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Romans 12:1

AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE

I beseech you therefore, brethren ... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God - Romans 12:1

The admonition of the apostle Paul in this verse is not at all unreasonable; in fact, it is a most logical request. In consideration of the mercies of God and all that He has done for us, and in contemplation of Christ's work of redemption at Calvary and the great sacrifice He made there, it is only reasonable that believers give their bodies back to Him as living sacrifices for service. Nothing less than a complete presentation of our bodies, however, will ever be acceptable to God. Our "sacrifice" must involve an entire and full surrender.

It was Dr. Arthur T. Pierson who gave a most striking illustration of the need to give our "all," with nothing held back. He said,

"Supposing you had one thousand acres of land and someone approached you and made an offer to buy your farm. You agree to sell the land, except for one acre right in the very center, with provisions for a right of way. Do you know," he continued, "that the law would allow you to have access to that one, lone spot in the middle of that thousand acres? You could build a road all across the remainder of that farm to get to that small plot of ground. And so it is with the Christian who makes less than a one-hundred-percent surrender to God. You can be sure that the devil will make an inroad across that person's life to reach the unsundered portion and, as a result, his testimony and service will be marred and have little effect upon others."

Christian, does the Lord have your body? Have you ever by a very definite act of the will presented it to Him for His control, His use, and His glory? If not, why don't you do so right now? Just say, "Lord, I've already given You my heart, but now here is my body! Help me to keep it clean, pure, and undefiled. Use me for Your glory in any way You see fit. I'm Yours to command!"

Poor is my best and small;

How could I dare divide?

Surely the Lord shall have my all,

He shall not be denied!—Anon.

There is no risk, only blessing, when we surrender ourselves to God!

Our Daily Bread

Romans 12:1-2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Romans 12:1-2

To do your will, O my God, is my desire; your law is within my heart. - Psalm 40:8

In his devotional poem, "The Altar," seventeenth-century pastor George Herbert pictures his heart as

an altar for sacrifice and worship before God: "A broken altar, Lord, thy servant rears, / Made of a heart, and cemented with tears."

The poet glorifies God as the creator of his heart, and compares it to the natural stones required for Jewish altars (cf. Ex. 20:25). He then expands the image of a stone, admitting that only God could succeed in shaping his stone-hard heart (cf. Ezek. 36:26). As a result, even though there has been suffering along the way, his whole being praises the name of the Lord.

Herbert concludes his poem with a prayer for further sanctification: "Oh let thy blessed sacrifice be mine, / And sanctify this altar to be thine."

George Herbert recognized that offering ourselves as living sacrifices is one of the joyful requirements of the Christian life. There's no better way to close our month's study on sacrifice than with these classic verses from Romans 12.

What does it mean to be "living sacrifices" or "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5)? It means we are consecrated, committed, and dedicated; willing, obedient, and submissive. It means we must die to self and live to God (cf. Jn. 12:24-25). The language of these verses speaks also of eternal life, spiritual transformation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17), and worship. We want our "ears pierced," so to speak--a sign of lifelong servanthood (Ex. 21:6), a service that is freedom because God is the Master (Ps. 40:6-8).

A "living sacrifice" has the "Here am I" attitude shown in today's verse (cf. Is. 6:, ready to go anywhere and do anything that is God's will. Our motivation, as always, is the salvation we have through God's mercy (Rom. 12:1). With the spiritual renewing of our minds comes discernment to see and respond to God's will (v. 2).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - What a journey this month has been! Why not review the road today? What lessons has God taught you personally? What new perspectives on Easter do you have in light of the Old Testament sacrifices? What do you know about Christ that you didn't know before?

ROMANS 12:1

Present your bodies a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

A young woman went to a Scottish preacher and asked how she could resolve her problem with desires that contradicted the will of God. The minister wrote two words on a slip of paper. Then he asked the woman to ponder the words for ten minutes, cross out one of them, and bring the slip back to him. The woman looked at the two words on the slip: "No" and "Lord." It did not take her long to realize that if she said no, she could not say Lord, and if she wanted to call Christ Lord, she could not say no.

Herein lies the secret of discerning God's will for our lives. We cannot know God's choice concerning the limitless options before us until we put ourselves unconditionally at His disposal. We must turn over all our rights. Presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is another way of saying "Yes, Lord" to any command. Once we settle the question of our yieldedness, we can take the second step, which is to bring our behavior in line with the renewing of our minds. Renewing occurs only when we pattern our thinking after the principles of God's Word, not the prevailing ideas of the world around us.

If you are trying to discover God's plan for your life, you must first make a complete sacrifice of your body. —D.J.D.

God gives His very best to those who leave the choice with Him.

WILDERNESS WANDERINGS - And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people (Exodus 13:21-22).

Our Daily Bread

Romans 12:1

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.

To present carries us back to Romans 7. We might almost say that the intervening chapters, after the manner of the apostle, are one prolonged digression or parenthesis, and that he classes all the great things with which he has been treating as among the mercies of God, and as reasons for our entire consecration. Every disclosure of God's grace towards us is an argument for our complete surrender to his will and power.

We are called on to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness, because all true regimen of the inner life immediately affects the body in all its members; and, conversely, the consecration of the body reacts upon and affects the temper of the soul. It would be well for you to take bliss Havergal's hymn, with its enumeration of the various parts of the body, and offer and present yourself, to be from this day and forward, wholly for God. Only believe that He is more anxious for this than words can tell, because He loves you so, and that He accepts immediately what you offer.

Such consecration must be living; that is, it must enter into all our life, being holy, well-pleasing to God, and rational. It is not only reasonable when we consider the relation we sustain to Him, but it should engage all our intelligence and reasoning faculties. And when it is made, and the soul is becoming duly transfigured in its exercise, we begin to prove that God's will, which once we dreaded, is also good, well-pleasing, and perfect. When we look at God's will from a distance, and before consecration, it seems impossible. It is only when we begin to obey, that we can say:

"Thou sweet beloved will of God."

Meyer, F. B.. Our Daily Homily Vol. 5

Romans 12:1-2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Genesis chapter 22 tells a familiar story. In this gripping account, God asked Abraham to present his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. In obedience, the two of them set out, carrying items needed for making an offering to the Lord. When they arrived at the designated spot and Abraham began preparations, Isaac asked, ""Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"" Abraham's answer: God will provide (Gen. 22:7-8).

Abraham bound Isaac and laid him on top of the wood on the altar. Just as he was about to slay his son with a knife, the Lord intervened and provided a ram for the burnt offering. God honored Abraham's willingness to sacrifice that which was most valuable to him, his son. In faith, Abraham put his all on the altar (Heb. 11:17-19).

Similarly, Romans 12:1-2 tells us to present ourselves as living sacrifices to God. We can hold nothing back. His mercies demand total faith and surrender on our part.

Perhaps the most important word in this text is the first one: ""Therefore."" This word indicates that because of all that God has done for us in Christ, offering ourselves to Him is only reasonable. It's also a great defense against the devil's wiles. A body presented to God is off limits to the enemy (see Rom. 6:11-14).

A renewed mind is another strong defense against our spiritual enemy. The difference between conforming to the world's pattern and being transformed by God is the difference between darkness and light, between death and life.

Notice how Paul pictures the unbelieving world--and by extension, its ruling prince, the devil. The world's system is constantly hammering away at us, trying to bend and shape us until we are doing other than God's will.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We usually think of God's will in terms of a decision or a choice we need to make sometime in the future.

But in the Scriptures, the emphasis is on the will of God that is clearly revealed in its pages. This is important because it's in the context of obedience to His revealed will that God helps us with the specific decisions we need to make.

Romans 12:1-2

Tattered Umbrella

Several years ago I read an article about Queen Mary, who made it her practice to visit Scotland every year. She was so loved by the people there that she often mingled with them freely without a protective escort. One afternoon while walking with some children, she went out farther than she'd planned. Dark clouds came up unexpectedly, so she stopped at a nearby house to borrow an umbrella. "If you will lend me one," she said to the lady who answered the door, "I will send it back to you tomorrow." The woman didn't recognize the Queen and was reluctant to give this stranger her best umbrella. So she handed her one that she intended to throw away. The fabric was torn in several places and one of the ribs was broken.

The next day another knock was heard at the door. When the lady opened it, she was greeted by a royal guard, who was holding in her hand her old, tattered umbrella. "The Queen sent me," he said. "She asked me to thank you for loaning her this." For a moment the woman was stunned, then, she burst into tears. "Oh, what an opportunity I missed," she cried. "I didn't give the Queen my very best!"

Our Daily Bread

Romans 12:1-2 Turning Point

The surrender of one's will to Jesus is essential to a life of joy and victory. Oswald Chambers called this "giving up my right to myself." We hold nothing back—no earthly life, no material gain, no pride-filled position—but simply say, "Jesus, do with my life whatever You want." Many Christians hold back from yielding all to Christ because they fear that it will bring terrible consequences, the death of a loved one or some other great loss.

F. B. Meyer reflected on a turning point to his spiritual life and how he overcame this fear. "The devil said, 'Don't do it! There is no knowing what you may come to.' At first I thought there was something to it, then I remembered my daughter, who was a little willful then, and loved her own way. I thought to myself as I knelt, Supposing that she were to come and say—'Father, from tonight I am going to put my life in your hand. Do with it what you will.' Would I call her mother to her side and say, 'Here is a chance to torment her'? .I knew I would not say that. I knew I would say to my wife, 'Our child is going to follow our will from now on. Do you know of anything that is hurting her?' 'Yes, so and so.' 'Does she love it much?' 'Yes,' 'Oh, she must give it up. But we will make it as easy for her as we can. We must take from her the things that are hurting her, but we will give her everything that will make her life one long summer day of bliss.'"

Our Daily Bread

Romans 12:1-2 - Honor to God

David Brainerd was an American colonial missionary to the Indians who died at the age of twenty-nine. His diary reveals a young man intensely committed to God. Brainerd once said to Jonathan Edwards: "I do not go to heaven to be advanced but to give honor to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high seat or a low seat there. My heaven is to please God and glorify Him, and give all to Him, and to be wholly devoted to His glory. - Today in the Word

Romans 12:1 - Consecration

"Will you please tell me in a word," said a Christian woman to a minister, "what your idea of consecration is?" Holding out a blank sheet of paper the pastor replied, "It is to sign your name at the bottom of this blank sheet, and to let God fill it in as He will." - The Baptist Challenge

Romans 12:1-2 - Moral Behavior or Christians - A study conducted by The Roper Organization for High Adventure Ministries in 1990 found that the moral behavior of born again Christians actually worsened after their conversions. Examined were incidences of illegal drug use, driving while intoxicated and marital infidelity. The problem can be solved, says one researcher, with a new commitment to accountability and discipleship. - New Man, November/December, 1994, p. 13

Romans 12:1

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice ... which is your reasonable service."

I scarcely like this word sacrifice, because it involves nothing more than a reasonable service. If we gave up all we had and became beggars for Christ, it would display no such chivalrous spirit or magnanimous conduct after all. We would be gainers by the surrender.—

C H Spurgeon

Romans 12:1

The Perfect Gift

Read: Romans 12:1-8

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.

Psalm 96:8

Every year our local botanical garden hosts a celebration of Christmas around the world. My favorite display is a French nativity. Instead of the traditional scene showing shepherds and wise men with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh gathered around the manger, it shows French villagers bringing their gifts to baby Jesus. They bring bread, wine, cheese, flowers, and other items that God has given them the ability to produce. This reminds me of the Old Testament command to bring the firstfruits of our labor to the house of the Lord (Ex. 23:16-19). This depiction of the nativity illustrates that everything we have comes from God, so the only thing we have to give is something that God has given us.

When Paul instructed the Romans to present themselves as a living sacrifice, he was telling them to give back to God what God had given them—their own selves (Rom. 12:1). This includes the gifts He gave them, even their ability to earn a living. We know that God gives people special abilities. Some, like David, were skilled in music (1 Sam. 16:18). Some, like Bezalel and Oholiab, were skilled in artistic works (Ex. 35:30-35). Others have skill in writing, teaching, gardening, and many other things.

When we give back to God what He has first given to us, we give Him the perfect gift—ourselves.

What can you offer to Jesus?

Share on our Facebook page: facebook.com/ourdailybread

Give your all to Christ who gave His all for you.

INSIGHT: There are five listings of spiritual gifts in the New Testament: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:11. In each of these lists the emphasis is not on the different types of gifts but on their diversity and how they are to be used in a way that promotes love and unity in the church (1 Cor. 12:12–13:13). Gifts are to be used to build up the spiritual maturity of the believers (Eph. 4:12-16) and to bring glory to the Lord (1 Peter 4:9-11). In Romans 12 Paul encourages believers to use their gifts in humility (v. 3), in unity (vv. 4-5), and with sincere love and respect (vv. 9-10).

By Julie Ackerman Link

Romans 12:1 Click here

February 17 SERVING THE LORD

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

Romans 12:1-8

Giving All

Read: Romans 12:1-8

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. —Romans 12:1

During his only inaugural address as the US President, John F. Kennedy issued this challenge to Americans: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” It was a renewed call for citizens to surrender their lives in sacrifice and service to others. His words especially inspired the sons and daughters of men and women who had served their country in war.

His meaning was clear: What their parents purchased, often with their very lives, must now be protected by peaceful means. An army of volunteers arose to answer that call, and through the decades they have accomplished an immeasurable amount of humanitarian work around the globe.

Centuries earlier, the apostle Paul issued a similar call to Christians in the opening verses of Romans 12. Here he urges us to give our bodies as “living sacrifices” in service to the One who paid with His life for our sins. This spiritual sacrifice must be more than mere words; it must be an investment of our lives in the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of others.

Best of all, our serving can be done right where we are.

Father, show me this day the many ways my life can be surrendered to You, and then give me the strength to begin to act.

Don't always ask Jesus what He can do for you; ask Jesus what you can do for Him.

