

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

GOLDEN TEXT

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” (Romans 12:1)

USEFUL PRACTICE

The new life in Christ is consists in living the victory of the cross fervently.

SCRIPTURE READING Romans 12:1-12

1 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

2 - Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

3 - For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

4 - For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,

5 - so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

6 - We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If

your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;

7 - if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;

8 - if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

9 - Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

10 - Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

11- Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

12 - Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

GRNERAL OBJECTIVE

To show that the new life in Christ consists in living in holiness.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

I. To point out that we need to live the new life in such a way that it pleases God;

II. To explain the need to use the gifts with wisdom and humility;

III. To understand that as new creatures we need to exercise love, Christian service and to resist all evil.

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INTRODUCTION

The connection between all that Paul wrote earlier (Chapters 1 to 11) and Chapter 12 of Romans is made through the use of the Greek particle **oun** (*οὖν*), translated into Portuguese as **then, therefore**. In this context, the use of this particle can refer to all that the apostle had written previously or can also refer to what he wrote in the section that only comprises chapters 9 to 11. The fact is that this text is not out of place. Paul had talked in detail about justification by faith and about how God, in His sovereignty, dealt with the Gentiles and Jews in this process. Now he wants believers to become aware that all this has practical implications in the new life in Christ.

I – IN RELATION TO THE STEWARDSHIP OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP (Rom 12:1,2)

1. An exhortation in the form of appeal. "I urge you", as it appears in the NIV, translates the Greek verb *parakaleo* (παρακαλέω). This word has, in its original form, the sense of **urge**, **encourage** and **exhort**. Lexicons point out that this term was used in the military context when an officer wanted to exhort the troops. Paul's introductory words are, therefore, an exhortatory appeal. Believers should take into account all that he had taught until then and seek to adjust to the new life in Christ. The biblical doctrines, even the most complex ones, should not only promote theological speculations, but encourage Christian piety in the believer.

2. A word concerning the body. The apostle urges the Roman believers [...] "to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship" (Romans 12:1). Three things are said here about the body as an instrument of worship. First, the body must be offered in sacrifice. The Greek word used here by the apostle is *thüsia* (θυσία), which means sacrifice or offering. The parallel is made with the system of Levitical sacrifices of the Old Testament. Second, this sacrifice, unlike that of the Old Covenant, must be presented alive and not dead. Third, this sacrifice must be holy. The idea of something that was separated exclusively for the service of God. In doing so, the believer will be assured that he will be pleasing God in his worship.

3. A word concerning the mind. Just as our body should be offered as a living sacrifice to God, our mind also needs to be (Romans 12:2). For worship to be true it must be carried out by people with a transformed mind. This transformation, as shown by the original *metamorphousthe* (μεταμορφοῦσθε), where the term metamorphosis comes from, means being transformed into our deepest inner nature.

II - IN RELATION TO THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE EXERCISE OF THE GIFTS (Rom 12:3-8)

1. To exercise them in moderation and humility. The term gifts (Gr. *Charismata* χαρίσματα) that appears in verse 6 is the same word used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:4 to refer to the spiritual gifts. The same love of 1 Corinthians 13, which regulated the use of the gifts, should be practiced here. Paul had already spoken a lot about grace (Gr. *Charis* Χάρις) and it is in the name of this grace, which was given to him, that he calls for moderation and humility in the stewardship of spiritual gifts. No

one who exercised the spiritual gifts should think they were something independent of grace. This is exactly what means the Greek word **hyperphroneó** (ὑπερφρονέω), translated here as "to have higher thoughts of oneself than one should".

2. To exercise them, respecting their diversity. Paul reminds the Romans that moderation and humility are essential in the exercise of the gifts. He also reminds them that God does not want exclusiveness in the exercise of the gifts (Rom 12:4). Individuality must be respected, because the Spirit uses people, but individualism must be rejected. The gifts are diverse, as diverse are the members of the body (Rom 12:5). There is no body formed by only one member, the same way the Lord does not want the gifts to operate through a single person (Romans 12:6). All have their place in the body of Christ.

3. To exercise them with diligence and regularity. Paul writes here in the context of a local church, and is not concerned about separating the spiritual gifts from the ministry gifts. Here, the believers, whether laypeople or clergy people, are invited to practice the spiritual gifts (Rom 12:6-8). The gifts should therefore be exercised with dedication and regularity. They are presents from God and must be performed in the context of the church.

III - IN RELATION TO THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES (Rom 12:9-21)

1. To exercise love. Socially speaking, the word love is very worn out and is often associated only with feelings. However, this is not the meaning of **agapé** (ἀγάπη) in the New Testament. Christian love is something that springs from within, from the character of a regenerated person and begins to shape their behavior (Romans 12:9,10). This way, love can never be something fake, that is, practiced hypocritically. It is something authentic. Seeing the other before oneself.

2. To exercise Christian service. Paul advises believers in Rome to live Christian life intensely. No apathy or sluggishness: "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord" (Rom 12:11). The word **sluggish** translates the Greek term **okneros** (ὀκνηρός), which also has the sense of **slothful, reckless** and **indolent**. Being fervent does not mean being fanatic, but being reached by grace and walking by it. The term "in the spirit" can either be in the Greek locative case, meaning our

human spirit, or in the instrumental case, referring to the Holy Spirit. Whatever the case Paul has used, the meaning is one of the Holy Spirit burning the life of the fervent Christian.

3. To exercise resistance to evil. Closing this section, the apostle advises, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). In Romans, we find the apostle Paul referring to evil (Gr. *Kakos* *κακός*) fourteen times. In Romans 7:19,21, he presented this *evil* as being synonymous with the sinful and bad Adamic nature that wants to lead the believer to do what he disapproves of. That is the reason for the inner war. In Acts 16:28, Paul talks about this evil as an irreparable harm that a person can do to themselves. Here this evil appears as an opposing force to good, which seeks to prevent the victorious Christian living. The biblical recommendation is: "overcome evil with good."

CONCLUSION

In this lesson, we have learned that chapter 12 of Romans forms a set of exhortations about living the new life in Christ. As we have noted, these exhortations are related to various aspects of Christian living and involve the stewardship of Christian worship, in which the value of the body and mind in the service of God is shown. Attention is paid to the stewardship of spiritual gifts, where Paul combats apathy and individualism. The Church is the body of Christ and as such it should live. Finally the apostle exhorts regarding the exercise of the Christian virtues, highlighting the practice of a victorious Christian living.

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