

Chapter Eleven
Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans
Eight Practical Evidences of a Functionally Mature Christian

“⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; ¹⁰ Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; ¹² That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. ¹³ Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (Romans 1:8-15).

Spiritual maturity is evident in a believer’s life through the exhibition of spiritual practices. A Christianity that does not exhibit these spiritual practices as the norm of everyday existence is not a spiritual Christianity.

1. Paul was a thankful Christian (Romans 1:8). The *Thank You* Psalm (136) details the spirit of thankfulness and remembrance of God’s on going mercy and intervening work in the lives of His children. .

“¹ O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ² O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ³ O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ⁴ To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ⁵ To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ⁶ To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ⁷ To him that made great lights: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ⁸ The sun to rule by day: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ⁹ The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ¹⁰ To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ¹¹ And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ¹² With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ¹³ To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ¹⁴ And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ¹⁵ But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ¹⁶ To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ¹⁷ To him which smote great kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ¹⁸ And slew famous kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ¹⁹ Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ²⁰ And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ²¹ And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ²² *Even* an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ²³ Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ²⁴ And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ²⁵ Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. ²⁶ O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth* for ever” (Psalm 136:1-26).

Paul was thankful. The word “thankful” is translated from the Greek word *eucharisteo* (yoo-khar-is-teh'-o). Paul was grateful to God for the faithful testimony of the church at Rome. “Faith” is from the Greek word *pistis* (pis'-tis). In this context it refers to a group of people whose faithfulness to truth was evident and widely spoken of. They had reliable character which could be trusted to practice what they professed to believe regardless of what it cost them personally. They were “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

2. Paul was a serving Christian (Romans 1:9).

Being a servant is directly related to being a saint. To be a saint means to be set apart from the world to serve God.

“²⁵ But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. ²⁶ But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ²⁷ And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: ²⁸ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11).

In the epistle to the Galatians, Paul refers to his confrontation regarding the incident with Peter’s and Barnabas’ compromise as a positive example in a negative application of what it means to be a servant of Christ. If he too would have compromised by tolerating the continuation of the preaching of a false gospel, he states, “I should not be the servant of Christ.” A servant of Christ seeks to please Christ first. A servant of Christ serves others out of the obligation he owes the Lord. Therefore, he cannot be disobedient to any of Christ’s commands and still serve others as commanded

“⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-10).

Christ is our example of what it means to be a servant. Being a servant begins with having the attitude of a servant.

“¹ If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, ² Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:1-8).

The word “serve” is translated from the Greek word *latreuo* (lat-ryoo'-o). This refers to the broad scope of all that falls under the heading of the priesthood of the believer. The word “serve” in the context of Christian service means to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God. It is used of the ministry of priests as they fulfilled the daily duties of their sacred office.

“⁵ Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. ⁶ Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. ⁷ Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, ⁸ And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. ⁹ But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:5-9).

“⁴ John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; ⁵ And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, ⁶ And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:4-6).

3. Paul was a *Prayer Warrior* (Romans 1:9-10). To be a *Prayer Warrior* means to live in constant communion with God.

“¹⁶ Rejoice evermore. ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸ In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thessalonians 5:16-18).

The Christian life is lived under constant threat from spiritual forces of darkness. There are no “rest periods” or “time outs.” Let down your guard for one moment and you will end up on the pile of casualties. The Christian’s struggle is won or lost because of his prayer life and his devotional life. The Christian must constantly maintain his spiritual “armour.”

“¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. ¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; ¹⁵ And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;” (Ephesians 6:10-18).

4. Paul was submissive to the will of God (Romans 1:10). To know God’s Word is to know God’s will, but before God will illuminate His Word to the understanding of a believer, the believer must commit to doing whatever God will reveal before it is revealed. The attitude of submission must be present before illumination will be given.

“¹⁴ Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. ¹⁵ And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? ¹⁶ Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. ¹⁷ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself” (John 7:14-17).

Perhaps the best example of the attitude of submission is found in the little book of Ruth. It is a portion of Scripture often used in a woman’s wedding vows.

“¹⁶ And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God: ¹⁷ Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me” (Ruth 1:16-17).

Submission is a central characteristic of a person with a servant’s heart.

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:21).

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

5. Paul was a communal Christian (Romans 1:11-12). He made himself available and accountable to the assembly of the saints.

²³ Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) ²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Understanding the interdependency of believers is basic to the Christian life. Only immature Christians think they can get by alone. There is no such thing as a *Robinson Crusoe Christian* in the Scripture. The “body” metaphor does not refer to universalism (a universal church). Metaphorically it refers to a unity of parts.

“¹³ For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? ¹⁸ But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? ²⁰ But now *are they* many members, yet but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²² Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: ²³ And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. ²⁴ For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked: ²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (I Corinthians 12:13-26).

God has ordained the local church for a specific purpose with specific goals.

“⁸ Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. ⁹ (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴ That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: ¹⁶ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:8-16).

6. Paul was a purposeful Christian. He was goal oriented (Romans 1:13).

“⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, ⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,

but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: ¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; ¹¹ If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. ¹² Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Philippians 3:8-15).

The “mark” (v 14) Paul admonishes all Christians to “press towards” is the mature life in Jesus Christ. It is also the “prize.”

7. Paul was an obligated Christian. He was responsible to the obligations of sonship (Romans 1:14). When we accept Christ, we become both sons of God by spiritual regeneration and Ambassadors for Christ. Being an Ambassador details the responsibilities of sonship while we remain in this body in the world.

“¹⁷ Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. ¹⁸ And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:17-20).

“²¹ Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: ²³ Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:21-23).

Sonship refers to the position of an adult son with all the responsibilities of that position.

“⁴ But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. ⁶ And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁷ Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Galatians 4:4-7).

8. Paul was a prepared Christian. He was ready to witness (Romans 1:15). Mature Christians are constantly sharpening their Swords.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

Mature Christians prepare themselves to confront a world that is hostile to God.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Peter 3:15).

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List the eight practical evidences of a functionally mature Christian from Romans 1:8-15 and discuss in detail what **YOU** need to do to realize each one in your life. Use Scripture to support your discussion.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

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