INSIGHT: In Romans 12:1 Paul encourages us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God by exhibiting behavior that is pleasing to Him. However, verse 2 encourages us to have our minds renewed as well. God wants us to be totally His in both actions and thoughts.

By Randy Kilgore

Romans 12:2 [Click here](#)

February 15 TRANSFIGURED LIVES

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

Romans 12:2 "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed."

Nothing worse can happen to a church than to be conformed to this world. - C H Spurgeon

The Scriptures were not given for our information, but for our transformation. - D. L. Moody

Romans 12:2

Re: TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: 1 Timothy 6:3-10

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is. - Romans 12:2

In 1816, Mary Shelley wrote the novel, Frankenstein, the story of an ambitious young scientist who creates a man in his laboratory. His creation is monstrous and turns into a savage killer. His final words reveal his regret: “Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries.”

Frankenstein reveals what happens to a man with unrestrained ambition and conceit, the same character we see in the false teachers in Ephesus.

Their egotism motivated them to reject sound instruction and godly teaching. Like so many people today, the false teachers decided that the teaching of Christ didn't really suit their desires. It wasn't progressive enough. They could be a little bit more forward-thinking.

Jesus taught that no one could serve both God and money (cf. Matt. 6:24); they taught that godly living was a means to financial success (v. 5). Jesus emphasized that no one could pursue both earthly treasure and eternal treasure; the false teachers insisted that these were complimentary goals. They promoted a bigger bang for your spiritual buck: get Jesus and get rich! They failed to understand the emptiness of selfish ambition, especially compared to the wealth found in “godliness with contentment” (v. 6).

While this false teaching might seem like a slight detour from sound instruction, it was actually a U-turn from faith. The disastrous result: “Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (v. 10).

This challenges our perspective on Scripture's teachings: do we, like the false teachers in Ephesus, stand above Scripture, judging for ourselves which parts of its teaching we embrace or reject? Or do we allow Scripture to stand above us, submitting fully to all of its teaching?

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Our passage today is especially convicting for us in the United States where selfish ambition and striving for financial success is admired and rewarded. Consider today how eager you are to get rich. Have you compromised financial integrity in the workplace? Have you cheated God from generous and cheerful giving of your tithes and offerings? Seek to hold onto your money with an open hand, realizing it is God who gives it to you and expects you to use it in His service for His glory.

Alexander Maclaren said:

The measure of our discord with the world is the measure of our accord with Christ... The measure in which the world agrees with us and says we are really a fine type of Christian, we are so entirely broad, is the measure in which we are unlike Christ.

Romans 12:3

Padarewski

On a visit to the Beethoven museum in Bonn, a young American student became fascinated by the piano on which Beethoven had composed some of his greatest works. She asked the museum guard if she could play a few bars on it; she accompanied the request with a lavish tip, and the guard agreed. The girl went to the piano and tinkled out the opening of the Moonlight Sonata. As she was leaving she said to the guard, "I suppose all the great pianists who come here want to play on that piano."

The guard shook his head. "Padarewski [the famed Polish pianist] was here a few years ago and he said he wasn't worthy to touch it." (Today in the Word)

Romans 12:3 - High Opinion

A man who had a high opinion of himself stepped on a coin-operated scale that dispensed a card, giving his weight and comments about his personality. After reading the card, he handed it to his wife and said, "Here, look at this!" She took it and read aloud, "You are dynamic, a born leader, handsome, and much admired by women for your personality." Giving it a second look, she added, "Hmmm, I see it's got your weight wrong too!"

Romans 12:3

For I say ... to everyone ... not to think of himself more highly than he ought

A man who had just been elected to the British Parliament brought his family to London and was giving them a tour of the city. When they entered Westminster Abbey, his eight-year-old daughter seemed awe-struck by the size and beauty of that magnificent structure. Her proud father, curious about what was going on in her mind, asked, "And what, my child, are you thinking about?" She replied, "Daddy, I was just thinking about how big you are in our house, but how small you look here!"

Pride can creep into our lives without our awareness. From time to time it's good for us to be "cut down to size." We need to be reminded not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. It's easy to become proud when we stay in our own circles of life. But when we are thrust into larger situations, with increased demands, pressures, and competition, we come to the shocking realization that "big fish in small ponds" shrink quickly in a large ocean.

One thing that stands out in the Word of God is that the Lord despises the haughty. Under inspiration the psalmist said, "One who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure" (Psalm 101:5) . And James said, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

If we ask the Holy Spirit to help us see ourselves as we really are, He will enable us to control our foolish pride. —R.W.D.

Those who know God will be humble; those who know themselves cannot be proud. - Our Daily Bread

Romans 12:3 - Hudson Taylor was scheduled to speak at a large Presbyterian church in Melbourne, Australia. The moderator of

the service introduced the missionary in eloquent and glowing terms. He told the large congregation all that Taylor had accomplished in China, and then presented him as "our illustrious guest." Taylor stood quietly for a moment, and then opened his message by saying, "Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious Master." - Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers, W. Wiersbe, p. 243

Romans 12:3 - Oscar Hammerstein - When he was 46 years of age, Oscar Hammerstein had worked with thirty different composers. Nothing took off. There was no successful song. It was a despairing, dispiriting time for him. Finally, Oscar Hammerstein tied in with Richard Rogers. The following year they wrote the musical Oklahoma. He was a success. In fact his success was so enormous in its impact that he went out and bought a full page ad in Variety magazine. To keep himself humble, he bought this headline: "I've done it before and I can do it again!" He then listed every single one of his failures.

Romans 12:3 - Good Advice - When Harry Truman was thrust into the presidency at the death of F.D.R., Sam Rayburn gave him some fatherly advice: "From here on out you're going to have lots of people around you. They'll try to put a wall around you and cut you off from any ideas but theirs. They'll tell you what a great man you are, Harry. But you and I both know you ain't." - Bits and Pieces, Vol. F, #41

Romans 12:3 - Fishing for a Compliment - One Sunday on the way home from church the pastor turned to his wife and tried to fish a complement out of her. "Well dear, what did you think of the sermon this morning?" She was very non-committal in her response, "Oh, it was fine." The pastor wouldn't let it drop so easily. "Mrs. Smith said on the way out of church that I must be one of the great preachers of our generation." Still no response from the wife. The pastor pushed on. "How many great preachers do you think there are in our generation?" Without a moment's hesitation she fired back, "One less than you think." - Source unknown

Romans 12:3 - The Boy Scout - A noted brain surgeon, Dr. Bronson Ray, was taking a stroll when he saw a boy on a scooter smash headfirst into a tree. Realizing that the boy was seriously injured, the doctor told a bystander to call an ambulance. As he proceeded to administer first aid, a boy not much older than the injured one nudged through the crowd that had gathered and said to Dr. Ray, "I'd better take over now, sir. I'm a Boy Scout and I know first aid." - Source unknown

Romans 12:3 - Tom Brokaw was wandering through Bloomingdales' New York store one day, shortly after earning a promotion to the co-host spot on the Today Show. Brokaw's new position was another peak in a rapidly-rising career in television journalism after plodding faithfully up the ranks, first in Omaha, then for NBC in Los Angeles and Washington. It wouldn't be lying to say he was feeling pretty good about himself. As he browsed through the store, he noticed a man watching him intensely. The man continued to stare, and finally, when the man approached him, Brokaw prepared himself to reap the first fruits of television stardom in New York.

The man pointed at him and asked, "Tom Brokaw, right?"

"Right," said Brokaw.

"You used to do the morning news on KMTV in Omaha, right?"

"That's right," said Brokaw, getting ready for the warm praises destined to follow.

"I knew it the minute I spotted you," the fellow said. Then he paused and added, "Whatever happened to you?"

Soundings, Vol. A, No. 1

Romans 12:13

True Hospitality

In 1987, our family moved to California to take up the pastorate of a church in the Long Beach area. The day we flew into town, my secretary picked us up at the airport to take us to our house. As we pulled into traffic, the very first thing I saw was a bumper sticker that read: "Welcome To California . . . Now Go Home!" It was not exactly a warm and cheery welcome to sunny southern California!

I wonder if there might be occasions in our lives when we send similar signals to people around us. Whether we are at church, in the neighborhood, or at social gatherings, are there times when we fail to make others feel welcome in our world?

In Romans 12:13, Paul instructed his readers to be "given to hospitality." The book of Hebrews goes even further, saying, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (13:2). By showing gracious kindness to

those who come our way, we echo the Savior's invitation for salvation, which declares, "Let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

To show someone loving hospitality just might be the first step in showing that person the way to heaven.

Give as 'twas given to you in your need;
Love as the Master loved you;
Be to the helpless a helper indeed;
Unto your mission be true. —Wilson

Live so that when people get to know you, they will want to get to know Christ.

By Bill Crowder

Romans 12:10

A New Bucket List

Read: Romans 12:6-21 | Bible in a Year: 1 Chronicles 4-6; John 6:1-21

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another. —Romans 12:10

A friend told me he had recently accomplished one of the things on his "bucket list" (a list of things to do before you die) when he took his sister to Europe. Although he had traveled there many times, she had never been there. What struck me was the unselfish nature of having that goal on his "bucket list." It caused me to wonder how many of my dreams and goals are focused on others, not on myself.

Romans 12:6-21 speaks of God's gifts to us as members of the body of Christ and how we should use them in everyday life. All of them are outward in focus. Teaching, for example, is not for the teacher's self-fulfillment but for the benefit of others. So too with the other gifts mentioned in verses 6 through 8. Paul summarized this openhanded approach by urging us to "be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (v.10 niv).

Paul exemplified this attitude by including others in his ministry and investing his life in the next generation of believers. Generosity, hospitality, forgiveness, and compassion guided his behavior.

Our goals in life should include giving away the gifts God has given to us.

Grant us, then, the grace for giving
With a spirit large and free,
That our life and all our living
We may consecrate to Thee. —Murray

For a healthier spiritual life, exercise humility and care for others.

By David McCasland

Romans 12:14-21

Of Geese and Difficult People

Read: Romans 12:14-21

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Romans 12:18

When we first moved into our present home, I enjoyed the beauty of the geese that nest nearby. I admired the way they cared for each other and the way they moved in straight lines in the water and in majestic V-formations in the air. It was also a joy to watch them raise their young.

Then summer came, and I discovered some less beautiful truths about my feathered friends. You see, geese love to eat grass, and they don't really care if it ruins the look of the lawn. Worse, what they leave behind makes a stroll across the yard a messy adventure.

God helps us see the beauty in even the most difficult people.

I think of these geese when I'm dealing with difficult people. Sometimes I wish I could simply shoo them out of my life. It's then that God usually reminds me that there is beauty in even the most difficult person if we can get close enough to discover it, and the pain they're giving out may be reflective of the pain they are feeling. The apostle Paul says in Romans, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (12:18). So I ask God to help me be patient with the "hard side" of others. This doesn't always produce a happy outcome, but it is remarkable how often God redeems these relationships.

As we encounter difficult people, by God's grace we can see and love them through His eyes.

By Your grace, Lord, help me to live peaceably with others. And help me to recognize when I'm the difficult person in other people's lives and need Your intervention. Give me the will and desire to change.

Peace can come if we respond with a gentle answer.

INSIGHT: When the apostle Paul instructs the Roman Christians to bless rather than curse those who persecute them, he's not talking just about words. The biblical concept of blessing and cursing nearly always meant both words and actions. In today's passage Paul is calling for radical acts of love, for—as Jesus showed us—true love is not just conveyed by what we say but also by what we do (John 15:13; 1 John 3:18). Dennis Moles

By Randy Kilgore

Romans 12:15

New Record - Forty thousand fans were on hand in the Oakland stadium when Rickey Henderson tied Lou Brock's career stolen base record. According to USA Today Lou, who had left baseball in 1979, had followed Henderson's career and was excited about his success. Realizing that Rickey would set a new record, Brock said, "I'll be there. Do you think I'm going to miss it now? Rickey did in 12 years what took me 19. He's amazing."

The real success stories in life are with people who can rejoice in the successes of others. What Lou Brock did in cheering on Rickey Henderson should be a way of life in the family of God. Few circumstances give us a better opportunity to exhibit God's grace than when someone succeeds and surpasses us in an area of our own strength and reputation.

Our Daily Bread

Samuel Beckett - Irish novelist and playwright Samuel Beckett received great recognition for his work—but not everyone savored his accomplishments. Beckett's marriage, in fact, was soured by his wife's jealousy of his growing fame and success as a writer. One day in 1969 his wife Suzanne answered the telephone, listened for a moment, spoke briefly, and hung up. She then turned to Beckett and with a stricken look whispered, "What a catastrophe!" Was it a devastating personal tragedy? No, she had just learned that Beckett had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature! (Today in the Word)

Romans 12:19

Law Suit - The story is told of a rich man in Springfield, Illinois, who insisted that a certain poor man owed him \$2.50. When the claim was denied, the rich man decided to sue him. He contacted a young lawyer named Lincoln, who at first hesitated to take the case. On second thought he agreed—if he'd be paid a fee of \$10 cash in advance. The client readily produced the money, whereupon Lincoln went to the poor man and offered him \$5 if he would immediately settle the alleged debt. Thus Lincoln received \$5 for himself, the poor man got \$2.50, and the claim was satisfied. The rich man foolishly paid three times the original debt, just to gain his rights.

Romans 12:20

Prize Chickens

In today's text, the apostle Paul said that by helping our enemies we heap "coals of fire" on their heads. He certainly didn't mean that this is a good way to hurt them—to get even. He meant that by using kindness we might secure their repentance, thus showing our

sincere desire for their eternal good.

A Christian lady owned two prize chickens that got out of their run and busied themselves in the garden of an ill-tempered neighbor. The man caught the hens, wrung their necks, and threw them back over the fence. Naturally, the woman was upset, but she didn't get angry and rush over and scream at him. Instead, she took the birds, dressed them out, and prepared two chicken pies. Then she delivered one of the freshly baked pies to the man who had killed her hens. She apologized for not being more careful about keeping her chickens in her own yard. Her children, expecting an angry scene, hid behind a bush to see the man's face and hear what he'd say. But he was speechless! That chicken pie and apology filled him with a burning sense of shame. But she wasn't trying to get even. Her motive in returning good for evil was to show her neighbor true Christian love, and maybe even bring about a change of heart. H.V.L.

