

That We Might Bear Fruit For God

Lesson 11

The Christian's transformed life brought about by the renewing of the mind. (Romans 12:1-2).

By F. M. Perry

(1) I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (2) And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2 NASV).

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Questions for study.

1. What preparation has been made for the Christian to be in a position to be beseeched by Paul, in Romans 12:1-2, to present his body as a sacrifice to God? (Refer to Romans, chapter 6, especially verses 6-15, 19, and 22). Is the sacrifice of a Christian's body necessary for him to bear fruit for God?
2. Why and how is one beseeched "by the mercies of God?" (Romans 12:1).
3. The King James translation of Romans 12:1 says that the presentation of one's body as a sacrifice is "your reasonable service." The New American translation says it is "your spiritual service of worship." Reconcile these different translations. In what ways is the Christian life "your spiritual service of worship" while simultaneously being "your reasonable service?"
4. What is the meaning of the admonition, "Do not be conformed to this world?" Of the admonition, "Be transformed?" Into what is the Christian to "be transformed?" (Romans 12:1-2).
5. What is the meaning of the phrase, "By the renewing of your mind?" (Romans 12:2).
6. Who is involved in the process resulting in "renewing of your mind?" What are the basic elements of the "renewing" process? (Romans 12:1-2).
7. How is the "mind" related to the "spirit," "soul," and "body" of the

Christian? How is it related to the “will,” “emotion,” “conscience,” “intuition,” and “spiritual communion” of the Christian? What is the difference in the functioning of these parts of the Christian while he is still “conformed to the world,” from their functioning after he is “transformed?”

8. Survey the scriptures of the Roman letter from Chapter 12 verse 1 to chapter 15 verse 14. Do these scriptures speak directly to “bearing fruit for God,” or do they speak to the “renewing of your mind?” How does “renewing of your mind” relate to “bearing fruit for God?”

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1. What preparation has been made for the Christian to be in a position to be beseeched by Paul, in Romans 12:1-2, to present his body as a sacrifice to God? (Refer to Romans, chapter 6, especially verses 6-15, 19, and 22). Is the sacrifice of a Christian's body necessary for him to bear fruit for God?

What Paul said in chapter 12 follows directly from the great revelations of chapters 6, 7, and 8. It seems that Paul put chapters 9, 10, and 11 into parentheses. Important as chapters 9, 10, and 11 are, we must go back and review chapters 6, 7, and 8, for chapter 12 follows directly from there.

The preparations of God's Christian to make him ready to present his body as a sacrifice to God have all been made by God through the Cross of Christ. Each Christian has been crucified with Christ, buried and raised with Him to newness of life through his response of baptism, and sanctified as holy for God's use through his response in the "presenting" or "yielding" of his body as a sacrifice.

The admonition by Paul in Romans 12:1, "to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship," calls the reader's mind back to Romans 6:12-13 where Paul said, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

We should remember that the "presenting" of the members of one's body "as instruments of righteousness to God" called for in Romans 6:13 was

the third step in a process for one to prepare himself to "walk in newness of life," a life led by God's Holy Spirit. The first two steps mentioned in Romans 6:6-11 was: (1) to "know", and (2) to "reckon" or "make use of" what happened to each of us at Christ's crucifixion and how each of us realized it through baptism. The facts that we should "know" and "reckon" into use are that "we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death" and "also in the likeness of His resurrection." "Our old man was crucified with Him" and we are now "dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." After preparing ourselves by "knowing" and "reckoning," Paul then admonished us to "present the members of (our) bodies as instruments of righteousness to God." Only after doing these three things, "knowing," "reckoning," and "presenting," is one prepared in "obedience of faith" to "walk according to the Spirit."

The sacrifice of a Christian's body through the "presentation" of the body's members as instruments for God's use is necessary, according to Paul, for the Christian to be led in his walk through life by the Holy Spirit. A walk through life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is tantamount to a life of bearing fruit for God. Only in a life led by the Holy Spirit can a Christian bear fruit for God. Therefore, we must conclude that the sacrifice of a Christian's body is necessary for him to bear fruit for God.

2. Why and how is one beseeched "by the mercies of God?" (Romans 12: 1).

To this point in the Roman letter the Holy Spirit has revealed to us through Paul the righteousness of God which makes provision to supply all people with everything needed to allow them to become and live as "sons of God." All that God has provided for us has been provided through His mercy for "all have sinned and fall short of the glories of God." No one deserves God's wonderful provisions as a wage. Therefore it is possible for the Christian, still a sinner, to present his body to God only because of God's mercy. In a figure the total case, which the "mercies of God" has revealed in the Roman letter to this point, does the beseeching to the Christian.

3. The King James translation of Romans 12:1 says that the presentation of one's body as a sacrifice is "your reasonable service." The New American Standard translation says it is "your spiritual service of worship." Reconcile these different translations. In what ways is the Christian life "your spiritual service of worship" while simultaneously being "your reasonable service?"

