

# Epistle of Romans XXV

## (Chapter 12)

### How God Wants the Church to Function

Fred R. Coulter—July 18, 1998

Romans 12:3: "For I say through the grace that was given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think with sound-mindedness, as God has divided to each one a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function; likewise, we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another. But each one has different gifts according to the grace that is given to us—whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the measure of faith; or service, *let us tend* to service; or the one who is teaching, *let him tend* to teaching; or the one who is encouraging, *let him tend* to encouragement; the one who is giving, *let it be* with generosity; the one who is taking the lead, *let it be* with diligence; the one who is showing mercy, *let it be* with cheerfulness" (vs 3-8).

What we're talking about in all of these things here, through the rest of the whole chapter really, is the whole attitude and function of how God wants the Church run; how He wants us to function and interface with each other.

Verse 3: "For I say through **the grace** was given to me..."

Let's understand something about *the grace*, which is given to the Apostle Paul, which should be given to everyone who is then ordained a teacher or an elder. In order to teach the word of grace, there has to be given a special addition, through the laying on of hands, as Paul told Timothy: 'The gift that you receive through the laying on of my hands for the purpose of teaching.' For the purpose of doing whatever the job is to do.

Ephesians 3:1: "For this cause I, Paul, *am* the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the ministry of the grace of God that was given to me for you; how He made known to me by revelation the mystery (even as I wrote briefly before" (vs 1-3).

We also need to understand that the understanding of the New Testament plan of God was unfolded step-by-step to the apostles. When they first began, they really didn't understand very much other than what was given by the teachings of Jesus as found in the Gospel. And they really didn't understand how God was going to reach out to all nations, though they were told, 'Go into all the world.'

When Peter was sent to Cornelius, he was very surprised that here was someone who was an uncircumcised Gentile that God was accepting his worship. That's why God gave the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized, because, I'm sure, you couldn't have convinced them any other way. So, the revelation that we are to become the very sons of God you read in the later writings of Paul and John.

Verse 4: "So that when you read *this*, you will be able to comprehend my understanding in the mystery of Christ)...  
[the secret of God being revealed]

...which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His Holy apostles and prophets by *the Spirit*" (vs 4-5).

He is writing as it is now at the date that he's writing this. He had this revelation and the understanding along with the other apostles just before he died. This was quite a profound thing.

Verse 6: "That the Gentiles might be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel, of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God, *which* was given to me through the inner working of His power" (vs 6-7).

Romans 12:3: '...through the grace that was given to me...'  
he is talking about the special grace that was given to him as an apostle: ***to teach, to write and to preach***. This is all in accord with what Jesus told the apostles in Matt. 13. I am sure that for us in some ways and in some things—not in all things—we have even greater understanding than they did at that time. I don't want anyone to take that statement wrongly. I am not saying that I, as a person, know more than they did. Of course not, that's ridiculous! But we may *understand* more things of prophecy *more clearly* than they did.

They were anticipating Christ to return during their lifetime. So, we do have more *understanding*. Hopefully with the Word of God and the things we have now, and the Spirit of God, we can claim the promise that Christ gave that '***the Spirit would lead us into all Truth***' all the things that we need to know.

There are certain things that God reserves for Himself that only God knows. Those things we will never know. But those things for us that we are to know, *we will know!* That is if we love God and are faithful with His Word and we keep His commandments, and all of those things are involved.

Matthew 13:16: "But blessed *are* your eyes, because they see...  
[we are dealing with some extra blessings, which come from God]  
...and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and  
righteous *men* have desired to see what you see, and have not seen; and to hear what  
you hear, and have not heard" (vs 16-17).

What He told the apostles there in John 14, that the Holy Spirit would 'bring to remembrance'  
everything that He said, and then we have this written down for us. *That's quite a gift! That's  
quite a revelation!*

Philippians 1:1: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ  
Jesus who are in Philippi, together with *the* overseers and deacons: Grace and  
peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ" (vs 1-2).

It's just like this, brethren, whenever we come before God on the Sabbath, God gives us His  
grace for that Sabbath. Part of that grace is:

- what we learn
- the fellowship that we have
- the reassurance of the hope and understanding that we have
- reconfirmation of the Word of God

Whenever we read and study, God's grace is imparted to us, because God's grace is an overall  
umbrella in which we live. So, when he says, 'grace and peace to you,' this is an important  
thing. He's imparting a blessing. Just like in Revelation where it says, 'blessed are those who  
read and blessed are those who hear.' It's the same way when we come on Sabbath services  
the same thing applies.

Verse 3: "I thank my God on every remembrance of you, always making supplication  
with joy in my every prayer for you all, for your fellowship in the Gospel from *the* first  
day until now" (vs 3-5).

I imagine so because this church in Philippi was the only church of the Apostle Paul that  
wasn't wracked in ruin with problems. You compare this to the Church at Corinth. I mean,  
really, there's no comparison with all the problems and difficulties that they had.

Verse 6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you  
will complete *it* until *the* day of Jesus Christ."

Brethren, we really need to understand to have that confidence that God will do it.

- God has promised!
- God has given His Word!