Our Daily Bread

Unexpected Kindness

In 1818 a man named Tamatoe, King of the South Sea island of Huahine, became a Christian. Shortly thereafter, he discovered a plot to seize him and other converts and burn them to death.

Tamatoe organized a band that attacked the conspirators, captured and bound them—and then set before them a feast! The unexpected kindness so impressed his enemies that they burned their idols and confessed Christ.

Today in the Word

Romans 12:21

Good Testimony

Bruce Goodrich was being initiated into the cadet corps at Texas A & M University. One night, Bruce was forced to run until he dropped—but he never got up. Bruce Goodrich died before he even entered college.

A short time after the tragedy, Bruce's father wrote this letter to the administration, faculty, student body, and the corps of cadets: "I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my family for the great outpouring of concern and sympathy from Texas A & M University and the college community over the loss of our son Bruce. We were deeply touched by the tribute paid to him in the battalion. We were particularly pleased to note that his Christian witness did not go unnoticed during his brief time on campus."

Mr. Goodrich went on: "I hope it will be some comfort to know that we harbor no ill will in the matter. We know our God makes no mistakes. Bruce had an appointment with his Lord and is now secure in his celestial home. When the question is asked, 'Why did this happen?' perhaps one answer will be, 'So that many will consider where they will spend eternity.'"

Our Daily Bread

Leniency

Georges Clemenceau was twice the prime minister of France, and played a major role in the treaties that concluded WWI. At the Versailles conference, Clemenceau was on his way to a meeting with President Woodrow Wilson's adviser when he was shot at by a young anarchist named Emile Cottin. As Clemenceau's car sped away Cottin fired at least six more shots, one of which struck Clemenceau near his heart. Cottin was captured and the death penalty demanded, but Clemenceau asked for leniency, recommending eight years in prison," with intensive training in a shooting gallery."

Today in the Word

Romans 12:21 "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

The text appears to give us a choice between two things, and bids us choose the better one. You must either be overcome by evil, or you must yourself overcome evil. One of the two. You cannot let evil alone, and evil will not let you alone. You must fight, and in the battle you must either conquer or be conquered. (C H Spurgeon)

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This text inculcates not merely passive non-resistance, but it teaches us active benevolence to enemies. "Overcome evil with good," with direct and overt acts of kindness. If any man has done you a wrong, do not only forgive it, but also avenge it by doing him a favor. (C H Spurgeon)

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You know the old saying: Returning evil for good is devil-like, evil for evil is beastlike, good for good is manlike, and good for evil is God-like. Rise to that God-like point. (C H Spurgeon)

ROMANS 13

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Romans 13:1

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ROMANS 13:1

Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes ... fear to whom fear (Romans 13:7).

One night I heard a radio preacher say that we should fear only God. But I don't agree. Peter exhorted servants to be subject to their masters "with all fear" (1 Pet. 2:18) , and Paul said that wrongdoers should be afraid of civil authorities (Rom. 13:4) . A hierarchy of fear is an integral part of living on our sin-cursed planet. Our moral responsibility is to put the things we fear in their proper place.

A boy whose friends urged him to experiment with illicit drugs told me he was afraid they would think of him as a coward, but he resisted because he was more frightened of the consequences. A young man who volunteered for dangerous military duty admitted he was scared of being wounded or killed, but he had a greater concern about what would happen if the enemy won the war. Both of these young men did what was right because they recognized the priority of certain fears.

The Bible teaches that our greatest fear should be of displeasing God. A believer who is told that he must either commit evil or face the firing squad should be more concerned about disobeying the Lord than being shot. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

Fear is part and parcel of life here on earth. But this strong emotion can serve us well if we let our fear of God be supreme. —H.V.L.

Shame arises from the fear of men, conscience from the fear of God. —Samuel Johnson

Our Daily Bread

Romans 13:7 - Battle of the Buldge

World War II was at its height. Forces were engaged in what was known as, “The Battle of the Bulge”—or “The Christmas War of 1944.” The fighting was fierce in the bitter cold and snow.

The Allied Forces bombed and established control of a strategic area. The commanding officer turned to several of his men and said, “Sweep across that field, and kill all German soldiers still entrenched in the snow. I want no prisoners. Absolutely none!”

One of the American soldiers selected gives his account of what happened next. “As I walked, I immediately shot and killed two wounded and suffering soldiers.” He continues, “Then, suddenly I approached a tall, young guy with a broad Teutonic forehead.

“He was leaning against a tree. He wasn’t wounded—simply exhausted. He had no food, no water, no comrades in sight, no ammunition. Fear, fatigue, defeat, and loneliness overwhelmed him. He spoke English with a beautiful wonderful-world-type accent.

“When I noticed a little black Bible in his shirt pocket,” he reminisces, “we started to talk about Jesus and salvation. “Wouldn’t you know it, that lanky German soldier turned out to be a born-again Christian who deeply loved the Lord.

“I gave him water from my canteen; I even gave him crackers. Then, we prayed and read God’s Word together. And we wept together too.”

His voice began to tremble, as tears splashed down his cheeks. His face began to reflect anguish.

“It seems like only yesterday. We stood a foot or so apart, as he read a Psalm from his German Bible. Then, I read Romans 12 from my King James translation. He showed me a black-and-white picture of his wife and daughter.”

The soldier took a deep breath. “You see, in those days, I was a young man in my early twenties. I had just graduated from a Christian college in Illinois and hadn’t had time to sort out my thoughts on the war.

“Maybe that’s why I did what I did.” I bid my German brother farewell, took several steps away, then returned to the soldier. Romans 13, the ‘thou shalt not kill’ commandment, the promises of eternal life, the Prince of Peace, the Sunday school distinction between killing and murder, the irrationality of war—all swirled in my mind.

“When the German soldier saw me returning, he bowed his head and closed his eyes in that classic prayer posture.

“Then it happened. I said three crisp sentences that I still repeat once or twice a week when I have nightmares about the war, ‘You’re a Christian. I am too. See you later.’”

“In less than a second, I transformed that defenseless Christian soldier into a corpse.”

Courage - You Can Stand Strong in the Face of Fear, Jon Johnston, 1990, SP Publications, pp. 155-157

Resource

Difficult Passages in the Epistles, R. Stein, Baker, 1988, p. 77, “Is every Government from God?” (Bible.org)

Romans 13:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Exodus 20:12-17

For he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. - Romans 13:8

“Affirming the consequent” is a logical fallacy that produces unreliable conclusions. Here’s an example: “If a baby boy is born in Ohio, he’s an American citizen. Sally is an American citizen, therefore, she was born in Ohio . . . and she’s a baby boy.” It’s easy to spot the mistake when the end result is obviously flawed. But when some Bible students “affirm the consequent,” the results can lead to legalism.

Here’s an example of the logic of legalism: “If you love your neighbor, you’ll obey these last six commandments in Exodus 20. Therefore, if you obey these commandments, you love your neighbor.” This section of the Ten Commandments pertains primarily to our relationship with other people (the first four focus on properly honoring God; Ex 20:3-11). While it’s important to observe these rules faithfully, we shouldn’t consider this an exhaustive list. In Romans 13, Paul says that these commands are summed up in the command to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Ro 13:9). Following these commands should be rooted in love, but it doesn’t prove

our love.

Still, any time we fall short of these commands, we can be sure that we're also failing to love as God commanded. They provide a good test for any obvious problems in our relationships with others.

A proud heart might result in disrespectful attitudes toward parents and family. Even those not guilty of a capital crime might be infested by anger, the seed that blossoms into murder. Someone who stops short of adultery can still dwell on lustful thoughts. And our society offers countless creative, socially acceptable ways to steal and lie. Even if we're not committing these actions, a combination of weak love and inflated selfishness will push us in the direction of these outward displays of sin.

The final command, however, speaks against an internal sin that's easy to examine in our hearts but difficult to avoid. Our hearts naturally incline toward greed, and we desire what other people have. Not only does that defy the commandment not to covet, it violates the greater commandment to love.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Living by the negative often proves overwhelming, if not impossible. If your aim is to not get angry, not lust, not lie, or not covet, you may find your mind preoccupied with all that you should not do. Instead, when you feel tempted to do any of those things, resolve to love others more than you love yourself. Use these commandments as a checklist to see any obvious ways you have failed to love. Then ask God to create in you a deep love that conquers your sinful predisposition.

Romans 13:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Romans 13:7-10

For he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. - Romans 13:8

The United States national debt is fast approaching \$9 trillion. The economics aren't easy to understand, but the basic idea is that the government is spending more money than it's taking in. Some estimate that if every working American paid nearly \$300 a month toward the debt, it would take one hundred years to pay it off. Others believe that the country will never eliminate the debt.

When it comes to loving others, we all owe a debt that will never go away. In Romans 13 Paul calls our attention to this "continuing debt" of love, a reminder that loving others is not an "above and beyond" behavior. We owe it to each other to love unconditionally.

At first read, it might appear that Paul is issuing a free pass from the details of the law, but that's not exactly true. Love does cover all the stipulations of the law regarding other people in that it prevents us from doing harm. But the fact that loving your neighbor fulfills the law also serves to stress the mandate. Love doesn't abolish the law, it simply fulfills it. So if at any point we fail to love, we fail to fulfill the law.

This passage forces us to reexamine how we think about love. Because the commandment to love is a positive one, we sometimes interpret it as a suggestion to keep in mind. But the command isn't, "Love your neighbor as yourself, when you get a chance." Love for others is not a concept we should have filed away in the back of our minds. It should be the governing principle of our lives.

Another natural inclination is to subconsciously think that we can meet our love quota for the day, week, or month. At what point have we loved enough? The answer is obvious. We can never pay our ongoing debt. But our concern shouldn't be when we have sufficiently loved. It's impossible to limit or even to quantify. The important thing is that our hearts are marked by the desire to love others rather than the compulsion to serve our own agendas.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Is there a person in your life from whom you are withholding love? If there is a dispute or a division in any of your relationships, don't wait for the other person to make the first move toward reconciliation. Consider yourself in debt to that person, a debt that can only be paid with love. Instead of listing the reasons why you feel justified in holding a grudge or responding in anger, think of ways you can lovingly restore harmony.

Romans 13:8-14

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Romans 13:8-14

I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. - Romans 12:1b

It's often said that God moves in mysterious ways, and the person we'll look at today is one of the better examples of this. When we hear the name Augustine, we may think of his brilliant writings, such as *The City of God*. For centuries, Augustine's work as a theologian and philosopher has been influential. Yet you might be surprised to learn that Augustine's youth was anything but praiseworthy.

Because of his obvious brilliance, Augustine left home early to study in Carthage in northern Africa. But Augustine didn't always study. By eighteen, he had a mistress, and by twenty, an illegitimate child. God had other plans for this wild young man. His mother, Monica, a devoted Christian, prayed for her son continually. Although Augustine resisted for years, slowly his objections to Christianity began to break down. One day (in 386) in a villa outside of Rome, he threw himself on the ground, disgusted by his lifestyle and feeling powerless to change. As he lay there, he heard a voice saying, "Take up and read; take up and read!" It was probably some nearby children singing in a game, but Augustine had been trying to read the Bible just before he heard this. He picked up the Bible again and, when he "took up" to read, his eyes fell on Romans 13:13–14. At that very moment Augustine was converted to Christianity.

This passage follows a long section that urges believers to offer their lives fully to the Lord (Ro 12:1). As Christians, we are no longer to conform to worldly standards. Rather, being a Christian should impact every area of our lives. Romans 13 then addresses our relationship to government (Romans 13:1-7) and our daily conduct. Christians are to be loving, because truly loving one another actually fulfills the Ten Commandments (vv. 8-10). Next, Christians are to be spiritually "awake," or diligent. Like Augustine, this means setting aside sin (Romans 13:13) and "clothing" ourselves with the Lord Jesus (Romans 13:14).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Augustine wrote another book, *Confessions*. Instead of dwelling on his lifestyle before becoming a Christian, this book is a confession of Augustine's faith. Here Augustine writes how his heart found rest in God.

Romans 13:11 "... for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Oh, you unconverted men, must I read the text as it would have to run if it were written to you? "It is high time that you should awake out of sleep, for now is your damnation nearer than when you first heard the gospel and rejected it." God grant you grace to take heed and believe in Christ.

C H Spurgeon

Romans 13:14 - Augustine

The story is told that when Augustine was still without God and without hope, the Holy Spirit convicted him on the basis of Paul's words in Romans 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." Augustine acknowledged his sinfulness, accepted Jesus as his Savior, and became a different person. His entire outlook on life began to change because of his new nature. One day he had to attend to some business in his old haunts in Rome.

As he walked along, a former companion saw him and began calling, "Augustine, Augustine, it is I!" He took one look at the poor, disreputable woman whose company he had formerly enjoyed, and he shuddered. Reminding himself of his new position in Christ, he quickly turned and ran from her, shouting, "It's not I! It's not I!" Augustine had found the secret of Paul's words: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). - *Our Daily Bread*

Romans 13:14 Click here

January 1 MAKING A FRESH START

F B Meyer. *Our Daily Walk*.

Romans 13:14

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse is ever memorable from its association with the life of Augustine, who says: "Thus was I sick and tormented in mind, bitterly accusing myself, and rolling and turning about in my chain, till it might be wholly broken."

At length, rushing into the garden, groaning in spirit, "all my bones were crying out, soul-sick was I and grievously tormented. I said

to myself, 'Be it done now; be it done now.' And a voice said, 'Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him. Fear not; He will not withdraw Himself, to let thee fall. He will receive, and will heal thee. Stop thine ears against those unclean members of thine, which are upon the earth, that they may be mortified.'"

