

Romans 12

By: Charles Stanley

From: On the Epistle to the Romans

We come now to practical righteousness, the state and walk of those who have been made the recipients of the grace of God, who have been taken up in sovereign, free favor, justified from all things; without condemnation in Christ. It is by this very compassion of God that these precepts are addressed to them. “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies [or compassion] of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable [or intelligent] service.”

It certainly does require some intelligence, as to these bodies, to yield them up thus in intelligent service. We are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). They are about to be fashioned like unto His glorious body. We are about to bear the image of the heavenly. Even as to our bodies, we shall soon see Him, and be like Him (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:48; 1 John 3:2).

Now, having intelligence as to all this, we can give up our bodies beforehand, to be His now, to be used in holy separation to Him, and for Him. What a privilege! But this cannot possibly be, if we are conformed to this world — a world at enmity with Him. And as we have been renewed in spirit, “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” If God has saved us, in pure mercy and compassion, then let us intelligently seek to know His will, prove what that will is. This will require spiritual intelligence as to the time or dispensation in which we are found. The good and acceptable, and perfect will of God as to this can only be known and proved in lowliness of soul and entire dependence.

Verse 3: “For I say; through the grace given unto Me.” What a constant need of the sense of the free favor shown to us individually, and given unto us! It is this that enables us to have low thoughts of self, and to think soberly, or to

think so as to be wise, as God has dealt to each a measure of faith.

Verses 4-5: As there was one nation *in the flesh* in the past dispensation, and a covenant of commandments adapted to that dispensation, “so we, being many, are one body IN CHRIST, and every one members one of another.” What a contrast this is to Israel; and we must have intelligence as to this, or we cannot prove the excellent will of God to us now. In the past no person could be in Christ. Christ must die, and be raised from the dead, or remain alone; but now we are one body in Christ. And this truth must rule all our obedience to Christ. We are to act in union, like the various members of the human body, even as we are one body in Christ. It is not so much the doctrine of the one body here, as the practice of all the members of that one body.

Verse 6: Still ever remembering, “Having, then, gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” Surely, whatever may be the service in the one body in Christ, it is all grace, all free favor. With this blessed sense of the free favor of God, let us be diligent in the service, whatever it may be whether prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, or ruling. Let all be done with cheerfulness, and thus these heavenly precepts are so plain, they need no explanation, further than seeing all must be done in reference to the one body in Christ. And yet each precept is of the utmost importance, and can only be kept as walking in the Spirit; indeed, these are fruits of the Spirit. Will the flesh, still in us, “cleave to that which is good,” or, “in honor preferring one another,” or will it “bless them which persecute you”? No, it will ever persecute that which is born of the Spirit.

Verse 16 should be, “Have the same respect one for another, not minding high things, but going along with the lowly.” The very opposite of this world’s ways.

Verses 17, 19: How liable we are to forget this blessed teaching; how ready the flesh is to return evil for evil. And how sad when indolence takes the place of providing things

honest in the sight of all men. Yes, without care, the Christian may fall into the almost universal dishonesty of the world. Is not a deceitful, dishonest transaction of the same character as highway robbery? These are words that need to be put up in every office, shop, and house: “PROVIDE THINGS HONEST IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN.” Oh, for more faith and unswerving obedience in the common things of everyday life. We are persuaded it is carelessness in these things, if not worse than carelessness, that is the cause of much of our weakness. And how the flesh in each of us would avenge ourselves! But these are the words of the Spirit to us: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.”

Did He, whose precious name we bear, avenge Himself? The day of vengeance, of judgment

on an ungodly world, will come; but are we not the followers of Him who healed His enemy’s ear? Oh, to be more like Him. What tender words are these: “if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” Where shall we find such words apart from the inspired scriptures of truth? Leave man to himself, will he act thus? No, no, these are the precious fruits of the Spirit. May they abound in us more and more.

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59 Industrial Road
P.O. Box 649
Addison, IL 60101

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