

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 12

The doctrines concerning predestination, justification, etc.. being established, the duties of religion are built upon them, and enforced by them in this and the following chapters. The apostle first exhorts all the members of the church in common to a regard to the worship of God, in opposition to the things of the world; and then the officers of the church particularly, to the discharge of their duty; and next all of them, both officers and members, to the performance of various duties respecting God, themselves, one another, and the men of the world. The duty of attending public worship is first mentioned, signified by a presentation of their bodies to the Lord, (~~511~~Romans 12:1), to which they are moved, partly by the plenteous mercy and goodness of God to them; and partly by the acceptableness of it to God; as also by the reasonableness of the thing: then follows a dehoration from conformity to the world, the men and manners of it, in superstition and will worship, or in acts of immorality, (~~512~~Romans 12:2), and also an exhortation to a different course of life, in seeking to please God; which is proposed upon a principle of grace in them, being renewed in the Spirit of their mind; and with this end and view, that they might the better prove, try, and discern, and come at, a greater knowledge of the mind and will of God: and whereas gifts are apt to swell men with pride and vanity, such as qualify men to bear any office in the church, the apostle cautions against this spirit and conduct, and exhorts to sobriety and humility; by observing, that what gifts they have, are such that God has given them, and which they have not of themselves; and what they have is only in part and in measure, some one and some another; and none have all gifts, (~~513~~Romans 12:3), this he illustrates, (~~514~~Romans 12:4), by an human body and the members of it, which being many, have not the same office, but some one and some another; which he accommodates to the body of Christ the church, (~~515~~Romans 12:5), which though but one in Christ, has many members; and these are members one of another, and are designed mutually to serve and help each other, for which the gifts among them were bestowed: and then the apostle proceeds to take notice of the particular officers in the church, and exhorts them to the function of their

offices, according to their different gifts; as, first, the preacher to preach according to the rule of faith, and the measure of gifts bestowed, (^{<5116>}Romans 12:6), and then the deacon, the other officer, to attend to his deaconship, (^{<5117>}Romans 12:7), and inasmuch as these officers, according to their different gifts, may be distinguished, some having a talent for stating, explaining, and defending doctrines, and may be called doctors, or teachers, let them attend to the doctrinal part of the word; and others having a talent in the practical way of preaching, whether by way of exhortation or comfort, and may be called exhorters or comforters, let them attend to that branch of the ministry, (^{<5118>}Romans 12:8), and as for the deacon, the performance of his office, whether it be by distributing to the poor, let him do it impartially and faithfully; or by assisting in the government of the church, let it be done with all diligence; or by showing mercy to the poor in distress, besides what they usually receive, let it be done with a cheerful countenance: next follow various duties which are mentioned, not in an exact order or method, but may be reduced to these heads; such as concern God, an unfeigned love of him, abhorrence of all evil, and a close attachment to whatsoever is good, (^{<5119>}Romans 12:9), and also the worship of him, which is to be performed with diligence and fervency, (^{<5121>}Romans 12:11), the exercise of the grace of hope with joy, patience in the midst of tribulations, and perseverance in prayer, (^{<5122>}Romans 12:12), then such duties as concern one another, as Christians and brethren in a church relation; as to exercise an affectionate brotherly love to each other, and to honour one another; and even to give each other the preference, who may be equal or superior, both in spiritual gifts, and in temporal things, (^{<5120>}Romans 12:10), and with respect to poor saints, to communicate cheerfully to their necessities; and with respect to strangers, to entertain them hospitably, (^{<5123>}Romans 12:13), and as to every member, whether in prosperous or adverse circumstances, to bear a part with them, rejoicing with the one, weeping with the other, (^{<5125>}Romans 12:15), and to behave with humility, modesty, and sobriety, towards all, (^{<5126>}Romans 12:16), and next such duties as concern the men of the world, particularly to bless, and not curse persecutors, (^{<5124>}Romans 12:14), not to retaliate evil for evil, but to do everything that is of good report in the sight of men, (^{<5127>}Romans 12:17), to study, if possible, to live peaceably with all men, (^{<5128>}Romans 12:18), to bridle passion and refrain from wrath, and not seek private revenge, but leave it with the Lord to take vengeance, (^{<5129>}Romans 12:19), on the other hand, to be kind and beneficent to enemies, by giving them food and drink when hungry and thirsty, expressed in the words of

Solomon, (^{<4157>}Proverbs 25:21,22), the reasons for which are, because hereby an enemy may be wrought upon, and be brought either to shame or repentance, and become a friend, (^{<4120>}Romans 12:20), and because by doing otherwise, resenting and returning the evil, a man is conquered by it; whereas, by the other method, the enemy is conquered by good, (^{<4121>}Romans 12:21), and it is much more commendable and honourable to be a conqueror, than to be conquered.

Ver. 1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,* etc..]

The apostle having finished the doctrinal part of this epistle, proceeds to that which is more practical; and enforces the several duties of religion, upon the principles he had before laid down, a method generally observed by him in all his epistles. The illative particle “therefore”, shows that the following exhortations are so many conclusions, consequences, and inferences, deduced from what had been said in the latter part of the preceding chapter; that since all things are of God, and by him and to him, then the saints ought to present their bodies to him, and to know, approve, and do his will; and since they have nothing but what they have received from him, they ought not to think too highly of, or glory in their attainments. The introduction to these exhortations, is in a very kind and affectionate manner; the saints are addressed as “brethren”, and very appropriately; since this expresses the relation they stood in to the apostle, for whom he had an hearty love and concern; and therefore what he pressed them to was out of a sincere regard to their good, as well as to the glory of God; also their relation to each other, and which several of the duties he urges had a connection with; likewise their relation to God, being of his family, having one and the same Father, and so under obligation to regard his will, honour and reverence him: moreover, these things are moved, not in an imperious way, in an authoritative manner, but by way of entreaty, “I beseech you”; as an ambassador of Christ, and as though in his stead: nor are they enforced by terrors, threats, and menaces, but “by the mercies of God”; that is, the abundant mercy of God, displayed in their election, regeneration, and calling; than which, nothing can have a greater influence on a believer, to engage him to holiness of life and conversation; and shows, that the doctrines of grace are no licentious ones, nor do they render useless precepts, exhortations, entreaties, cautions, and advice, particularly such as follow;

