

# Love Your Church by Serving

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, if we could, this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Paul's letter to the Romans and chapter 12, page 1141, if you're using the Pew Bible.

Romans chapter 12, and if we just read again at verse 1. Romans 12 at verse 1, where Paul writes, You know, I don't think we should ever realize or ever tire of realizing how real and how relevant our Bible really is for the 21st century. Of course, our Bible may be three and a half thousand years old. It comprises 66 books. There are 39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New. And these 66 books, they were written by 40 different authors in three different languages spanning three different continents. And yet this book that we are opening before us this evening, it is the Word of

God. It is inspired. It's infallible. It's inerrant. By its own description and definition, our Bible is living. It's active. It's sharper than a double-edged sword because it confronts us with our sin.

It calls us to salvation. It commands us to seek the Lord. And it also commends us, as we'll see this evening. It commends us to serve the Lord. And so, my friend, our Bible—and I want us always to remember this—our Bible is real. It's relevant, and it's reliable. Our Bible is authorized, it's appropriate, and it's applicable. And I say that because I never planned on preaching about service and serving both ends on the Lord's Day. That wasn't my perfect planning. That was the Lord's perfect planning.

Because, as you know, we were considering Exodus 18 this morning. And we saw Moses there. He was on the brink of breakdown. He was on the brink of burnout. But Jethro's good and godly advice to his son-in-law, Moses, was very simple. Share and spread the load of serving the Lord. Share and spread the load of serving the Lord. Moses, you need to delegate and designate people to do some work. You need to assign and allocate roles and responsibilities within the congregation of Israel. Because you can't bear the burden alone. You can't bear the burden alone. People need to serve alongside you. And that's what we're thinking about this evening as we continue our study, our Sunday evening study, Love Your Church.

[ 3 : 21 ] And as you know, our study, it's all based upon the helpful and yet hard-hitting book by Tony Merida called Love Your Church. I hope you've all bought it now. And I hope you've read it. Because in the book, Love Your Church, we're being exhorted and encouraged to love your church because Jesus loves your church. And love your church like Jesus loves your church. And this evening, the chapter we're looking at from the book is where we're being exhorted and encouraged to love your church by serving your church. Love your church by serving your church. And we mentioned this morning what Tony Merida said about serving. And for those who weren't here this morning, I'll read it again to you. This is what he said. He said, followers of Christ are not spectators in the church, but servants in the church. As a Christian, you shouldn't think of your church as the place where I listen to sermons, but the place where I serve. To be sure, listening to sermons is important, he says. But church members are contributors to the ministry of the church rather than consumers of that ministry. And contributing involves your time, your talent, and your treasure for the health and growth of your church. But what I didn't read this morning is that Tony Merida, he went on to say, and this is where he really hits us hard. He says, many Christians know that they should, they should be actively serving in the church. But what's often lacking are deep enough motivations for that kind of commitment and long-lasting service.

He hits us hard. But you know, that's what Paul is reminding us here in Romans chapter 12. Paul is reminding us in this chapter about our motivation for service and our mission for service. Our motivation for service and our mission in service. So there are two headings this evening, our motivation in service and our mission in service. So first of all, our motivation, our motivation for service. He says in verse 1, 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. Now Paul's letter to the Romans, it is without doubt his most theological letter. That's not to say other letters aren't theological, but the letter to the Romans is full of theology. In fact, you could easily describe this letter as a systematic theology of the gospel. But Paul's letter to the Romans, it was written in order to emphasize and explain that as sinners, we are made righteous before a holy God, not by our works of righteousness, but by receiving Christ's righteousness by faith alone. As Paul says in the opening chapter in Romans 1 verse 17, he says in his letter, the righteous shall live by faith. That's how he starts his letter. And then he expounds and explains what that means. He says the righteous shall live by faith. We're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And throughout his letter, throughout the chapters that follow from chapter 1, Paul expands it and he explains what the faith of the righteous really is. And he does so by addressing all these theological areas of doctrine, because he talks about election and predestination and justification and adoption and sanctification and glorification. Paul expands and explains the faith of the righteous, because the righteous shall live by faith. But when we come to chapter 12, this is a transition point in his letter.

