



ROMANS Part 112

Chapter 12:1-2

The conduct of the saints; light before fruit.



I am entreating you, then, brethren, by the pities of God, to present your bodies a sacrifice, living, holy, well pleasing to God, your logical divine service, 2 and not to be configured to this eon, but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, for you to be testing what is the will of God, good and well pleasing and perfect.

We now enter an entirely new section of Romans. It is not only a new chapter, but a new section. From now until 15:7, Paul lays out guidelines for the conduct of the saints. He tells them what they ought to be doing. Notice that I said “guidelines” and not “laws.” Notice that I said “ought” and not “must.” Some think that, in this section of Romans, Paul is laying down laws. Please. This is not a re-introduction, with a twist, of the Law of Moses. It is not “The Law of Paul.” These are exhortations (not laws) based on the previous truths heralded in this very epistle. No exhortation in this section can be done or should even be attempted apart from an intelligent grasp of the previous truths, especially those found in chapters three through eight.

Christians get it backwards. They think that, if they behave themselves, God will lavish them with blessings. It’s just the opposite. God lavishes sinners with blessings *first*, and only then do the sinners find themselves doing righteous things in the wake of apprehending the lavishness of the blessings. Our behavior, then, is not a payment we make for God’s favors, but a proper reaction *to* the favors. Even if we run afoul of every single behavioral exhortation from here to 15:7, the favors that have come to us through Christ do not and cannot go away,

Remember Romans 5:20? “Where sin increases, grace superexceeds.” This truth does not disappear with subsequent chapter headings, or at any time during the ensuing two-thousand years since Christ’s sacrifice.

“THEN”

It is so important to note the word “then,” as in, “I am entreating you, *then*, brethren.” In my opinion, the “then” includes every word from Romans 1:1 to this place. It’s the equivalent of a “therefore.” Some may counter that the “then” refers only to the previous statement, that “out of Him, through Him, and for Him is

all, to Him be the glory for the eons of the eons! Amen!" I doubt it. Romans 11:36 is an acclamation of the power and majesty of God that shocks the mind and drops the jaw. No one goes about doing good works after reading that; one simply stands in stunned amazement. No, but I believe that Romans 12:1 is such a large break in Paul's narrative that he's not only jumping off from the statement of God's sovereignty—or the case of Israel that he's been setting out for three chapters—but he's jumping off from everything God has said concerning the saints up to this point, especially the catalogue of blessings from 3:21 through 8:39. He's not jumping *away* from it, but *off* of it. He's using the previous revelation as a diving board. This is the first time Paul has ever mentioned anyone behaving him or herself. Why wait this long? It takes time and space to catalog Jesus Christ's



accomplishments and glories. For the most part, every revelation before this (excepting the three chapters on Israel) had to do with Christ and His work at Calvary. We're in the background, if present at all.

Paul's first sentence in Romans tells us what this message and this letter is all about—

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, severed for the evangel of God—which He promises before through His prophets in the holy scriptures—*concerning His Son*—Who comes of the seed of David according to the flesh... (Romans 1:1-3).

Here is the most important thing. The gospel does not primarily concern you and me. This is the common misconception about Romans. Paul's gospel concerns, not us, but God's Son. The good news is about *Him*. We *receive* the good news, we don't behave our way into it. Therefore, it should be no surprise that Paul never even gets around to talking about us until twelve chapters into the treatise. This is how it should be. We are the caboose on the engine of Christ. How different is this message and Paul's method of organizing it (under the inspiration of the holy spirit) than the church message that basically tells people, "Work hard if you ever hope to enter into God's family. If you do well, pray well and attend church, then God's blessings will be upon you." Paul begs to differ. Paul says that God's blessings are *already* upon you. Jesus saved sinners, not saints. The blessings are upon sinners—

Yet God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes (Romans 5:8).

LIGHT BEFORE FRUIT

I love the "light before fruit" principle. It states that we must learn of the nature of God and grasp without a doubt what God thinks of us before we can ever hope to behave properly and with the right motives. No one wants to obey a tyrant, but everyone wants to love and oblige a gracious Deity.