that ye present your bodies; not barely that part of them commonly so called, for this is not to be understood of a mere presentation of the body

in public worship: for though this ought to be, yet not without the heart engaged therein, otherwise bodily exercise will be of no avail; nor of a bare abstinence from grosser sins done in the body, and against it, and which defile and dishonour it; much less of a maceration, and keeping under the body, by watchings, fasting, etc.. and still less of an offering of the body at death in a way of martyrdom, though this ought to be cheerfully complied with when called for: but by their bodies are meant, themselves, their whole souls and bodies, all the powers and faculties of their souls, and members of their bodies; and the presenting of them, designs a devoting of them, with all readiness and willingness, to the service of God for his honour and glory, without putting any confidence in, or placing any dependence upon them; which would be sacrificing to their own net, and burning incense to their drag; it includes the whole of their service, conversation, and religion, internal and external. So the Jews ^{f226} say,

“worthy is the portion of the righteous, who offer every day this offering before the Lord; and what is it? **whyçpnw whyymrg**, “their bodies and their souls”, which they offer before him.”

The allusion is to the rite of sacrificing, to the bringing of the slain beast, and laying it on the altar, and there presenting and offering it to the Lord. Under the Gospel dispensation all believers are priests; and the sacrifices they bring are not the bodies of slain beasts, but their own bodies, their whole selves; and these

a living sacrifice, in opposition to the bodies of slain beasts offered under the legal dispensation, and to the dead works of such as are destitute of faith in Christ, and to the lifeless performances of the saints themselves at certain times; and designs such a presentation of themselves in the performance of religious duties, as springs from a principle of life under the quickening influences of the Spirit of God, with faith and fervency; though without any view to obtain life hereby, for that is only by the offering up of the body of Christ once for all. Another epithet of this sacrifice of our bodies to God is

holy, in allusion to the sacrifices under the law, which were separated from common use, and devoted to God, and were not to have the least spot and blemish in them; and regards men sanctified by the Spirit of God, and whose actions flow from a principle of holiness, and are performed under the influence of the Holy Spirit; and such sacrifices as are both living and holy, cannot but be

acceptable to God through the mediation of his Son, by whom, as the persons, the souls and bodies of his people, so their spiritual sacrifices, whether of prayer or praise, are only acceptable to him:

which is your reasonable service; it is agreeably to reason, and especially as sanctified, that men who have their beings from God, and are upheld in them by him, and are followed with the bounties of Providence; and especially who are made new creatures, and are blessed by him with all spiritual blessings in Christ, that they should give up themselves to him, and cheerfully serve him in their day and generation; such service is also agreeably to the Scriptures of truth, the standard of filth and practice, and contain and enforce nothing but what is highly reasonable to be complied with; it is such service as lies not in the slaying of irrational creatures, but in the presenting of men endued with rational powers unto God; and is of a spiritual nature, performed by spiritual men, under the influence of the Spirit of God: and is suitable to the nature and perfections of God, and stands opposed to the corporeal and carnal service of the Jews.

Ver. 2. *And be not conformed to this world*, etc..] By this world is meant, either the Mosaic dispensation, and Jewish church state, so called in opposition to $\alpha\beta\eta\ \mu\iota\ \omega\sigma$, “the world to come”, the Gospel dispensation; in which there were a worldly sanctuary, and the rites and ceremonies of which are styled the rudiments and elements of the world; to which believers in the present state are by no means to conform, there being sacrifices and ordinances of another nature, it is the will of God they should observe and attend unto: or else the men of the world are designed, carnal and unregenerate men, among whom they formerly had their conversation, from among whom they were chosen, called, and separated, and who lie and live in wickedness, and therefore should not be conformed unto them: which is to be understood, not in a civil sense of conformity to them in garb and apparel, provided that pride and luxury are guarded against, and decency and sobriety observed, and the different abilities of persons and stations in life are attended to; or to any other civil usages and customs which are not contrary to natural and revealed religion; but of a conformity in a moral sense to the evil manners of men, to walk vainly, as other Gentiles do, to go into the same excess of riot with them; for this is contrary both to the principle and doctrine of grace, which teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts: and of a compliance with the men of the world in a religious sense, by joining with them in acts of idolatry,

superstition, and will worship, and in anything that is contrary to the order, ordinances, and truths of the Gospel.

But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind; which regards not the first work of conversion and renovation; for in this sense these persons were transformed, metamorphosed, changed, and renewed already; but the after progress and carrying on the work of renovation, the renewing of them day by day in the spirit of their minds; (see ⁴⁰²³Ephesians 4:23 ⁴⁰⁴⁶2 Corinthians 4:16); which believers should be desirous of, and pray for, and make use of those means which the Spirit of God owns for this purpose, attending to the spiritual exercises of religion, as reading, meditation, prayer, conference, the ministration of the word and ordinances, which is the reverse of conformity to the world: and the end to be attained hereby is,

that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God; by which is meant not the secret will of God, which cannot be searched into, proved, and known, till time and facts discover it: but the revealed will of God, both in the law, as in the hands of Christ, which contains nothing but what is good; and which when done in faith, from a principle of love, and to the glory of God, is acceptable through Christ; and is perfect as a law of liberty, and rule of walk and conversation; and which is to be proved and approved of by all the saints, who delight in it after the inward man: and also that which is contained in the Gospel; as that all that the Father had given to Christ should be redeemed by him, that these should be sanctified, and persevere to the end, and be glorified; all which is the good will of God, an acceptable saying to sensible sinners, and such a scheme of salvation as is perfect and complete, and needs nothing to be added to it; and is, by such who are daily renewed in the spirit of their minds, more and more proved, tried, discerned, and approved of, even by all such who have their spiritual senses exercised to discern things that differ.