Then arose a mighty tempest, bringing a heavy downpour of tears. "I cast myself under a certain fig-tree, and gave vent to my tears, and the floods of mine eyes brake forth. Why not now? Why not this hour make an end of my uncleanness? And, lo! from the neighboring house I heard a voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, singing and oft repeating, 'Take and read; take and read!' Checking the torrent of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be a Divine command to open the Book and read the first chapter I could find. I seized; I opened, and in silence read the passage on which mine eyes fell: 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.' No further would I read; nor was there need, for instantly all my heart was flooded with a light of peace, all the sadness of doubt melted away!"

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily Vol. 5

ROMANS 14

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Romans 14:7 "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

I think the first instinct of one who has been himself called by grace is to go and call others. When Christ appears to Mary, Mary runs to the disciples to tell them that the Lord has spoken to her. Samuel is chosen that he may carry the message to Eli. And let each believer feel that he is favored by God that he may take a blessing to others, "for none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

C H Spurgeon

Romans 14:8 "We live unto the Lord." - Spurgeon Morning and Evening

If God had willed it, each of us might have entered heaven at the moment of conversion. It was not absolutely necessary for our preparation for immortality that we should tarry here. It is possible for a man to be taken to heaven, and to be found meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, though he has but just believed in Jesus. It is true that our sanctification is a long and continued process, and we shall not be perfected till we lay aside our bodies and enter within the veil; but nevertheless, had the Lord so willed it, he might have changed us from imperfection to perfection, and have taken us to heaven at once. Why then are we here? Would God keep his children out of paradise a single moment longer than was necessary? Why is the army of the living God still on the battle-field when one charge might give them the victory? Why are his children still wandering hither and thither through a maze, when a solitary word from his lips would bring them into the centre of their hopes in heaven? The answer is—they are here that they may "live unto the Lord," and may bring others to know his love. We remain on earth as sowers to scatter good seed; as ploughmen to break up the fallow ground; as heralds publishing salvation. We are here as the "salt of the earth," to be a blessing to the world. We are here to glorify Christ in our daily life. We are here as workers for him, and as "workers together with him." Let us see that our life answereth its end. Let us live earnest, useful, holy lives, to "the praise of the glory of his grace." Meanwhile we long to be with him, and daily sing—

"My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;

Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.' "

Romans 14:10 The judgment seat of Christ

'But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.' Romans 14:10

Some Christians not only form judgments upon all that are round about them as to the facts that come under their notice, but also, without any facts whatever, conceive notions concerning people whom they have never seen, and are full of obstinate prejudices against them. Many twist words into meanings which they were never intended to mean by the person who used them; others, even without so much as the excuse of misunderstanding words, imagine evil against their brethren. They dream that they are slighted, and hard judgments follow. Once imagine that you are badly treated, and you will think that everything is done out of spite to you, and the next thing is to think spitefully of others. There are people who are liberally gifted in the line of gossip and who by their talk would make you think that you were living in Sodom and Gomorrah. You are made to fear that everyone you have trusted is a vile deceiver, that every man who is zealous is mercenary, that every minister is preaching in public what he secretly disbelieves, that every generous subscriber only gives out of pride, that, in fact, you are living in a place where the race of Judas Iscariot is to be seen, reproduced ten thousand times over. One goes to bed and cannot sleep after talking to these tale-bearers. The consolation is that there is no truth in their wonderful discoveries. These slanderous statements are a base burlesque of judgment, and nothing more. Why are they thought so much of? After you and I have done our best to hold our mimic court and have summoned this and that man before us, what is it at its best but child's play, and at its worst a violent usurpation of the rights of Christ Jesus, who alone reigns as lawgiver in the midst of his church today, and who will sit as judge on the clouds of heaven by-and-by to judge the world in righteousness? (365 Days with Spurgeon)

Romans 14:13

Unfairly Judged

We sometimes criticize others unfairly. We don't know all their circumstances, nor their motives. Only God, who is aware of all the facts, is able to judge people righteously.

John Wesley told of a man he had little respect for because he considered him to be miserly and covetous. One day when this person contributed only a small gift to a worthy charity, Wesley openly criticized him.

After the incident, the man went to Wesley privately and told him he had been living on parsnips and water for several weeks. He explained that before his conversion, he had run up many bills. Now, by skimping on everything and buying nothing for himself he was paying off his creditors one by one. "Christ has made me an honest man," he said, "and so with all these debts to pay, I can give only a few offerings above my tithe. I must settle up with my worldly neighbors and show them what the grace of God can do in the heart of a man who was once dishonest."

Wesley then apologized to the man and asked his forgiveness.

Romans 14:13

Resolve To Resolve

Read: Romans 14:1-13

Resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. —Romans 14:13

I haven't made any New Year's resolutions since 1975. I haven't needed any new ones—I'm still working on old ones like these: write at least a short note in my journal every day; make a strong effort to read my Bible and pray each day; organize my time; try to keep my room clean (this was before I had a whole house to keep clean).

This year, however, I am adding a new resolution that I found in Paul's letter to the Romans: "Let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way" (14:13). Although this resolution is old (about 2,000 years), it is one that we should renew annually. Like believers in Rome centuries ago, believers today sometimes make up rules for others to follow and insist on adherence to certain behaviors and beliefs that the Bible says little or nothing about. These "stumbling blocks" make it difficult for followers of Jesus to continue in the way of faith that He came to show us—that salvation is by grace not works (Gal. 2:16). It requires only that we trust in His death and resurrection for forgiveness.

We can celebrate this good news of Christ in the coming year by resolving not to set up hurdles that cause people to stumble.

Thank You, Lord, that You sent the Holy Spirit
to do the work of convincing and convicting.
May I be content with my own assignment:
to do what leads to peace and edification.

Faith is the hand that receives God's gift, then faith is the feet that walk with God.

INSIGHT: The judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:9-10) is believed to speak of a time in the future when followers of Christ will be held accountable by the Savior for their lives lived in His name—resulting in either receiving rewards or losing rewards.

By Julie Ackerman Link

The following devotionals are from the excellent resource Bible.org

Tests

1. THE WORLD TEST. Is it worldly? Will it make me worldly to do it (John 15:19, 1 John 2:15- 17)'
2. THE QUALITY TEST. Is it good for me physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Rom. 12:9b)'
3. THE TEMPLE TEST. Can I do it when I remember my body is God's temple and must not be marred or misused (1 Cor. 6:19)'
4. THE GLORY TEST. Will it glorify my Lord, or will it on the other hand possibly bring shame to His name (1 Cor. 6:20, 10:32)'
5. THE BLESSING TEST. Can I honestly ask God's blessing on it and be sure I'll not regret doing it (Prov. 10:22, Rom. 15:29)'
6. THE REPUTATION TEST. Is it apt to damage my testimony for the Lord (Phil. 2:15)'
7. THE CONSIDERATION TEST. Am I being considerate of others and the effect this might have on them (Rom. 14:7, 21)'
8. THE APPEARANCE TEST. Will it look bad? Does it have the appearance of what is wrong or suspicious (1 Thess. 5:22)'
9. THE WEIGHT TEST. Could this slacken or sidetrack me in running the Christian race (Heb. 12:1, 1 Cor. 9:24)'
10. THE COMING OF CHRIST TEST. Would I be ashamed to be found doing this when He comes again (1 John 2:28)'
11. THE COMPANION TEST. Can I invite Christ to go with me and participate with me in this (Matt. 28:20b, Col. 3:17)'
12. THE PEACE TEST. After having prayed about it, do I have perfect peace about doing it (Col. 3:15a, Phil. 4:6-7)'

Taken from Basic Bible Beliefs, Bible Baptist Church, Auburn, Wn., 1975, unpublished. From Training Manual for Local Church Visitation, Eugene A. Wood, DTS, ThM Thesis, 1980

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Definition of Sin - J. Wilbur Chapman said, "My life is governed by this rule: Anything that dims my vision of Christ or takes away my taste for Bible study or cramps my prayer life or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me, and I must, as a Christian, turn away from it." Source unknown

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Susannah Wesley -- This was how Susannah Wesley defined "sin" to her young son, John Wesley: "If you would judge of the lawfulness or the unlawfulness of pleasure, then take this simple rule: Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, and takes off the relish of spiritual things—that to you is sin." Resource, July/August, 1990

Enough about things that nullify grace. What we want most is to magnify it . . . promote it . . . release it, right?

In his letter to the Romans, Paul goes into great detail regarding the issue of personal freedom—greater detail than almost anywhere else in his writings. In the fourteenth chapter, for example, he sets forth four very practical guidelines that can be followed by all who are serious about releasing others in grace. My hope is that we not only learn what they are but, equally important, that we spend our days following them.

The first guideline is based on Romans 14:1–4:

Since we have already dealt with the issue of eating meat from a carcass offered to idols, there is no reason for me to explain the background again. But perhaps I should repeat the question that arose from the controversy: Should a Christian eat it or not? Some had no problem whatsoever, while others thought it was wrong to do so, feeling that the one who ate it would be spiritually contaminated by the association with pagan worship. Let's see how this situation can relate to magnifying grace:

Guideline 1: Accepting others is basic to letting them be. The problem was not a meat problem; it was a love problem, an acceptance problem. It still is. How often we restrict our love by making it conditional: "If you will (or won't), then I will accept you." Paul starts there: "Accept one another!" In other words, "Let's allow others the freedom to hold to convictions that are unlike our own . . . and accept them in spite of that difference." Those who didn't eat (called here "weak in faith") were exhorted to accept and not judge those who ate. And those who ate were exhorted to accept and not regard with contempt those who did not eat. The secret lies in accepting one another. All of this is fairly easy to read so long as I stay on the issue of eating meat. That one is safe because it isn't a current taboo. It's easy to accept those folks today because they don't exist!

How about those in our life who may disagree with us on issues that are taboos in evangelical Christian circles today? Here are a few:

- Going to the movies or live theater
- Wearing cosmetics
- Playing cards
- Watching television
- Going to the beach
- Not having a "quiet time" every morning or at least every day
- Going to a restaurant that sells liquor
- Wearing certain clothing
- Driving certain cars
- Wearing certain jewelry
- Listening to certain music
- Dancing . . . square, ballroom, disco—whatever
- Holding a certain job
- Wearing your hair a certain way (assuming you have hair)
- Having lovely and elegant possessions
- Getting a face-lift
- Drinking coffee
- Eating certain foods
- Working out in leotards

There are a dozen other things I could list, some of which would make you smile. But believe me, in various areas of our country or the world some or all of these things may be taboo, and if you cross that boundary, may God help you continue on in the church you're attending. Someone will probably say something. If not, you will be pounced upon by looks and reactionary treatment, revealing attitudes that lack grace. We are masters at that. If you hope to "survive," you had better learn the rules—fast. But don't assume that all areas are identical when it comes to taboos. The list changes from culture to culture even to this day.

I read about a pastors' conference where a group of German Lutherans had gathered. Part of their reception included serving beer. No one thought anything of it because in that culture a mug of beer is absolutely

accepted. But if one of the men lit up a cigar, the place would go up in smoke! Strange, isn't it? They shouldn't smoke, but if they choose to enjoy a swig of beer, no problem.

I know of churches where you are frowned on if you go to live theater or attend a movie, no matter what the rating is. Members of these congregations even spy out those places. But some of those same people will sit up late into the night and watch movies on television. Some even have cable TV and may watch movies that are far worse than those at the theaters. Funny, to me movies are movies, no matter where they are viewed. But not to these folks!

One of my favorite stories comes from a man who used to be in our church. He and his wife were close friends of our family, but they moved to another part of the country. When he was a youth worker many years ago in an ethnic community, he attended a church that had Scandinavian roots. Being a rather forward-looking and creative young man, he decided he would show the youth group a missionary film. We're talking simple, safe, black-and-white religious-oriented movie. That film projector hadn't been off an hour before a group of the leaders in the church called him in and asked him about what he had done. They asked, "Did you show the young people a film?" In all honesty he responded, "Well, yeah, I did." "We don't like that," they replied. Without trying to be argumentative, the youth worker reasoned, "Well, I remember that at the last missionary conference, our church showed slides—" One of the church officers put his hand up, signaling him to cease talking. Then, in these words, he emphatically explained the conflict: "If it's still, fine. If it moves, sin!" You can show slides, but when they start movin', you're gettin' into sin. My friend crossed the invisible line and got his hand slapped. He and I still laugh about the incongruity of that logic, but he does not look down on those leaders for their different understanding. (Remember, our goal is acceptance, the basis of a grace state of mind.)

In Romans 14 Paul mentions the two most common reactions to such conflicts. First he says, "Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not" (Ro 14:3). The words "regard with contempt" mean "regard as nothing, utterly despise, to discount entirely." That is the normal response of those who feel the freedom to do whatever toward those who are more restrictive and rigid. It is easy to look down on them . . . to "regard as nothing."

The second reaction Paul mentions is that of the other side—"and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats." Judging means to criticize, to view negatively, to make assumptions that are exaggerated and erroneous and even damaging to character. No matter how strongly you may feel about a certain taboo, judging another who may disagree with you is going too far. That kind of thing has been going on for years, actually, ever since the first century.

William Barclay writes: The Jews had made a tyranny of the Sabbath, surrounding it with a jungle of rules, regulations and prohibitions.

It became a fetish! Can you imagine making the Sabbath into a fetish? Why, of course! Anything we make too much of easily becomes a fetish, which is the tragedy of it all. Do you remember Paul's question? "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls." When we truly accept another person, we remember that the Lord is perfectly capable of directing his or her life. That relieves us from having to be his or her conscience. It's our job to accept others; it's God's job to direct them. What does acceptance mean? What does it include? Because I cannot say it better than what I read in a periodical many years ago, I'll return to that source for my answer to those two questions:

Acceptance means you are valuable just as you are. It allows you to be the real you. You aren't forced into someone else's idea of who you really are. It means your ideas are taken seriously since they reflect you. You can talk about how you feel inside and why you feel that way—and someone really cares.

