. The Christian is characterized by hope; the world by despair. The Christian holds up in trials and tribulation; the unsaved folds up. "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" is the motto of the world. The Christian is diligent in his prayer life, while the unbeliever thinks it is a waste of time.

**Sensitivity to People and Their Needs** (vv. 13-16). The way of the world is to look out for old number one. As in the story of the Good Samaritan, the world walks on by the person in need, for he only represents a liability, a demand on our time and money. The world suggests we spend our time and money with those who can further our own interests. But notice the way of the Christian:

... contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation (Romans 12:13-16).

The Christian observes a material need and meets it (verse 13). The Christian opens his home to those who need hospitality. The way of the world is expressed by this ancient proverb: "A guest is like a fish. After three days he stinks."

The Christian responds to ridicule and rejection by speaking a word of blessing, rather than a curse. The Christian is at ease with those of humble means and does not cater to the affluent. The Christian knows himself, his sinfulness and the waywardness of his heart. He is not proud, but humble.

**Absence of Vengeance** (vv. 17-21). The way of the world is all too evident in terms of our response to those who caused us hurt. Sock 'em!

“We communists have many things in common with the teachings of Jesus Christ,” Nikita Krushchev, ex-premier of Russia, once stated to American pressmen. He continued, “My sole difference with Christ is that when someone hits me on the right cheek, I hit him on the left so hard that his head falls off.”

As Dr. MacIver, professor of political science at Columbia University, put it, “In war the principle must be, do to the enemy as he would to you, but do it first.”

As Augsburgers rightly comments, “That’s merely the savage law of retaliation. ‘Do back to others as they have done to you.’ Or even worse, ‘Do to others as you expect them to do to you.’”

There is no place for this kind of thinking in the Christian’s life. We are to strive for peace to the extent that it depends upon us (verse 18). We are to recognize that vengeance is the Lord’s prerogative, not ours (verse 19).<sup>96</sup> Our response should be to repay good for evil, not in order to cause our enemy torment, but to bring him to repentance and restoration.<sup>97</sup>

### **Application**

Several truths should be impressed upon our minds from this great chapter.

**(1) The grace of God as evidenced in Romans 1-11 should motivate and compel us to a dedication of heart and mind.** Have you ever decisively dedicated all you are and have to God? After conversion, that is the starting point of the Christian life. The guidance of God and the experience of the abundant life are dependent upon it. If you have never submitted all you are and have to God in gratitude for His eternal salvation and His infinite wisdom and grace, why not do it now?

**(2) The doctrine of spiritual gifts is one which is too important and too fundamental to pass over lightly.** Do you know your spiritual gift? Are your priorities determined by your gift? Are you an instrument of grace and blessing as you exercise your gift?

**(3) The Christian experience is one that involves both body and mind.** Our emotions do play a vital part in our worship, but if our worship and service is to be pleasing before God, it must be intelligent. In Christianity, we should never have to take our heads off and put them on the proverbial shelf. We should have our thinking transformed by the Word of God, and we should use our minds in a way never before experienced.

**(4) The renewing of our minds takes place as we absorb the Scriptures.** Paul wrote from chapter 12, verse 3 on, to tell us how our minds should think in terms of Christian living. You will never renew your minds by reading the daily newspaper or watching the ‘tube.’

May God enable us to live our lives in a way pleasing to Him.

*(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/14-new-mind-romans-12>)*

### **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

A prevailing message in most cultures is that “might makes right.” Usually might refers to physical power and intimidation, but it may also describe economic power. The richest person often has lawyers who know how to win court judgments. Might can also be political power. “Might makes right” is not Paul’s position. His position flips the phrase around: “right makes might.” When Christians do right things, the mighty power of God is behind them. God is in control, and his justice will prevail. To say that the good will overcome the evil is to say that God will overcome evil. These are comforting thoughts for those who suffer affliction and injustice in a sin-broken world. We both depend on God and pursue his agenda for repairing the brokenness, using his principles and Jesus’ teachings. This is part of what it means to represent the kingdom “not of this world” (John 18:36).

***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary***

1. Our regard for others should be genuine and open rather than a false display (Rom. 12:9)
2. Everything we do should be centered on building others up and serving the Lord (vss. 10-14)
3. We ought to have a certain level of empathy for others, celebrating their successes and sharing their pain (vss. 15-16)
4. When we are wronged by others, we should do what is honorable and refuse to repay them by doing wrong (vs. 17)
5. We should be promoters of peace regardless of what is going on around us (vs. 18)
6. The fact that the Lord fights on our behalf should bring great peace (vss. 19-20)
7. We are to focus on what is good rather than allow the evil in the world to overcome us (vs. 21)