Ver. 3. *For I say, through the grace given unto me*, etc..] The Ethiopic version reads, the grace of God: and so two of Stephens's copies. By which the apostle intends, not that internal grace which was wrought in his soul; nor the Gospel of the grace of God, which he preached; nor the gifts of grace, which qualified him for that service; but the grace of apostleship, or that authoritative power, which he, as the apostle, received from Christ to

say, command, give orders and instructions to churches, and particular persons:

to every man that is among you: every member of the church, in whatsoever state or condition, whether in office or not; of whatsoever abilities or capacity, having gifts, whether more or less; the manifestation of the Spirit being given to everyone to profit with, for his own and the good of others:

not to think [of himself] more highly than he ought to think; that is, either not to arrogate to himself what does not belong to him, and detract from others, who may have equal, if not superior, abilities to him; or not to glory in what he has, as if he had not received it, and as if it was altogether owing to his own sagacity, penetration, diligence, and industry; or not to search into things too high for him that are out of his reach, and beyond his capacity; though this is not to be understood as discouraging a search into the Scriptures of truth, the more difficult parts of it, and the more knotty points of controversy; but as forbidding inquiry into things not lawful to be searched into, or, if lawful, as requiring such a scrutiny to be made with modesty, and an humble dependence on superior light and assistance, and a discovery of it with humility and lowliness of mind;

but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith: such ought to consider that what gifts, abilities, light, and knowledge they have, they have then, not of themselves, but from God; that they have not all faith, and all knowledge, or do not know the whole of the faith of the Gospel only a measure of it, which is dealt out, divided, and parted to every man, some having a greater degree of evangelical light than others; and that all have some, but none all. The Syriac version renders it, “faith in measure”; one of Stephens's copies reads, “the measure of grace”; (see ~~400~~ Ephesians 4:7).

Ver. 4. *For as we have many members in one body,* etc..] The apostle illustrates what he said last concerning God's dealing to every man the measure of faith, by comparing the church of Christ to an human body, which is but one, and has many members in union with it, and one another; and which are placed in an exact symmetry and proportion, and in proper subserviency to each other, and for the good of the whole:

and all members have not the same office, or “action”; they do not exercise the same function, and perform the same operation, but each that

which is peculiar to itself: the eye only sees, but does not hear, nor taste, nor smell; the ear only hears, but neither sees, or does any of the aforesaid things; the palate tastes, the nose smells, the hand handles, the foot walks, and the same may be observed of the other members of the body, which have not the same, but their particular offices, and all and each of them their usefulness.

Ver. 5. *So we being many are one body in Christ*, etc..] This is the application of the above simile. The chosen of God, the redeemed of Christ, and those that are justified by his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit; though they are but few in comparison of the men of the world, but considered in themselves are many, and yet make up but one body, the church, of which Christ is the head: and though this general assembly; or church universal, may be distinguished into several congregational churches, and distinct communities, yet each community, consisting of divers persons, is but one body “in Christ”, united and knit together by joints and bands, under him their head, Lord, and King; in him, and not in Caesar, or any earthly monarch, to distinguish this body from bodies politic, or any civil community among men:

and everyone members one of another; as in union with Christ their head, so to one another in love, walking in holy fellowship together, sympathizing with, and serving each other.

Ver. 6. *Having then gifts, differing*, etc..] As in a natural body, the various members of it have not the same office, and do not perform the same actions, thus they have not the same, but different faculties; one has one faculty, another another; the eye has the faculty of seeing, the ear of hearing, etc.. thus in the spiritual body the church, as there are different members, these members have not the same work and business assigned them; some are employed one way, and some another; also they have diversities of gifts for their different administrations and operations, and all from Christ their head, by the same Spirit, and for the service of the whole body,

according to the grace that is given unto us; for all these gifts are not the effects of nature, the fruits of human power, diligence, and industry, but flow from the grace of God, who dispenses them when, where, and to whom he pleases in a free and sovereign manner; and therefore to be acknowledged as such, and used to his glory, and for the good of his church and people. Wherefore

whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith.

The offices here, and hereafter mentioned, are not of an extraordinary, but ordinary kind, such as are lasting, and will continue in the church unto the end of time: and are divided into two parts, which are after subdivided into other branches. The division is into “prophesying” and “ministering”. By “prophesying” is meant, not foretelling things to come, though this gift was bestowed upon some, as Agabus, and others in the Christian church; but this, as it is of an extraordinary nature, so it is not stinted and limited according to the proportion of faith; but preaching the Gospel is here designed, which is the sense of the word in many places of Scripture, particularly in (~~413~~ 1 Corinthians 13:2,8,9 14:1,3-6,22) (~~414~~ 1 Corinthians 14:24,29,31,32,37,39). Now such who have this gift of prophecy, or of opening and explaining the Scriptures, ought to make use of it, and constantly attend to it: “let us prophesy”; diligently prepare for it by prayer, reading and meditation, and continually exercise it as opportunity offers; nor should any difficulty and discouragement deter from it: or whereas this last clause is not in the original text, it may be supplied from (~~415~~ Romans 12:3); thus, “let us think soberly”, who have this gift, and not be elated with it, or carry it haughtily to those who attend on the exercise of it: but behave with sobriety, modesty, and humility, in the discharge thereof: “according to the proportion of faith”. There must be faith, or no prophesying; a man must believe, and therefore speak, or speak not at all; a Gospel minister ought not to be a sceptic, or in doubt about the main principles of religion; such as concern the three divine persons, the office, grace, and righteousness of Christ, and the way of salvation by him: he should be at a point in these things, should firmly believe, and with assurance assert them, nor fear to be called dogmatical on that account: he is to preach according to his faith, the proportion of it: which may be the same with the measure of it, (~~416~~ Romans 12:3). And so the Syriac version reads it, *htwnmyhd atj wçm Æya*, “according to the measure of his faith”; to which the Arabic version agrees; that is, according to the measure of the gift of Christ he has received; according to the abilities bestowed on him; according to that light, knowledge, faith, and experience he has; he ought to preach up unto it, and not in the least come short of it; or by “the proportion”, or “analogy of faith”, may be meant a scheme of Gospel truths, a form of sound words, a set of principles upon the plan of the Scriptures, deduced from them, and agreeably to them; and which are all of a piece, and consistent with themselves, from which the prophet or preacher should never swerve: or the Scriptures themselves, the sure word

of prophecy, the rule and standard of faith and practice: the scope of the text is to be attended to, its connection with the preceding or following verses, or both; and it is to be compared with other passages of Scripture, and accordingly to be explained: and this is to follow the rule directed to.