- God cannot lie!
- He will do it!

That's why the only question mark is with *us*. That's why if:

- everyday we go to God
- everyday our lives are under the grace of God
- everyday we seek God
- everyday we study His Word
- everyday we pray to Him

—then He will complete it; no question about it.

Verse 7: "It is indeed right for me to think this of you all because you have me in *your* hearts, both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, *and* you are all fellow partakers of my grace."

When he's referring to his grace here, he's referring to the Spirit that God had given, the teachings that He has given, the understanding of the Word of God, which he's written for them. That's all part of it. Let's hope we can all partake of that same grace with him.

Romans 12:3: "For I say through the grace that was given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think with sound-mindedness, as God has divided to each one a measure of faith."

This is so vitally important for us to understand and realize. I think this is one of the big problems that you have within the ministry and within the Church. Too many people are thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to, taking to themselves names and labels and offices and things that God has not given; and presenting themselves as some great 'mucky-mucks.'

That's why on stationary I just have 'minister.' That's why when people ask me what I am, I tell them I'm a teacher. I don't want to think more highly than I ought to, and that's about as high as I ought to think. If God wants to make it more than that, then He'll have to make it evident, but so far He hasn't. So, I accept that and try and keep it that way.

Here's an admonition given on how to help solve problems within the Church, Galatians 6:1:

"Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in some offense, you who are spiritual...  
[those of you who have exercised the spirit, who understand the Word of God]  
...restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he is deceiving himself" (vs 1-3).

If you really are something, then you are something, that doesn't mean that at all. It means that if he thinks of himself to be something when he, as man, is really nothing. All human beings came from just a little speck of dust. That's a miracle in itself. How did that miracle come about? *Because of the work of the God, the grace of God!* That's how we need to approach things.

You've seen it when a minister, elder or deacon will get all carried away with some big, high 'mucky-muck' and strut around in vanity. What happens? *It destroys everyone around him!* That's why he's saying this. Notice how the Apostle Paul looks at these things:

1-Corinthians 4:7: "For what makes you superior *to others?*...."

In other words, 'I'm this, I'm that, I'm the other, I'm greater, he's less. I'm more important, he's nothing.']

So Paul answers the question:

"...And what do you have that you did not receive?...."

That's everything in life, everything there is. What is there in life that you didn't receive? In other words, the only One Who has something He didn't receive is God! And God, because He's a God of love and is gracious, *He's giving to us!* What a marvelous and miraculous thing it is that God can take that which is just a speck of dust of nothing and create us as human beings, and then *call us and give us:*

- His Spirit
- His Word and understanding
- grant us the mind of Christ
- then resurrect us as a spirit son or daughter of God

—at the resurrection is absolutely a miraculous and fantastic thing! These people here in Corinth were acting as though they were high up 'uppity-uppities'!

"...But if you also received *it*, why are you boasting as if you did not receive *it*?" (v 7). In other words, you came across this on your own. You created yourself.

Verse 8: "**Now you are satiated....**"

He has some real irony here; I mean, Paul is really cynical in a couple of places in 1-Cor.

"...**Now you have been enriched. You have reigned without us....**" (v 8). You've made it into the Kingdom of God already!

"...And I would that you did reign, so that we also might reign with you. For I suppose that God has made us apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We *are* fools for the sake of Christ, but you *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but you *are* strong..." (vs 8-10).

See what happens when you get high-minded people thinking greater of themselves than they ought to. That doesn't mean that we go around and we just denigrate ourselves and criticize ourselves and are down on ourselves. *No!*

We ought to think sound-mindedly. In other words, with God's Spirit, we are to think and to understand that what God has given He has given. We do the best we can with what we have, and if anything is going to happen, there is a **Proverb** that says 'promotion does not come from the east or the west, but from God.' That's what it needs to be.

Romans 12:3: "...but to think with sound-mindedness, as God has divided to each one a measure of faith."

God has given faith to everyone.

- we're to *grow in faith*
- we're to *grow in knowledge*
- we're to *grow in grace*

When you do, what do you have? *You have something that God has given, because you receive it from Him!*

Verse 4: "For even as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function."

That is the whole key in everything in how to organize a local congregation, according to the function.

1-Cor. 12 talks about 'by one Spirit we're all baptized into one body, which is Christ.' But we don't have the same function. Everyone has something different that he or she can do. This is what we need to understand. That's not to just rigidly put people in place, but because there's room for growth in all of these things, that is true. But the way that the congregations and fellowships should be organized is *according to function*. If you're going to have a social and you have a social committee, fine, have a social committee, but does that need to be a standing committee with authority with those that are on it? *No!* That's for *the social*. When you don't have socials, does the social committee have any function? *No!* When you do, do they? *Yes!*

It's the same way with everything else. One of the functions I do is *I teach*. That's what I want to do. I don't want to do all kinds of other things. That's not for me to do, other people can do that, and other people can help and other people can do things, and we can have it to where it is more of a level playing field for everybody.

Verse 5: "Likewise, we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another."

That's the way we need to consider it, brethren, as a family-type relationship. That's what's so important. Not a corporate membership. Not a stratified membership, but a family membership, which is a *created relationship*, which God has made.