Acceptance means you can try out your ideas without being shot down. You can even express heretical thoughts and discuss them with intelligent questioning. You feel safe. No one will pronounce judgment on you, even though they don't agree with you. It doesn't mean you will never be corrected or shown to be wrong; it simply means it's safe to be you and no one will destroy you out of prejudice.

Acceptance is basic to letting others be.

Consider the next four verses of Romans 14 as we turn to a second guideline: (Ro 14:5–8)

Guideline 2: Refusing to dictate to others allows the Lord freedom to direct their lives. I especially appreciate the statement at the end of verse 5: "Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind." Give people room to make up their minds. Do you have a few new converts who are a part of your life and ministry? Do you want to

help them grow toward maturity? Here is how: Let them grow up differently. Let them learn at their own pace, just as you had to learn, including failures and mistakes. If you really want grace to awaken, be easier on them than others were on you. Don't make up their minds . . . let them! Don't step in and push your weight around . . . give them plenty of space. Whatever you do, don't control and manipulate them to get what you want. Be an accepting model of grace. Refuse all temptations to be a brother basher or sister smasher. We already have too many of them roaming around the religious landscape. And nothing catches the attention of the unsaved world quicker than those times when we Christians beat up on one another. Don't think the unsaved world doesn't notice our cannibalism.

Leslie Flynn writes about the time when evangelist Jack Van Impe was closing a citywide crusade in Green Bay, Wisconsin. It was to end on a Sunday afternoon. The very same public arena also featured wrestling on Sunday night. Interestingly, on Monday evening (the following day), Rex Humbard was scheduled to begin a new series of evangelistic meetings.

One wonders if the man who set up the sign didn't have his tongue in his cheek when he arranged the letters on the marquee,

JACK VAN IMPE
WRESTLING
REX HUMBARD

Most Christians have a long way to go when it comes to releasing others to the Lord. I love the way Paul provides the right perspective—"We are the Lord's." Few things will keep us from directing others' lives like that reminder. Each one of us belongs to the same Lord. When we stop dictating, it is easier for others to mature as they follow the Lord's directing.

Let's press on to the next four verses in Romans 14: (Ro 14:9–12)

Guideline 3: Freeing others means we never assume a position we're not qualified to fill. This, in one sentence, is enough to stop any person from judging another. We're not qualified. We lack full knowledge. How often we have jumped to wrong conclusions, made judgmental statements, only to find out later how off-base we were . . . then wished we could cut out our tongue.

What keeps us from being qualified to judge?

- We do not know all the facts.
- We are unable to read motives.
- We find it impossible to be totally objective.
- We lack "the big picture."
- We live with blind spots.
- We are prejudiced and have blurred perspective.
- Most of all, we ourselves are imperfect and inconsistent.

In a Connecticut city, fifty-three residents of a certain neighborhood signed a petition to stop reckless driving on their streets. The police set a watch. A few nights later five violators were caught. All five had signed the petition.

I will never forget what happened to me several years ago that illustrated how wrong I could be in judging another. I was speaking at a summer Bible conference for a week. Attending the same conference was a couple I had not seen before. We met briefly the first night. Both were friendly and seemed especially glad to be there. I began to notice as the week wore on that the man fell asleep in every one of the meetings. I mean every one. Normally, that doesn't bother me . . . I often talk in other people's sleep! But this time, for some strange reason, it began to bug me. By Wednesday I was irritated. As I mentioned, that has happened to me numerous times . . . but this guy was out within ten minutes after I started to speak. It made no difference if I spoke in the morning or evening—he slept. By the last meeting on Friday evening (through which he slept, of course) I had become convinced it was she who wanted to be there, not her husband. I sized him up as a fellow who talked one way but lived another. "Probably a carnal Christian," I mused. She stayed after the crowd and her husband had left. She asked if she could speak with me for a few minutes. I figured she wanted to talk about how unhappy she was living with a man who didn't have the same interest in spiritual things as she. How wrong I was. She said their being there was his idea. It had been his "final wish." I didn't understand. She informed me he had terminal cancer and had only weeks to live. At his request they attended the conference where I was speaking even though the medication he was taking for pain made him sleepy—something that greatly embarrassed him. "He loves the Lord," she said, "and you are his favorite Bible teacher. He wanted to

be here to meet you and to hear you, no matter what.” I was sincerely stunned. She thanked me for the week and left. I stood there, all alone, as deeply rebuked as I have ever been. I had judged my brother, and I was as wrong as I could possibly have been.

Does this guideline mean we must always agree? It does not. That is the subject of my next chapter, so I’ll not attempt to address it at length here. There are any number of people with whom you and I may not agree. That’s fine . . . we can still be civil to each other, instead of spending our time putting each other’s face on a dartboard. I’m a lot happier if I accept the fact that others won’t always fall in line with my convictions. That’s okay. But the main thing you and I must guard against is judging. I repeat, we are not qualified to fill that role. God alone is to be our Judge and Jury.

There is one more guideline that grows out of verses 13–18 in Romans 14 (Romans 14:13-18)

Guideline 4: Loving others requires us to express our liberty wisely. In other words, love must rule. I’m not my own; I’m bought with a price. My goal is not to please me; it is to please my Lord Jesus, my God. It is not to please you; it is to please my Lord. The same is true for you. So the bottom line is this: I don’t adapt my life according to what you may say; I adapt my life according to the basis of my love for you because I answer to Christ. And so do you.

To paraphrase those verses we just read from Romans: “Nothing that is not specifically designated as evil in Scripture is evil—but rather a matter of one’s personal preference or taste. So let it be. Even if you personally would not do what another is doing, let it be. And you who feel the freedom to do so, don’t flaunt it or mock those who disagree. We are in the construction business, not destruction. And let’s all remember that God’s big-picture kingdom plan is not being shaped by small things like what one person prefers over another, but by large things, like righteousness and peace and joy.”

One of the marks of maturity is the ability to handle liberty without flaunting it. Mature folks don’t flaunt their privileges. They enjoy them fully, yet quietly . . . privately . . . with those of like mind, who aren’t offended by the liberty.

When our children began to grow up, we (like you) increased their privileges. One of the first privileges our oldest child enjoyed was not having to take a nap and not having to go to bed so early. He could miss his afternoon nap, and he could stay up later with his mom and dad. The problem was, the other three weren’t old enough to have the same privilege. So he had to be mature about handling this new freedom. If he flaunted it, chaos would break out. In other words, he couldn’t walk by their closed bedroom door and taunt them by shouting, “Na-na-na-na-na . . . I don’t have to take a na-ap.” Or “Ha! You’ve got to go to bed early—not me. I’m free to stay up reeeal late!” We warned him to stay quiet and handle his liberty very wisely. Paul cautions you and me to do the same. Otherwise, the grace killers will get ammunition and have reason to load up and fire in our direction. Grace never gives us the right to rub anyone’s nose in our liberty. When I see that happening, I realize I’m watching religious childishness in action.

A FEW ACTIONS THAT SIGNIFY GRACE

I want to close this chapter by focusing our final attention on the concluding verses in Romans 14. Read verse 19 slowly and thoughtfully. “So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” On the basis of that great statement, consider the first of four action steps.

1. Concentrate on things that encourage peace and assist others’ growth An idea that works for me is to filter whatever I do through a twofold “grid”—two questions that keep me focused: (a) Is this going to make a lot of waves, or will it encourage peace? (b) Is this going to hurt and offend, or will it help and strengthen my brother or sister? Let’s commit ourselves anew to encouragement and affirmation.

2. Remember that sabotaging saints hurts the work of God. “Don’t tear down the work of God for the sake of food” (v. 20). You sabotage the saints when you flaunt your liberty, knowing that they have convictions against it. That is not fair. Frankly, that is fighting dirty. Scripture calls it “regarding with contempt” and counsels us against it. Enjoy your liberty with discretion.

3. Exercise your liberty only with those who can enjoy it with you. I repeat, that means to keep it private and personal. Remember my story about our oldest child. What others don’t know can’t hurt them. That’s not deception; it’s wise and necessary restraint. It isn’t prompted by hypocrisy but by love.

4. Determine where you stand and refuse to play God in anyone else’s life That may sound simple and

easy, but it is tougher than it may seem. Be absolutely sure you are right, then press on, regardless. By letting others be, you free yourself to give full attention to what God is trying to make of you. You have neither the time nor the energy to keep holding on. Love demands that you let go.

Some time ago The American Scholar magazine included a piece by Wyatt Prunty that illustrates rather well what I've been attempting to write in this chapter.

LEARNING THE BICYCLE

(for Heather)

The older children pedal past
Stable as little gyros, spinning hard
To supper, bath, and bed, until at last
We also quit, silent and tired
Beside the darkening yard where trees
Now shadow up instead of down.
Their predictable lengths can only tease
Her as, head lowered, she walks her bike alone
Somewhere between her wanting to ride
And her certainty she will always fall.
Tomorrow, though I will run behind,
Arms out to catch her, she'll tilt then balance wide
Of my reach, till distance makes her small,
Smaller, beyond the place I stop and know
That to teach her I had to follow
And when she learned I had to let her go.

Romans 14:13

LIVING WITH OTHERS IN VIEW

Let ... no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

Romans 14:13

To become a Christian is easy — for it is just receiving God's grace through faith in the Savior. To live the sanctified life, however, is extremely difficult, especially since the pathway to Glory is narrow, and our instructions for travel include such admonitions as: "pray without ceasing," "be ye perfect," and "love thy neighbor as thyself." In fact, we are told to curb even legitimate desires, if they tend to offend a weaker brother (Rom. 14: 19-21

). Paul warns in our text that we must be doubly careful not to put a "stumbling block or an occasion to fall" in the way of a fellow believer.

I am told that tourists in the Alps are cautioned at certain points by the guides not to speak or sing or even to whisper, as the faintest breath might start reverberations in the air which could loosen a delicately poised avalanche from its place on the mountain, and bring it crashing down upon the villages and fields in the valley below. J. R. Miller, in commenting on this, wisely points out, "There are men and women who are walking under such a stress of burdens, cares, responsibilities, sorrows and temptations, that one whisper of censure, criticism, complaint or unkindness may cause them to fall under their load. Let us beware, therefore, how we conduct ourselves, for it is a crime thus to imperil another soul."

Recognizing the seriousness of life, every Christian who is consecrated at all must guard against being an offense to others. Let us walk carefully and prayerfully today lest some thoughtless word or deed impede the spiritual progress of a fellow believer!

Have your feet on errands of love been bent,
Or on selfish deeds has your strength been spent?
Has someone seen Christ in you today;
Or has your life led a soul astray?
— V. B. Hopkins, alt.

Live for thy neighbor, if thou wouldst live for God! —Seneca

Romans 14:18

He that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men.

Dean Howson renders this verse thus: "He who lives in these things as Christ's bondsman is well-pleasing to God, and cannot be condemned by men." There are two rules, therefore, to be observed by us when we consider our behaviour in that great borderland which lies between the dark and light, the clearly wrong and clearly right. We are all conscious of habits and tastes, of inclinations towards certain forms of amusement and recreation, of methods of life, which do not contravene any distinct law of God, but are certainly open to question. It is such things that fall within the scope of these two principles.

First, we must always remember that we are Christ's bondservants. — Let us look then, every day and hour, and as to the mental habit, every moment, upon Jesus Christ as our Master. Sainly George Herbert chose that to be, as it were, his best — beloved aspect of his Savior; "My Master, Jesus." "An oriental fragrancy, my Master." Let us do the same. Let us wear the word next the heart, next the will; nay, let it sink into the very springs of both, deeper every day. And as each fresh question arises in our life, let us stand close beside Him, noticing the expression of His face, asking Him what He would desire, and always reckoning that the least suggestion of his preference is law. "None of us liveth to himself for, whether we live, we live unto the Lord."

Second, we must always bear in mind the spiritual life of others. — We are to put no stumbling block, or occasion for falling, in another's way. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor to do any other thing, whereby our brother is made to stumble. Let us each of us please his neighbor for good ends, to build him up; for Christ pleased not Himself.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily Vol. 5

Romans 14:23 "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Do nothing about which you have need to ask a question. Be quite sure about it, or leave it alone. Whatsoever you cannot do with the confidence that you are doing right is sin to you. Though the deed may be right to other people, if you have any doubt about it yourself, it is evil to you.

C H Spurgeon

Romans 14:23

[Doubtful Things](#) (Doubtful is Dirty)

"He that doubteth is condemned if he eat" (Ro 14:23, R.V.).

Sandy was a thrifty Scot who objected to needless laundry expense, so when he wore a dress shirt to a banquet, he put it away carefully for future use. On one occasion when dressing for such an event, he took a used shirt out of the drawer and examined it with care, hoping to be able to wear it that evening. Not being quite sure of its strict cleanliness, he took it to a window, where he was looking it over under a better light than the room afforded. His wife, Jean, noticed him shaking his head as though fearful that it would not pass careful scrutiny.

"Remember, Sandy," she called to him, "if it's doubtful, it's dirty."

That settled it. The shirt went into the discard and another—a fresh one—took its place. Jeans' words may well speak to every believer concerning things about which conscience raises any question whatsoever.

[Illustrations of Bible Truth by H.A. Ironside](#), Moody Press, 1945, p. 9

ROMANS 15

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Romans 15:5 Click here

November 22 THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND COMFORT

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

Romans 15:13 Click here

November 23 THE GOD OF HOPE

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

Romans 15:5

The Waving Girl

Read: Romans 15:1-7

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. —Romans 15:7 niv

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, a familiar sight greeted ships as they pulled into the port of Savannah, Georgia. That sight was Florence Martus, "[The Waving Girl](#)." For 44 years, Florence greeted the great ships from around the world, waving a handkerchief by day or a lantern by night. Today, a statue of Florence and her faithful dog stands in Savannah's Morrell Park, permanently welcoming incoming vessels.