Ver. 7. *Or ministry, [let us wait] on our ministry,* etc..] The word **δῆμοκονία** sometimes signifies the whole ecclesiastical ministry, even the office of apostleship, as well as the ordinary ministration of the Gospel; (see ^{<4017>}Acts 1:17 6:4); but here “deaconship”, or the office of ministering to the poor saints, as in (^{<4068>}Acts 6:1 ^{<4665>}1 Corinthians 16:15), being a distinct office from prophesying: or preaching the word, and should be used, exercised, and attended to with diligence, care, and constancy; for such who are appointed to this office, are chosen not only to a place of honour, but of service and business, in which they should behave with prudence, sobriety, and humility:

or he that teacheth, on teaching. The gift of prophesying or preaching is subdivided into “teaching” and “exhorting”; the one belongs to “teachers” or doctors, the other to “pastors”; as the distinction is in (^{<4041>}Ephesians 4:11), not that different officers and offices are intended, but different branches of the same office; and one man's talent may lie more in the one, and another man's in the other; and accordingly each should in his preaching attend to the gift which is most peculiar to him: if his gift lies in teaching, let him constantly employ himself in that with all sobriety and “teaching” does not design an office in the school, but in the church; it is not teaching divinity as men teach logic, rhetoric, and other arts and sciences, in the schools; but an instructing of churches and the members thereof in the doctrines of the Gospel, in order to establish and build them up in their most holy faith; (see ^{<4628>}1 Corinthians 12:28 ^{<4041>}Ephesians 4:11,12); it chiefly lies in a doctrinal way of preaching, in opening, explaining, and defending the doctrines of Christ, as distinct from the practical part of the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances, in which the pastor is employed as well as in this.

Ver. 8. *Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation,* etc..] This is the other branch of prophesying or preaching, and which is more practical, and lies in giving a word of exhortation to the saints, as their particular cases call for; for as prophets were teachers, (^{<4101>}Acts 13:1); so also exhorters, (^{<4152>}Acts 15:32); and one considerable branch of the ministry, and which is more principally the pastor's work, as well as to teach, is to exhort all sorts of persons,

young and old, rich and poor, high and low, bond and free, under his care, with all longsuffering and doctrine. The words will bear to be read, “he that comforteth, on consolation”; and so the Syriac version renders them, **haywbb wh anaybmd tyaw**, “and another who is a comforter, in his consolation”. Though all the ministers of the Gospel are to speak comfortably to the saints, by preaching the doctrines of free justification by Christ's righteousness, and remission of sins by his blood, by bringing the good news of salvation by him, and by opening the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel; yet some have a greater talent this way than others; some are “Boanergeses”, sons of thunder, (^{<4017>}Mark 3:17), and others “Barnabases”, sons of consolation, (^{<4016>}Acts 4:36); and each should attend to that with all diligence and humility, he is best qualified for.

He that giveth, [let him do it] with simplicity. Here begins the subdivision of the deacon's office into its several branches, “giving”, “ruling”, and “showing mercy”: by “giving” is meant, not giving of his own, or performing: acts of charity, which is common to all the members of the church, who ought liberally to contribute to the relief of the poor; but imparting or distributing the church's money to proper objects, which is to be done “with simplicity”; with all faithfulness and integrity, without fraud or embezzling the church's stock, with impartiality, and without respect of persons, and liberally and bountifully, as the word here used signifies; (see ^{<4012>}2 Corinthians 8:2 9:13);

he that ruleth, with diligence; deacons are the “helps, governments”, mentioned in (^{<4028>}1 Corinthians 12:28), who are assisting to the pastor in the government of the church; their business is, to observe the conversations of the members of the church, and to warn them that are unruly and walk disorderly, to compose differences, and prepare matters to lay before the church; a deacon is **πρωισταμενος**, “one that goes before”; and leads on others by way of example in his conduct and conversation; or as the Syriac renders it, **açyrb maqd**, “that stands at the head” of affairs in the church; in the management of which he ought to use all study, thoughtfulness, care and diligence:

he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness; which is not to be understood of showing compassion to miserable objects in common, or of giving alms to necessitous persons, and which ought to be done according to the Jewish ^{f227} canons, **twpy mynp rbsb**, “with a cheerful countenance”; and is what is highly pleasing to God, who “loves a cheerful giver”: but of a branch of

the deacon's office, whose work, among other things, is to visit the sick and distressed, and communicate to them as their wants require; all which should be done, not in a morose and frowning manner, but with a pleasant look and cheerful countenance, which makes the visit and the gift more welcome, acceptable, and useful.

Ver. 9. *Let love be without dissimulation*, etc..] The apostle having given out suitable exhortations to the officers of this church, ministers and deacons, proceeds to stir up to the exercise of grace, and the discharge of such duties as were common to all the members of the church; and begins with “love”, which is the cement of saints, and the bond of perfectness, without which all the gifts that men have, the profession they make, and works they do are of no avail, and they themselves nothing. Here it is to be taken, in the largest and most comprehensive sense, for love to God, Christ, the saints, and fellow creatures, and ought, with respect to each, to “be without dissimulation”; or “hypocrisy”: love to God should be with all the heart, soul, and mind, otherwise the fear of him, and obedience to him, will be only outward, formal, customary, and hypocritical; love to Christ should be with sincerity, and so it is where it is right, hearty, and genuine; such can appeal to him as the searcher of hearts, that from the heart they love him; and love to one another should be not in word, and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth; yea, the love professed to fellow creatures, ought never to be through fear of men or mercenary views, but honest, upright, and sincere.