- Husband/wife relationship is a created relationship
- Family relationship is a created relationship
- Relationships within the Church is also a created relationship

—because God is the One Who has called the individual. God is the One who has brought them together. That's why the relationship needs to be in a family relationship considering one another, and that we're all a part of the Body of Christ.

Verse 6: "But each one has different gifts according to the grace that is given to us—whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the measure of faith."

God has given gifts to everyone, whether it is:

- to pray
- to study
- to encourage
- to help
- to teach

Ephesians 1:22: "For He has subordinated all things under His feet..."

[if we're all under Christ, we're all under the same thing]

...and has given Him *to be* head over all things to the *Church*, which is His body—the fullness of Him Who fills all things in all" (vs 22-23).

It fits in with the functioning of it just like Rom. 12.

Ephesians 4:1: "Therefore, I, the prisoner of *the* Lord, am exhorting you to walk worthily of the calling to which you were called..."

[notice the attitude that we are to have]:

...with all humility and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (vs 1-2).



Sometimes we do have to put up with things, but *forebear with one another in love*.

Verse 3: "Being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is one body and one Spirit, even as you were also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in you all*" (vs 3-6).

Now, if we consider that each one has the Spirit from God the Father, won't we love and appreciate each other all that much more, and won't we be all be willing to put aside all of our stupid, little carnalities—whatever they are—because we all have them? *Yes!* If we're willing to put them aside, each one individually, and each one individually is willing to be forbearing with each other, then we can grow closer in love and closer in a family relationship the way we ought to be.

Verse 7: "But grace was given to each one of us...  
[everyone has grace]

...according to the measure of the gift of Christ....  
[whatever God determines]

...For this *very* reason, He says *that* after ascending on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. Now He Who ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He Who descended is the same One Who also ascended above all the heavens so that He might fulfill all things" (vs 7-10).

Then he shows the whole purpose of it.

Verse 16: "From Whom all the body, fitly framed and compacted together by *that which* every joint supplies, according to *its* inner working in *the* measure of each individual part, is making the increase of the body unto *the* edifying of itself in love"—the edifying of the Body of Christ. We all have our ups and downs; we all have our difficulties, but Christ is always the same.

This is why when we come together on the Sabbath in Sabbath services, we need to have it where we are really taught the Word of God, we are uplifted with His Spirit, uplifted with what is taught. As soon as we leave we go out and face the world and there's the world again for another week. I know sometimes when Friday comes along, many of us feel that if we can just get to Friday and kind of trip over the Sabbath sunset line—Aha! The Sabbath is here! because of all of the difficulties and problems that we have. I know when I was out working, that's the way I felt. Boy, that was something! It's very important to understand how the world functions out there and to realize how great and marvelous the Sabbath is. So, *when* we come together for the Sabbath, *let's not bring the world with us*, because we're coming together with Christ. Let's all be of that one mind and of that one spirit.



We all have gifts given to us by the grace of God and he begins listing some of them for the edification of the Church. These are all gifts to help in the Church.

Romans 12:6: "...whether prophecy, *let us prophesy...*"

You might note this: There are two kinds of prophecy:

- foretelling events
- telling forth the Word of God, inspired speaking

Not necessarily prophesying events to come. The Greek has the two meanings here.

"...according to the measure of faith...

[and understanding]

...or service..." (vs 6-7).

The noun for this is *deacon* or 'diakonos' and the verb is 'diakonoi' which means *to serve*.

"...*let us tend to service...*" (v 7).

The Apostle Paul called himself a 'diakonos'—*a servant*. When he would serve it would be 'diakonoi'—*serving*.

"...*let us tend to service; or the one who is teaching, let him tend to teaching*" (v 7).

You have to prepare, you have to study, you have to equip yourself, and today, we're being inundated with so many papers and things.

Did you know that 'between the two evenings' means on the morning of the 13th? There are so many people out there *pretending to be teachers*. They don't know anything. I'll tell you one thing I do—and I'm not trying to pat myself on the back; I'm not in anyway intending to do that whatsoever; so don't take it that way at all—when I bring a sermon or a lesson I prepare for it and study for it and prepare. If I'm gong to teach I have to know! The only way I know is to get into the Word of God and know myself, that's the only way. Have it all prepared and then I can give you something that is going to teach you; something which is going to uplift you.

Of course, you still have this, and this is always true, and this is something that anyone who is going to be teaching needs to realize: Never rely on the status quo as ever, ever being enough. What do I mean by that? When it was told that the Church got off track by Herbert Armstrong, he re-established the 18 points of Truth. All he did was re-state the status quo.

There was no growth and knowledge of understanding for how many years? *Years and years!* Here's an obligation to everyone who teaches has to really understand before God:

- you can never, *never* know as much as you need to; even in your whole lifetime
- you can't teach other people unless you also learn and increase in knowledge yourself.

