



# Inter-Lutheran Theological Seminary

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Dear Friends,

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. <sup>3</sup> For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. <sup>4</sup> For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: <sup>5</sup> So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; <sup>7</sup> Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; <sup>8</sup> Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. <sup>9</sup> Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”*

## **Romans 12:1-9**

In the latter portion of his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul gives a significant challenge to the church. He calls Christians to a radical life of service. Paul beckons us away from the world, so that we might live lives in accordance with the will of God. But how can we do this? No matter how hard we try to be faithful to our calling, we slip and fall. In the weakness of our flesh, we find ourselves to be like the Apostle Paul: **“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” Romans 7:15** This statement from Paul is not some sort of false modesty, but rather a declaration about the truth of the human condition. Because of sin, we cannot follow the commands of God by our own efforts.

The key to understanding Romans 12 can be found in the first half of verse one; **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...”** What are these mercies of God? They are the mercies that Paul describes in Chapters one through eleven. Paul tells us that no one can save himself and that everyone is a sinner (Romans 1-2). He then tells us that it is faith in Christ Jesus that justifies us in God’s sight, not the works of the law (Romans 3-4). Paul then instructs us that God’s gift of grace in Christ is far greater than the power of sin and death (Romans 5). Now, through the death and resurrection of Christ we are united with Him (Romans 6). We still struggle with sin (Romans 7), but we are not condemned by God or the law, because we walk by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8). God’s mercy is given to everyone, both Jew and Gentile (Romans 9-11).

So then, Paul tells us that because of all of these mercies of God, we are now able to serve Him. Our efforts gain us nothing, while God’s effort gives us everything. Because of God’s mercy, we have been forgiven, justified and restored. We live this new life of servanthood, because of who we now are in Christ Jesus. May God grant us grace to always abide in His mercies.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Chuck Bylkas

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