Abhor that which is evil; sin, both in its principle and in its actings; it being hateful to God, Father, Son, and Spirit, contrary to the nature, being, and perfections of God, a transgression of his righteous law, exceeding sinful in itself, and pernicious in its effects and consequences; for all which it is to be abhorred by the saints: the word **αποστουθουντες**, here used, designs the greatest aversion imaginable, a turning away from it, as what is the most loathsome, detestable, and abominable; and such an hatred of it with horror, as of the Stygian lake, or hell itself:

cleave to that which is good; to God, who is originally, infinitely, and immutably good; who is good in his nature, and works, and to all his creatures, and especially his chosen people, and therefore should be cleaved unto; to his will, his ways, and worship; and to Christ the good shepherd of the sheep, the Lamb that is to be followed and cleaved unto, whithersoever he goes; and to the good Spirit of God, after whom we

should walk, and not after the flesh; and to the good people of God, assembling with whom should not be forsaken; and to the good Gospel of Christ, and the truths of it, which should be held fast; and to the ordinances of the Gospel, which ought to be constantly attended on; and to every good work, to which we should be ready, careful to maintain, and ever follow, both among ourselves and all men: they should even be glued unto it, as the word here signifies.

Ver. 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love*, etc..]

This is one branch of that love, before advised to, which should be unfeigned, and without guile and deceit. The objects of this grace are “brethren”, not in such sense as all the descendants of Adam are, or men of the same country be, or as such who are born of the same parents in a natural sense are; to each of whom love is due under their respective characters and relations: but such who are so in a spiritual sense, who are born of God, are of his household, belong to his family, are the brethren of Christ, and one another; and are either members of the same church, incorporated together in the same church state, or at least members of Christ, and of the church universal. Now love to these should be kind, tender, and affectionate, reciprocal and mutual; such should love one another; there should be no love wanting on either side; and it ought to be universal, and reach to all the saints, though of different gifts, light, knowledge and experience, or whether high or low, rich or poor; and should show itself by bearing one another's burdens, bearing with, and forbearing each other, forgiving one another, and by edifying one another in their most holy faith, and praying with, and for one another.

In honour preferring one another; saints should think honourably of one another, and entertain an honourable esteem of each other; yea, should esteem each other better than themselves; and not indulge evil surmises, and groundless jealousies of one another, which is contrary to that love that thinks no evil. They should speak honourably of each other in Christian company, and discourage that evil practice of whisperings, backbitings, and innuendos; they should treat each other with honour and respect in their common conversation, and especially when met together as a church of Christ. They should go before each other in giving honour, and showing respect, as the word *προηγουμενος*, signifies: they should set each other an example; and which also may be taken into the sense of the word, should prevent one another, not waiting until respect is shown on one side to return it again. Nor does this rule at all break in upon that order

that should subsist, and be maintained in bodies civil and ecclesiastical, which requires superior honour to be given to persons according to their character, office, and station in which they are.

Ver. 11. *Not slothful in business*, etc..] Meaning not worldly business, or the affairs of life; though slothfulness in this respect is scandalous to human nature, and especially in persons under a profession of religion; men should diligently pursue their lawful callings for the support of themselves and families, and the interest of Christ: but spiritual business, the affairs of piety and religion, the service of God, private and public, to which we should not be backward, nor slothful in the performance of; such as preaching, hearing, reading, praying, and other ordinances of God; yea, we should be ready and forward to every good work, and particularly, and which may be here greatly designed, ministering to the poor saints in their necessity; in doing which we show that kind, tender, affectionate, brotherly love, and give that honour and respect, at least that part of it, which is relief, required in the foregoing verse; (see ^{<3060>}Hebrews 6:10-12). Remarkable is that saying of R. Tarphon ^{f228},

“The day is short, and the work great, μῦλ × [μῦλ [wphw, “and workmen slothful”, and the reward much, and the master of the house is urgent.”

Fervent in spirit; in their own spirits, for the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the cause of religion, in imitation of Christ himself, and as Phinehas and Elijah were; which fervency of spirit is opposed to that lukewarmness of soul, (^{<686>}Revelation 3:16), that coldness of affection, and leaving of the first love, (^{<604>}Revelation 2:4), so much complained of, and resented by Christ in his people: or else in the Spirit of God; for there may be fervency in men's spirits, which comes not from the Spirit of God, as in the Jews, and particularly Saul, before his conversion, who had “a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge”, (^{<502>}Romans 10:2); but when “the love of God is shed abroad in the heart” by the Spirit of God, (^{<685>}Romans 5:5), this will make a man's spirit fervent in the service of God, for which the apostle would have these believers concerned. A disciple of the wise men among the Jews is ^{f229} said to be j tr, “fervent”, because the law is as a boiling pot unto him; much more should a disciple of Christ be fervent, who has the Gospel of Christ, the love of God, and the grace of the Spirit to inflame his soul with true zeal and fervour.

Serving the Lord; some copies read, “serving time”: the likeness of the words, **καιρος** and **κυριος**, especially in an abbreviation, may have occasioned this different reading; which should it be followed, is not to be understood in an ill sense, of temporizing, or time serving, of men's accommodating themselves, their sentiments and conduct, according to the times in which they live, in order to escape reproach and persecution; but of redeeming the time, improving every season to do good, and taking every opportunity of serving God. But as the reading our version follows is confirmed by authentic copies, and by the Syriac, and other Oriental versions, it is best to adhere to it: by “the Lord” is here meant either God, Father, Son, and Spirit, who are the alone object of divine service and religious worship; or the Lord Jesus Christ, who most frequently goes by the name of Lord in the New Testament; and who is the one Lord, whose we are and whom we should continually serve, being under the greatest obligations to him, not only as our Creator, but as our head, husband, and Redeemer. Very rightly does the apostle premise fervency in spirit to serving the Lord; for without the Spirit of God there is no true worshipping and serving of him, and which ought to be done with fervency as well as with constancy. The Syriac version renders it, “serve our Lord”.