There is something in a warm welcome that speaks of acceptance. In Romans 15:7, Paul urged his readers: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you" (niv). Paul had in view our treatment of each other as followers of Christ, for in verses 5-6 he challenged us to live in harmony with one another. The key is to have "the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (niv).

Our acceptance of our fellow believers in Christ demonstrates more than just our love for each other—it reflects the great love of the One who has permanently welcomed us into His family.

Father, give me a heart for my brothers and sisters in Christ. Please give us, together, a heart for one another, so that we will love and honor You in all we do.

Share this prayer from our Facebook page with your friends. facebook.com/ourdailybread

The closer Christians get to Christ, the closer they get to one another.

INSIGHT: In Romans 14:1–15:7 Paul addressed a conflict between "strong" believers and "weak" believers that threatened the unity of the Roman church. The dispute was not over any core doctrines, but over some Old Testament laws (Rom. 14:1-6). The

“strong”—or mature in faith—were those who believed that Christians no longer needed to observe these laws (vv. 2,15). Paul asked the mature believers not to despise the less mature, and the weak not to condemn the strong (v. 3). He called for tolerance and acceptance of each other’s convictions and practices. In today’s passage he lays the responsibility on the mature to be sensitive to the convictions of those weaker in faith and to help build them up (15:1-2). Sim Kay Tee

By Bill Crowder

Romans 15:6

A Unique Choir

Read: Romans 15:5-13

That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. —Romans 15:6

When Mitch Miller died in July 2010, most people remembered him as the man who invited everyone to sing along. On his popular 1960s TV program *Sing Along with Mitch*, an all-male chorus sang well-loved songs while the words appeared on the screen so viewers could join in. A Los Angeles Times obituary cited Miller’s belief that one reason for the program’s success was the appeal of his chorus: “I always made a point of hiring singers who were tall, short, bald, round, fat, whatever—everyday-looking guys.” From that unified diversity came beautiful music in which everyone was invited to participate.

In Romans 15, Paul called for unity among the followers of Christ—“that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.6). From several Old Testament passages, he spoke of Gentiles and Jews together singing praise to God (vv.9-12). A unity that had been considered impossible became reality as people who had been deeply divided began thanking God together for His mercy shown in Christ. Like them, we are filled with joy, peace, and hope “by the power of the Holy Spirit” (v.13).

What a unique “choir” we belong to, and what a privilege it is to sing along!

Lord, we are grateful that we can be a part of Your family. Help us to live in unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ so that others may see how gracious You are and want to know You too. Amen.

Unity among believers comes from our union with Christ.

By David McCasland

Romans 15:5-13

Re: TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Ephesians 2:11-22; Romans 15:5-13

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. - Galatians 3:28

Throughout his short life, Antonio had only known hatred—for his abusive parents, for kids who weren’t part of his gang, and for all the Asians and African Americans who lived in his neighborhood. Hatred led him to juvenile detention at age twelve. It seemed that hatred would consume this young man. But then God’s love broke into his life. A local Christian outreach sponsored a basketball Bible club. With nothing better to do, Antonio started to attend. Slowly he began to change, and others began to notice. One day, an African-American club member was seriously injured on the basketball court. Antonio was the first to help him, and even held his head until the paramedics could arrive.

One of the greatest testimonies to Christ’s transforming power is unity within His body. Only the love of Jesus could enable a kid like Antonio to care for someone he had been taught to hate. Recall from our study on Genesis 3 (see Dec. 2) that the consequence of the Fall was alienation. In Ephesians 2, we see that the effect of Jesus’ ministry is reconciliation.

Throughout this section, Paul has two levels of reconciliation in mind. First and foremost, believers are reconciled to God the Father through Jesus the Son. No other reconciliation is truly possible if a person remains estranged from God. But once this level of reconciliation occurs, then we see that Christ also reconciles those who are far (Gentiles) and those who are near (Jews). To be sure, this includes Jewish and non-Jewish believers. But this also indicates any groups who have been separated historically, such

as the groups that Antonio formerly hated. Miraculously, God is building His church (v. 21) out of formerly separated peoples who have been brought together in Christ.

We find this same emphasis on unity in Romans 15, where Paul urges believers to accept one another to the glory of God. The series of Old Testament quotations in this section offer a fitting summary of our study this month. Praise is the proper response to God's great mercy in bringing the good news to Gentiles.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The saddest condition of any person is to be "without hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Any work of reconciliation, whether it's between different ethnic or economic groups, must begin with reconciliation to God.

If you have never experienced this reconciliation with God, don't let this year pass without committing your life to Jesus Christ. If you are one who has been brought near, prayerfully ask God how you can reach out to others who are far away, to those who are without hope and God.

Romans 15:14-22

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Romans 15:14-22; 11:11-16

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. - Isaiah 49:6

TODAY IN THE WORD

A stanza from the popular hymn, "Tell Me the Old, Old Story," begins: "Tell me the story slowly, That I may take it in—That wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin." This is the story that we've been tracing this month, and today we see that Paul carefully understood his own part in the "old, old story."

You may have heard the claim that Paul "invented" Christianity, because Jesus never intended to start an organized religion. The problem, of course, is that this is completely untrue. This becomes clear when we see that both Jesus and Paul saw their own missions as fitting perfectly in the larger context of God's redemptive story. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus showed the disciples how everything in the law and the prophets related to Him (Luke 24:44-45). Similarly, Paul's understanding of his call to the Gentiles was firmly rooted in the Old Testament. Paul didn't "invent" anything—he was simply obedient to God's call and His Word.

Toward the end of his letter to the Romans Paul affirmed his call to be a light to the Gentiles. Crediting God's grace, Paul acknowledged that some of the points that he had made in this letter weren't easy, but he was duty-bound to proclaim the gospel in its entirety to the largely Gentile church in Rome. Using language from the Old Testament, Paul likened his ministry to the Gentiles to offering an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. Citing Isaiah 52:15, Paul affirmed his call to preach the gospel where it hadn't been previously proclaimed. And, in fact, God had enabled Paul to preach the gospel all the way to Illyricum, modern-day Albania.

Despite his clear call to the Gentiles, Paul also understood that the gospel went first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. As he traveled, he first shared the gospel in synagogues. It's also clear that Paul saw his ministry to Gentiles in terms of its impact on the Jews. As we read in Romans 11:14, Paul hoped that his Gentile ministry would make the Jews envious and lead to their salvation.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Perhaps you've seen a child become bored with a toy, only to want it back the moment another child starts to play with it.

Similarly, God prepared a special gift for His people, but they rejected it. So God brought the gospel directly to the Gentiles, to provoke the jealousy of Jews and increase their desire for this gift. We should pray for Jewish people around us to accept the gospel and embrace Jesus as their Messiah.

Romans 15:13

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

The English poet Alexander Pope said, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast, man never is but always to be blessed." As Christians, we know there is only one sure and abiding source of hope, and that is God. If hope originated in ourselves, we would be cast into the depths of despair because life's complex problems have a way of squeezing every last ounce of it from our hearts. But when we trust God, hope abounds by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In his book *Live With Your Emotions*, Hazen G. Werner quotes part of a letter from a woman who had run out of hope. She wrote, "A

vile and ugly sin had dogged my way for years. My soul had been eclipsed in darkness. I began to feel I would never be emancipated from its grasp. Then one evening in the midst of my despair, I felt the impulse to say, 'Thank you, God, anyway,' and for a moment it was light. I said to myself, 'That must be the way.' I began to thank Him still more, and the light continued and grew, and for a whole evening I was relieved of my burden."

What that woman seemingly stumbled onto by accident, the psalmist knew from experience. The power of gratitude can lift the weight of the most pressing trial. Turning the gaze of his soul heavenward, he saw God as an inexhaustible source of hope.

When we get discouraged, we can talk to ourselves as David did: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? ... Hope in God" (Psalm 42:5). No matter how dark the path, thank God for Himself. It will open a window to heaven and let in a ray of hope. —D.J.D.

Hope, like an anchor, is fixed on the unseen.

Our Daily Bread

Romans 15:14-22

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Romans 15:14-22; 11:11-16

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. - Isaiah 49:6

TODAY IN THE WORD

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Romans 15:17-29

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Romans 15:17-29

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known. - Romans 15:20

George Verwer was a veteran of mission work in Mexico, the former Soviet Union, Spain, and other countries. He had founded Operation Mobilization, a pioneering organization in the use of short-term missions teams. But when he dreamed of a "gospel ship," his co-leaders advised him to forget it. "What do you know about running a ship? Nothing! It would be a disaster!"

After five years of prayer, the Logos was commissioned and set sail for India. Since 1971, the Logos, its sister ship, the Doulos, and its successor, Logos II, have been spreading the gospel and offering Bible teaching and Christian literature in ports around the world.

Like George Verwer, Paul was ambitious for the gospel of Christ. For him, the bottom line was preaching Christ. Later he'd repeat this idea, even when he was in prison and others' motives were suspect (Phil. 1:12–18). He gloried only in his service to Christ and in what Christ had done. It's all about God!

Paul's list of "accomplishments" (vv. 17–20) reads like a review of the Great Commission readings. He'd proclaimed the gospel, doing so in the power of the Holy Spirit. He'd journeyed from Jerusalem to Illyricum (present-day Albania and Yugoslavia), following the geographic progression outlined in Matthew and Acts. And he'd taught the Gentiles to obey, as Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:20).

Paul's particular ambition was to preach the gospel to people who had never heard (vv. 20–21). In the secular world, "ambition" often points to self-promotion and materialism—what a difference godliness makes! Paul wanted to promote not himself but his Savior. He was eager not to acquire things but to store up treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:19–21), taking the Light where it was darkest. His quotation of Isaiah 52:15 (part of a "Servant Song") reinforced the biblical foundations of his ambition.

What is "spiritual passion"? Take time today to write out a concise, biblical definition of this term. You could study Paul's statements in today's Scripture reading as a model for your definition.

Romans 15:18

I will not dare to speak of any things save those that Christ wrought through me. (r.v.)

All things that have not sprung from the indwelling and inworking power of Christ, are probably valueless in the sight of God. As the apostle dared not record them in this book, so probably they are not recorded in God's book. They lack the one principle or germ of life. Our Lord said, Separate from Me ye can do nothing; and probably, therefore, whatever we do out of living union with Him amounts to nothing.

These words are a window into the apostle's inner life. He was ever looking to the Lord to work through him, in the power of the Holy Ghost. He had nothing, therefore, to boast of, as he reviewed his labors; the impulse in which they originated, and the success with which they were crowned, were alike attributable to the Son of God, who had been revealed and formed within.

Let us so yield ourselves to Him, that the great Master may fulfill through us also all the good pleasure of his will.

Let us wait before Him in earnest expectancy, till the foundation of his purpose begins to arise within us; and let us receive from Him the gracious power of which to realize his plans. "I cannot," one may say, "give that tract; speak to that fellowtraveller; witness for Christ on that ship or in that shop; stand up in that pulpit and preach." No, perhaps not. But you can let Christ do these things through you.

"So others shall Take patience, labor, to their heart and land, From thy land and thy heart and thy brave cheer, And God's grace fructify through thee to all. The least flower with a brimming cup may stand And share its dew-drop with another near."

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily Vol. 5

Romans 15:33 [Click here](#)

November 24 THE GOD OF PEACE

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

ROMANS 16

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Romans 16:1-16

Helpers Needed

Read: Romans 16:1-16

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, . . . will teach you all things. —John 14:26

To some people, the term helper carries with it second-class connotations. Classroom helpers assist trained teachers in their classes. Helpers assist trained electricians, plumbers, and lawyers on the job. Because they aren't as skilled in the profession, they might be viewed as having less value. But everyone is needed to accomplish the task.

The apostle Paul had many helpers in his work of ministry. He listed them in his letter to Rome (ch.16). He made special reference to Phoebe, who "has been a helper of many and of myself also" (Ro 16:2). Priscilla and Aquila risked their own lives for Paul (Ro 16:3-4). And Mary, Paul said, "labored much for us" (Ro 16:6).

Helping is a spiritual gift, according to 1 Corinthians 12:28. Paul listed it among the gifts from the Holy Spirit that are given to believers in Christ's body, the church. The gift of "helps" is just as needed as the others that are listed.

Even the Holy Spirit is called a "Helper." Jesus said, "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, . . . will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26).

In whatever ways the Holy Spirit, the Helper, has gifted you, let Him use you for His honor.

Dear Lord, thank You for the gifts You have given me so that I might serve the body of Christ. Help me to be faithful to use my gifts to bring You glory.

You are a necessary part of the whole.

INSIGHT: Today's passage is found near the end of Paul's theological masterpiece—the epistle to the Romans. As Paul concludes his letter, he greets people by name. His final appeal to maintain unity in Christ is followed by this marvelous phrase of worship: "To God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen" (Ro 16:27).

By Anne Cetas

Romans 16:1-16

A Heart Full Of People

Read: Romans 16:1-16

You are our glory and joy. —1 Th. 2:20

Paul's letter to the Romans is considered the theological centerpiece of the New Testament. Yet this grand statement of doctrine concludes with a personal greeting from the apostle to a host of people, 27 of whom are mentioned by name. He also refers to "our sister," "servant," "helper," "fellow worker," "beloved," "countrymen," "fellow prisoners," "brethren," and "saints."

I read a letter recently, a tribute to a Christian man who has personally influenced thousands of people over the past 50 years. He loves and teaches the Word of God. He welcomes everyone with open arms, shows his appreciation for them, and offers the gift of friendship. Many who met him when they were not followers of Christ are now among his brothers and sisters in the faith.

The apostle Paul's keen mind was filled with doctrine, but his heart was full of people. He wrote to the Thessalonians, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Th. 2:19-20).

This combination of commitment to truth and compassion for people is the hallmark of everyone who, like Paul, reflects the mind and heart of Christ.

Compassion touches people's hearts
Much more than words alone,
But love must be combined with truth
For faith to be full grown. —Sper

You can measure your love for God by your love for others.

By David McCasland

Romans 16:1-16

"Isn't There Anything Else?"