The Christian life becomes a life which is both "spiritual" and "reasonable" as the Christian's limited world view is expanded from a view of only the fleshly, material world to a view which includes the entire spiritual realm where worship of God goes on eternally.

4. What is the meaning of the admonition, "Do not be conformed to this world?" Of the admonition, "Be transformed?" Into what is the Christian to "be transformed?" (Romans 12:1-2).

In admonishing the Christian to not be conformed to this world but to be transformed, Paul has called for a change of world view, a complete change of perspective. And in the change of world view from only that of a fleshly, material world to a view which encompasses the entire spiritual realm, Paul has called for a complete change of objectives and goals in life. The expanded view of all God's realm, spiritual as well as fleshly, is much, much bigger than this material world only. The life we live before becoming Christians is a life "conformed to this world." It is a life built upon Satan's lie to Adam, a lie accepted by him in behalf of all his progeny, including us. Because of Adam's acceptance of Satan's lie we have been born into a world outside of the God's Eden, into a world in which Satan is ruler. Although we all are born into such a world, we all are God's creation, born with free powers of volition, able to reject Adam's choice of the evil environment into which we have been born. "Whoever will" reject, then, is able to reject the visible, fleshly world of Satan and turn to the invisible, spiritual realm of God.

Inevitably, before we exercised our volition to become Christians, we had let sin begin to reign in our mortal bodies and had begun to obey the lusts to which the body is subject in Satan's world. Being in Satan's world we had been influenced to present the members of our bodies to

the sinful practices of his world as instruments of his unrighteousness. In fact, before we became Christians, we were "conformed to this world."

Satan knows how God has created us, "spirit and soul and body." Satan knows that God created us to be guided through life by God through His connection to us in spirit. Satan knows that God intended that our invisible spirit be the predominant guide in our lives because that is the part of us through which the invisible Spirit of God gains access to us. God intended our spirits to so influence our souls that our souls would then direct the members of our fleshly bodies to perform as instruments of His righteousness.

But Satan's worldly propaganda encourages primary awareness of our fleshly bodies which are part of his visible domain. At the same time Satan's propaganda does all it can to hide the fact that we have a spirit which is part of God's invisible, spiritual domain. Satan's propaganda turns God's order around and tells us we are fleshly bodies first of all and that only the visible, fleshly body should present any inputs to influence the soul's direction of our lives. The soul, so strongly influenced by the flesh, then completely engulfs the spirit and smothers any outputs to the soul that the spirit may try to communicate through conscience, intuition, or teachings of the Bible.

Knowing that all of us, even after we become Christians, are still subject to the world and continue to sin, Paul admonished us in Romans 6:12-13, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness." After chapters 9, 10, and 11 when Paul again took up the subject, he reminded us of where he had left off with the admonition of Romans 12:1-2 with these words, "I urge you therefore, brethren, ... do not be conformed to this world."

Then Paul said in Romans 12:2, "but be transformed." The transformation for which Paul calls is a reversal of the order of life which Satan puts before us in the world. Instead of our souls being influenced predominately by our fleshly bodies we are admonished to

alter our lives to allow our souls to be influenced predominately by our spirits. Let us remember that Paul wrote this Roman letter to Christians. Christians receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit to indwell their own personal spirits when they are baptized into Christ to become Christians. Therefore, the transformation to the guidance of spirit in the Christian's life is a transformation to the guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

In Romans 12:2 Paul said, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed." He did not say, "do not conform yourself," or "transform yourself." Plainly Paul wrote in this verse of a force outside the Christian to which the Christian must yield himself. The meaning seems to be, do not yield yourself to the forces of this world which will conform you to the world, but do yield yourself to the Spirit which God has given to indwell you and God will transform you! Christians cannot do it themselves. They must yield themselves and let God do it!

Into what is the Christian to "be transformed?" He is to be transformed into "that which is good and acceptable and perfect." These characteristics are the opposite of those exhibited by Adam when he sinned and by all of us in our lives of sin. These characteristics have been exhibited by only one human being, our second Adam, the Son of God, Jesus the Christ!

5. What is the meaning of the phrase, "by the renewing of your mind?" (Romans 12:2).

The method of the Christian's transformation is through the renewing of the Christian's mind from a mind which was "conformed to this world" to a mind which is transformed into conformation with the "will of God." (See questions below for further discussion.)

6. Who is involved in the process resulting in the "renewing of your mind?" What are the basic elements of the "renewing" process? (Romans 12:1-2).

The Christian himself is the first one involved in the "renewing" process. Within the Christian, the "mind" is involved. However, the

Christian cannot renew his own mind to the necessary state from his own personal resources of spirit, soul, and body. Only God, through the working of His Holy Spirit, can actually bring about the renewing of the Christian's mind. Thus God's Holy Spirit is involved, especially through God's word, the Bible, which has been brought to Christians through His Holy Spirit.

