For eleven chapters Paul has been explaining what God in his mercy has done, and will yet do, for repentant sinners. Now he reminds those who have experienced this mercy that the most fitting act of worship by which they can show their thanks is to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God. No longer are they to think and act like non-Christians. Their minds must be changed so that they see issues from a different point of view, God’s point of view. As they learn to think in a more Christian way, they will know God’s will better and their actions will be more pleasing to him (12:1-2).

This does not mean that they will become proud or hold high opinions of themselves. Rather they will learn to be more honest in acknowledging whatever abilities and limitations they have. They will recognize that as members of Christ’s body, the church, all have been given different abilities (3-5). All should be diligent in carrying out the task for which God has fitted them, whether in the leadership roles in the church or in the various ministries to the needy (6-8).

Christians must be sincere and straightforward in everything they do. They must in particular have a loving care for those who are fellow members of Christ’s body (9-10). Besides being spiritually enthusiastic, they must work hard at developing qualities of perseverance and prayerfulness. They must also be generous in giving practical help to their fellow believers (11-13).

These positive attitudes must be shown also towards those who are outside the church, even to persecutors (14-16). Christians should not look for revenge against those who do them wrong, but should try to live peacefully with everyone (17-18). The punishment of persecutors is a matter for God to decide. The responsibility of Christians is to treat them as if they were friends. This may in the end make the persecutors feel so ashamed that they will repent of their wrongdoing (19-21).

McGuiggan (p. 357) noted how people have spoken of 3 types of love: if love; because love; and anyway love. The “if” love works this way: “If you do this, I will love you.” Although this is a common practice in the world, this is certainly not the kind of love described in Scripture. The second type of love says, “I love you because you are fun, nice” or something else. This is a healthy kind of love but it is not the deepest kind.

The last kind of love says, “You have displeased me but I will love you anyway.” This is the type of love that Christians are to have for each other and for others. We do not pretend to love others in order to gain something. Loving others or saying we love others to get something is hypocritical. Professing something that is not in our hearts is wrong. Our love and the expression of it must be genuine.