Ver. 12. *Rejoicing in hope*, etc..] Of the glory of God, than the hope of which nothing can make a believer more cheerful in this world; the saints' joy is therefore called the “rejoicing of the hope”, (^{<30R6>}Hebrews 3:6). This is placed between serving the Lord, and being patient in tribulation; for nothing tends more to animate the people of God to a cheerful serving of him, or to make them more patient under afflictions, than a hope of being for ever with the Lord:

patient in tribulation; whilst the saints are in this world they must expect tribulation; their way to heaven lies through it; and it becomes them to be patient under it, not murmuring against God, on the one hand, nor reviling of men, on the other.

Continuing instant in prayer: prayer is needful at all times, but especially in a time of tribulation and distress, whether inward or outward. This should be made without ceasing; saints should watch unto it with all perseverance; men should pray always, and not faint; never give out and over, or be discouraged. This advice is rightly given and placed here, to teach us that we are to go to the throne of grace continually for fresh supplies of grace,

and strength to enable us to exercise the grace, and perform the duties exhorted to both in preceding and following verses.

Ver. 13. *Distributing to the necessity of saints*, etc..] Or “communicating”, as many versions render the word; “distributing” more properly belongs to the officers of the church, the deacons, and communicating to the members of it in common. All men in general are to be relieved that are in want, even our very enemies, and particularly such as are our own flesh and blood, nearly related to us, aged parents, etc.. and especially they that are of the household of faith, here called “saints”; and indeed, such only come under the care and notice of a church: and they are such, whom God has set apart for himself, has chosen in his Son, that they should be holy; whom Christ has sanctified, or whose sins he has expiated by his blood; and to whom he is made sanctification; and in whose hearts a work of grace and holiness is wrought by the Spirit of God, which is the sanctification of the Spirit they are chosen through, as a mean to eternal salvation by Christ; and in consequence of this, they live soberly, righteously, and godly, and have their conversations as become the Gospel of Christ: and such as these, being in necessitous circumstances, are to be communicated to; for not all, or any of the saints, but only such as are in “necessity”, are here pointed at; it is not communicating to the saints, but to their necessity, which is recommended. It is the will and pleasure of God, that some of his dear children should be in strait circumstances of life, be reduced to want and distress, partly to try their own graces, their faith and trust in God, and dependence on him; and partly the graces of others, the charity, liberality, and beneficence of those who have of this world's goods: and who are the persons that are to “communicate”, not words only, saying, be warmed and filled, and give nothing; but their substance, they are to deal their bread to the hungry, clothe the naked, and give a portion to as many as are in need: and these acts of giving and receiving, are one way by which the saints have communication with each other, and which is suggested by the word “communicating” here used; for fellowship does not lie merely in private conversation, and in sitting down together at the Lord's table, but in “communicating to one another such things” as are needful, as for the soul, so for the body. Some copies read, “communicating to the memories of the saints”; not making images of them, and praying to them, but speaking well and honourably of them, and imitating them in what they did well; (see ~~20007~~ Proverbs 10:7).

Given to hospitality; or, as it may be rendered, “pursuing”, or “following after love to strangers”; which is properly hospitality: respect is to be shown not to such only who are members of the same community with us, but also to such of the people of God, that may be of another country, or of some distant parts of our own, not before known by us; who by persecution, and distress of some sort or another, or by some providence or another, are obliged to remove from their native place. These we are to love, and show our love to, not only by directing and advising, but, if need be, by giving them food and raiment, and lodging them: this is a duty incumbent on ministers of the Gospel, and on private members, and on all who are in any capacity to perform it; and which should be done cheerfully, and without grudging; and what persons should use, inure, and give themselves to, yea, should seek after, and call to objects of it; as Abraham and Lot did, who thereby entertained angels unawares, and is what the apostle here means by pursuing and following after it.

Ver. 14. *Bless them which persecute you*, etc..] It is the lot of God's, people in this world to be persecuted by the men of it, in some shape or another, either by words or deeds; either by reviling and reproaching them, and speaking all manner of evil of them; or by hindering them the free exercise of religious worship, by confiscation of their goods, imprisonment of their persons, by violently torturing their bodies, and taking away their lives; under all which circumstances they are taught to

bless them; that is, to pray for them, that God would show them their evil, give repentance to them, and the remission of their sins; which is the order Christ gave to his disciples, (^{<4154>}Matthew 5:44); and encouraged to an observance of, by his own example, (^{<4234>}Luke 23:34); and has been followed herein by his disciples and apostles, (^{<4470>}Acts 7:60) (^{<4442>}1 Corinthians 4:12,13). Moreover, by “blessing” may be meant, giving them good words, mild and soft answers, “not rendering evil for evil, railing for railing”, (^{<4189>}1 Peter 3:9); but, on the contrary, blessing, in imitation of Christ, who, “when he was reviled, reviled not again”, (^{<4023>}1 Peter 2:23): “bless”,

and curse not: to have a mouth full of cursing and bitterness, (^{<4514>}Romans 3:14), is the character of an unregenerate man, and what by no means suits one who names the name of Christ; for blessing and cursing to proceed out of the same mouth, is as absurd and unnatural, as if it should be supposed that a fountain should send forth sweet water and bitter, or salt and fresh,

(~~3180~~ James 3:10-12). The imprecations upon wicked men, used by David and other good men, are no contradictions to this rule; since they were made under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, and were predictions of God's vengeance, which in righteous judgment should fall on them, and are not to be drawn into an example by us.

