

Overview

Having completed his teaching on an argument for the grace of God in salvation - without the self effort of man, Paul begins to show how Grace has a practical bearing on the life and walk of the man in Christ. There has never been the intent for these great doctrines of the Grace of God to be formulas for the intellectual speculation of men that have nothing better to do than to answer the different questions of life. Grace can do that, but offers so much more. As the Grace of God is brought to bear on the hearts and lives of men, they will find God's answers for their lives. He therefore calls on men everywhere to present themselves to God without reservation.

Verse Commentary

Verse 1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

The whole argument of the first eleven chapters is teaching us our obligation to devote ourselves to God with our whole heart; that we accept Christ and are born again. Also, we accept Christ as Lord and Savior and sanctification begins.

From expressions like these, it is clear the apostle never supposed that the doctrine of Grace would lead to loose living that grace might abound. The reality of the fact is that Jesus said, "if a man would follow me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow." Therefore Paul's position here is the same as that of Jesus.

- "By the mercies of God." This is showing our need of God's help in this dedication of our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Certainly God is vitally involved in our devoting our bodies to Him.
- "A living sacrifice." Both Jesus and Paul teach us our dedicating ourselves to God is a commitment, to give our lives to Him. Being willing to give up our lives is the moral quality of this calling. This is the true nature of the followers of our God.
- "Holy." The meaning here is without blemish or defect. The Jew would not offer to God an animal with a blemish nor would God accept it of them. We would call this "following God with our whole heart."
- "Acceptable to God." The practice of "half hearted" service to God is the norm in today's society. One Christian author said it this way: "We are saved by accepting Christ as Savior; we are sanctified by accepting Christ as Lord." We may do the first without doing the second. Many are teaching today that the rapture will include the whole church, without regard to our walk. I do not agree. The rapture is for the over-comers, those who accept Christ as Lord. Anything less than this would be unacceptable to God. *It is teaching a divided Christ.*
- "reasonable service." This service is not teaching man's well thought out service, but that which has become a whole hearted worship to God. The thing that pleases God is our entire giving of ourselves to worship to God.

Verse 2 *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

- “Not conformed” = This means to form, fashion, or shape one thing after or like another. We are in this world but not of it. We are not to look like the world. The devil has the intention of causing God’s people to look like the world, it’s dress, actions, or habits. To enjoy the same things as the world. To become satisfied in the same manner as the world. We are not to find our happiness or our completion in the fashion of this world.
- “world” = This same word is found in **Galatians 1:4** -*Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father.*

The meaning is “an age or generation of men.” The world takes on different appearances and meaning in different time periods. Example: People seem to want to have the latest gadgets or clothes. Another example : a fad is to change our bodies into something we are not...known as transgender. However, the Bible teaches us that we are to be changed by the Gospel. We are to be governed solely by the Divine laws of the Bible.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

- “Be ye transformed” = To change the outward figure; to alter the shape or appearance, change the bearing or look. This is the kind of change that comes about as we believe God’s word. A word of caution: This kind of transformation also is seen in a negative form.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ and no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

- “by the renewing of your mind” = renewal, renovation, a making other and different from that which had been formerly. Same word as seen in : **Titus 3:5** *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and **renewing** of the Holy Ghost.*

Only by our renewed mind can we expect any growth into Godliness. Our fellowship form a very necessary basis for this maturing. This is an eternal work, carried on by the blessed spirit, as we allow Him time and place in our hearts. This is called a spiritual walk. This comes out of a spiritual life.

- “that you may prove” = Prove is to assay, to make trial of, put to the proof, examine or prove by testing. This proving is commonly used of metal tried by fire. The sense is that our renewed mind is essential for a clear understanding of God’s word, and a willingness to enter into the mind and will of God when He shows us these depths.

1 Corinthians 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

The heart that is fashioned like the world will not be able to enter into the will of God nor clearly see, understand God’s word, God’s thoughts, God’s ways.

Psalms 25:9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

Verse 3 *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

This is one of those verses that is a single exhortation, after telling us that by yielding to God we can prove the will of God for our lives. The caution here is that there is basically one hinderance to our discovering the will of God for our lives: Pride. Let's look at some thoughts about pride.