If you properly teach people, you're going to do as Christ said: 'It's sufficient that the disciple become as the teacher.' And the obligation of whoever is teaching, is to teach and lift everybody's knowledge and understanding through that teaching to a higher level of understanding so that they can be greater disciples of Christ. This is going to increase in you being able to receive a greater reward in the Kingdom of God. That's what Paul said, 'You are my crown.' That's what he was talking about.

Romans 2:17: "Behold, you are called a Jew...  
[teacher]

...and you yourself rest in the law, and boast in God."

By the way, they even allowed ministers (at the end of the former WCG) to be called 'reverend'; when the Scripture says that only God's name is Holy and reverend.

Verse 18: "And know *His* will, and approve of the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and are persuaded *that* you yourself are a guide of *the* blind, a light for those in darkness, an instructor of *the* foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of the knowledge and of the Truth *contained* in the Law" (vs 17-20).

He's talking to those who thought of themselves more than they ought to.

He challenges them, v 21:

"You, then, who are teaching another, do you not teach yourself also?...."

That's what it has to be. If whoever is teaching does not teach himself and follow what is taught... You have to subtract from that human weaknesses and faults that come along, because they will, then he's going to end up being hypocritical like the scribes and Pharisees.

Paul went on to say:

"...You who preach, 'Do not steal,' are you stealing? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' are you committing adultery? You who abhor idols, are you committing sacrilege? You who boast in law, are you dishonoring God through your transgression of the Law? For through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, exactly as it is written" (vs 21-24).

We've seen this happen, too, with different ministers and teachers and things like this. Some of them are still going on in their various nefarious practices.

Romans 12:7: "...or the one who is teaching, *let him tend* to teaching."

That includes:

- preparing
- educating
- reading
- studying
- writing

—doing all of those things. I know this for sure: If you write, you're going to be able to teach better, because writing makes you congeal your thoughts in a cogent manner. It's one thing to get up and talk and just babble on, it's another thing to have your thoughts organized and to be able to present them in such a way that everyone is able to understand. That's all a part of teaching. So, when he says 'tend to teaching' this is what he's meaning.

Verse 8: "Or the one who is encouraging, *let him tend* to encouragement..."

Here's a rule, ***when a person is down***:

- don't kick him
- if they're down and out and they're discouraged, don't come and land the world on them
- don't come and tell them how bad they are
- don't come and tell them they shouldn't have done this and that and the other thing

They already know that! When they are up, that's when to come and bring some of those things. If a person is down, ***encourage them!*** If they're up and encouraged, then they'll be more than willing to listen to some of the things which are perceived as problems that they need to work on. I know I am. When I feel down and miserable, the last thing I want is someone to come and crash on me. I might not respond in too kind of a way. That's the same with all of us.

That's the whole process that we need here in encouraging. That's one thing the Apostle Paul did. The Apostle Paul was always encouraging! I mean, even in his correction he gave hope. That's another thing to remember. If there is correction, then also give hope.

1-Thessalonians 3:1: "Accordingly, when we could not bear to wait any longer, we thought *it best for us* to be left in Athens alone; and we sent our brother Timothy, a servant of God and our fellow worker in the Gospel of Christ, in order to establish you

and to encourage you concerning your faith, so that no one might be unduly shaken by these persecutions. (For you yourselves know that we are appointed to this very thing" (vs 1-3).

Paul sent Timothy out to be encouraging the brethren when they were confronted with all of these difficulties.

1-Thessalonians 5:5: "*For* you are all children of *the* Light...  
[notice how he encourages them here; inspires them]  
...and children of *the* day; we are not of *the* night, nor of *the* darkness....

[now he gives a warning]:

...So then, we should not sleep, as others *do*...  
[we don't want to be like that]  
...but we should watch, and we should be sober. For those who are sleeping sleep in *the* night, and those who are drunken get drunk in *the* night. But we who are of *the* day should be sober, having put on *the* breastplate of faith and love..." (vs 5-8)  
—encourages and inspires the brethren. For those who are giving encouragement this gives you some methods on how to do it.

"...and *for* a helmet *the* hope of salvation, because God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs 8-9).

They were having a lot of persecution, a lot of problems, and they were really down and out. Always remember that. Whenever you're down and out, look up to Christ. He's called you to salvation, so the circumstances around can be changed at any time.

Verse 10: "Who died for us, so that whether we *remain* alive *until He comes* or we *fall* asleep *before that day*, together we may live *forever* with Him....  
[at the resurrection]

...Therefore, encourage one another, and edify one another, even as you are already doing" (vs 10-11).  
This is all part of the encouragement.

Romans 12:8: "...the one who is encouraging, *let him tend* to encouragement."

Isaiah 51:11: "Therefore, the redeemed of the LORD shall return and come with singing into Zion...  
[after they've been delivered out of their captivity]  
... and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head...."

That's what we want to have with the encouragement; to encourage one another. That's not to puff each other's vanity up or anything like that, but encourage each other. You're not going to puff up anybody's vanity if you just encourage them.

"...Gladness and joy shall overtake *them*; sorrow and mourning shall flee away. 'I, even I, *am* He Who comforts you. Who *are* you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, or of the son of man who *is* made *as* grass?'" (vs 11-12).

Why be afraid of that. There's always hope in God. We need to really keep that in mind.