Because when you come to chapter 12, Paul moves from doctrinal information to doctrinal application. And the reason Paul does that is because Paul knows that the faith of the righteous must not only impact and influence our head, it must also impact and influence our heart and our hands. In other words, we need to exercise and evidence our faith by our works. As James said in his letter, faith without works is dead. Therefore, along with many of the other New Testament writers, Paul's greatest concern, Paul's greatest concern as he writes to the church wasn't just learning about the gospel and what the gospel is. Paul's concern was for us to live out the gospel, to live out the gospel in God-centered, Christ-centered lives. Because our Christianity, it must not only be personal, it must also be practical. All this doctrinal information we receive, it's absolutely useless, says Paul, if there is no doctrinal application of it in our lives. So there must be information, but there must also be application. And that's how Paul begins this chapter. He begins this transition point by saying in verse 1, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, I want you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. You know, Paul's plea here to live out the gospel, it's much stronger than an appeal as it is there in verse 1. I love what the authorized version says. If you have the authorized version in front of you, you'll know that Paul is saying,

I beseech you, I beseech you. But literally, the word that he uses is, I summon you. I summon you. It's in the sense of a king giving an order to the citizens and subjects of his kingdom. And here is Paul. Here is Paul the apostle, Paul the ambassador of Christ, and he's writing with the authority of King Jesus, and he's saying, I summon you. I summon you as brothers and sisters in Christ. By the mercies of God, present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, because that is your reasonable service. That is your reasonable service. And you know, what we ought to notice is that Paul says straight away that our motivation for service is the mercy of God.

Our motivation for service is the mercy of God. As we said, throughout his letter, throughout the first 11 chapters of the letter to the Romans, Paul has addressed all these areas of doctrinal and systematic theology. He's addressed the depravity of sin and the death and death because of sin. He talks about it in chapter 3, the wages of sin is death. He addresses salvation and what salvation is. It's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He's addressed all these issues of election and predestination and justification and adoption. He's addressed redemption and reconciliation and restoration and renewal. He's addressed all these theological areas and avenues of the full and free forgiveness that is in Christ. But Paul summarizes it all here in one word. He summarizes it all as the mercy of God. The mercy of God. Because the mercy of God should be our motivation for service. The mercy of God should be our motivation for service. Paul is saying to the

[12:01] Romans and to us, all this doctrinal information about the gospel in chapters 1 to 11, it is absolutely useless unless there's doctrinal application of it in your lives. And so, my friend, the mercy of God should be our motivation for service. Why we do anything in our congregation and within our community is because of the mercy of God shown towards us in the first place. Now, boys and girls, God's mercy and God's grace are like twins. God's mercy and God's grace are like twins. Because God's mercy is not receiving what we do not deserve. God's mercy is not receiving what we do deserve.

And God's grace is receiving what we do not deserve. God's mercy is not receiving what we do deserve. Because as sinners, as those who have sinned and rebelled against a holy God, and I think we should always have this in our mind. What we deserve is God's fierce anger.

We deserve his full wrath. We deserve his final judgment. We deserve the fires of hell. We deserve eternal death, eternal damnation, eternal destruction in hell. We deserve the pains and the punishment of hell. That's what we deserve. And yet Paul reminds us in Ephesians chapter 2, he writes those wonderful words, but God. But God, my Christian friend, that is the word that summarizes your life. But God, that's the phrase that summarizes your life. But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love with which he loved us, by grace are you saved through faith.

My friend, God's mercy is not receiving. So God withholds what we deserve. That's his mercy. He doesn't give to us what we deserve. And God's grace, though, is giving to us what we do not deserve. God's mercy is not receiving what we do deserve. God's grace is receiving what we do not deserve. Because grace is given. Grace is given as a full and free gift from the hand of King Jesus.

Grace is given to us with no strings attached. There's no small print to read. There's no contract to sign. No, grace is given not because of who we are or what we've done or how much we know. Grace is given not because of anything we have achieved or attained or accomplished for ourselves. No, grace is given as a gift. Grace is given as a full and free gift from the hand of King Jesus, held out to us freely. And we're told in the gospel, just take it. Just take it. My friend, God's mercy is not receiving what we do deserve. God's grace is receiving what we do not deserve. They are God's twins, grace and mercy. And you know, Paul is saying to us here, brothers and sisters, when we have this perspective on God's mercy and God's grace, when we see that we have nothing to claim or to cling to in and of ourselves, when we see that we, and when we realize that we are undeserving of the least of God's mercies, that should be our motivation for service. That's what should spur us on to service.

[ 16 : 02 ] God's mercy and God's grace. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. That should be our motivation for service.

But more so, more so, Paul says there, we should present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God because Jesus Christ presented His body as a living sacrifice to God. We should present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God because Jesus Christ presented His body as a living sacrifice to God.

