

102. The Book of Romans 12:2

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(9-24-25)

Find this week's Study Audio & Video [Here](#)

As we come to Chapter 12 in our study of the Book of Romans—we move into the practical portion of the book.

Romans Chapters 1-11 dealt with *doctrine*; and now chapters 12-15 will focus on *duty*. The order is significant—*doctrine* must always precede *duty* because Christian *living* depends on Christian *learning*.

VI. Application: The Behavior of God's Righteousness (12:1–15:13)

Romans 12:1–2 (NKJV)

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service*. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Greek word for “**world**” is ‘*aion*’—the same Greek word that Jesus used in the Olivet Discourse—

Matthew 24:3 (NKJV)

³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Comment)

Here the word is used by Paul to basically denote— “*The society or system that man has built in order to make himself happy without God.*”

The Bible talks about this “*present evil age*” (Galatians 1:4) which refers to a kingdom (a fallen world system) that is antagonistic to God.

The ‘god’ and prince of this world is Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and all fallen, unsaved people are his *subjects*.

He seeks to attract and hold people through— “*The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*” (1 John 2:16)

This is spiritual warfare, and it is basically a battle for control of the minds of people as Satan pumps into their minds through their eyes and ears through advertising, music, videos, movies, the internet, school—his evil thoughts and philosophies.

That’s why Paul admonishes us here in Romans 12:2 once we’re saved—

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Holy Spirit (speaking through the apostle Paul) is commanding believers in Jesus not to be **conformed** ('squeezed into the world's mold') to this brain-washing any longer but to be **"transformed by the renewing of your mind..."**

Romans 12:2 (NLT)

² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

The word **"transformed"** is the same Greek word used of Jesus when He was *'transfigured'* on the Mt. of Transfiguration where the radiant glory that is His as God (but had been veiled by His humanity while on the earth) began to radiate outwardly.

Or as one commentator described it—*"He turned 'inside out' which allowed Him to radiate like the sun with His Second Coming glory!"*

This Greek verb translated **"transformed"** is the word we get our English word *'metamorphosis'* from. The dictionary defines *'metamorphosis'* as *'a change of physical form, structure, or substance.'* Or in other words, it speaks of a total change from the inside out—as when a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

The transformation that takes place in the life of a Christian also happens from the inside out—i.e., it starts with a new nature and heart and works its way out to a changed life.

As Jesus said, *"Cleanse the inside of the cup and it will overflow and cleanse the outside also."* (Matthew 23:26)

What is interesting about this transformation is that—the world's *conforming* force happens from the *'outside in'* (external indoctrination), whereas the *transforming* power of the Holy Spirit works from the inside out!

This transformation starts at *salvation* and continues through the process of *sanctification* through the *'renewing of our minds'* which starts by spending time each day in the Word of God and abiding in Christ.

As one author put it,

"The world tries to brainwash people into their way of thinking—but the Holy Spirit wants to 'wash our brains' by the 'cleansing water of the Word.'" (Ephesians 5:26)

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove ['learn to know'] what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So, every day we are to do 3 things if we are going to **prove** our devotion and dedication to God as we continue to learn His will for our lives:

1. **Present our body** (which would include our eyes, ears, mouths, hands, feet etc.).

2. ***Be transformed by the renewing of our mind*** (un-brainwash our thinking through the reading, listening, studying, memorizing and meditating on God's Word).
3. ***Surrender our will completely to Him.***

We first of all surrender our will to God through Christ-like prayer:

One author, "As we spend time in prayer, we surrender our will to God and pray, with the Lord, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." We must pray about everything and let God have His way in everything."

"OK then what?"

We go out into the world where it all gets put into practice and tested.

One author put it this way—

"Romans 12:1–2 are extremely important verses for Christians. They express our most important responsibility to God, namely, submitting completely to His Lordship over our lives. The popular saying: "God is my co-pilot," does not give God His rightful place. God wants and deserves to be our Pilot, not our co-pilot. Christians should make this commitment as close to the moment of their justification as possible. However, notice that Paul addressed his appeal to believers, not to the unsaved. Dedication to God is a response to the mercy of God that we already received in salvation. It is not a condition for receiving that mercy. It is a voluntary commitment that every Christian should make out of love for the Savior, but it is not one that every Christian does make. It is possible to be a Christian without ever making this commitment, since it is voluntary.