The basic elements of the "renewing" process may be said to be: (1) the Christian's rejection of the worldly influences which come through the senses of his body, (2) the Christian's full acceptance of God's provisions to him through the Cross (which include the "crucifixion" and "burial" with Christ of his "old man of sin" and the "resurrection" with Christ of his "new man"), (3) the Christian's presentation of his body as a living and holy sacrifice, and (4) the Christian's "walk" under the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

7. How is the "mind" related to the "spirit," "soul," and "body" of the Christian? How is it related to the "will," "emotion," "conscience," "intuition," and "spiritual communion" of the Christian? What is the difference in the functioning of these parts of the Christian while he is still "conformed to the world" from their functioning after he is "transformed?"

The Biblical concepts of "mind," "spirit," "soul," and "body" are not concepts which the world of physical science or medicine identify and define (with the exception of the concept of physical "body"). Instead they are concepts which the Bible places in the metaphysical or spiritual realm. A complete person consists of "spirit and soul and body." (1st Thessalonians 5:23). It becomes clear in the usage of the words "spirit" and "soul" that they are inner spiritual parts of man which are invisible to the senses of the body. Even the physical body, which is visible during life on earth, will be changed to an invisible, spiritual body in the final resurrection when Christ comes again. (1st Corinthians 15:42-44). Each saint of God in heaven will be a complete spiritual being consisting of "spirit and soul and body."

In examining the usage of the words "spirit," "soul," and "body" in the

Bible we learn something about the functions of each of these parts of the triune person. We find that the functions defined by the words "intellect," "will," and "emotion" are attributed to the "soul" of a person. The functions defined by the words "conscience," "intuition," and "spiritual communion" are attributed to the "spirit" of a person. The word "mind" is found most often associated with the "soul" of a person, but is also associated in some passages with the "spirit" of the person. A reasonable assumption seems to be that the "mind," which clearly includes "intellect" and "will" in its usage, provides the function of a bridge between the "spirit" and the "soul" of a person, allowing communications from the "conscience" and "intuition" to pass into the "soul," as well as allowing communications (such as prayer, praise, and commitment to God) to pass from the "soul" to the "spirit."

If these conclusions are correct, then they shed light on the meaning of the transformation of the Christian which comes about through the renewing of the Christian's "mind." When a person is "conformed to this world," his "mind" is completely involved with a "soul" and a "spirit" which are enslaved to sin. (Romans 6:20). The "will," "intellect," and "emotion" of his "soul" are atuned to sin. His "mind" can not transport any of God's influences from his "spirit" to his "soul" for there are none. The person is "conformed to this world."

On the other hand, when a person is "transformed," his "mind" is renewed through inputs from God which are passed into his "mind" through his personal spirit. These inputs come primarily from his spirit's recognition of Biblical truths he studies and reads with the senses of his body. The person is surely helped in other ways by the Holy Spirit's indwelling position in the person's spirit. In the course of this process the person's conscience is renewed by training approved by God's Holy Spirit. And the person's "soul" and "spirit" become atuned to God.

This writer wishes to note that he has found no indication as the Bible describes this process that there is any miraculously direct revelation given by God's Holy Spirit to a person today through that person's spiritual faculties of "conscience," "intuition," or "spiritual communion." God's communication with people in subtleties of complex ideas is

through language once for all delivered by the Bible. We input the language of the Bible to our souls through the eyes and/or ears of the fleshly body. But I do believe that the Christian who has God's Holy Spirit indwelling him is wonderfully helped in the understanding and handling of God's word in his "walk according to the Spirit."

8. Survey the scriptures of the Roman letter from chapter 12 verse 1 to chapter 15 verse 14. Do these scriptures speak directly to "bearing fruit for God," or do they speak to the "renewing of the mind?" How does "renewing of the mind" relate to "bearing fruit for God?"

It seems to this writer that the scriptures from Romans 12:1 to Romans 15:14 speak to the "renewing of the mind" rather than directly to "bearing fruit for God." These scriptures speak to preparation that we might be enabled to "bear fruit for God." These scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit instruct us how to live and work together in peace and harmony with our complete environment, both fleshly and spiritual. In our environment as Christians, our relationship with the Holy Spirit is of primary importance. As far as possible we must work in harmony with the environment of the fleshly world. And finally, we must work in full peace and harmony with our brethren in the church.

As we are led in our "walk" by the Holy Spirit and are "renewed in mind," we are expected to reap the "fruits of the Spirit," that is, fruits which the Holy Spirit will bear in our lives. These fruits are enumerated in Galatians 5:22 as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Much of what Paul says in Romans 12:1 through 15:14 appears to be intended to bring about such fruits in Christians. But these are not fruits which we bear for God. These are fruits from God which are produced in us for our use in preaching the gospel, individually and collectively, so that souls of men may be saved and presented to God. What is the fruit which Paul indicated in Romans 7:4 that we might bear for God? Is it not the souls of additional people converted through the gospel from conformity with the will of the world to conformity with the will of God?