Read: Romans 16:1-16

Through love serve one another. —Galatians 5:13

A prominent Christian leader was known for his willingness to help needy individuals with their social and financial problems. When asked why he took time out of his busy schedule to do this, he replied, "When I was a boy, I worked in our family grocery store. I was taught that I should never ask a customer, 'Is that all?' Instead, I was told to say, 'Isn't there anything else?'"

I have carried this philosophy over into my Christian work." That man of God was filled with so much love for others that he wanted to see them develop in all areas of their lives.

In Romans 16, the apostle Paul commended many in the church who were like this man. He singled out Priscilla, Aquila, Mary, Persis, and several others who had labored for the Lord with willing hands and loving hearts. They were not content to do minimal service but were always busy ministering to the needs of fellow believers.

When we have experienced the matchless grace of God, our hearts should be filled with compassion for our brothers and sisters in Christ. By extending to them a helping hand and assisting them in whatever way possible, we're actually saying, "God has given me so much. Isn't there anything else I can do for you?"

Beautiful lives have they who bear
The burdens of those heavy laden with care;
Earnest are they who daily show
Compassionate service wherever they go. —Anon.

You may serve God without loving Him, but you cannot love God without serving Him.

By Henry G. Bosch

Romans 16:1-2

Special Delivery Read: Romans 16:1-16

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who . . . has been a helper of many. —Romans 16:1-2

When a special delivery letter is handed to us at the door, it usually means we are receiving something very important. According to many Bible scholars, Phoebe was the one who hand-delivered a letter of immeasurable value to the church in Rome—Paul’s inspired doctrinal masterpiece. It points out how a lost and sinful humanity can find redemption through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Phoebe, whose name means “bright and radiant,” lived in Cenchrea, a harbor village in eastern Corinth where Paul had stopped during his third missionary journey. Because of her kindness to him, he wrote to the Romans, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may . . . assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also” (Ro 16:1-2

). Phoebe had assisted others in getting out the Word of God.

All of us are “spiritual mail carriers.” We have the good news that Paul wrote about so many centuries ago. And like Phoebe, we should assist in delivering it by word and deed to people around us who need its life-giving message.

Do good to all and kindness show—
That’s what God’s Word commands;
For when we’re serving in Christ’s name,
We are His feet and hands. —Fitzhugh

We serve God by sharing His Word with others.

By Dennis Fisher

Romans 16:1-2

A Gratitude Visit

Read: Romans 16:1-16

I commend to you Phoebe, . . . for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also. —Romans 16:1-2

Counting your blessings promotes good physical health, according to a study by some US doctors. Volunteers who kept weekly gratitude journals reported fewer aches and pains than those who recorded daily hassles or neutral events.

A “gratitude visit” was developed by Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman to promote strong emotional health. He tells people to think of someone who has made an important difference in their lives. He asks them to write the story of how that person has helped them, and then to visit that person and read the story aloud. Tests show that a year later the people who had done so were happier and reported fewer episodes of depression. Even more important, think of what it must have done for those who were thanked!

The apostle Paul had a long list of people who had helped him and for whom he was grateful (Rom. 16:1-16

). He wrote that Phoebe had “been a helper,” Priscilla and Aquila had “risked their own necks” for his life, and Mary had “labored much” for him. And he took time to write his thanks in a letter to the church at Rome.

Who has helped to shape your life? Could you make a gratitude visit—for their sake, and for yours?

Consider what the Lord has done
Through those who’ve shown you love;
Then thank them for their faithful deeds,
For blessings from above. —Sper

Gratitude should not be an occasional incident but a continuous attitude.

By Anne Cetas

Romans 16:1-2

Companions Or Competitors?Read:

Romans 16:1-20

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who . . . has been a helper of many. —Romans 16:1-2

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) had nothing but disdain for the concept of companionship. He saw all people as competitors. According to this view, people are always striving with one another in a kind of continual rivalry.

Competition can be healthy in the worlds of business and athletics. It becomes detrimental, however, when a person's attitudes and actions become viciously self-serving. Such competition should have no place in a marriage or in the church.

When spouses try to outdo each other in a career, or in some other endeavor, the marriage may be in trouble. The apostle Peter, in a male-dominated society, admonished men to treat their wives as companions, as "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7).

When someone starts complaining about people in the church who always try to run things, a competitive spirit may be at the heart of the problem. In Romans 16, Paul saw his fellow believers as companions, not competitors. All Christians, men and women, are members of God's family and serve Jesus as co-workers in the greatest of all enterprises.

Companions, not competitors—that's what Christ wants us to be! —HVL

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray,
My prayer shall be for others. —Meigs

Beware: Competition can destroy companionship.

By Herbert VanderLugt

Romans 16:1-2

Credit Due

Read: Romans 16:1-16

Phoebe our sister . . . has been a helper of many and of myself also. —Romans 16:1-2

In 1946, when the US Army unveiled its 30-ton computer called ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer), two men named John Mauchly and J. Presper Eckert received all the credit. But it was six women behind the scenes who made the computer work.

Before Mauchly and Eckert took the stage to demonstrate ENIAC, the women had programmed the complex machine. They received no recognition at the time, but historians today want to give them due credit.

Women have often gone unrecognized for their achievements and contributions. And sadly, it's also true in the church. But in Romans 16, we have an example of the importance of honoring women who serve faithfully. Paul praised Phoebe as "a helper of many and of myself also" (vv.1-2). He commended Priscilla and her husband Aquila, who risked their lives for Paul's sake (vv.3-4). Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis "labored in the Lord" (v.12). Paul mentioned at least eight women for whom he had great appreciation.

Women of faith deserve honor for their service to God and others. Think of the women who are serving faithfully in your church. Why not give one of them a word of thanks and praise today?

O Lord, help me appreciate
The work that women do,
The service given from their hearts,
Their sacrifice for You. —Sper

God never fails to give credit where credit is due.

By David McCasland

Romans 16:1-2

"We Cut The Coal"

Romans 16:1-16

I commend to you Phoebe . . . ; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also. —Romans 16:1-2

Winston Churchill knew that people who work behind the scenes don't always get the credit they deserve. During World War II, many of England's coal miners wanted to enlist and fight on the front lines. Churchill acknowledged their patriotism but reminded them of how valuable their work was to the cause of the war. "Some must stay in the pits," he said, "and others must stay in the army. Both are equally needed, and for both there is equal credit."

Looking ahead to when children would ask their parents what they did in the war, Churchill said, "One will say, 'I was a fighter pilot'; another will say, 'I was in the submarine service'; . . . and you in your turn will say with equal pride and with equal right, 'We cut the coal.'"

Paul too recognized the vital importance of those who worked behind the scenes. Much of Romans 16 is dedicated to honoring some of his fellow workers in the faith—people such as Phoebe, Andronicus, and Urbanus—whom we would otherwise never know about. Their service was valuable to Paul and to the cause of reaching people for Christ.

Your labor for the Lord may be unseen and unheralded, but it is essential. Continue to "cut the coal." You are valuable to the Lord.

Use now what God has given you,
Count not its worth as small;
God does not ask of you great things,
Just faithfulness—that's all! —Bosch

Your little is a lot when you give your all.

By David Egner

Romans 16:1-2, 6, 12

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Romans 16:1-2, 6, 12

Of all the people who influenced Dwight L. Moody during the early years of his ministry in Chicago, none was more powerfully used by God than a woman known as ""Auntie"" Sarah Cooke. She was a tireless Christian worker, evangelist, and prayer warrior who attended the same church as Moody when he was a young man.

At a camp meeting in 1871, Auntie Cooke, feeling a deep burden for Moody, began praying that God would anoint him with greater spiritual power. Her prayers were answered just after the Great Chicago Fire of that year, and Moody himself looked back to that occasion as a key to the power in his ministry.

Phoebe and the other women mentioned in today's verses must have been just as tireless and effective as Auntie Cooke. In particular, Paul pays Phoebe a high spiritual compliment in his brief tribute. In fact, since the word ""servant"" here is the word often translated 'deacon,' many believe Phoebe held the office of deaconess in the church at Cenchrea.

Whether Paul was using this term in an official sense is open to debate, but this much is certain—he had great confidence in Phoebe. She was the emissary delivering this Roman letter to the believers there, so Paul commended her to them as a servant of great worth.

Phoebe was not only worthy of the respect of the Roman church. She was worthy of any help they could give her in her capacity as Paul's representative.

There were also some women in the Roman church itself who deserved honor for their hard work. Today we are singling out four women: Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis. All are commended for their hard work helping people and the cause of Christ.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - When God decides to bless His people for their obedience, no power on earth can hinder Him. Wouldn't it be great to be known as the ""help-bringer?"" No matter what the century, the church of Jesus Christ has always needed dedicated workers like these women. As you read today's devotional, the faces and names of faithful servants of Christ in your church may have come to mind. These are the people who work very hard, often in the background, to support the work of Christ.

Romans 16:1-4, 13, 21-23

The Swagger

Read: Romans 16:1–4,13,21–23

Encourage one another and build each other up. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

In the summer of 2015, Hunter (aged 15) carried his brother Braden (8) for a fifty-seven-mile walk to raise awareness of the needs of people with cerebral palsy. Braden weighs sixty pounds, so Hunter needed frequent rest stops where others helped him stretch his muscles, and he wore special harnesses to disperse Braden's weight. Hunter says that while the harnesses helped with the physical discomfort, what helped him most were the people along the way. "If it weren't for everyone cheering and walking with us, I wouldn't have been able to do it. . . . My legs were sore, but my friends picked me up and I made it through" His mom named the arduous trek "The Cerebral Palsy Swagger."

The apostle Paul, who we think of as strong and courageous, also needed to be "picked up." In Romans 16 he lists a number of people who did just that for him. They served alongside him, encouraged him, met his needs, and prayed for him. He mentions Phoebe; Priscilla and Aquila, who were co-workers; Rufus's mother, who had been like a mother to him as well; Gaius, who showed him hospitality; and many more.

Encouragers pick others up when troubles weigh them down.

We all need friends who pick us up, and we all know of others who need our encouragement. As Jesus helps and carries us, let us help one another.

Lord, in Your wisdom You established Your church as a place for us to love and care for each other. Help me to extend the grace I've received to others.

Encouragers pick others up when troubles weigh them down.

INSIGHT: The letter to the Romans is arguably Paul's most intensely theological letter. Yet in Romans 16, he issues more personal greetings than in any other letter—twenty-seven! These personal greetings, included at the close of a theological letter about the nature of the gospel, serve as a significant reminder. The message of the death and resurrection of Jesus is not merely a piece of intellectual information. The doctrines that form the foundation for our rescue in Christ are not an academic exercise. These truths describe the love of God for human beings who have names and faces and struggles and victories. The gospel is the story of God's unending love for people—people like those listed here. People like you and me.

By Anne Cetas

Romans 16:3

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus (Romans 16:3).

The Bible tells us that God is the Helper of His children (Heb. 13:6). Most important, of course, He has delivered us from the condemnation of sin by providing salvation. But He also comes to our aid in many other ways every day. His example shows us that it is vital for us to do the same for other believers. Paul was especially concerned about encouraging Christians to help one another, and he commended those who had aided him in Rome. In his letter to the Christians there, he wrote, "Greet Mary, who labored much for us" (Ro 16:6). And of Phoebe he said, "She has been a helper of many" (Ro 16:2).

Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide, Tenzing Norgay, successfully completed their historic climb of Mt. Everest in 1953, a feat of remarkable courage and skill. Once during their descent Hillary lost his footing. Instinctively, Tenzing held the line taut and kept them both from falling by digging his ax firmly into the ice. Hillary recovered his balance, regained a foothold, and they continued their descent. When reporters later called Tenzing a hero, he refused to take any credit. Rather, he said, "Mountain climbers always help one another." He considered it a routine part of his job.

That's the way it should be with Christians. We are all pilgrims headed toward the same goal. When another's burden becomes heavy or someone stumbles along the way, we should give whatever assistance we can. Outsiders should say of us, "Christians always help one another." —D.C.E.

When we share another's burdens, both of us will walk straighter.

Our Daily Bread

Romans 16:3-4Risks and Rescue

Read: Romans 16:1-7

Greet Priscilla and Aquila . . . who risked their own necks for my life. —Romans 16:3-4

On September 7, 1838, Grace Darling, the daughter of an English lighthouse keeper, spotted a shipwreck and survivors offshore. Together, she and her father courageously rowed their boat a mile through rough waters to rescue several people. Grace became a legend for her compassionate heart and steady hand in risking her life to rescue others.

The apostle Paul tells us of another man and woman team who took risks to rescue others. He wrote about Priscilla and Aquila, his fellow workers in Christ, who “risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (Rom. 16:3-4).

We are not told exactly what “risk” Paul was referring to, but with beatings, imprisonment, shipwrecks, and threats of death so common to Paul’s ministry, it’s not hard to see how this couple could have put themselves in harm’s way to help their friend. Apparently, Paul’s rescue was more important to them than their own safety.

Rescuing others—whether from physical or spiritual danger—often carries a risk. But when we take a risk by reaching out to others, we reflect the heart of our Savior who gave up so much for us.

The hand of God protects our way
When we would do His will;
And even when we take a risk,
We know He’s with us still. —D. DeHaan

When you’ve been rescued, you’ll want to rescue others.

By Dennis Fisher

Romans 16:3-4

Loving Relationships

Read: Romans 16:1-16

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ, . . . to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches. —Romans 16:3-4

A reporter in USA Today quoted a young woman who said of her baseball superstar father: “I don’t know why he never spent any time with us. All we wanted him to do was spend time with us. He never liked us.”

When the athlete was told what she said, he responded, “I don’t know what she’s complaining about. I just bought her a Mercedes last week.”

He obviously didn’t realize that a loving relationship has much more value than anything money can buy. This is true in every aspect of our lives. We need people far more than we need possessions.