With this combined emphasis on commitment to and dependence on God, Paul has set out the basis for responsible living and for the more specific exhortation which follows."

The section that now follows, which covers verses 3-21, deals with conduct within the Church.

It's important to understand up front that this conduct includes *general* living for all Christians (being like Jesus to this fallen world)—and then specific conduct in the way of individual ministry for the Lord.

As one author said,

"Every Christian has the same duty toward God, namely, self-dedication (vv. 1–2). But the will of God for one Christian will differ from His will for another concerning life and ministry within the body of Christ, the church (verse 3–21)."

Again, *conduct* (in general) within the Church covers verses 3-21—but verses 3-8 falls under the category of *"Serving through Spiritual Gifts."*

The subject of spiritual gifts is mentioned specifically in 3 passages in the N.T.—Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11; but the classic passage is 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

Paul began to introduce the subject of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 by saying:

1 Corinthians 12:1 (NKJV)

¹Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

It's interesting to me and a little sad that Paul is going to take the next three chapters to talk about spiritual gifts because he didn't want any confusion concerning them—and yet this is the one area that seems to have more confusion surrounding it than any other!

There are many good churches that are ‘cessationists’ in other words they believe certain gifts of the Holy Spirit (tongues, miracles, prophecy, healing etc.,) have ceased, or passed off of the scene at the end of the apostolic period (end of first century).

Then you have other good churches (like Calvary Chapels) who believe that these gifts are still in operation today.

Unfortunately, among many of the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches that believe the gifts are still around today there is much confusion on what they are and how they work.

I think much of the confusion comes from the fact that often Christians in those churches have learned about the gifts and their operation from watching other Christians exercise them instead of going to the Bible to see what God has said about the gifts.

So, you have a situation where abuses of the gifts are handed down from one generation in the church to the next because the younger generation is simply copying what they see their parents doing.

There are some of these churches where the exercise of spiritual gifts is so chaotic and downright bizarre that I think it has actually helped others to want to write them off as not being for today and ascribe them and all the weirdness associated with them to the devil.

Now that’s really sad because when Paul said, in verse one, *“I don’t want you to be ignorant brethren about spiritual gifts...”*, the word ‘ignorant’ is super emphatic in the Greek. In other words, the exercise of spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ is so vital that without them Paul knew the Church couldn’t function and be built up the way God desires it to.

Now before we go any farther into the area of spiritual gifts we need to stop and make some observations. First of all, we need to make a distinction between *“spiritual gifts”* and natural abilities. When you were born into this world God gave you certain *natural* abilities—maybe some of you are artists or musicians; others might be gifted in athletics or mechanics.

Now these *natural* talents and abilities that God gave to us when we were born physically are different from the *supernatural* gifts, He gave to us when we were born-again spiritually.

1 Corinthians 12:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

One pastor provides clarity—

“We are gifted according to His plan, His purpose, and His measure. We have no more to do with determining our gift than we did with determining what color of skin, hair, or eyes we would be born with...”

Now that doesn’t mean we only get one single gift but a gift that contains a unique blending of different spiritual gifts. These gifts (some claim there are nine of them), are like *‘primary colors’* on a painter’s pallet which the Holy Spirit mixes in different amounts and intensities to create a unique blending for each individual Christian so they are spiritually equipped and enabled to do the work God is calling them *personally* to do.

As believers in Jesus Christ and as a part of the Body of Christ,
we have all been given spiritual gifts.

How does the believer discover and develop his or her gifts? The only way the Holy Spirit will reveal what gifts you have been given is by getting plugged into a local church where you are serving.

Remember every Christian has been given spiritual gifts whether they use them or not.

1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-7 (NKJV)

¹ Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant...

⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*:

Here Paul uses five different words to describe what spiritual gifts are and how they operate.

