



EXHORTATION ELECTION'S EVIDENCE

*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,
that we should be holy and blameless before Him. -- Eph. 1:4*

Study 17a: OUR RESPONSE -- SELF-SACRIFICIAL SERVICE (12:1-2)

12:1 *What is the motive for Christian sacrifice?* (2 Cor. 5:14,15; Gal. 5:13)

... the gospel, the "doctrine" ... is both the pattern according to which the life of the Christian is to be shaped (cf. p. 256), and the power that transforms. We find the same idea in 1 Thess.2:12, where Paul writes, "God calls you into his own kingdom and glory"; and there Paul exhorts Christians to "lead a life worthy of God" ... And when Paul turns to exhortation, in Eph.4:1, his first admonition is "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called". **Anders Nygren, Romans**, p. 416



Bernard of Clairvaux

As we actually approach the rules of holiness now before us, let us once more recollect what we have seen all along in the Epistle, that **holiness** is the aim and issue of the entire Gospel. It is indeed an "evidence of life," infinitely weighty in the enquiry whether a man knows God indeed and is on the way to His heaven. But it is much more; it is the expression of life ... **H.C.G. Moule, Romans**, pp.324,325 (emph. added)

12:2 *How only may we discern the good and acceptable and perfect will of God? (and what can happen to our best efforts if we DON'T discern?)* (1 Cor. 9:26; Eph. 5:8-17)

As soon as you do not desire to become better, then you have ceased to be good. -- **St. Bernard (of Clairvaux)**

Study 17b: NO SOLO MEMBERS in the BODY (12:3-16)

12:3 *What is the peculiarly Protestant disease?* (Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 13:20; 15:22; 18:1; 24:6)

It has been well said that in Christianity theology is grace and ethics is gratitude; and it is not by accident that both "grace" and "gratitude" are expressed by one and the same Greek word, *charis*. -- **F.F. Bruce, op.cit.**, p. 226

Honest evaluation (12:3) -- Each Christian must know what his spiritual gifts are and what ministry (or ministries) he is to have in the local church. It is not wrong for a Christian to recognize gifts in his own life and in the lives of others. What is wrong is the tendency to have a false evaluation of ourselves, Nothing causes more damage in a local church than a believer who overrates himself and tries to perform a ministry that he cannot do. (Sometimes the opposite is

HOW CAN WE KNOW WE ARE SAVED?

We have followed the exposition of the mysterious unbelief and the destined restoration of the chosen nation; a theme which we can see, as we look back on the perspective of the whole Epistle, to have a deep and suggestive connexion with what went before it; for the experience of Israel, in relation to the sovereign will and grace of God, is full of light thrown upon the experience of the soul. ... The Christian, filled with the knowledge of an eternal love, is told how not to dream, but to serve, with all the mercies of God for his motive. **H.C.G. Moule**, pp. 321,322

Doctrine is never taught in the bible simply that it may be known; it is taught in order that it may be translated into practice. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Jn. xiii. 17). Hence Paul repeatedly follows up an exposition of doctrine with an ethical exhortation, the two being linked together, as here, by "therefore" (cf. Eph. iv. 1; Col. iii. 5). -- **F.F. Bruce, Romans**, p. 225

Psychology enables us to distinguish more accurately the essential from the non-essential elements in conversion. All that Jonathan

Edwards has so subtly and exhaustively described in his *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, and his *Religious Affections* is still further sharpened and made convincing by the aid of a more thorough psychological analysis. The fact of a sudden or a gradually realized conversion is entirely indifferent. Emotion or the lack of it, the physical condition at the time, and even unusual accompaniments of the new attitude are also indifferent. Persons may experience a doctrine or a suggested experience of a given type, and still not have begun the new life. One and one thing only is necessary -- the beginning of that type of life which Jesus Christ lived, His attitude toward God, His attitude toward men. Not all who enter upon this life believe the same things or are conscious of the same ideals, or give expression to the life in the same terms of conduct. If this new spirit now becomes "the hot place in a man's consciousness, ... the habitual centre of his personal energy," psychology pronounces him a Christian. **James Stalker Christian Psychology** p.275

true, and people undervalue themselves. Both attitudes are wrong.)
-- **W. Wiersbe**, *op.cit.*, p. 140

12:4-8 Has God given all his graces to any individual -- or any denomination? (John 3:8; Eccl. 11:5; Acts 10)

