

## Romans Part 40 – Chapter 12

Sunday, February 12, 2023

With input from John Piper, <https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/12>, John MacArthur

### Review

Chapter 12 is the application of the theology we have learned from Romans chapter 1 to chapter 11. Paul starts chapter 12 by telling us we need to “present our bodies” and since they need to be holy and acceptable to God, then He is the one whom are bodies are presented to.

We know Paul’s example is that he lives for the Lord and belongs to him. Later in Romans 14:8: *If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

Paul then tells us this is our “spiritual worship” or “reasonable service” as also seen in **Matthew 16:24**: *“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*

Then we are to be transformed from the inside out by renewing our minds, rather than be conformed to a worldly image from the outside in.

### **Romans 12:1-8:**

*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. 2 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.*

*3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

*6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

### **Now let’s dissect:**

#### **Romans 12:3:**

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

Paul writes that one of the ways our minds must be transformed is in developing the ability to see ourselves accurately. We must develop "sober judgment," or an objective eye. We need to be honest with ourselves about what we're good at and what we're not.

Paul does not say we must all learn to think of ourselves as terrible and worthless. Instead, he wants us to step away from the funhouse mirror that causes us to see ourselves as big and powerful and important. It takes faith to see ourselves objectively in this way, Paul writes. Why faith? He will go on to show that we must see ourselves truthfully so that we can trust God to do through us what He has gifted us for.

In other words, God has work for each of us to spend our lives doing in service to His church. An inflated view of ourselves will only get in the way of the truly powerful things God intends to do through us.

Remember that we are to be conduits of God's love, not pots where we gather but there is no output. We also remember "how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" from Isaiah 52:7

*4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

Paul begins to get into what our specific jobs in this sacrificial lifestyle might be. It turns out that God's purpose for Christians is that we will spend our lives serving each other in specific ways. His analogy here applies broadly to each local congregation, but it also includes the worldwide church in general.

Paul uses the familiar analogy of a human body, something he develops in more detail in 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. Bodies are a unified whole, containing one person. But that unified body is made up of many different parts that serve wildly different functions from head to toe. Paul will show in the following verses that the church, meaning all Christians, is similar in that we are the body of Christ.

*6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

All Christians together are meant to operate as a single human body. Since we are all in Christ, by definition, we are Christ's body on earth. We are to function in the world as a single entity. That does not mean, however, that God intends for each of us to be exactly the same. We serve wildly different functions just as all the different parts of a human body serve different functions.

Our job is to serve our function, in service to each other, in the power of God. Paul describes our differing functions in the body with the word "gifts." In the church, we usually call these the "spiritual gifts." These gifts are given to each believer through the Holy Spirit to use in our specific service to and in the church. We might describe each of these gifts as the supernatural ability to perform or fulfill a specific function that our fellow members in the church truly need.

John Piper: The basic problem is becoming the kind of person who wakes up in the morning and thanks God for life and for salvation and then says, "Lord, oh how I want to strengthen people's faith today at work. Lord, let me come to the end of this day and be able to look back and say, 'Somebody has more confidence in your promises today because I crossed their path. Somebody is happier in your grace because I crossed their path.'" That's the main problem, waking up and being that kind of person.

The reason I say that's the basic problem and not the discovery of spiritual gifts is because, if there were 550 people in this church waking up and saying that and praying that and meaning that, the Holy Spirit would not leave you frustrated in finding ways to do that. He will not let a person whose heart is earnestly desirous of building other people up go without building them up.

He will help you find those ways, and the finding of those ways will be the discovering of your gifts. It doesn't matter whether you can find a name for it or not. Let's apply ourselves to becoming the kind of people who more and more long to build up each other's faith, to make each other happier in the Lord, and to make each other more confident in his promises.

*6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if **prophecy**, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our **servicing**; the one who teaches, in his **teaching**; 8 the one who exhorts, in his **exhortation**; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does **acts of mercy**, with cheerfulness.*

Notice there are many gifts Paul addresses here and there's confusion as to why they don't completely align with the list of other gifts he mentions in 1 Corinthians. There are some topics we must grapple with when it comes to gifts. First, they are gifts of the Spirit, meaning foremost that the Holy Spirit is the main gift. The ability (gift) comes from the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

With a "Spiritual Gift Inventory" we see confused people who say "I'm having a terrible time defining my gift. I went to a seminar and they told me all these were the gifts and I don't seem to fit into any one. I sometimes think I have a little of this and then I think I have a little of this and I just don't know what my gift is."

Perhaps Henry Blackaby was correct that God not only can give us multiple gifts but he can provide us with a "new" gift when we need it. Maybe our "gift" resists a label. And if you keep trying to label it and over-simplify and over-define it, you're going to cause confusion.

And then there's another problem that comes when you over simplify the gifts and that is a rationalization that says, "Well, that's not my gift, I can't do that. Sorry, I'd certainly like to give to this cause but my gift is not giving. Praise the Lord," see. "My gift is taking, do you have anything I can take?" There's a lot of that rationalization. Well, that's not my gift, I'd certainly like to help but, you see, I have the gift of showing mercy and I'm certainly not going to teach anybody anything or exhort anybody, no.

That is over-definition and can lead to over-simplification which becomes an excuse.

Then there's the problem of over or under defining a gift. Paul mentions prophecy and he says in verse 6, if you have prophecy, then do it according to the proportion of faith. One biblical definition is that prophecy means to speak publicly - you have a gift for public speaking. And prophecy as defined for us in 1 Corinthians 14:3, it tells us "the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation." He's a speaker. He gets up and speaks. What does he speak about? He speaks edification, exhortation and consolation. He builds them up with truth, he exhorts them to obedience, and he comforts them.

Sometimes in the Bible those who had the gift of prophecy gave revelation from God, direct divine revelation. Other times they reiterated something God had already revealed. Sometimes they preached the Scripture. Some of the New Testament preachers who exercised prophetic gifts, who spoke publicly, quoted Old Testament truth as well as giving new revelation. Now since all the revelation is complete, the one with the gift of public speaking today speaks the revelation already revealed.

Still yet, there are those who define it as an ability to take two or three facts and deduce a situation or problem before others would need many more facts.

The point I am making is that the Holy Spirit can supernaturally give us what we need in order to do that task God requires of us. AND, it may go even further than that, perhaps it is a good definition of **Psalm 37:4**: *Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.* We will even have the desire to do the task God entrusts to us. Have you ever noticed the happiness and joy of the person who has the gift of helps while they are helping?

Romans 12:9: *9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.*

Don't fake or pretend to love. Genuinely seek to understand the needs of a person and be available emotionally and spiritually. Then match the two statements together "*Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil*" to act the way our Heavenly Father acts toward us, loving us, but always dealing with our sin and making us more like Jesus.

This only builds on the theology Paul spoke earlier to die to the flesh and live in the Spirit: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace."

Next week:

**Romans 12:10-13:**

*10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

*11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.*

*12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.*

*13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*