And you know, what Paul is saying here is, it's wonderful. He's using Old Testament language, the language of sacrifice and worship, language that we're familiar with, with the tabernacle and the temple. And Paul's reminding us, he's saying to us here that all the sacrifices in the Old Testament, all these bulls and goats, all these lambs and sheep, all these Old Testament sacrifices, all these types and shadows, they were only pointing forward to what was to come.

Because as you know, the message of the Bible, the message of the Bible is without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin.

And the New Testament tells us that what was impossible for these Old Testament sacrifices, it was impossible for them to deal with our sin. Because the blood of these Old Testament sacrifices, of sheep and lambs and goats and bulls, none of it could truly cover our sin.

[ 17 : 56 ] None of it could expiate or propitiate the heinousness and the ugliness and the awfulness of our sin in the sight of a holy God. But, another but in the Bible, Hebrews chapter 10. But when Christ came, but when Christ came into the world, he said, quoting Psalm 40, as we sang it earlier, sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me. Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.

You know, it's the glory of the gospel that God took to himself a body. God who is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

And yet that same God took to himself a body. God became man. He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

He became like us in order to redeem us. He became the suffering servant. He became the sacrifice for his people. He came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And you know, the wonder of the gospel is that the King of Kings humbled himself. He humbled himself from the crown of glory down to the cradle in Bethlehem, all the way down, down, down to the cross of Calvary. And it was the greatest act of humiliation.

[ 19 : 45 ] Where Jesus made himself, as Paul writes in Philippians chapter 2, he made himself of no reputation. He took upon himself the form of a servant. He was made in the likeness of men and been found in fashion as a man. He humbled himself. He became obedient, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

My friend, the mercy and the grace of God, through the mercy and grace of God, Jesus Christ presented his body on that tree as a living sacrifice to God. It was a holy and acceptable sacrifice to God. Therefore, says Paul, with that in mind, I summon you. I summon you as brothers and sisters in Christ. Because of the mercy of God being shown towards you, this should be your motivation for service. That you present your body. You use the body that God has given to you as a living sacrifice to present it to God as holy and acceptable to him. Because that is your reasonable, your reasonable service. Your reasonable service. And it is reasonable service. The ESV has the phrase spiritual worship, which is okay. But what Paul is really saying here, that's amazing how he puts it together.

What Paul is saying here is that when you consider closely the mercy and the grace of God in Jesus Christ, when you consider what God has done in Jesus Christ, the logical conclusion, the reasonable and rational response as a saved sinner is that we ought to wholeheartedly offer our whole being in service to God. We are to give our everything to him because he has given his everything for us.

That's our motivation for service. That's our motivation for service. Which brings us secondly and shorter to our mission in service. Our mission in service. We'll read again at the beginning of chapter 12.

Paul says, I appeal to you, I urge you, I exhort you, I summon you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, by the mercies of God, who present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship, do 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. And so as Paul reminds us that the mercy of God should be a motivation for service. He goes on to exhort and to encourage us towards our mission, our mission in service, because our mission in service, as Paul says in verse 2, is not to be conformed to this world. Our mission in service is to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

[ 23 : 19 ] Our mission in service is to be converted. It's to be committed to the renewal of our minds through God's Word. Do not be conformed to this world, he says, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. You know, there's a daily podcast. I don't know if you listen to it or you receive it.

There's a daily podcast that was set up by the late R.C. Sproul, and it's called, as Paul says there in verse 2, it's called Renewing Your Mind. Renewing Your Mind. It's part of Ligonier Ministries.

And Renewing Your Mind, it's a podcast, a brilliant daily podcast that you can sign up to, and I'd encourage you to sign up to it. Sign up to it for free. You'll receive the link by email every morning at 11 o'clock. It'll come into your inbox. And what's amazing about it is all these different subjects and different speakers who explain and they expound the Word of God with one purpose, this purpose, the renewing of your mind. The renewing of your mind, because as Calvin said, it's what goes into your mind. It's what goes into your mind that makes you a strong Christian.

And as Christians, we are head, heart, and hands. So it's so important to be renewing our mind, because as you know, it's so easy for us to be conformed to the world. It's so easy for us to be clouded by the world. It's so easy for us to be confused by the ways of the world, which is why we need God's Word to change us. We need to be converted again and again. We need to be committed more and more to the renewal of our minds through God's Word. Because as Paul explains, he says that the renewal of our minds will give us discernment in God's will. It will give us direction in God's way, and it will give us devotion to God's Word. The renewal of our minds will give us discernment in God's will, direction in God's way, and devotion to God's Word. The renewal of our minds will not only impact and influence our head, but it will also impact and influence our heart and our hands. It will lead to service. Because when we fill our mind with a Savior, it will focus our heart for mission on behalf in service. So when we fill our mind with a Savior, it will focus our mission in service. Because our mission in service, our mission in service is to serve as part of a body, the body of Christ. That's what Paul says. He says that in verse 4.