Romans 12:8: "...the one who is giving, *let it be* with generosity..."  
—not just the penurious little thing. God is able to give back to you in many, many more ways.

"...the one who is taking the lead, *let it be* with diligence..." (v 8).  
There has to be leadership within the fellowship groups. There has to be leadership within the Churches of God, but it has to be done with diligence and with the kind of attitude that we're talking about here. Just think how much different that our church experiences would have been *if* this would have been the guidelines for what was done. It would have been totally different.

"...the one who is showing mercy, *let it be* with cheerfulness" (v 8)  
—not with grudgingness: 'all right I forgive you.' {note booklet and sermon series: *Judge Righteous Judgment*} Mercy always comes after the judgment, not before. Let me give you an example of that:

Many people think that in John 8, it is showing Christ's forgiveness. Let's read it very carefully. It's rather showing His judgment and mercy. This is the account of the woman who was taken in adultery:

John 8:3: "Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought to Him a woman who had been taken in adultery..."

[I've often wondered, how did they do that?]

... and after setting her in *the* center, they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. And in the Law, Moses commanded us...' (vs 3-5).

Now you have opinionated judgmentalness without righteous judgment and not all of the facts. They're using the law as vengeance rather than a way to define right or wrong.

"...that those who commit such *a sin* should be stoned. Therefore, what do You say?' Now, they said this to tempt Him, so that they might have *cause* to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down *and* wrote on the ground with *His* finger" (v 5-6).

Everyone has always wondered what was He writing on the ground?

(go to the next track)

I'll tell you what I think He was writing down on the ground. Some think He was writing the sins of those who brought her; that's possible. But I'll tell you what I think after we get through this a little bit further.

Verse 7: "And as they continued to ask Him, He lifted Himself up *and* said to them, 'Let the sinless one among you cast the first stone at her.'"

That's why people think that He was writing down some of their sins.

Verse 8: "And again He stooped down *and* wrote on the ground. But after hearing *this*, they were convicted *each* by *his own* conscience, and went out one by one, beginning with the older ones until the last. And Jesus was left alone, with the woman standing in *the center*" (vs 8-9).

Here's a whole crowd of people around and they brought the woman to the middle and brought her right up to Him. He stooped down on the ground, they all left and He stood up and here's the woman there alone.

Verse 10: "And when Jesus lifted Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are your accusers? Did anyone condemn you?' And she said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more'" (vs 10-11).

He did not say 'I forgive you'—did He? This is a type of ***mercy based upon judgment***. What we really have here is *unrighteous judgment* on the part of the Pharisees. They took the woman, but who did they leave behind? *The man!* Moses said you would take both of them and stone both of them. So, could it be that He was writing down on the ground, 'Where is the man?' That's what I believe. He could have been writing down their sin, too, because He wrote more than once. He said, 'I don't condemn you.' He rendered *righteous judgment* because you cannot have adultery with just one party. It requires two. Therefore, this is an example of showing mercy because the judgment was improper, but He did it with cheerfulness because He also said, 'Go and sin no more.' He said, 'I don't condemn you.' ***Mercy without cheerfulness is mercy with condemnation!***

Romans 12:9: "*Let love be without hypocrisy, abhorring that which is evil and cleaving to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned toward one another in brotherly love. Let each esteem the other more highly than himself. Be not slack in business. Be fervent in spirit. Be timely in serving*" (vs 9-11).

That's especially so if you're called to help put out a fire; if it's too late it's all burned up.

Verse 12: "*Be* rejoicing in hope. *Be* patient in tribulation. *Be* steadfastly continuing in prayer."

All of these are present tense participles showing that it is an ongoing thing in doing these things.

Verse 13: "Contribute to the needs of the saints, *and* strive to be hospitable. Bless those who persecute you; bless, and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep; *be* of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high ambitions; rather, be accommodating with those of low estate. Do not be wise in your own eyes" (vs 13-16).

You can tie that back in here with v 3: "...not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think..."—not be wise in your own conceits.

Verse 17: "Do not render to anyone evil for evil, *but* be prepared to do what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, as much as is your part, be at peace with all men" (vs 17-18).

Sometimes it's not possible. Sometimes people are just cantankerous.

We can't be at peace with our neighbor in back of us because he doesn't want to be peaceable. We were repairing the deck and he called the building department to come out and inspect if we were building a church out there or not. Come on; spare us! It should have been evident. We had the boards all torn up, we had the dry-rot that we had to get rid of. Sometimes there are people you just can't be at peace with. That's why he says, '*if at all possible*.' Those kinds of people you just have to avoid them. With us, let us be at peace with each other if at all possible, and I'm sure that it is.

Verse 19: "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves; rather, leave *this* to *God's* wrath; for it is written, "'Vengeance is Mine! I will recompense," says *the* Lord.' Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for in doing this you will be heaping coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (vs 19-21).

Let's go back and look at v 9: "*Let* love *be* without hypocrisy...." Love has to come from God's Holy Spirit, *from within*. It has to be genuine and sincere. You can put it on as a form of vanity and be friendly and outgoing and all this sort of thing, but if it isn't from the heart, sooner or later it will be known, because it is 'feigned' love. In other words, it's put on.



