

[Romans 12:1 – 11]

~ How do other people know you trust Christ as your Savior? Does your life reflect your confession of faith? Are you acting like a believer should act? Are you lying to others by telling them you have no sin? Well, this report will reveal the nature of conduct genuine Christians should display. This is not a list of rules and regulations, though; this is the path to practical, clean living. We had a brief introduction to this section of Romans in our previous report; and if you haven't read that report, I suggest you go back and do so now.

Our Spiritual Safari does not divide the books of the Bible as a normal Bible study would, because we are not after the theological or the doctrinal aspects of Scripture. However, in Romans, it's almost impossible not to make at least a basic division and teach it correctly. The first eight chapters of Romans are doctrinal; dealing with sin, salvation, sanctification and security. Then chapters nine, ten and eleven were the dispensational section; which are God's past, present and future dealings with the nation Israel and His plan and purpose for them in those times.

We are now in the final division of Romans beginning in chapter twelve; and this section is labeled "*Duty*." This deals with the service of the sons of God and the separation of the sons of God *unto* the Gospel. The super-duper saint is going to be in for a shock in this report, I can promise you that. They're going to vehemently disagree with me; but that will be alright. It won't be the first time they have exercised their right to be wrong; and it probably won't be the last

In our last report, Paul taught we have a relationship with Christ if we are the sons of God living in this world. It's true our citizenship is in Heaven, our treasure is in Heaven, and we are pilgrims and strangers down here, but we have a personal relationship to Christ; and that relationship comes with privileges and gifts of the Holy Spirit to support our earthly walk furthering the cause of Christ. We have a relationship to other believers and unbelievers, to our neighbors - and many other relationships that, by de

facto, come with a Christian responsibility. In this passage, we begin in our relationship with God *not* by thunder and lightning from Mount Sinai, as when the law was given, but through Paul as he says he begs them to present themselves a living sacrifice. That's our reasonable service. God has been so good to us, friends....

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

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

~ Dr. Kenneth Wuest has a fine book on Romans; one that is an interpretation as opposed to a translation - and it is elaborate – but excellent; here is an excerpt, “....and stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your innermost being but is patterned after this age. Change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being by the renewing of your mind and putting to the test what is the good, complete and well pleasing will of God for your life.”

We're not to fashion our life and conduct to those around us – even in the church. I understand we are to be all things to all people; but certain cliques assume a front that isn't real. They are the super-pious people who always think they have the shiniest halo. They're not normal and they aren't natural; and if you want to hear the meanest gossip and the dirtiest dark humor, they can almost always help you out. Most of them are the nastiest sort of individuals in their private lives you'll ever meet; but they put up an incredibly churchy front.

The word hypocrite means to play a role. The base Greek word means to play a part and to answer back. Further, it means to receive a cue to say a certain thing or make a particular move at a certain time. It means to be something you're not. The child of God ought not act that way. We should be normal and natural; or maybe I should say normal and *supernatural*! It's

easy to only play a part. Some people who smile at you and pat you on the back with compliments are your worst enemy. Some people are dangerous to be around just on general principle. Shakespeare said every man is on a stage and playing a part; but that is *NOT* true of the believer. This is why it is critical for the believer to be genuine; because the Holy Spirit is working from within them. The life of a true believer *MUST* be transformed by the renewing of the mind. That can only happen in one place – the Word of God.

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

Titus 3: 5 *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit ~*

Alright, by permitting the Spirit of God to function in our lives, the believer is able to test the will of God - and will find it good. However, the moment you and I assume a deceptive pose, or to be something we're not, then it becomes impossible to determine the will of God for our lives. The properly discerned will of God for a believer becomes good and fits precisely — like a tailor-made coat. First, it is good, and then it is acceptable; then, finally, it is perfected. If a believers will is totally in tune with Gods direct will, then you can't improve on that. When we are totally in His will is the *ONLY* time we can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth us, too, by the way. It's wonderful we can be free to be ourselves and not have to act the part of a phony Christian - but we can just be normal! That's the *ONLY* time the Spirit of God moves through us, friends – you may be sure of that.

*I would not have the restless will ~
~ That hurries to and fro
Seeking for some great thing to do ~
~ Or secret thing to know
I would be treated as a child ~
~ And guided where I go*

Have you reached the place of honestly turning everything in your life over to the Lord? That is the way to happiness, and it is the *ONLY* way to have joy. This is the way of fulness and satisfaction. If you are in a group of super-duper saints, I urge you to get away from them and live a normal and natural life sans fronts or put-on. The super-duper saint in your church and the private individual they are at home and in their business dealings are two completely different people. You may not even recognize some church members at home and during the week. The ones who say they have no sin conform to the world like a chameleon....