Ver. 15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice*, etc..] Not in anything sinful and criminal, in a thing of nought, in men's own boastings; all such rejoicing is evil, and not to be joined in; but in things good and laudable, as in outward prosperity; and to rejoice with such, is a very difficult task; for unless persons have a near concern in the prosperity of others, they are very apt to envy it, or to murmur and repine, that they are not in equal, or superior circumstances; and also in things spiritual, with such who rejoice in the discoveries of God's love to their souls, in the views of interest in Christ, and of peace, pardon, and righteousness by him, and in hope of the glory of God; when such souls make their boast in the Lord, the humble hearing thereof will be glad, and will, as they ought to do, join with them in magnifying the Lord, and will exalt his name together:

and weep with them that weep; so Christ, as he rejoiced with them that rejoiced, at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, wept with them that wept, with Mary at the grave of Lazarus. The design of these rules is to excite and encourage sympathy in the saints with each other, in all conditions inward and outward, and with respect to things temporal and spiritual; in imitation of Christ their great high priest, who cannot but be touched with the infirmities of his people; and as founded upon, and arising from, their relation to each other, as members of the same body; (see ~~4126~~ 1 Corinthians 12:26);

Ver. 16. *Be of the same mind one towards another*, etc..] Which is not to be understood of the sameness of their judgment, or of their agreement in sentiments, espousing the same doctrines, observing the same ordinances, and in the same manner, and attending to the same form of discipline; but of their having the same love, and being of the same accord and affection to one another, entertaining the same good opinion, or a better, of others than of themselves; and so the Syriac version renders the passage, “what ye think of yourselves, think also of your brethren”: think of one another, as equally interested in the love of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, blessed with the same spiritual blessings in him, and called in the same hope

of your calling; and do not think of one another, as being one richer or wiser than another, do not value yourselves upon that:

mind not high things; be not highminded, do not think too highly of yourselves, and despise others; meddle not with, nor grasp at things too high for you, that are out of your reach, and beyond your capacity; nor seek great things for yourselves, as riches, honours, etc.. nor covet great company:

but condescend to men of low estate; or “to low things”; be content with mean and low things in life, and disdain not to take notice of and converse with, men in a low condition, whether in things temporal or spiritual; who may be poor in this world, be very ignorant and illiterate, as to general knowledge and learning; be men of mean parts and abilities, of very small gifts, and be weak in faith and experience; condescend to their weaknesses, bear their infirmities, and become all things to them for their good, and God's glory: consider the apostle is writing to citizens of Rome, who might be tempted to look upon themselves above others, and to look disdainfully upon others, as citizens too often do on country people, as if they were below them, as persons of low life to them:

be not wise in your own conceits; (see ^{<1187>}Proverbs 3:7). This is attended with bad consequences, spoils a man's usefulness, prevents his improvement in knowledge, tempts him to reject all counsel and advice given him, and to treat his fellow creatures and Christians with haughtiness and insolence, and exposes him to the scorn and contempt of men: or “be not wise by or with yourselves”; imagining you have all the wisdom, and others have none; or keeping it to yourselves, what wisdom you have communicate it to others; the Ethiopic version reads, “say not, we are wise”; (see ^{<812>}Job 12:2,3).

Ver. 17. *Recompence to no man evil for evil*, etc..] Neither evil words for evil words, railing for railing; nor evil deeds for evil deeds, one ill turn for another; nor the evil of punishment for the evil of fault, unless it be by persons, who under God have an authority to inflict it; as the civil magistrate, who “is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil”, (^{<5134>}Romans 13:4); but private revenge is what is here forbidden:

providing things honest in the sight of all men. The Vulgate Latin reads, “not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men”; and the

Alexandrian copy reads, “in the sight of God and in the sight of men”, which clause seems to have crept in here, out of (^{<402>}2 Corinthians 8:21). The words are not to be understood of a man's providing things honest, decent, and commendable, as suitable food and raiment for his family, in the sight of all men, to the honour of religion, and the credit of his profession, which is right to be done; but of a provident, thoughtful, and studious concern, to do everything that is laudable and of good report among men. The Syriac version renders the words alter this manner, **atbj** **ˆwdb[td ˆwkl l j btn al a**, “but be careful to do well”, or exercise beneficence before all men; either restraining it to acts of beneficence, even to them that do us ill, in opposition to rendering evil to them; or applying it to all offices of humanity, and every good work, which are to be done in the sight of men; not merely to be seen of them, and in a vainglorious way, in order to obtain their esteem and applause, as did the Pharisees; but to avoid offence; to put, to silence, by well doing, the ignorance of wicked men; and to shame them that falsely accuse the good conversation of the saints; and to recommend the Gospel and true religion, and win men over to it thereby, and give an occasion to them of glorifying God.

Ver. 18. *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably*, etc..] Or be at peace, seek after peace, pursue it, and cultivate it:

with all men; with those that we are immediately concerned with, in a natural relation; so husbands should live peaceably with their wives, and wives with their husbands; parents with their children, and children with their parents; masters with their servants, and servants with their masters; and one brother, relation, and friend, with another: and so with all we are concerned with in a spiritual relation, as members of Christ, and in the same church state; such should be at peace among themselves, (^{<5613>}1 Thessalonians 5:13); peace should rule in their hearts, (^{<5185>}Colossians 3:15), and they should study to keep “the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace”, (^{<408>}Ephesians 4:3): yea, with all we are concerned in a civil sense; saints should live peaceably in the neighbourhood, towns, cities, and countries, where they dwell, and show themselves to be the quiet in the land; should pray for the peace of the place where they are; and do all that in them lies to promote it, by living themselves peaceably and quietly, in all godliness and honesty; yea, they should live peaceably with their very enemies, “if it be possible”; which is rightly put, for there are some persons of such tempers and dispositions, that it is impossible to live peaceably

with; for when others are for peace, they are for war; and in some cases it is not only impracticable, but would be unlawful; as when it cannot be done consistent with holiness of life and conversation, with the edification of others, the truths of the Gospel, the interest of religion, and the glory of God; these are things that are never to be sacrificed for the sake of peace with men: the apostle adds another limitation of this rule, “as much as lieth in you”; for more than this is not required of us; nothing should be wanting on our parts; every step should be taken to cultivate and maintain peace; the blame should lie wholly on the other side; it becomes the saints to live peaceably themselves, if others will not with them.

