



1/6/25

So... we took our Christmas stuff down today. Are you the person who takes everything down as soon as the presents are opened? Or do you still have things up in March? I'm always amazed by how much bigger my living room looks after putting the decorations away. Until next year. 😊

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Romans 12:1-12

I see that this passage starts out with a therefore, "I appeal to you, therefore..." So I look back to Romans 11:33-36 for my answer to... What's the therefore there for? Paul is speaking of how rich God's wisdom and knowledge are... how no one can comprehend His decisions, how His understanding of every situation is so beyond anything my finite mind can grasp. No one can completely know His mind because it's so far beyond us. No one can counsel Him. He doesn't need the help. He owes no one anything, because everything comes from Him and through Him. And everything is for His glory. THEREFORE... because He is so merciful that He would even give me the time of day, let alone go so far as to be my sacrificial Lamb who takes my sin... Paul appeals to me...

Present my body as a living, holy, and pleasing sacrifice to God. People have sacrificed their lives for much lesser things. Soldiers have felt beholden to others who saved them from death or imprisonment. Others have felt beholden to people who paid off their massive debts. Jesus has saved me from eternal destruction and imprisonment in the domain of darkness. He has paid the debt that I could never pay, nailing it to the cross. Don't I owe Him everything?

It is my spiritual worship to be a living sacrifice to God. This spiritual worship is also translated as "reasonable service." It makes sense to live for the Lord with all I've got. Let me not forget that I am a LIVING sacrifice, because Jesus was my DYING sacrifice who LIVES again.

How do I live for the Lord as an offering to Him for His goodness? Truly, He is the one who

makes me holy and blameless. I make a daily choice to give up conformity to the world. 1 John 2:15-17 says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." Why waste my time to be conformed to what is passing away and what draws me away from the Lord who is forever?

To be in the world is to make the choice to let the world conform my thoughts, feelings, and decisions to align with its values. It takes so little effort to want the things of the world because it promises happiness, but it doesn't deliver. To be conformed to the world is to sabotage my peace, hope, and joy.

Instead, be transformed by the renewal of my mind. Do not BE conformed, but BE transformed. In both cases, I am not the one DOING. I am BEING. I need the Holy Spirit to be the One to transform the way I think, to renew my mind so that I no longer indulge the desires of my flesh and mind, or seek the false pride and honor that comes with the world. I need the Spirit to renew my mind so that I want what God wants, so that I love what God loves, so that I hate what God hates.

How does He renew my mind? Through testing. I prove out God's good, pleasing and perfect will AS I offer my life to Him... and He uses every opportunity to change my mind from one degree of glory to the next. Just like a baby isn't born walking and talking but learns little by little, so I learn what pleases God little by little as I put myself in His presence. Everything that I do flows from this. If I think it's about DOING rather than BEING, I will see the rest of this passage as a "to do" list, rather than the outpouring of a life that is surrendered to God. O Lord, let me start with offering myself to You every day, every hour, every minute, every second.

Paul says, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." Don't think of myself according to what I value and what the world values. Think of myself according to the faith God has given me. Jesus is the founder and perfecter of my faith. I have NO reason to think I'm superior to ANYONE! "I am more like the worst sinner than I am like Jesus" (Garrett Higbee). "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). O Lord, please take away my pride.

Even the spiritual gifts I have are not there to build myself up, but to serve the body of Christ. The gifts I have are GIFTS. I did not earn the ability to offer my gifts for the body of Christ. They were a gift of God's grace, the generosity of His love. O Lord, please help me to use the gifts You've given me according to my faith in You, with diligence and with joy... knowing that You didn't give them so that I could lift my name up, but so that I could lift up Yours. Let me remember that, whatever gifts You've given me as a member of the body of Christ, I am

NOT the Head. That position is reserved only for You (Colossians 2:10).

So Lord, because Your love is genuine, please help my love to be genuine... without hypocrisy. Genuine love hates evil. It doesn't just hate evil, but it turns from evil and holds tightly to what is good without letting it go. Genuine love is devoted to others in friendship and brotherly affection. Genuine love is devoted to showing honor to others, even to treat them as more important than myself. Genuine love is not lazy, but eagerly cares for others. Genuine love is fervent in spirit, boiling over with intentionality to care. Genuine love serves the Lord who IS love. Genuine love rejoices in hope, anticipating whatever God has for us with confidence and joy. Genuine love is patient in tribulation, enduring through all the trials that come and not giving up. Genuine love is devoted to constant conversation with the Lord.

I see two huge things when I look at this incredible description of genuine love. First, I see that Jesus is the perfect model of this love. He hates evil so much that He conquered it by sacrificing His life. He clings to what is good because He IS good. He is so devoted to His friends in brotherly love that He laid His life down for us. He showed preference to us by stepping down from His throne in heaven, emptying Himself, and humbling Himself to the point of death on a cross. He continues to show us honor even from His throne in heaven. He was NEVER lazy, but eagerly served everyone in His path while on earth, and all mankind through His death and resurrection. He fervently gave of His Spirit, even sending Him to dwell with me and seal me for the day He takes me home. He celebrates the hope of spending eternity with His people. He patiently endured all the sin and rebellion throughout history, and He continues to endure it even now as His judgment on the world and the devil waits to be brought down. He constantly intercedes for me and speaks with me through His Spirit and His word. He is the epitome of love without fail.

The second thing I see is His constant mercy, because my love falls woefully short of genuine. I praise You for Your mercy, Lord. I praise You that You are renewing my mind and transforming me so that my love can become more and more genuine. My job is not to try to make myself love better, but to offer myself to You as a living sacrifice so that You can make my love better. O Lord, here I am. Please make it so.