1. Over estimating one's importance among God's people is a very serious and common problem.
2. The only one that can possibly have a valid estimate of himself is the one who has surrendered himself, his body, a living sacrifice to God.
3. To each one is given a measure of faith. Note: This is a measure of faith...not a measure of talent or of knowledge.
4. When a man surrenders himself to become a living sacrifice to God, this measure of faith has a great potential for real Christian service.

By these qualities, Paul is showing us God's standard for Christian service. We must be very careful not to judge ourselves by our perceived abilities. Note: "As God has dealt to every man the measure of faith." The result of this standard is humility, modesty, soberness, and prudence.

Verse 4 & 5 *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

The health and proper function of the human body is shown to be an example of what is meant to work together so as to please God. There are different offices in the church. One is not better than the other. These all form one body in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 *13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

This one body is called the church: **Colossians 1:18** *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

This one body is made up of both Jew and Gentile, made one by the Cross. And this body, the church is called glorious.

Ephesians 2:6 *6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

Ephesians 5:27 *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Verse 6 *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

These gifts are given to various members of the body of Christ for its' edification, exhortation, comfort.

1 Corinthians 14:3 *But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.*

These gifts are intended to set the church apart from those who function by the wisdom and strength of the natural man. These are supernatural empowerments, and when practiced in humility and grace, will make the church a fruitful, spiritual body of believers.

Note: A clear and definitive exhortation in verse three: A man must not think more highly of himself than he should. The reason for this exhortation is when God gifts a man for a ministry, it will be very obvious that he is empowered by God. God does not overrule the man he uses. The man is supposed to prophecy according to the proportion of faith.

Verse 7 *Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;*
The ministry here includes any service to the body of Christ. Serving tables or speaking the word.

Acts 6:4 *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

The minister must wait on his ministry. This means to be “occupied with.” He must prepare himself, as in study and prayer. Trusting in God. Teaching is a vital part of this ministry. It has the meaning of instruction in spiritual things.

Verse 8 *Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

- **Exhortation:** This gift is a very important part of the local church. Exhortation is a touching of the will. The purpose is to persuade God’s people to follow God with their whole heart. True exhortation is not condemnation. The man that exhorts in the spirit will also walk in the spirit. This gift may be practiced by many of the other leaders of the local church.
- **Giving:** This giving seems to be a person who has been put into this office for the church. This was practiced in the early church and is still in practice today, in some places. Simplicity means singleness of heart and mind; but is not referring to private giving, rather in office of the church.
- **He that ruleth:** To set over, to stand before, to preside over.

1 Timothy 3:4-5 *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)*

This same word is used both for ruling the home or the church. The thought seems to be in any place of responsibility, to use diligence. That is earnestness and zeal.

- **Mercy:** To have the desire to relieve the miserable or distressed. This is particularly addressed to those who care for the sick or aged. We say of some today: “They are good in this work.” In reality, God has called some to feel this compassion to the needy.

2 Corinthians 9:7 *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

This reference is directed toward those who give. However, I think it applies very well for those who minister to the needy. If truth be known, we all are needy and a kind word or a ready smile is of great value. Often in the midst of a kind word will be a word of guidance.

Verse 9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

- Love without dissimulation = unfeigned without hypocrisy; to be unlike the other. This word expresses the exact opposite of Jesus words in

John 17:23 *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

This unity in love doesn't mean that we are not different human beings in our personalities, but that this love God has put in us is able to overrule our natural personalities.

- Abhor = To hate, to turn from, avoid.
Psalm 97:10

The person who loves the world, whether saved or unsaved, will find it difficult to hate evil due to the fact the devil has made evil attractive.

1 Corinthians 15:33 *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*

Proverbs 13:20 *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

- Cleave to the good = To join fast together, to glue together, cement together. This word cleave is a strong word with good reason. Our fellowship is very influential in how we walk with God.

Verse 10 *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

- Kindly affectioned: To love with tender affection. The kind of affection parents have for their children

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*

There are so few that exhibit this tender affection toward one another. This affection comes from having given our bodies a living sacrifice unto God. These also will prefer one another in love. This means they will put the needs of others before their own.

