ROMANS 12

A Living Sacrifice and a Renewed Mind

From the Mercies of God to Love That Overcomes Evil

> *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*
> ROMANS 12:2

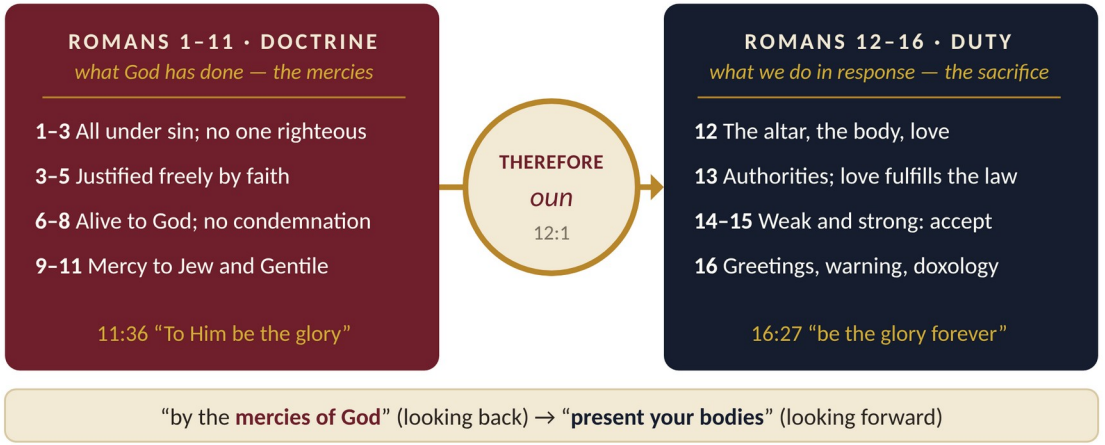
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Paul has brought us

1. Romans 11 ends with Paul out of breath: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

2. The appeal is made “by the mercies of God” — oiktirmōn, the deep compassion of God (G3628), the plural word Paul uses again for “the Father of mercies” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

3. The church in Rome, written to from Corinth around AD 57, was a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers meeting in homes (16:5), and chapters 14–15 show the friction between them.



Present Your Bodies

The great "therefore" — mercy received, a body offered, a mind made new

ROMANS 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

DAVID GUZIK

Doctrine before duty; the sacrifice is brought alive to the altar; worship by the Word.

R.C. SPROUL

Therefore makes us perk up; whole self, whole life; nonconformity is the easy part.

C.H. SPURGEON

Not enough to be nonconformists — be transformed; everyday labour as priestly sacrifice.

MATTHEW HENRY

Christ living in the soul makes the body a living sacrifice; a new heart is God's work.

παραστῆσαι τὰ σώματα … θυσίαν ζῶσαν

PARASTĒSAI … THYSIAN ZŌSAN · "TO PRESENT … A LIVING SACRIFICE"

Paristēmi (G3936) is the priest's verb — to set beside, to place at someone's disposal — and Paul has used it five times in Romans 6:13–19: "present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead."

Conformed or Transformed (12:2)

DO NOT BE CONFORMED
συσχηματίζεσθε · G4964

Root: σχῆμα — the outward shape, the pose

Pressure: from outside, pressing in

Mold: "this world" — τῷ αἰῶνι, this age

Lasts: "the fashion … passeth away"
(σχῆμα again, 1 Cor 7:31 KJV)

Also: 1 Pet 1:14 — "do not be conformed to the former lusts"

a costume put on

BE TRANSFORMED
μεταμορφοῦσθε · G3339

Root: μορφή — the form, the real nature

Power: from inside, working out

Means: "the renewing (ἀνακαίνωσις) of your mind" — G342

Same verb: the Transfiguration
(Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2) and 2 Cor 3:18

Goal: the image of the Son (8:29)

a new life showing through

Both verbs are present imperatives in the passive voice — you are always being shaped;
the result: you "prove" (**δοκιμάζω**, test and approve) God's will — good · acceptable · perfect

Two verbs, two directions: the world presses a shape onto you from outside; the Spirit changes the form from inside by renewing the mind — and both verbs are going on all the time.

One Body, Many Gifts

Sound judgment about yourself, and seven gifts of grace put to work

ROMANS 12:3

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

DAVID GUZIK

Even saving faith is a gift; teaching without exhortation makes fat sheep.

R.C. SPROUL

Sober esteem, not low esteem; every Christian gifted; prophecy as interpreting the Word.

C.H. SPURGEON

Humility is sober thinking, pride drunken thinking; stand in your own niche.

MATTHEW HENRY

Faith is the radical grace; free grace is the spring of every gift — use them.

μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν … ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν

HYPERPHRONEIN … SŌPHRONEIN · "THINK MORE HIGHLY … SOUND JUDGMENT"

Verse 3 is a wordplay on phroneō, "to think, to set the mind": not hyper-phronein (G5252, only here) — to think above, to over-think oneself — but phronein eis to sō-phronein, to think toward sound…

Seven Gifts, Seven Manners (12:6–8)

χαρίσματα · GIFTS OF GRACE — "according to the grace given to us" (v. 6)

	THE GIFT	PAUL'S GREEK	THE MANNER — HOW IT IS TO BE USED	
1	**Prophecy**	προφητεία	according to the proportion of his faith	v. 6
2	**Service**	διακονία	in his serving	v. 7
3	**Teaching**	ὁ διδάσκων	in his teaching	v. 7
4	**Exhorting**	ὁ παρακαλῶν	in his exhortation	v. 8
5	**Giving**	ὁ μεταδιδούς	with liberality — ἐν ἁπλότητι, single-hearted	v. 8
6	**Leading**	ὁ προϊστάμενος	with diligence — ἐν σπουδῇ, eager haste	v. 8
7	**Mercy**	ὁ ἐλεῶν	with cheerfulness — ἐν ἱλαρότητι	v. 8

Every gift is named with its manner — Paul tells not only *what* to do, but *how*.

Read across each row: Paul names the gift and then, every time, the manner of using it — the gift is grace, the manner is faithfulness.

Love Without Hypocrisy

Love that hates evil, gives honor, burns in spirit and opens the door

ROMANS 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

DAVID GUZIK

Hypocritical love isn't love; abhor and cling — both; pursue strangers with welcome.

R.C. SPROUL

Love genuine and authentic; the kingdom never a secondary interest; hope as certainty.

C.H. SPURGEON

Be a good hater; burn — let your soul get hot; no fits and starts.

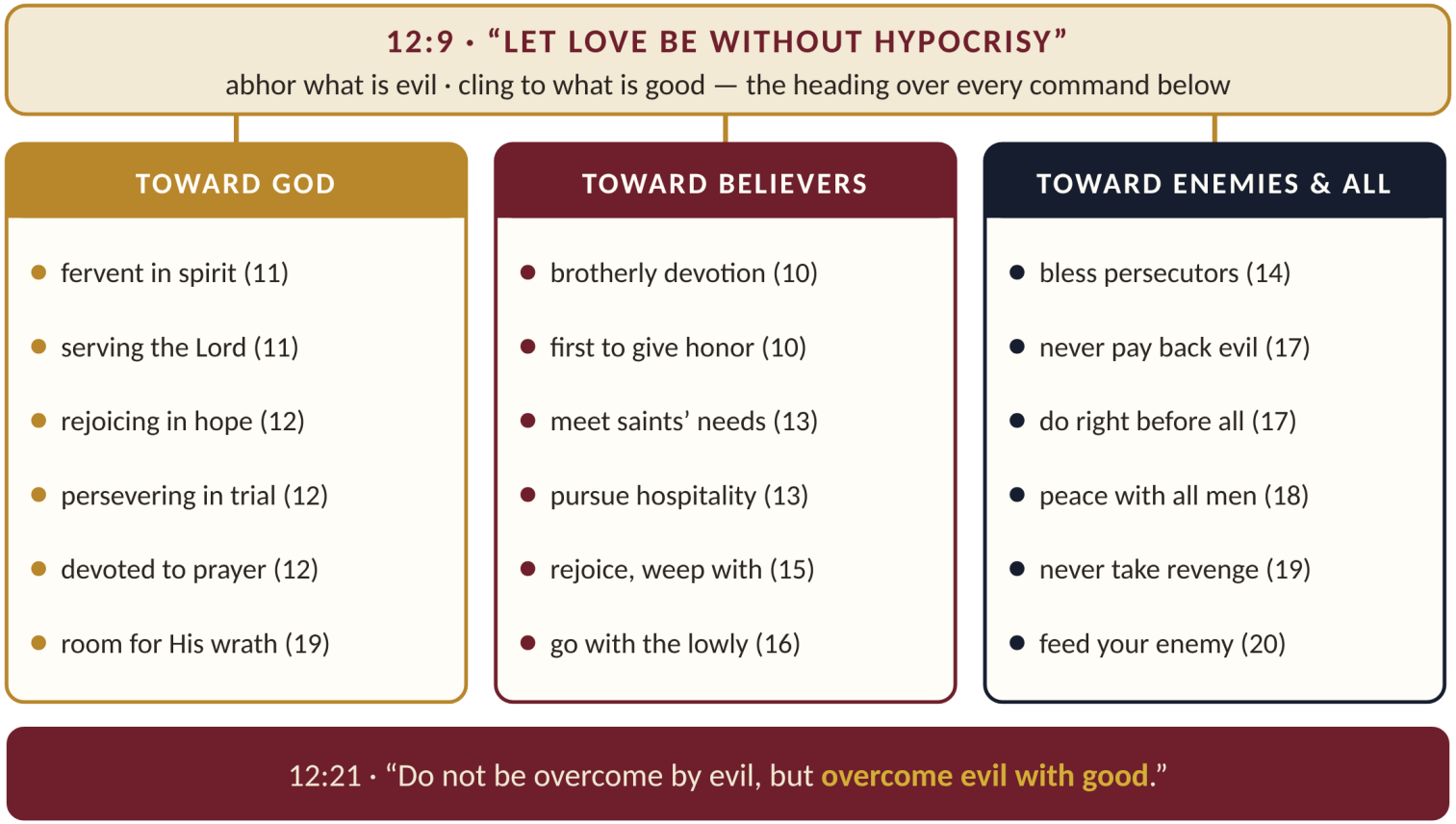
MATTHEW HENRY

Love in reality, not compliment; be forward to give others the pre-eminence.

ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος· ἀποστυγοῦντες
ANYPOKRITOS · APOSTYGOUNTES

Hypokritēs was the stage actor who spoke from behind a mask; a-nypokritos (G505) is love with the mask off — unfeigned, the same word for "sincere love of the brethren" (1 Peter 1:22) and for the…

The Rapid-Fire Commands of 12:9–21



Under one heading — sincere love — the commands fall into three directions: upward to God, inward to the family of believers, and outward to enemies and all men, until evil itself is overcome.

Bless, Weep, Stoop

Blessing the persecutor, sharing joy and grief, keeping company with the lowly

ROMANS 12:16

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.

DAVID GUZIK

Persecution can come from inside; shared joy and grief is the same mind.

R.C. SPROUL

Presence over words in grief; unity more than doctrine; test your own opinions.

C.H. SPURGEON

A cursing Christian is an awkward spectacle; rejoicing with others is the harder half.

MATTHEW HENRY

True love shares sorrows and joys; love is a condescending grace.

εὐλογεῖτε … καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε
EULOGEITE … KATARASTHE · "BLESS … AND DO NOT CURSE"

Eulogeō (G2127) is "to speak well" — eu + logos — and in Scripture to call down God's good on someone.

Overcome Evil with Good

No payback, no private revenge — feed the enemy and leave the verdict to God

ROMANS 12:19

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

DAVID GUZIK

Peace may not always be possible; destroy an enemy by making him a friend.

R.C. SPROUL

Vengeance is good but God's alone; vindication is not vengeance; Jesus' grand strategy.

C.H. SPURGEON

Good is the only weapon; evil for evil cuts the man who uses it.

MATTHEW HENRY

Private revenge steps into God's throne; he who cannot bear an injury is conquered.

μὴ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδικοῦντες … δότε τόπον τῇ ὀργῇ

EKDIKOUNTES … DOTE TOPON TĒ ORGĒ · "AVENGING … GIVE PLACE TO THE WRATH"

Ekdikeō (G1556) is to avenge, to exact justice; ekdikēsis (G1557), "vengeance," is the noun in the quotation.

What to carry from this chapter

1

The hinge is one word.

“Therefore” (oun) in 12:1 turns eleven chapters of mercy into five chapters of response.

2

The altar now takes the living.

Thysia comes from a verb meaning “to kill,” and Paul calls it “living.”

3

Worship is logical.

Logikē latreia — reasonable, rational service.

4

Conformed is a costume; transformed is a new nature.

Syschēmatizō works on the outside shape; metamorphoō, the word of the Transfiguration, works from inside out — and both are present tense: you are always being shaped by…

More to carry

5

Humility is sanity.

The same word as the healed demoniac “in his right mind” stands behind “sound judgment” (v. 3).

6

Every gift comes with a manner.

Paul never names a gift in vv. 6–8 without saying how to use it — liberality, diligence, cheerfulness.

7

Love has a recoil and a grip.

“Abhor” (apostygeō, only here) is hatred intensified; “cling” is the glue of marriage.

8

Chase the stranger.

The verb for “practicing” hospitality (v. 13) is the verb for “persecute” (v. 14).

Talk it through

1. Paul does not say “present your bodies” until he has spent eleven chapters on “the mercies of God.” Which of those mercies most moves you to give God your body this week — your eyes, your hands, your schedule?

2. Where is this age pressing you into its mold right now — in what you watch, what you want, or how you talk about people? What would “the renewing of your mind” look like there, concretely?

3. Is your estimate of yourself sober — not too high, not falsely low? What gift has God allotted you, and is it being used, buried, or envied?

4. “Let love be without hypocrisy.” Where in this group or your home do you wear a mask of love over resentment, indifference or performance?

5. Who is hard for you to rejoice with right now — and who is hard to weep with? Which comes more easily to you, and what does that reveal?

CLOSING

Romans 12 does not leave the gospel behind; it shows the gospel walking around in a body. The man who has been shown mercy lays himself on the altar, lets his mind be remade, uses his gift, loves without a mask, and feeds the enemy who hurt him — because the One who will judge has already loved him while he was an enemy (5:10).

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study, reflection journal and film: see the Romans study page.