
“Get Along For God’s Glory”

ROMANS 12:1-16:27

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AT A GLANCE

In this sermon, we concluded our series in Romans by exploring chapters 12–16, where Paul moves from explaining the Gospel to showing how it transforms our lives. True worship is offering ourselves as living sacrifices to God, which shapes how we treat others within the church. Paul calls believers to humility, love, service, and unity — emphasizing that a divided church hinders the mission of God. As we live out our faith in love and unity, we demonstrate the power of the Gospel and help advance God’s mission to reach all people.

INTRODUCTION

Wildwood, today we come to the final stretch of Romans — chapters 12 to 16 — and I want you to see something crucial: the mission of God and the unity of the church are *inseparable*. Paul’s heart burned to carry the gospel to Spain, but he knew it depended on a healthy Roman church to send him.

Here’s the point: A divided church is an ineffective church. Our ability to reach the nations, to reach our neighborhoods, even to reach across the street, rests on our ability to love one another well. Unity doesn’t mean uniformity. It means genuine fellowship — lives laid down for Christ, lives intertwined for His mission. Today, we’ll see the principle, priority, purpose, and power of true fellowship in these chapters.

Let’s stand together and read the first section of our passage.

ROMANS 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

THE PRINCIPLE OF TRUE FELLOWSHIP: LOVING SELF-SACRIFICE

This is the principle of true fellowship. We are a **living sacrifice** to God. Our entire life laid on the altar of God like Abraham laid Isaac; completely surrendered. Notice this, Paul says, **is our spiritual worship**. This is what it means to truly worship God. It means to let go of our lives.

This is the beginning of Christian fellowship as **verses 3-8** makes clear. Paul moves from a living sacrifice to a reminder that we are **one body** with **many members**. (**v. 4**) We have different functions and giftings and each one of us is called to use those gifts not for ourselves only, but for the benefit of the body.

In **Romans 12:9-21** Paul encourages believers to take care of one another, to walk with one another through the ups and downs, to be patient in tribulation and to not seek your own revenge. He

cautions Christians to live peaceably with all so far as it depends upon you. All of this in the name of love, which opens what is called a literary envelope.

An envelope is where we see a common theme on each side of a passage. In this case, the theme is love and it both opens this passage in 12:9 **Let love be genuine** and closes it in the following passage, **Romans 13:10**.

Paul says, ¹⁰ **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.** Love is such a controlling theme for this whole section, Romans 12-16. Out of love for God, out of gratitude for what He has done for us in our salvation, we lay down our bodies as living sacrifices. Then out of a heart surrendered to God we love the people He has knit us together with in the body of believers, the local church. We use our gifts to serve Him and one another. Self-sacrificing love for God and love for our neighbor serves as the principle of true fellowship.

THE PRIORITY OF TRUE FELLOWSHIP: UNITY IN THE BODY

Romans 14:1-9 reveals the priority of true fellowship. Both the weak and the strong have a responsibility to pursue unity. The weak in the faith are told not to pass judgment while the strong are told to not despise their weaker brothers. Whether it has to do with food or drink or days, there is a rule of thumb we should all practice: assume good intent.

Paul says that each person, when they are **fully convinced (v. 5)** does what they do, abstaining or enjoying with gratitude, **in honor of the Lord. (v. 6)**

Further, Paul reminds each group that the others are also servants of Christ. It's between Him and His servant. We have no business judging the servant of another. (v. 4)

Verses 13-17 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother...¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Paul lifts our eyes from our bellies to the kingdom. Why would we be so small-minded and self-centered as to elevate a personal freedom or conviction to the point of disunity? Why would we hold so tightly to food or drink that we **destroy the one for whom Christ died? (v. 15)**

Your freedom is good until it causes someone else to violate their conscience. We have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters in Christ, to regard them and their sensibilities. If we need to abstain for a minute to protect a weaker brother, ²¹ **It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.**

Who has the primary responsibility to move toward the other person here? Paul says in **Romans 15:1-3 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."**

As you consider what it means to live peaceably with all people, and as you flesh out what it means to lay your lives down in living sacrifice, this is where the rubber meets the road. It's one thing to say you love God and love your neighbor. It's another to sacrifice your freedoms for their good. It requires that we prioritize true fellowship.