With us, with the brethren, we're to have *unfeigned love* of the brethren. I think the closer that we draw to each other in loving each other comes as a direct result of drawing close to God and loving Him, and letting God love us. If we do that, then we are going to eliminate so many difficulties and problems and thoughts that people have one toward another—if you're really following what the Apostle Paul is teaching here.

1-Peter 1:21: "*Even for you* who through Him do believe in God, Who raised Him from *the* dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God. Having purified your lives by obedience to the Truth unto unfeigned brotherly love through *the* Spirit, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (vs 21-22).

This is what has been missing in the Churches of God. Satan has succeeded through an oppressive hierarchy, and through tares and division in the Church to set brethren against brethren. That's not what God wants. And because of this, God is also having to scatter the Church. "*Let love be without hypocrisy...*" (Rom. 12:9)—love of the brethren with a pure heart.

Let's see how it works, Galatians 5:6:

"Because in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision of any force, nor uncircumcision; rather, ***it is the inner working of faith through love.***"

That's what God wants us to have, otherwise we just degenerate down into carnality. We degenerate down into what they were doing here.

Verse 14: "For the whole Law is fulfilled in this *commandment*: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, watch out *lest* you be consumed by one another" (vs 14-15).

What we're dealing with is how to combat the evils of human nature; is what we're really dealing with, brethren:

- we can overcome
- we can grow and change
- we can develop the love of God, with His Spirit

He says right here,

v 16: "Now *this* I say, walk by *the* Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

That's what we need to do. And if we do that, that will save us a whole lot of pain, agony and misery.

There used to be a western television program called 'Hee Haw' and they had one section: Pain! and Misery! and Agony! And they had different ones stand up out of the cornfield in

their bib-overalls and it was typical of being down and out. Well, God doesn't want us to have that and be filled with backbiting and devouring one another.

Romans 12:9: "*Let love be without hypocrisy, abhorring that which is evil and cleaving to that which is good.*"

Just an automatic way of living; an automatic way of doing things. If you're doing that, then you're going to be overcoming and changing as you're going. That which is good, cleave to. That which is evil, put away from you.

Verse 10: "*Be kindly affectioned toward one another in brotherly love. Let each esteem the other more highly than himself.*"

This is very important for us to understand. Notice how the Apostle Paul kept admonishing and encouraging the congregations to really do this. This is the heart and core as to why we get together, brethren; why we are brethren.

- If we don't love each other, who's going to love us?
- Is the world going to love us? *No!*

*Jesus said the world is going to hate us!*

- If we backbite and devour each other, who is going to put us together?
- Is the world going to put us together? *No!*

We have a lot we really need to understand and consider. What he's really saying here, through all of this: get rid of your carnality and put on the love of God and have the fruits of the Holy Spirit, in a little different terminology by giving you step-by-step on how to do it.

Philippians 2:1: "Now then, if *there be* any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of *the* Spirit, if any *deep* inner affections and compassions, fulfill my joy..." (vs 1-2).

The Apostle Paul didn't have too much joy in his life with all that he went through, but yet, he maintained the joy through the Spirit of God. *Yes, he did!* In spite of everything, even when he was taken off to be killed, he said, 'There's a crown of life waiting for me now.' Still had the joy!

"...that you be of the same mind, having the same love, being joined together in soul, minding the one thing....

[the Kingdom of God]

...*Let nothing be* done through contention or vainglory...

[you can probably find a section in every one of the Apostle Paul's epistles showing this kind of thing]

...but in humility, each esteeming the others above himself. Let each one look not *only* after his own things, but *let* each one also *consider* the things of others" (vs 2-4).

That doesn't mean neglect your things. It means to consider the other person's things, as well. Just don't be selfishly looking at yours alone. Consider the other person.

Verse 5: "Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus."

That's what we need to do being of one mind, "...esteeming the others above himself."

Romans 12:11: "*Be* not slack in business....

[in other words, if you have something to do, do it, be diligent, do it, get it done]

...*Be* fervent in spirit...."

—not depressed, not down, but zealous. Let's see what we are to do. If you're not zealous in spirit, then what should you do?

2-Timothy 1:6: "For this reason, I admonish you to stir up the gift of God that is in you by the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound-mindedness" (vs 6-7).

The way that you are fervent in spirit is to let God stir that up in you. And you stir that up in you by:

- study
- prayer
- knowing God's Word
- fellowshiping with one another

—all of these things together—that's how you're *fervent in spirit*. By the way, if you're Laodicean, that's it to overcome being Laodicean.

Romans 12:11: "...*Be* timely in serving."

If someone has need of clothing, give it to them when they need it. Don't give it to them after they're totally naked and destitute. If they need food, don't wait until they're on their deathbed; give it to them when they need it. *Let it be timely! Help them out in the time that they need!*

I'm sure that when you have a need, aren't you glad if it comes in time? Let's think of it this way—I can relate something to all of us: If you have a paycheck coming, aren't you happy when it's there on time? What if it's a month late, now what? It's the same way, if you have need, if you're sick and in bed and you have something you need that will help you, because you have the flu and three days later someone comes over with something to help you with the flu, but you're already up and about. You needed it when you flat on your back in bed.