Verse 11 *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;*

- Slothful: Slow, tardy, lazy, idle, destitute of mind.

Proverbs 6:10-11 *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.*

This does not refer to any certain employment; various kinds of labor is intended, encouraging industry and faithfulness in his duties. The idea is to have a strong work ethic and to value our time. This gives the mind something to do, hence, keeping one out of trouble.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;*

2 Thessalonians 3:10 *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

- Fervent in spirit = To boil, to be hot. Apollos was such a man.

Acts 18:25 *This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.*

Love is the constant that is behind this fervent spirit.

Matthew 24:12 *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

When someone is slow or lazy, it shows an attitude of the world and their love of it.

Verse 12 *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*
Rejoicing in hope = To be delighted, pleased, to be glad. The Christians should be the one full of hope.

1 John 3:3 *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

Romans 5:2 *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Undergirding all tribulation should be the daily practice of prayer. This should be the kind of prayer which leaves us full of confidence and hope. This continuing *instant in prayer* is interesting: To be strong and firm towards anything. To endure, persevere, to stay with a thing until completed.

Verse 13 *Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*

This distribution is probably an office of the early church. They had very few Holiday Inns nor restaurants. This work of the early church was a very large and important part of the church. However, we must not assume this ministry ended with the early church.

1 Timothy 6:18 *That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute*, willing to communicate;*

Hospitality is of a similar need in today's church.

Verse 14 *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*

See **Matthew 5:44** *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

This shows that we really are children of God. Do not allow this to make us angry. This is one of the most severe of Christian duties, but also, one of the most rewarding. There is an inward discipline here, that is, be careful of our inward thoughts.

Verse 15 *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

This ability to rejoice with some, or weep with others, grows out of the unity of verses 4-5. The Church is one and we feel the needs and hurts of its members.

1 Corinthians 12:26 *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

To be able to enter into each other's trials is God given. This is the comfort of God whereby we comfort one another.

Verse 16 *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

We are to seek after the same things for each other. In other words, what we seek for ourselves, seek the same for our brothers. Do not allow the church to easily be divided. The members of the church, though different individuals, should pursue the same ends. One member should not indulge himself in separate activities in the church. What we think concerning ourselves, we should think the same of others.

1 Peter 3:8 *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

The thoughts of this verse stem from the renewed mind of verse 2. Mind not high things: this is the core of the problem of the first part of verse 16. If we are wise in our own conceits, this comes from pride, and is the basis of what divisions are made of. We should be able to interact with all members of the church. We have the example of Jesus:

Philippians 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

These wonderful truths can only be practiced as we each present our bodies a living sacrifice to God.

Verse 17 *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

It is inevitable there will be issues arise in the church, because the devil is there to stir up trouble. We must be willing and able to be mis-used and not retaliate. There should never be the thought of getting even.

Colossians 3:13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

Provide things honest: The thought here is being careful to take forethought before Christians or non-Christians; taking forethought to do the honest, honorable and right thing.

Verse 18 *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

Jesus told the people "I came not to bring peace but a sword."; Paul, because of his stand for preaching truth, caused trouble everywhere he went. But neither of them, Jesus or Paul, was ever the selfish cause of trouble. We can't always be at peace with all men, but we can be a peace-lover or peace-maker among men.

Romans 8:36 *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

We must be careful about claiming our so-called rights, instead be willing to take the wrong.

Verse 19 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

James 1:20 *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

It is nearly impossible to back away from vengeance without presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God. Seeking vengeance is taking into our own hands things that belong only to God. Only God knows all the details of the conditions and motives that are needed to settle these issues between people.

1 Corinthians 6:7 & 8 *Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*

Verse 20 *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

This is showing us how to leave our issues with others to God alone. The scripture says the goodness of God leads a man to repentance. That is what we are doing when we give a hungry man food, or a thirsty man water. The coals of fire here are the kindnesses we may do to our enemies. These acts of kindness touch his conscience and cause him to be convicted.

Verse 21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Do not allow a negative reaction to something done to us that brings deep hurt. The best way to resist evil is to do good. This is the way to promote peace among the brethren.