Thinking and living like Christ isn't easy, so Paul prays for God's intervention in our lives in **verses 5-7**. ⁵ **May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,** ⁶ **that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** ⁷ **Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.**

THE PURPOSE OF TRUE FELLOWSHIP: THE GLORY OF GOD

This reveals the purpose of true fellowship – living **in harmony with one another**, to **glorify God with one voice**. Fellowship means living in such a way that our lives match our songs of praise, the essence of Romans 12:1, where we read that our worship is living self-sacrificially.

Our lives should be like that of a well-trained choir: **harmony**. We complement one another, we don't compete. After all, our fellowship is for the **glory** of God, not our own. In **verses 8-13** Paul heralded the glory of God's work in uniting Jews and Gentiles in worship of Him.

In **verses 15-16** Paul revealed to us why our worship is even acceptable, saying in **verse 16**: **so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.**

Paul, acting symbolically as a priest in the gospel ministry, presented Gentile believers as living sacrifices. And we, those living sacrifices, offer our **acceptable** worship because we have been **sanctified by the Holy Spirit**.

It is for this reason that Paul was proud of his work for God (**v. 17**) because all he had done was participate in the work of Christ through him. He had preached the gospel to gentiles **by the power of the Spirit of God**.

And Paul was delighted by it so much so that he said in **verses 20-21** he made it his ²⁰ **...ambition to preach the Gospel, not where Christ has already been named...** ²¹ **but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see and those who have never heard will understand."**

The fellowship of believers who had little to nothing in common was a glorious thing to Paul and he desired to see it continue as far and wide as he possibly could.

In **verses 22-29** Paul revealed why his plans to come to them must be delayed and how he intended to pass through Rome on his way to Spain. He hoped and anticipated that this church would help him in his westward expansion to Spain. All of this for the glory of God. This is the primary purpose of true fellowship – that the mission of God may continue for His glory.

THE POWER OF TRUE FELLOWSHIP: GOSPEL ADVANCE

From here, Paul begins to bring his letter to a close in the familiar fashion, offering warm greetings. In **Romans 16:1-24**, we see the strength of the early church: the power of true fellowship.

One by one, Paul names those who have labored, suffered, and persevered alongside him for the sake of Christ. His words are not mere formalities; they're full of gratitude and remembrance, each name a hand on the rope pulling for the gospel's advance.

Here we truly see Paul's heart — he treasures these brothers and sisters, not for what they could do for him, but for who they had proven themselves to be in the Lord.

These weren't distant acquaintances; they were comrades forged in the fires of ministry, faithful partners who shared not only the toil but also the triumphs of the mission. Paul's longing to partner with the Roman church flows from the trust these individuals inspired — a trust rooted not in human ambition, but in the shared passion for God's glory.

They were bound by a kinship deeper than blood, a unity born of the Spirit and sealed by a common vision: the glory of God magnified to the ends of the earth. This is fellowship — not mere association, but the deep, abiding bond of those who have seen the same light, fought the same battles, and long for the same kingdom.

It is therefore no wonder that **in verses 17-20** Paul warns the church to actively resist division in their ranks. No one should lose sight of the fact that this body is brought together by the blood of Jesus and set apart to carry the precious treasure of the gospel to the nations.

But Paul rightly understood fellowship in the church is as fragile as a clay vase. And once broken, it is often hard to repair.

ONLY POSSIBLE IN HIS STRENGTH

Thus, Paul blessed the church one final time in **verses 25-27**. ²⁵**Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.**

We have seen in these five chapters the principle, priority, purpose, and power of true fellowship. Only by God's grace can we achieve it, which is why Paul concluded his letter with **now to him who is able to strengthen you**.

Church, in our own strength, we will do what comes naturally: we'll divide, we'll complain, we'll seek our own self-interests, and we'll consume ourselves with non-sense.

But by His strength and for His glory, we will remain unified. We will love humbly. We will prioritize our fellow members of the body and appreciate what God has given us through them. We will keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus, and we will take the gospel to those who have never been told. And it will all be to the glory of God forevermore through Jesus Christ!

Unity isn't something we stumble into — it's something we fight for by laying down our rights for the good of others, just as Christ laid down His life for us. Wildwood, let's be a church that refuses to settle for shallow community.

Let's fight for each other's faith. Let's carry each other's burdens. Let's outdo one another in showing honor. Let's be the kind of church that the world can't ignore — because our love looks like Jesus. Let's stand firm, side by side, for the sake of the gospel — until the whole world hears. Amen?!

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