The apostle Paul highlighted the value of relationships as he closed his letter to the believers in Rome (Rom. 16:1-16). After teaching them deep truths about the gospel, he sent his personal greetings to more than 25 individuals and the people associated with them. His co-workers joined him in sending their greetings. They obviously treasured the friendship of the saints.

Loving relationships! They enrich our individual lives. They encourage us in our Christian faith. They make a house a home. They vitalize our churches. Give yourself to developing loving relationships and you will be greatly blessed.

Lord, teach us the secret of loving,
The love You are asking today;
Then help us to love one another—

For this we most earnestly pray. —Anon.

We don't find friends, we make them.

By Herbert VanderLugt

Romans 16:3-4

Plant A Tree

Read: Romans 16:1-16

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, . . . who risked their own necks for my life. —Romans 16:3-4

Before I entered the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem, I had to walk down a boulevard called “The Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles.” It is lined with hundreds of trees planted in honor of people who sheltered or in other ways assisted Jews during the Nazi regime. At the base of each tree is a metal plaque bearing the name of a man, woman, or family who risked their lives to help Jews during the Holocaust. Some of the names are familiar, like Corrie ten Boom and Oscar Schindler. But most are not.

As I walked down this avenue of memorial, my thoughts went to Romans 16, where Paul said that Priscilla and Aquila had risked their lives for his sake. Then I thanked God for devoted believers in Jesus Christ down through the centuries who made tremendous sacrifices, some losing loved ones or their own lives, to meet the physical and spiritual needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Few of us face serious risks today. If we did, it's not likely that anyone would plant a tree in our honor. Even so, let's pray for a willingness and a desire to support sacrificially a struggling or suffering believer.

God gives us all we need, so let's give to others in their need.

By David Egner

Romans 16:3-4

Say It Now!

Read: Romans 16:1-16

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, . . . to whom . . . I give thanks. —Romans 16:3-4

An unknown author has penned these thought-provoking words:

I would rather have one little rose
From the garden of a friend
Than to have the choicest flowers
When my stay on earth must end.
I would rather have a pleasant word
In kindness said to me
Than flattery when my heart is still,
And life has ceased to be.

I would rather have a loving smile
From friends I know are true
Than tears shed 'round my casket
When to this world I bid adieu.

Bring me all your flowers today,
Whether pink, or white, or red;
I'd rather have one blossom now
Than a truckload when I'm dead.

Recalling the good qualities of deceased friends or relatives at their funeral is appropriate, but how much better to give sincere praise to them while they are still living. It may be the encouragement they desperately need.

As the apostle Paul closed his letter to the Romans, he publicly commended those who had helped and encouraged him in the work of the gospel. He not only greeted them by name, but he also expressed his gratitude for what they had done (16:1-15). What an example for all of us to follow!

Do you owe someone a word of thanks or appreciation? Don't put it off. Say it today. Tomorrow may be too late!

You can't speak a kind word too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.

By Richard DeHaan

Romans 16:4

A Debt Of Gratitude

Read: Romans 16:1-16

[They] risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. —Romans 16:4

Dave Randlett was someone of whom I can say, "Because of him, my life will never be the same." Dave, who went to heaven in October 2010, became a mentor to me when I was a new follower of Jesus in my college years. He not only invested time in me, but he took risks by giving me opportunities to learn and grow in ministry. Dave was God's instrument to give me the opportunity to be a student preacher and travel with a college music team. As a result, he helped shape and prepare me for a life of teaching God's Word. I'm glad I was able to express thanks to him on a number of occasions.

Just as I am thankful for Dave's influence in my life, the apostle Paul was grateful for Aquila and Priscilla, who served the Lord with him. He said they "risked their own necks for my life." In gratitude, he thanked them, as did "all the churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. 16:4).

You too may have people in your life who have taken risks by giving you opportunities to serve or who have greatly influenced you spiritually. Perhaps pastors, ministry leaders, friends, or family members have given of themselves to move you further along for Christ. The question is, have you thanked them?

Consider what the Lord has done Through those who've shown you love; And thank Him for each faithful one— A blessing from above. —Sper

For those who have helped you, take time to give them thanks.

By Bill Crowder

Romans 16:4

An Unusual Couple?

Read: Acts 18:1-3,18-28

Aquila and Priscilla . . . explained to [Apollos] the way of God more accurately. —Acts 18:26

The more we see marriage problems all around us, the more we wonder where to look for a marriage that is working.

How about the story of a couple who not only made their marriage work but who also used their unity to assist the early church? Their names were Aquila and Priscilla.

Notice the characteristics that made them so helpful to Paul, and which, I believe, reflected the strength of their marriage.

They were selfless and brave. In Romans 16:4, Paul said they "risked their own necks" for him.

They were hospitable. A church met in their home (1 Cor. 16:19).

They were flexible. Twice they had to move—once by force from Rome (Acts 18:2) and once by choice to go on a missions trip with Paul (Acts 18:18).

They worked together. They were tentmakers (Acts 18:3).

They both were committed to Christ and teaching others about Him. They invited Apollos to their home, where they “explained to him the way of God more accurately” (v.26).

Aquila and Priscilla were a unit—a team—an inseparable twosome. That may make them an unusual couple, but it’s a difference we who are married should all hope to imitate.

A man and wife who serve the Lord
Will serve each other too;
And jointly they will show the world
What’s right and good and true. —K. De Haan

Marriage works best when a couple has a single purpose.

By Dave Branon

Romans 16:10

Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus (Romans 16:10).

Few have ever heard of Apelles or of the unnamed Christians in the house of Aristobulus: Yet these people were important enough to the growth of the church at Rome for Paul to mention them. This tells us that in the service of Christ, the efforts of the “little guys” are as important as the “all stars.”

In a 1984 article for the Detroit News, Ernie Harwell, radio announcer for the Detroit Tigers, wrote,

“When the Tigers got off to their roaring 35-5 start this season, the experts began writing and talking about the 1927 New York Yankees, a team rated by most as the outstanding aggregation in the history of baseball. Those Yankees were graced with bigger-than-life heroes. Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Earl Combs, Herb Pennock, and Waite Hoyt from that team are in baseball’s Hall of Fame. But what about their teammates? What about Joe Giard, Mike Gazella, Ray Morehart, John Grabowski, and Pat Collins? Not only did they miss the Hall of Fame, they’re not even household words.”

Harwell then commented, “We all remember the greats, but the little guys also have their roles. It might be the role of a utility man, a pinch hitter, or maybe even a substitute who is just a holler guy—the kind who keeps up the spirits on the team... It also takes those little-known guys to win a pennant.”

Although we may play only a minor role in our church, we must stay with it. Our contribution is vitally important to the church’s spiritual success—even if we’re not a Hall-of-Famer. —D.C.E.

It is a great waste to do nothing because we think we can only do a little.

Our Daily Bread

Romans 16:13

A Mother’s Touch

Read: Romans 16:1-16 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. —Romans 16:13

A Christian who helps to place orphans in homes tells about a little Russian boy named Ivan. He’s a lovable child with a shock of brown hair falling over his face. When he learned that he might be able to leave the orphanage, he said, “Please, will you find me a mother?”

Fathers are important too, but there are times when nothing but a mother’s touch will do. Even grown men need it.

The apostle Paul, probably in his fifties, sent special greetings to a fellow believer in Rome named Rufus. Interestingly, he added greetings to “his mother and mine” (Romans 16:13). Why would he refer to her in this way?

During his years of ministry, Paul faced many hardships (2 Corinthians 6:4-10). Could it be that Rufus had brought a weary and tired apostle to his house, where Paul received from the mother of Rufus comforting words, a fresh garment, and a nourishing meal? Did Paul receive from her the empathy and tenderness that only a mother can give? We don’t know this for sure, but it could explain his

unusual greeting in today's text.

I believe that God has given mothers a unique capacity for showing gentleness and compassion, and for influencing the spiritual direction of children. Let's be thankful for our mothers and for those who have been like a mother to us.

God has conferred on motherhood
A true nobility,
And she who gladly fills that role
Can shape man's destiny. —DJD

Nothing moves a child like a mother's touch.

By Herbert VanderLugt

Romans 16:18

How To Catch A Rat

Read: Matthew 7:15-23

By smooth words and flattering speech [they] deceive the hearts of the simple. —Romans 16:18

My grandson's chicken coop was invaded by rats. Attracted by the feed, they had moved in. He asked for my help and we set out a couple of traps. After a week, though, we had not caught a single one. Then a farmer friend offered some advice. "No rat," he said, "will touch an exposed trap. You must disguise it with food. Fill a pan with meal and place the trap in it. Cover it well with meal so it is completely hidden." It worked! The next morning we had a big fat rat.

All this reminded me that the devil knows this trick too. He carefully disguises his trap with truth. Nowhere is it better seen than in the numerous false cults and religions in the world today. All set their traps of error in a pan of meal. Many quote the Bible and preach a certain amount of gospel truth. They talk about prayer and Jesus and the Bible. But under the layer of truth is the trap of error.

This is the age of deception. The Bible therefore warns us to "test the spirits" (1 Jn. 4:1) and beware of deceivers (2 Tim. 3:13; 2 Jn. 7). The only antidote against the clever deceptions that come in the name of Christ (Mk. 13:5-6) is to know your Bible. Be rooted and grounded in the truth (Col. 2:6-8). "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Th. 5:21). Beware of Satan's traps.

Satan dogs the steps of the saints
And digs a pit for their feet;
He craftily sows his tares in the field,
Wherever God sows His wheat! —Anon.

Satan often disguises error with a veneer of truth.

By M.R. DeHaan

Romans 16:20

January 2

Conquest to Victory

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."—Romans 16:20

THIS promise follows well upon that of yesterday. We are evidently to be conformed to our covenant Head not only in His being bruised in His heel, but in His conquest of the evil one. Even under our feet is the old dragon to be bruised. The Roman believers were grieved with strife in the church; but their God was "the God of peace," and gave them rest of soul. The arch-enemy tripped up the feet of the unwary, and deceived the hearts of the simple; but he was to get the worst of it and to be trodden down by those whom he had troubled. This victory would not come to the people of God through their own skill or power; but God Himself would bruise Satan. Though it would be under their feet, yet the bruising would be of the Lord alone.

Let us bravely tread upon the tempter! Not only inferior spirits, but the Prince of darkness himself must go down before us. In unquestioning confidence in God, let us look for speedy victory. "Shortly!" Happy word! Shortly we shall set our foot on the old serpent! What a joy to crush evil! What dishonor to Satan to have his head bruised by human feet! Let us by faith in Jesus tread the

tempter down.

Spurgeon, C. Faith's Checkbook

Romans 16:20

TODAY IN THE WORD

Read: Genesis 3:1-15

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. - Romans 16:20

With his usual clarity Oswald Chambers said, 'Sin is not weakness, it is a disease; it is red-handed rebellion against God and the magnitude of that rebellion is expressed by Calvary's cross.'

Chambers had the right diagnosis for sin and it matters a great deal that we understand and believe what the Bible teaches about sin. It is impossible to make sense of what's happening around us unless our theology of sin is straight.

Have you noticed how desperately the world tries to ignore, suppress, and erase the concept of sin? People are willing to admit they made a mistake, used poor judgment, or gave in to a weakness. Some people will even go to a therapist and pay to get a name for their disorder in an attempt to legitimize what they are doing.

But to confess, 'I have sinned,' is just about the hardest thing for people to say. Some people never get around to facing their sin.

We come by our denial and self-deception naturally. The entrance of sin into the human race was accompanied by deception, denial, and finger-pointing, and apart from Jesus Christ those are still human-kind's preferred methods for trying to deal with sin (vv. 1-5).

There is no question that Eve was deceived. She knew God's command concerning the forbidden tree, even though she was not present when God delivered it to Adam (Gen. 2:16-17). The serpent didn't try to talk her out of what she knew. He took the direct approach of denying that God had Eve's welfare at heart when He issued His prohibition.

The devil bluntly accused God of holding out on His creatures and Eve bought the lie. Adam ate with full knowledge that he was disobeying God, and as the head of the race he was the one God sought out first (v. 9).

That's when the blame game started. Adam indicted Eve, and Eve passed the guilt along to the serpent. But each was guilty, and each came under God's judgment. Over the next week we will see what the Bible says about the disease of sin and its cure.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Genesis 3:15 is the gospel in its earliest form. This great verse gave the sinners in Eden the assurance that one day Satan and his scheme of sin would be crushed by a woman's 'offspring.' We just celebrated the fulfillment of that promise in the birth of Jesus Christ. Is He your Savior today? If not, you can come to Him in faith right now and receive forgiveness from the guilt and penalty of sin. And if you know Christ, why not pray today for any Today in the Word readers who may be unsure about their relationship with Christ?

Romans 16:23

Quartus the brother.

That is all we know about him. The others whose names are written here are more or less famous. Tertius wrote the Epistle; Gaius was evidently a man of influence; Erastus was the treasurer of the city, and so on. But Quartus was just a humble, simple Christian, who had no handle to his name, save his brotherliness and his desire to assure his Roman brethren, whom probably he had never seen, of his love to them. "So he begs a little corner in Paul's letter, and gets it; and there, in his little niche, like some statue of a forgotten saint scarce seen amidst the glories of a great cathedral, 'Quartus the brother' stands to all time."

What a lesson in humility! Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not. Be content to live and die unknown, except for the love that breathes through thy life, not to those of thine own circle merely, but for those across the sea, with whom thou wouldst fain strike hands. Thy one joy, that thou hast been born into the family of God. Thy creed, that all regenerate souls, of every name and sect, are members of the same family, children of the same Father, and therefore one in ties of peculiar tenderness and strength.

What a revelation this slight reference is to the new binding forces of the Gospel! At the Advent the world was split by great gulfs of

national hatred; fierce enmities of race, language, and religion; wide separations far profounder than anything that we know. And then the Gospel came, which began to gather men of every race into one family, in Jesus Christ, the Divine Elder-brother; and from this, uniting influences of brotherhood began to permeate the world.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily Vol. 5