Same way if you have something of a sinus problem or an allergy problem; whatever it may be. If you're serving, let it be timely.

Verse 12: "*Be rejoicing in hope...*"

and never, *never, never* give up in hope. There is always hope. Let's look at the worst-case scenario. ***Where there is life, there is hope!*** Even in the midst of correction, ***there is hope!*** Even in the midst of destruction, ***there is hope!*** You need to understand that. Ezekiel was told that he was the 'watchman' for the house of Israel, and he was to warn. God says, 'If you don't warn, I'm going to require the blood at your hand. But if you do warn and the wicked man doesn't turn, then it's going to be his own blood.'

Ezekiel 33:10: "'And you, son of man, speak to the house of Israel. Thus *shall* you speak, saying, "When our transgressions and our sins *are* on us, and we are wasting away in them, how then shall we live?" Say to them, "As I live," says the Lord GOD..." (vs 10-11).

Right here in the middle of sin, destruction, correction, captivity, misery death, God says, "...I have no delight in the death of the wicked, except that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (v 11).

Right in the middle of the most severe correction, ***God gives hope!*** Right in the middle of the Tribulation (Rev. 7), what does God do? ***He seals the 144,000 and the great innumerable multitude! Great hope!*** I tell you, that's why He's called *the God of hope*. Be rejoicing in that. And when you do get discouraged and down and out, ***think of hope and rejoice in that hope.*** Don't focus in on that little problem or depression that's right ahead of you. There's always a way out.

Here is the promise; here is the hope, 1-Cor. 10, and you can count on this. Sometimes we don't know how much we can bear or not bear. Even in the final analysis, if you die there's the hope of the resurrection. Even in the very worst-case scenario.

1-Corinthians 10:12: "Therefore, let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall. No temptation has come upon you except what is common to mankind. For God, Who *is* faithful, will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able *to bear*; but with the temptation, He will make a way of escape, so that you may be able to bear *it*." (vs 12-13).

***God will do that!***

We need to look at it. We need to especially keep that in mind as we're coming down toward what we might say is 'doomsday,' Armageddon and all that sort of thing.

Always realize there is a way of escape, there is hope, there is a way out! God will provide it even if you're down flat and you think there is nowhere else for you to go but down into the earth. God will still raise you up out of that. God will provide a way. What's that story? The man was starving and he was praying and was asking God to provide food. There was nothing there so the kids ran out and bought a loaf of bread and threw it in the open window. The bread came in and he said, 'Thank you, Lord.' And the kids were laughing. But God provided it. He may have used the kids to go buy the loaf, but he got the loaf of bread. It may come from an unexpected source that you would never think of it, or an unexpected way that you would think would never take place.

I remember when I was writing the first edition of *The Christian Passover* book. When we started out we said we needed a thorough booklet about 75 pages. Then it grew to 100, then 125, then we thought it would be pretty close to 200, well, about 225. We finally ended up with 320, and all during that time while I was writing and there was very little church income at that time. Delores kept asking me, 'Fred, where's the money coming from?' I'd say it would be there when we're ready. She must have asked me a half-dozen times, which is fine, because she didn't want me to take the grocery money. She was out working and having a horrible commute driving 280 miles a day. So, we were really strapped for money. It was a concern for her—a proper concern—where the money was going to come from. I wasn't going to write and ask the brethren to send money.

What happened was, there were two real estate transactions that were dead. That means they had fallen through. But they were resurrected, and out of the total of those two transactions, there was \$9,000 available which was extra, above and beyond what our income was and we were able to do the book. We had enough church income to take care of the rest and then one man sent in \$500 and said he wanted it to go for the book. So, we were able to do the book. To get the whole book and everything, it was \$12,000 for the first edition; that was to get it printed. We were able to take care of the freight later. But you always have hope! You *never, never, never* give up on hope! Whenever you have a problem and trial, ***God will provide the way out!***

Romans 12:12: "...*Be patient in tribulation....*"

That's hope, rejoicing—tribulation and enduring tie hand-in-hand. Tribulation brings endurance, and endurance then brings the love of God.

"...*Be steadfastly continuing in prayer*" (v 12).

We're told to be instant in prayer, pray continuously. Let's be doing that.

Here's something also to realize in praying, I think in Paul writing this, God really inspired him tremendously in it to help the brethren. For it to come all the way down to this age is

really something, because we get inspiration from it today. That's why the Word of God is so great. The mind of Christ inspired it and it is spiritually based so that when we read it, it inspires us. When people other than us do it, it can inspire them. Going clear back to the time of the Apostle Paul—and I don't know how far it's going to go—I think that during the Millennium the Apostle Paul is going to be encouraging people all the time. Remember this, this is all part of that whole sequence that he's giving in Rom. 12.

Romans 8:14: "For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God." Never forget that's *your calling*, brethren! Always remember that! When you do, you will never let anything get you down.