If you go over the page, he says, Now, throughout his letters, whenever Paul writes to the church, and about the church, when he describes the church, he doesn't refer to the church as a building.

[ 26 : 50 ] Buildings don't matter to him. It's the body. The body is what's important, because the church is not a place. The church is a people. And Paul often uses this image and illustration of the human body.

He makes it very personal. He reminds us of our own human body. And he emphasizes and he explains that we're all members of this body. Where as the king and head of his church, Jesus Christ is the head. He's the head of the body. And as those who are part of the church, as those who are called to love their church and serve in their church, we're all to be the functioning limbs of the body.

We're to be the arms and the legs and the ears and the eyes and the mouth and the hands and the feet of the body of Christ. And as Paul said, all these parts of the body, all these living limbs, they're all very different. They're all very, very diverse from one another.

Just like we all look differently. We all act differently. We all have different roles and responsibilities. And yet Paul's emphasis here is that as a body, we must all function together as one. We must all function together as one body. You know, it's a beautiful image and illustration. It's easy for us to relate to. All we have to do is look at ourselves.

But you know, like we were saying to the children this morning about the spoons. One of our elders was asking another elder this evening, which spoon are you? And you know, like how the spoons were used for service. And you know, it doesn't matter how small or insignificant we may think we are for the serving spoon in comparison to the measuring spoon.

[ 28 : 42 ] It doesn't matter how small and insignificant we think we are. Each member is important. And integral to the body of Christ. Therefore, we must function together. We must function together as the body of Christ. Because our mission in service, our mission in service is to serve as part of the body of Christ. We're to share and spread the load by serving the Lord. That's why Paul says in verse 6, he goes on, he explains what he's talking about in verse 6. He says, Let love be genuine, he says.

Let love be genuine, he says. Let love be genuine, he says. And then he goes on. He goes on.

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord, rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. He gives all these imperatives all the way through the rest of the chapter. And Paul is addressing all these areas of service where our gifts must be used and utilized for the good of the body and the glory of Christ's name. It's always, that's the focus, the good of the body and the glory of Christ's name. And as you can see, Paul's list of functions, it's extensive, but it's not exhaustive. Paul is emphasizing and explaining by giving us this list, by giving us all these imperatives. He's emphasizing and explaining to us that if you're part of this body of Christ, you are not exempt. You are not excluded. You're not exempt or excluded from our mission in service. In other words, if you're part of the body of the Savior, then you need to be functioning for the Savior. If you're part of the body, then you need to be functioning. The body of

Christ can't have a limb that's not functioning. Because a limb that's not functioning becomes a dead weight. And as you know, a dead weight puts more pressure. It causes more pain to other parts of the body. Therefore, our mission in service is to work together, to serve together. As we were saying this morning, the sayings that are often used, there's no I in team. Because team stands, together everyone achieves more. More hands make light work. Which means, as we were saying earlier, we're not to be spectators in this church. No, we're to follow the example of our Savior.

We're to be servants in this church. We're to be committed contributors, not casual consumers. And our commitment and contribution to our church. Yes, it requires our time. Yes, it will require our talents. And it will even require our treasure. Our commitment and contribution, it requires our involvement, our initiative, and our ideas. Because, you know, we need to be involved.

[ 32 : 18 ] We need to be involved. We're not spectators. We're not to be sitting on the sidelines, spectating, or even scrutinizing. We're to be involved. What can I do? What can I do? We need initiative.

Not thinking somebody else will do it. Oh, yeah, the church officer will get that. No, no, no, no. What can I do? What can I do? We need ideas. New ideas for outreach. New ideas for evangelism.

New ideas for Bible studies. Come with your ideas. Come with your ideas. My friend, our commitment and contribution to our church requires our time, our talents, and our treasure. It requires our involvement, our initiative, and our ideas. Because this is our mission in service. This is our mission in service.

My friend, love your church by serving your church. Love your church by serving your church. Because Paul is reminding us this evening about our motivation in service and our mission in service. Our motivation for service is the mercy of God. We have come to meet these two twins, grace and mercy, through the suffering servant, Jesus Christ. That's our motivation in service. And our mission in service is to function as a body, as one body in Christ for the good of the body and the glory of Christ's name. That's our motivation in service. So love your church by serving your church. Love your church by serving your church.