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

~ That's a pungent warning to all of us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to. Paul had a whimsical smile on his face as he wrote that statement, I'm sure. There are many Christians who are ambitious and feel as if they have to take control of their lives. Many of them want an office in the church. If you want to appear successful as a pastor today and get a bunch of people working like termites, then just create a bunch of offices. People will work like madmen when they think more highly of themselves than they ought to.

We need to be sober and think correctly. One cannot think wrong and act right. God has given grace to each one of us. Paul is saying this through the grace that was given to him. Paul is saying all of this because the Lord Jesus Himself made Paul an apostle. Here, Paul is speaking as an apostle; and he sure isn't begging. We shouldn't have the ambitions to always lead and control our Christian circles because there is the danger of said leader overestimating his ability, character and gifts. We need to be careful to have a correct assessment of ourselves in relationship to other members of the church, particularly. It's certainly our *best* joy when we fit into the slot where God wants us to be....

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

~ This is the first time Paul has referred to the church as the body of Christ; which becomes a primary theme of Ephesians and Colossians. The church is to function as a body. Of course, we have many members. We have different gifts; and I don't feel as if Paul provided a complete list of gifts, because every time he mentioned them, he brought up new gifts he hadn't mentioned before. I think that was done purposely by the Spirit of God, too....

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

~ These gifts are called "*charismata*." This is the same stem word for grace. It means grace and free gift. It is something only the Spirit of God can give us. To the church God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. What that means is God gave the church men who had the gift of these offices. Each member of the body of Christ has a gift and a function. Naturally, if we are all one body, the gifts differ. That does not mean that some have no gift, though – because everyone has a gift. That gift is part and parcel in the grace God gave us. When we are saved, we are placed in the body of believers, and we are to function as members within Christ's body.

When our gifts are exercised properly, they are conformed by the power of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. I think every believer needs to test his gift often. If you have a gift, and you feel you are using it responsibly, you should want to examine yourself and make a spiritual inventory regularly. Are you a blessing to other people? How so? Are you building a church up, and not tearing it apart? Are you dividing your church?

"*Prophecy*" in verse six does not refer to predictions but to *ANY* message from God. If we think we prophecy, we need to understand the proportions we have been allotted; because God supplies the faith, the power, and all necessary means to match His gift. We might want to think about that

before designating ourselves with pious titles. That is so completely important to thoroughly understand, my friends, that I hope you will pray for understanding here....

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our active service: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

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

~ “Active service” refers to a manifold ministry; and the phrase carries profoundly practical implications. There is likely an infinite number of positions of servitude in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Putting away chairs and giving out songbooks is a ministry. Not everyone has the gift to speak; but all have a valuable gift.

Exhortation means to comfort someone through the Word of God and that is a well-loved gift! I think it goes hand in hand with giving; which seems to be a gift most people have forgotten all about. The ability to give money is a tremendous gift. Some people have a whole lot of money, and their giving is shameful, usually non-existent. For some people, ten percent is a slap in the Face of God; they should be giving much more.

Others are given a gift of leadership whereas some are not. It is a particular responsibility to discern our positions and exercise a leadership role with extreme caution and employing much careful prayer. The ability to show mercy means to visit the sick. So, we have our entire relationship to other believers covered. That’s when we are told....

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

~ Saying pious things to other believers that you don’t really mean is hypocrisy. Remember, we defined hypocrisy specifically. We need to let our love be without hypocrisy. To achieve that, we will have to hate that which is evil. To hate that which is evil, we will need to know what evil is; and, to

know what is good, we'll need to know the Word of God properly, correctly and completely.

Hypocrisy may rank number two in terms of problems in the modern church; with number one being a total and complete ignorance of the Word of God. If we find something wrong in the church, we need to stand up and say it appropriately. If things are not being done honestly, we are to make a stand for the truth. We have too many people who appear as sweet as gumdrops, but who have no intestinal fortitude to stand for that which is right. They will literally stand by and watch you and other believers be treated shamefully. In fact, some people *NEVER* stand for that which is honest! This is one reason so many fundamental churches are in deep trouble today, too, by the way....

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

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

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

~ We end this report from our Spiritual Safari with an exhortation to love one another honorably, to serve the Lord fervently, and to be happy in the Lord. "*Not slothful in business*" does *NOT* mean to be a good merchant or salesperson; it means never to flag in our zeal. We should be aglow serving the Lord. All of that should be our code of honor and the Spirit of God should live through it. The things of God should motivate us to serve Him with all our might, all of our mind and all our hearts. This entire report has been pushed towards one focal point: serve the Lord. I hope you can join us next time ~