I remember hearing the story of a landowner in the U.S. Civil War South who would buy slaves in order to free them. Oftentimes, the freed slaves felt such gratefulness for their benefactor that they voluntarily placed themselves into his service. Thus also with Christ. Who would not want to serve the most powerful, benevolent Force in God's creation? And yet if we never come to the realization that He *is* benevolent, we can never offer unforced, fear-free patronage—and we're back at the law of Moses. Paul is *not* taking us back there with these exhortations.

Ephesians 5:9-10 might be the perfect "light before fruit" passage—

As children of light be walking—for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth—testing what is well pleasing to the Lord.

"The fruit of the light is in all goodness..." Do you want to do what is good? Then first apprehend the light. The fruit receiving the most light becomes the most succulent and desirable.

Even the Circumcision recognize this principle. Here is Peter from 2 Peter 2:20—

For if, while fleeing from the defilements of the world by *the recognition of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, yet, being again involved in these, they are being discomfited, their last state has become worse than the first.

Believers of both administrations flee the defilements of the world not by *trying* to flee them but by recognizing our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If someone tells you to contract your pupil, would you attempt to manually manipulate the delicate organ into shape? Why not simply look at the sun? Matthew 6:22—

The lamp of the body is your eye. If, then, your eye should be single, your whole body will be luminous.

Thus, Romans 12:1 through 15:7 belong right where God put them—at the end of Paul’s testimony concerning Jesus Christ and His work on behalf of the saints. Again, the gospel of grace is about Him, not us. Upon realizing this, our bodies will naturally conform to the light. Good light equals good fruit. Bad light equals bad fruit. It’s science. This is why the Christian religion has been one of the worst purveyors of violence and persecution—both physical and mental—in history. Practically, Christianity puts the end of Romans before the beginning, making one’s behavior the keys to the kingdom. No good works? Then no kingdom. Thinking they are doing the populace a favor, they will then *force* people into do-goodery. Failing to perform in accord with their standards gets one persecuted to death. Literally. After that, God eternally torments you.

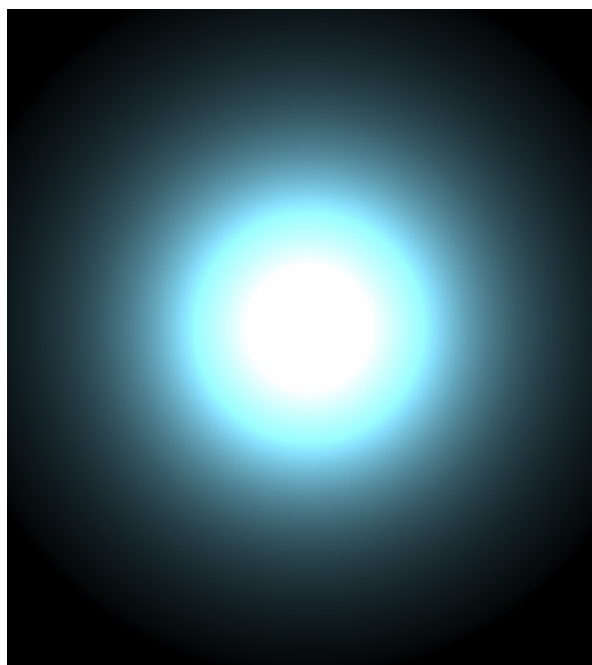
So much for favors.

A LIVING SACRIFICE

Present your bodies a sacrifice, living, holy, well pleasing to God, your logical divine service (Romans 12:1).

Here is an initially strange yet spirit-inspired comparison of the bodies of believers to the bodies of dead animals that were presented to God in the old system. Paul even goes so far as to call it “[our] logical divine service.” In the old system, as a demonstration of the costliness of overcoming sin and death, the priesthood sacrificed animals. The costliest thing we have in this world is life, yes, even the lives of bulls, goats and birds. But then came the costliest of all lives: God’s own Son. Nothing tops that. The

animal sacrifices pointed to Christ. In Christ, sin and death are judicially and spiritually overcome, to be permanently eradicated. Thus, altars no longer exist. (All Christian altars are fake.) The temple ritual is gone. The priests and their elaborate costumes have gone the way of history. Now, the spirit of God dwells in us. This is what God had been building toward. He did not delight in the animal sacrifices (Hebrews 10:8), and neither was it overly thrilling for Him to occupy the temple in the form of the token presence of a supernatural glow (the Skeninah glory; the Hebrew word *schechinah* simply means “dwelling”) hovering between the wings of the



cherubim of the ark of the covenant in the holiest place of the temple. The final and greatest manifestation of His presence would be placing *schechinah* into the very bodies of human beings. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:16—

Are you not aware that you are a temple of God and the spirit of God is making its home in you?

