

## COMMENTARY ON ROMANS 12

The following comments on Romans chapter 12 are brief by design. Since the word of God is “living and active” (Heb. 4:12), the most important part of this brief study are the Scriptures themselves. As you focus on the text of the Scriptures pray that the Holy Spirit will work through these inspired words so that they will be useful for teaching, rebuking correcting, and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

**1 - “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”**

- The Roman letter not only proves that all have sinned, but it also proves that salvation is available to everyone (Rom. 3:23).
- Based on the mercy of God everyone is urged to present their bodies as a “living sacrifice” to God. Nothing is to be held back, but like every sacrifice, we must give ourselves 100% to God.
- This is a true and rational thing to do. Idolatry is not rational! Isaiah made fun of idolators because they cut down a tree and with part of it they build a fire to bake their bread, and with the other part they make a god to worship (Is. 44:14-20). This is not rational!

**2 - “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”**

- The law puts pressure on us from “without” and seeks to “conform” us. The Gospel puts pressure on us from “within” and seeks to “transform” us.
- No amount of money or education can teach a caterpillar how to fly! It has to be transformed!
- The word for “transform” is “metamorphosis”. A caterpillar does not become a butterfly by “conformation” but by “transformation”.
- This is precisely the way we become like Jesus! (2 Cor. 3:7-18).

**3 - “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”**

- Anyone who listens to the word of God and does not obey it is like a man who looks in the mirror but forgets what he looks like (Ja. 1:22-23).
- Everyone needs to have a sober and accurate opinion of himself.
- Everyone needs to understand the “faith” or “gift” God has distributed to each believer.

**4 – 5 “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”**

- By one Spirit we were all baptized and become members of one body (1 Cor. 12:13).
- God arranges the members of His Body just as he wants them to be (1 Cor. 12:18).
- If every member of the Body does not function the Body of Christ is handicapped.
- Every believer needs to function in accordance with the gift that God has given them!

**6 – 8 “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is servicing, then serve; if it is**

**teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”**

■ The word translated as “gift” is “charismata”. It comes from the word “charis” which means “joy”, or “grace”. When you are exercising the gift God has given you it gives you grace and joy.

■ Note that “each of us” has a “charismatic” gift. See also 1 Peter 4:10.

■ Seven “gifts” are listed:

(1) Every member of the Body is to speak for Christ, but the prophet has a special gift of speaking. Among those born of women there was not a greater prophet than John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11). When he saw Herod commit a sin he spoke the word of God and said **“It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife” (Mk. 6:18)**. The primary function of the prophet is to speak!

(2) Every member of the Body is to serve, but some have the special gift of service. Apollos, for example, was a great help to believers (Acts 18:27). The primary function of the gift of service is to serve!

(3) Every member of the Body is to teach, but some have the special gift of teaching. God has especially gifted some to be teachers in the church (1 Cor. 12:28). The primary function of the gifted teacher is to teach!

(4) Every member of the Body is to encourage, but some have the special gift of encouragement. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, for example, was given the name “Barnabas”, which means “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36). The primary function of the gift of encouragement, is to encourage!

(5) Every member of the body is to contribute to the needs of others, but some have the special gift of generosity. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, for example, helped to support Jesus and His disciples out of their own means (Lk. 8:2-3). The primary function of the gift of generosity is to be generous!

(6) Every member of the Body has influence and is a leader to somebody. God, however, has gifted some to be leaders in a special sense. Paul, for example, was set apart from birth to be an apostle to the gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16). The primary function of the gift of leadership is to lead!

(7) Every member of the Body is to show mercy. Jesus promised that the merciful will be shown mercy (Matt. 5:7). But some have a special gift of mercy like the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37). The primary function of the gift of mercy is to show mercy!

In each instance we have emphasized the “primary function” of each gift. When faced with a need, each gifted person naturally responds to the need as God has gifted them. Here is an example of how these seven spiritual gifts can work together. Suppose there are seven people with these gifts eating together when someone spills the milk. The prophet speaks for this is his gift. He points out how much the milk cost, how it has been wasted, and that next time we need to be more careful. The servant grabs a towel and begins cleaning up the mess for this is his gift. The teacher analyses the situation and explains why the accident occurred for this is his gift. The encourager recognizes this as a good idea and encourages everyone to take this advice for this is his gift. The contributor immediately sees the need to share his milk with the one who has spilled his for this is his gift. The leader dares to take charge and make sure that every need is being met and every gift is being used. This is his gift. The one with the gift of mercy puts his arm around the victim and keeps him from falling away for this

is his gift. One gift is not sufficient to solve the problem, but using our gifts together the problem can be solved.

Please note how the next verses apply to the seven spiritual gifts mentioned above:

**9 - Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.** The prophet must not play favorites but must condemn evil and reward good regardless of who is involved.

**10 - Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.** The servant must also show devotion and honor to everyone regardless of whether he likes them or not.

**11 - Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.** Teachers need to be zealous for nobody enjoys listening to a teacher that is lazy and boring.

**12 - Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.** Everybody deserves to be encouraged regardless of how hopeless their case may seem.

**13 - Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.** So also the contributor must not play favorites but must share with all of God's people who are in need.

**14 - Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.** Leaders are often subjected to more criticism than anyone else. They must bless others and not retaliate against criticism.

**15 - Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.** It is sometimes easier to mourn with those who mourn than it is to rejoice with the person who got the job you were hoping to get. The merciful however, must do both!

**16 - Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.** The Guinness Book of Records lists the largest orchestra in the world as El Sistema Nacional de Orquestas y Coros Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela. That orchestra consists of 8,573 musicians. They play different instruments and different notes, but achieve harmony because they play from the same sheet of music and obey a single director. Christians can achieve harmony in the same way by following the Bible and being obedient to Christ!

**17 - Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.** Jesus said that "every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matt. 7:17). When we belong to Jesus we only bear fruit that is good!

**18 - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.** Jesus said: "Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

**19 - Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.** "The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 2:9).

**20 - On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."** This is a quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22. Jesus taught the same thing when He said to love your enemies (Matt. 5:44). Burning coals represent the judgment of God (Ps. 11:5-6). The point is that we must love everyone and leave their judgment to God.

**21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

Please remember that when Paul dictated this inspired letter to a scribe named Tertius it was not divided into chapters and verses (Rom. 16:22). Stephen Langton was said to have divided the Bible into chapters around A.D, 1227. Robert Estienne was said to have divided the Bible into verses in A. D. 1551. It is important, therefore, not to study any chapter of the Bible without considering what was written before and after.

**Now: “To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24-25)**