Verse 15: "Now, you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God. Now, if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..." (vs 15-17).

Inherit the universe! We need to understand that that's a great and marvelous calling. Really, what things are in the flesh really don't count!

"...if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (vs 17-18).

What a thing that is going to be!

Verse 19: "For the earnest expectation of the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God."

That's hard to comprehend, that the whole world out there is waiting for God's final completion of His plan with the saints in the first resurrection. That is hard to contemplate. But it is!

Verse 20: "Because the creation was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected *it* in hope, in order that the creation itself might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.... [and God is going to use us to do that]

...For we know that all the creation is groaning together and travailing together until now. And not only *that*, but even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, also groan within ourselves, awaiting the sonship—the redemption of our bodies" (vs 19-23).

I think the older you get the more that is true. The more pain and suffering that you go through the more that you anticipate that in a great and glorious way.

Verse 24: "For by hope we were saved; but hope that is seen is not hope; for why would anyone still be hoping for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we ourselves wait for it with patience. Now, in the same way also, the Spirit is conjointly helping our weaknesses because we do not fully understand what we should pray for, according as it is necessary, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groaning that cannot be expressed *by us*" (vs 24-26).

So, when you are praying, brethren, God's Spirit *in you* is conveying to God exactly what your thoughts are. All of these fleeting little things that intervene in your thought in your mind, as you're praying, are just all edited out. They don't go to God. As you're praying on your knees, and you think 'did I turn the pot off on the stove, is it going to boil over?' That doesn't go to God. That doesn't need to go to God. God wants to know what's in your heart, what's in your mind. That goes to God! And the Spirit is intervening for us. This is all a part of the hope that He has given here. We need to understand that the Spirit is making intercession for us.

Romans 12:12: "...Be steadfastly continuing in prayer....

[knowing that God's Spirit is there]

...Contribute to the needs of the saints, *and* strive to be hospitable. Bless those who persecute you; **bless, and do not curse**" (vs 12-14).

That ties in with what Jesus said, 'blessed are you if you're persecuted' (Matt. 5:10-12). You're to 'love your enemies and bless those that persecute you and despitefully use you.'

"...**bless, and do not curse**...

[it's too easy to curse]

...Rejoice with those who rejoice...

[you have empathy and feeling with all of those brethren]

...and weep with those who weep" (vs 14-15).

There are times that you will be empathic and weep with those who have a sorrowful situation. There are times when people's lives have really been hurt and crushed. You can't help but weep! There are times when I think about what has happened to the Church and I feel like Jeremiah that 'oh my eyes were rivers of water.'

Verse 16: "Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high ambitions..."

God is going to take care of the calling. That doesn't mean not to improve yourself; that doesn't mean not to increase in what you're able to do. That means just don't have high ambitions like this fellow on television that 'you can do anything you want to do, you can be anything you want to be, just pull yourself up by your bootstraps.'



You can do certain things. You can change certain things. But don't set out and say, 'I'm going to make all the money in the world that I can make.' That's a high ambition. 'I'm going to be President of the United States.' That's a high ambition. Too many times, a lot of these high ambitions have an evil price tag to go along with it.

"...rather, be accommodating with those of low estate....

[those who are in humble circumstances realize that they need help and so forth]

...Do not be wise in your own eyes. Do not render to anyone evil for evil, *but* be prepared to do what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, as much as is your part, be at peace with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves; rather, leave *this* to *God's* wrath...

[if you have to, and you're real angry, sleep on it, *if* you can sleep]

...for it is written, "'Vengeance is Mine! I will recompense," says *the Lord*" (vs 16-19).

There's a reason why God says this because there's nothing worse than a miserable night's non-sleep.

Ephesians 4:26: "*When* you become angry, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger."

Don't go to bed angry. All you're going to do is lose a night's sleep. What are you going to solve anyway? Has any anger or frustration or fighting mental battles at night ever solved the problem or convinced the other person to change? *No!* Put them into God's hands. They're in better hands—aren't they?

- God, You know how to deal with this.
- God, You know how to intervene and take care of this.
- I don't know the way.
- I'm filled with anger and rage, help me to get rid of it, get it out of my mind.
- You take care of it.

God *will* take care of it! And He'll take care of **it in His time** and **in His way** and it will be far better than what you could do.

So, vengeance belongs to the Lord! And the day of vengeance is the Feast of Trumpets. God will take the vengeance. And if you don't think God is able to take vengeance, you think about all the plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt.

Deuteronomy 32:39: "'See now that I, *even* I am He, and there is no god besides Me. I kill, and I make alive...

[notice Who has all the power; God does]

...I wound and I heal. Neither *is there any* that can deliver out of My hand, for I lift up My hand to heaven and say, 'I live forever! If I sharpen My glittering sword, and if My

hand takes hold in judgment, I will give vengeance to My enemies and will reward those that hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the hairy scalp of the enemy." Rejoice, O, nations, *with* His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His foes and will be merciful to His land, to His people." (vs 39-43).

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- Romans 12:3
- Matthew 13:16-17
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- Sermon Series/Booklet: *Judge Righteous Judgment* by Fred R. Coulter
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