But you know, as we conclude, I don't know about you, but I have in my mind, and this is what I had in my mind preparing this sermon. I had in my mind that famous image from World War I. We've all seen it.

[ 34 : 21 ] It's the image of Lord Kitchener. You might know, maybe you don't know, the man with the big mustache and the hat on. Lord Kitchener, he became the Secretary of State for War just after the World War started. On the 5th of August 1914, the day after Britain had declared war on Germany, Lord Kitchener knew. He knew that the Great War was going to be long, and he knew that it was going to be costly. And it was going to be costly not only in terms of money, but also in terms of men.

Which is why that famous poster, we've all seen it, that famous poster was designed and it was distributed throughout the British Isles, appealing for volunteers. Volunteers to enroll and enlist in the British Army. And the poster, you've seen it, it was simple. It was a picture of Lord Kitchener, the commander-in-chief, and he's pointing at the reader of the poster, pointing directly at them with the words, Britons. Britons, your country needs you. Britons, your country needs you.

And remarkably, the response to that poster was that within a year, within a year, two and a half million men signed up to join the war effort. They had motivation, and they had mission in service.

And you know, my friend, that's what we're being reminded this evening. Love your church by serving your church. Because the church is a voluntary army. The church is a voluntary army, which we are all called to enroll and enlist. And your commander-in-chief, boys and girls, your commander-in-chief, Jesus Christ, he's pointing directly at us. And you're already saying, Christian, your church needs you. Christian, your church needs you. So, my friend, love your church by serving your church. Love your church by serving your church. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, may we give thanks this evening for that wonderful reminder of the mercy and the grace that has been shown to us in and through thy Son, the Lord Jesus. And Lord, we pray that in response to it, that we would live like Jesus lived. We would serve like Jesus that we would serve like Jesus. And Lord, we would serve like Jesus. And Lord, we would serve like that we might do all for him because he has done all for us. Lord, help us, we pray, to go into the week ahead with a servant-like heart, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and to know that we have met with Jesus here, and that he is one who commends us and even commands us as our commander-in-chief.

[ 37 : 44 ] To go into all the world and proclaim this glorious gospel message. Help us to serve in our congregation in any way that we can, but ultimately to do it for the good of the body and the glory of Christ's name.

Lord, do us good, and we pray. Bless us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening. We're singing in Psalm 135.

Psalm 135, it's in the Scottish Psalter, page 426. Psalm 135. We're singing from verse 15 down to the end of the psalm.

But before we sing, we'll look for some answers. Are you ready? No? Yes?

Okay, question one. What are tonight's headings? Our motivation in and our mission in service, isn't it?

[ 39 : 04 ] Our motivation and our mission. What are God's twins? Well done. Mercy and grace. I won't ask you what they mean.

What is our commander-in-chief saying about serving? Christian, your church needs you. Your church needs you.

So whether you're eight or eighty, your church needs you. Whether you're a big serving spoon or a little measuring spoon, your church needs you to serve.

Okay? And for those who weren't here this morning, I'm not doing the children's address again, okay? You can ask them about the spoons and work out what kind of spoon you are. So Psalm 135, in conclusion, page 426 in the Scottish Psalter.

And we're singing from verse 15. And verses 15 to 17 are talking about worshipping idols or serving idols. And then there's this plea, well, verse 15 to 18.

[ 40 : 12 ] Then there's this plea in verse 19 to the end, calling us not to serve idols, but to serve the Lord. The idols of the nations of silver and our gold and by the hands of men is made their fashion and mould.



Mouths have they, but they do not speak. Eyes, but they do not see. Ears have they, but hear not, and in their mouths no breathing be. Their makers are like them, so are all that on them rely.

O Israel's house, bless God, bless God, O Aaron's family. O bless the Lord of Levi's house, ye who his servants are, and bless the holy name of God, all ye the Lord that fear.

And blessed be the Lord our God from Zion's holy hill who dwelleth at Jerusalem, the Lord, O praise ye still. So these verses in conclusion, we'll stand to sing if you're able to God's praise.

The light as of the nations of silver, red, and gold, and by the hands of red is made, their fashion and gold.

[ 41 : 43 ] Mouths have they, but they do not speak, eyes, but they do not see.

Ears have they, but hear not, chanted, there must no breathe in me.

There may catch are like and so are all that hold them re-high.

O west west ■ olvides saviourci score And bless the Holy Name of God, all ye the Lord that we are.

And bless the Holy Name of God, all ye the Lord that we are.

[ 43 : 44 ] Amen.