Diversity, not uniformity, is the mark of God's handiwork. It is so in nature; it is so in grace, too, and nowhere more so than in the Christian community. Here are many men and women with the most diverse kinds of parentage, environment, temperament, and capacity. Not only so, but since they became Christians they have been endowed by God with a great variety of spiritual gifts as well. Yet because and by means of that diversity, all can co-operate for the good of the whole. Whatever kind of service is to be rendered in the church, let it be rendered heartily and faithfully by those divinely qualified, whether it be prophesying, teaching, admonishing, administering, making material gifts, sick-visiting, or performing any other kind of ministry. ... the body ceases to be used as a mere simile and becomes rather the most effective term which the apostle can find to express the **vital bond** which unites the life of believers with the risen life of Christ. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *op.cit.*, p. 227,228 (emphasis added)

It is strange how much (*harm*) the good intention does which makes persons believe that by preaching they produce ever so much more

fruit, even if they are without the necessary special training, without the (*necessary*) call, and without the gracious gift (*of teaching*). When God calls (*persons to preach*), He calls either those who have this gift, or with the call He grants the gift. Without such (*divine*) grace men either beat the air (1 Cor. 9:26), or the fruit of which they boast exists only in their foolish imagination. I will not mention the stupid and altogether incompetent persons who here and there are put into the pulpit by bishops and abbots. We really cannot regard them as called and sent, even if we wanted to, because here incompetent and unworthy (*persons*) are called under God's wrath, which on account of our sins removes from us His Word and permits the increase of babbling, doting talkers. -- **Martin Luther**, *op.cit.*, p. 155

12:9-16 Judging by these exhortations, how was the Roman congregation threatened by separation?

Do not get to be wise in your own opinion; be ready always to learn; dread the attitude of mind, too possible even for the man of earnest spiritual purpose, which assumes that you have nothing to learn and everything to teach; which makes it easy to criticize and to discredit; and which can prove an altogether repellent thing to the observer from outside, who is trying to estimate the Gospel by its adherents and advocate. -- **H.C.G. Moule**, *op.cit.*, p. 339,340

Study 17c: AMBASSADORS of the PRINCE of PEACE (12:17-21)

12:17-18 What witness won many pagans to the Christian faith?

12:19-21 How will a realized eschatology affect one's view of this counsel?

So God converts those whom He does convert by showing them goodness. It is only in this way that we can convert a person, namely, by showing him kindness and love. Whoever is converted by threat or terror is not truly converted, as long as he adheres to the outward form of conversion; for fear causes us to hate those who convert us. But if anyone is converted by love, then the whole person burns against himself and is more angry with himself than anyone else could be angry with him, for he detests himself with the greatest vehemence. -- **Martin Luther**, *op.cit.*, p. 162

Witnessing -- by what we DO and what we ARE



Once more, let us not forget that the Apostle lays his main emphasis here rather on being than on doing. Nothing is said of great spiritual enterprises; everything has to do with the personal conduct of the men who, if such enterprises are done, must do them. This too is characteristic of the New Testament. **Very rarely do the Apostles say anything about their converts' duty**, for instance, **to carry the message of Christ around them in evangelistic aggression**. Such aggression was assuredly attempted, and in numberless ways, by the primeval Christians, from those who were "scattered abroad" (Acts viii. 4) after the death of Stephen onwards. The Philippians (ii. 15,16) "shone as lights in the world, holding out the word of life." The Ephesians (v.13) penetrated the surrounding darkness, being themselves "light in the Lord." The Thessalonians (1, i. 8) made their witness felt in Macedonia, and Achaia, and in every place." The Romans encouraged by St Paul's presence and sufferings, "were bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. i. 14). St John (3 Ep. 7) alludes to missionaries who, "for the Name's sake, went forth, taking nothing to the Gentiles." Yet is it not plain that, when the Apostles thought of the life and zeal of their converts, their first care, by far, was that they should be wholly conformed to the will of God in personal and social matters? This was the indispensable condition to their being, as a community, what they must be if they were to prove true witnesses and propagandists for their Lord. ... What the Christian does is even more important than what he says. What he is is the all-important antecedent to what he does. He is "nothing yet as he ought to" be if, amidst even innumerable efforts and aggressions, he has not "presented his body a living sacrifice" for his Lord's purposes, not his own; if he has not learnt, in his Lord, an unaffected love, a holy family affection, a sympathy with griefs and joys around him, a humble esteem of himself, and the blessed art of giving way to wrath, and of overcoming evil in "the good" of the presence of the Lord. -- **H.C.G. Moule**, *op cit.*, p. 346,347