- In **verse 1** he uses the word “*spiritual*”. The Greek word is “*pneumatikon*” which means, “*controlled by the spirit*.” Spiritual gifts are controlled by the Holy Spirit as to who receives what gift and in what variation.
- In **verse 4** the word “*gifts*” is “*charismaton*” in the Greek, which means “*gifts of grace*” or “*grace gifts*”. They can’t be earned; they are given freely by God. (Simon the sorcerer—Acts 8)
- In **verse 5** Paul uses the word “*ministries*”—which is the Greek word “*diakonion*” which means, “*to serve*”. This tells us that spiritual gifts are to be used to serve the Body of Christ and not ourselves.
- In **verse 6** he uses “*activities*”—which is the Greek word is “*energmaton*”, the word we get our English word “*energy*” from. This means that the gifts are “*energized by God*”—which again means that these gifts are *supernatural* enablements not *natural* abilities.
- In **verse 7** Paul uses “*manifestation*”—the Greek word is “*phanerosis*” which means, “*to make known or revealed*”. It’s the Holy Spirit that reveals or makes known these gifts in our lives—in the process of us serving the Body of Christ.

It’s important to note that the gifts of the Spirit are not an “*end in themselves*”—they are a means to an end:

Ephesians 4:13–16 (NKJV)

¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Let’s recap some important points concerning spiritual gifts:

1. **They are essential**—in 1Cor.12:7 and Eph.4:12 Paul tells us that Christians must minister their gifts in order that the Body of Christ might be built up.
2. **They can be counterfeited**—fleshly counterfeits and satanic counterfeits.
3. **The Holy Spirit is the source**—all these gifts are supernaturally given and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

They are not natural talents and abilities—that’s why Paul calls them “*spirituals*” (pneumatikon) in 1 Corinthians 12:1 (“*controlled by the Holy Spirit*”).

4. **The gifts of the Spirit aren’t an indication of spiritual maturity, superiority or holiness. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).**
5. **The gifts are not for personal gratification or profit.** Their purpose isn’t to entertain us, or to provide us with an emotional ‘*high*’ or to build our self-esteem.

The gifts of the Spirit are given to us as tools to be used in the building up of the Body of Christ. That’s why in 1 Corinthians 12:5 Paul calls them “*services*”—something you do for someone else, and in 1 Corinthians 12:7 he says they are to be used for the “*profit of all*”—not for personal profit.

6. **They are channels through which the Divine power and energy of God can flow.**

It is tremendously exciting to realize that we become channels for the power of God to flow through to touch and transform the lives of others every time we use our gifts.

7. **They come in varieties—each gift is unique.**

Every Christian receives a unique blending of several gifts that fits the ministry God is calling them to.

Romans 12:5–6a (NKJV)

⁵ so we, *being many*, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them...*

8. **Joy comes in exercising our gifts.**

The word for “*gift*” is the Greek word *charisma*, which comes from the word “*chara*” which means joy. One of the ways God fills our lives with joy as believers is by using our spiritual gifts in service to others. (John 13:17)

9. **Experiencing the fullness of all God has for us is only possible through the exercise of our spiritual gifts.**

Every Christian has a desire to live the abundant life that Jesus promised us. This can only happen when we are functioning in God’s will by being plugged into a local church and using our spiritual gifts.

10. **The *gifts* of the Spirit are not the same as the *fruit* of the Spirit.**

The fruit of the Spirit is found in Galatians 5:22-23. Gifts are *given* and can be exercised immediately as the Spirit enables—Fruit is *grown* more and more over time the longer we walk with Jesus (See John 15:1-8).

11. **You can have a gift and not be using it.**

Paul told Timothy to “*stir up the gift that was given to him by the Holy Spirit*”. Apparently, Timothy had become discouraged and stopped ministering his gift—just like many today.

12. **God wants each one of us to know and understand our gifts(s).**

Before we can use our spiritual gifts, we first need to understand what they are and how they function.

(Check out our study in 1 Corinthians 12 & 14)

It also helps us to function in unity and harmony with other members in the Body of Christ if we understand their particular gifts.

In this way we can *complement* each other in our work for God and not *compete* with one another.

1 Peter 4:11

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, **that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ**, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

Catch this week's audio, video, study and sermon notes [HERE](#).