PURE LOGIC

So now what happens? Now we simply walk around living our daily lives manifesting this *schechinah*—God’s presence—at the speed and volume that God sees fit, “growing in the growth of God” (Colossians 2:19). One needn’t become red-faced or break a sweat. One simply walks about the Earth living one’s life and the spirit of God within does its thing. Its thing is love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, goodness, meekness, gentleness, and self-control. Paul does get into details between here and 15:7. We are to be conscious of this inside-out spiritual expression, but it is neither wrought nor won by rigid programs of self-denial or strenuous “do-gooder” theatrics. Good works proceed organically—that is, naturally—from the bodies of those infused with God’s spirit. It is to be so natural that Paul calls it “logical.” It’s our “logical divine service.” This is the furthest thing from imposing a thing via law. The law would say, “Do this or else.” The new way says, “It’s simply logical to act righteously.” It logically follows that someone endued with the spirit of God would manifest that spirit, nearly effortlessly, in the form of works that please God.

It’s never perfect in this life, but it progresses.

DARKNESS EQUALS CHAOS

Considering the structure of the book of Romans, we find that this behavioral section corresponds to an earlier section in the book detailing the conduct of humanity as a whole. Here is the structure. Note how the section of 12:1-15:7 finds its counterpart in 1:18-3:20. The conduct of the saints is played against the conduct of humanity—



Paul began Romans (1:18-3:20) detailing the shameful behavior of the mass of the human race. To what did Paul attribute the lack of fruit? To the lack of light. The apostle writes in 1:21-25—

Knowing God, *not as God do they glorify or thank Him*, but vain were they made in their reasonings, and darkened is their unintelligent heart. Alleging themselves to be wise, they are made stupid, and they change the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of a corruptible human being and flying creatures and quadrupeds and reptiles. *Wherefore* God gives them over, in the lusts of their hearts, to the uncleanness of dishonoring their bodies among themselves, those who alter the truth of God into the lie, and are venerated, and offer divine service to the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for the eons! Amen!

Who dishonors their bodies among themselves? Those who purposely set upon self-made crusades of evil and sin? No. It is those who “alter the truth of God into the lie” and who fail to glorify or thank God “as God.” This latter is a condemnation of the doctrine of human free will. The former is a condemnation of everything from eternal torment, to the immortality of the soul, to the Trinity. Believing lies about God produces noxious fruit. It’s reliable. Being bathed in the light, on the other hand, produces fruit which delights God.

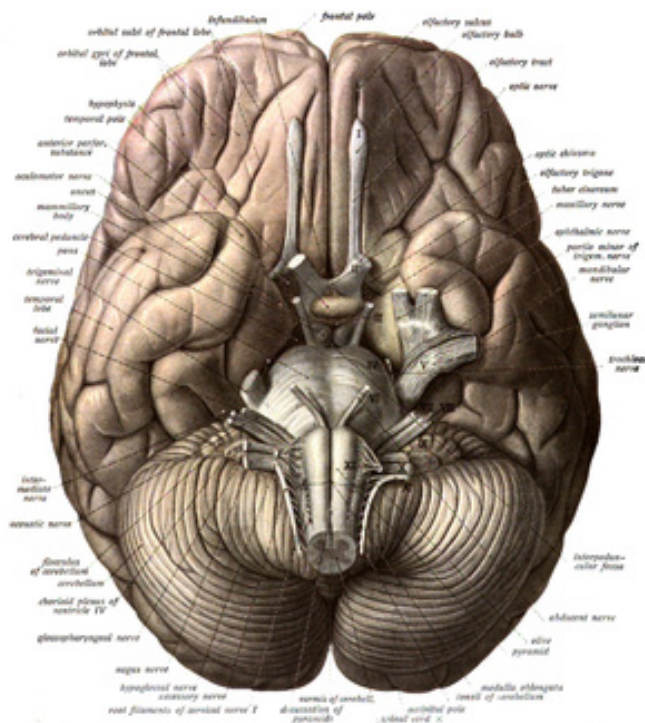
One of my favorite examples of the light before fruit principle is Mary and Martha. You know the story well enough so I needn’t quote it here. Martha worked strenuously in the kitchen while Mary sat at Jesus’ feet, receiving light. A bystander would assume that Mary was doing nothing while Martha was being “a good Christian soldier” and “working for Christ.” Yet whose “works” were justified by the Lord? Jesus said to Martha—