Ver. 19. *Dearly beloved*, etc..] This affectionate appellation the apostle makes use of, expressing his great love to them, the rather to work upon them, and move them to an attention to what he is about to say; which they might assure themselves was in great tenderness to them, for their good, as well as the glory of God: moreover, he may hereby suggest to them, not only that they were dear to him, but that they were greatly beloved of God, that they were high in his favour and affection; and this he might hint unto them, in order to melt them into love to their fellow Christians and fellow creatures, and even to their enemies, and never think of private revenge:

avenge not yourselves; this is no ways contrary to that revenge, a believer has upon sin, and the actings of it, which follows on true evangelical repentance for it, (⁴¹⁷¹2 Corinthians 7:11), and lies in a displeasance at it, and himself for it, and in abstaining from it, and fighting against it; nor to that revenge a church may take of the disobedience of impenitent and incorrigible offenders, by laying censures on them, withdrawing from them, and rejecting them from their communion; nor to that revenge which civil magistrates may execute upon them that do evil; but this only forbids and condemns private revenge in private persons, for private injuries done, and affronts given:

but rather give place to wrath; either to a man's own wrath, stirred up by the provocations given him; let him not rush upon revenge immediately; let him sit down and breathe upon it; let him “give” *arta*, “space”, unto it, as the Syriac, which may signify time as well as place; and by taking time his wrath will, subside, he will cool and come to himself, and think better on it: or to the wrath of the injurious person, by declining him, as Jacob did Esau, till his wrath was over; or by patiently hearing without resistance the evil done, according to the advice of Christ, (⁴¹⁸⁹Matthew 5:39,40); or to

the wrath of God, leave all with him, and to the day of his wrath and righteous judgment, who will render to every man according to his works; commit yourselves to him that judgeth righteously, and never think of avenging your own wrongs; and this sense the following words incline to,

for it is written, (^{<4625>}Deuteronomy 32:35);

vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord; vengeance belongs to God, and to him only; it is proper and peculiar to him, not to Heathen deities, one of which they call *δίκη*, “vengeance”; (see ^{<4834>}Acts 28:4); nor to Satan, who is of a revengeful spirit, and is styled the enemy and the avenger; nor to men, unless to magistrates under God, who are revengers and executioners of his wrath on wicked men; otherwise it solely belongs to God the lawgiver, whose law is broken, and against whom sin is committed: and there is reason to believe he will “repay” it, from the holiness of his nature, the strictness of his justice, his power and faithfulness, his conduct towards his own people, even to his Son, as their surety; nor will he neglect, but in his own time will avenge his elect, which cry unto him day and night; and who therefore should never once think of avenging themselves, but leave it with their God, to whom it belongs.

Ver. 20. *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him*, etc..] These words are taken from (^{<4072>}Proverbs 25:21,22), and to be understood, as a Jewish ^{f230} writer observes, *ו[מַצְמִיךְ]*, according to “their literal sense”; though some of the Rabbins explain them in an allegorical way, of the corruption of nature. The Alexandrian copy and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version, reads “but if”; so far should the saints be from meditating revenge upon their enemies, that they should do good unto them, as Christ directs, (^{<4054>}Matthew 5:44), by feeding them when hungry, and giving drink unto them when thirsty:

if he thirst give him drink; which includes all offices of humanity and beneficence to be performed unto them: the reason, or argument inducing hereunto is,

for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head; not to do him hurt, not to aggravate his condemnation, as if this would be a means of bringing down the wrath of God the more fiercely on him, which is a sense given by some; as if this would be an inducement to the saints to do such acts of kindness; which is just the reverse of the spirit and temper of mind the apostle is here cultivating; but rather the sense is, that by so doing, his

conscience would be stung with a sense of former injuries done to his benefactor, and he be filled with shame on account of them, and be brought to repentance for them, and to love the person he before hated, and be careful of doing him any wrong for the future; all which may be considered as a prevailing motive to God's people to act the generous part they are here moved to: in the passage referred to, (^{f231}Proverbs 25:21,22), “bread” and “water” are mentioned as to be given, which include all the necessaries of life: and it is added for encouragement, “and the Lord shall reward thee”. The sense given of this passage by some of the Jewish commentators on it agrees with what has been observed in some measure; says one ^{f231} of them,

“when he remembers the food and drink thou hast given him, thou shall burn him, as if thou putttest coals upon his head to burn him, [r Æl twç[m rwmçyw, and “he will take care of doing thee any ill”;

that is, for the time to come: and another of them observes ^{f232} that

“this matter will be hard unto him, as if thou heapest coals on his head to burn him, wtçb bwr̄m, “because of the greatness of his shame”, on account of the good that he shall receive from thee, for the evil which he hath rendered to thee.”

This advice of showing kindness to enemies, and against private revenge, is very contrary to the dictates of human nature, as corrupted by sin. The former of these Julian the emperor represents ^{f233} as a “paradox”, though he owns it to be lawful, and a good action, to give clothes and food to enemies in war; and the latter, to revenge an injury, he says ^{f234}, is a law common to all men, Greeks and Barbarians; but the Gospel and the grace of God teach us another lesson.

Ver. 21. *Be not overcome of evil*, etc..] Neither of the evil one, Satan, who is very busy to stir up the corruption of nature to an hatred of enemies, and to seek revenge; but give no place nor heed unto him, resist him, and he will flee from you, (^{f235}James 4:7); “put on the whole armour of God”, (^{f236}Ephesians 6:11), whereby you may defend yourselves, that he cannot touch you: nor of the evil of sin that dwells in you; “for whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage”, (^{f237}2 Peter 2:19); nor of the evil of the man that has done you an injury, as you will be, if you return

evil for evil, or take any steps and measures to avenge yourselves; for then not you, but he that has done you the wrong, will be the conqueror:

but overcome evil with good; overcome the evil man, and the evil he has done you, by doing good to him, by feeding him when hungry, by giving him drink when thirsty, by clothing him when naked, and by doing other offices of kindness and humanity to him; which is most likely to win upon him, and of an enemy to make him your friend: and if not, however it will show that you are conquerors, yea, “more than conquerors”, (~~8:37~~ Romans 8:37), through the grace and strength of him that has loved you, over Satan, over the corruptions of your own hearts, and over the malice and wickedness of your enemies.