Martha, Martha, you are worrying and in a tumult about many things. Yet of few is there need, or of one. For Mary chooses the good part which shall not be wrested from her (Luke 10:41-42).

THE RENEWING OF THE MIND

“...and not to be configured to this eon, but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, for you to be testing what is the will of God, good and well pleasing and perfect.

No one wants to be configured to this eon. But how do we avoid it? By becoming monks? By not resting until a daily list of “good works to do today” is accomplished? No. This would not be light before fruit. We do it by “the renewing of [our] mind.” Note that Paul calls for the



“Note that Paul calls for the renewing of the mind, not the removal of it.”

renewing of the mind, not the removal of it. Renewing the mind means thinking differently. It means having a good opinion of God rather than a bad one. It’s as simple as that. It means becoming healed from years of the foul teaching that God would eternal torment most of His creation, or that He waits with bated breath to see how many of His creatures manage to like Him, or that evil is unstoppable and eternal. These dark thoughts that can produce nothing but dark fruit—or no fruit at all.

Here is Paul in Colossians 1:9-12—

Therefore we also, from the day on which we hear, do not cease praying for you and requesting that you may be *filled full with the realization of His will*, in all wisdom and *spiritual understanding*, you to *walk worthily of the Lord* for all pleasing, *bearing fruit* in every good work, and *growing in the realization of God*; being endued with all power, *in accord with the might of His glory*, for all endurance and patience with joy; at the same time giving thanks to the Father, Who makes you competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light,

Paul prays for the Colossians to become “filled full with the realization of God’s will.” This is his first prayer. It reflects the way he wrote Romans. Paul wants us to know God’s will and so he says, “Take care how you walk.” Paul would never say “Take care how you walk” before presenting to us the true God and the righteous walk of Jesus Christ. Without “light before fruit,” we’re lost. We’re hacking away at frustration from the wrong end of the train. Back to the above passage. The result of being filled full with a realization of God’s will is a walk “[worthy] of the Lord.” The result is the “bearing [of] fruit in every good work.” Then Paul prays for even more realization for the saints—“growing in the realization of God.” More realization results in more power—“being endued with all power”—and this is “in accord with the might of His glory.” The result is, “all endurance and patience with joy.” Do you see that the ball starts rolling with a realization of God? Only this will keep one from being configured to an eon whose chief occupation, according to Romans 1:18-3:21, is darkness.

May God continually cause His light to shine upon us (let’s learn more and more worthy things), that we might walk worthily of the calling with which we have been called. —MZ

OPPORTUNITY TO HELP A FELLOW BELIEVER!

Do any of you remember the show I did a year ago November in the home of Sheryl Crow of Kerman, California? I think many of you do. In case you have never seen that show, please click on the link below. I know that she has the same name as the singer, but I call *this* Sheryl Crow “the famous Sheryl Crow,” because she is a future ruler of the universe. Anyway, Sheryl is a cancer victim. For years, cancer has ravaged her body. She has no right arm. Her left arm doesn’t have a hand. She has no foot on her right leg and a half of a foot on her left leg. Needless to say, Sheryl has a hard time getting around. She depends on her laptop computer to stay in touch with the body of Christ, and of course to watch the Revelation Series. She has been a fan of my writings and my videos for many years. Well, her poor little laptop is on the fritz. Sheryl does not know I’m telling you this. (She knows now.) If you are able, do you think that you send Sheryl a small to check to help her get a new laptop? Her address is: **Sheryl Crow, 2393 N. Trinity Ave., Kerman, CA 93630**
Thank you! —Martin

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SHERYL CROW

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