



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Lesson 13

Romans 12:1-8 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

(Romans 12:1) I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Christians use their bodies in the service of God to do what God has commanded in the Bible, which involves making daily decisions to will the will of God moment-by-moment. Sacrifices involve cost. There will be some cost when we use our bodies, our time, and our talents in the service of God. We have received many mercies from God, and in the light of the mercies we have received from God—most importantly our salvation through faith in Jesus Christ—our sacrificial service expresses our love for and thanks to God. Christians do not put themselves first and try to make God serve them; rather, they give of themselves and use their God-given gifts to fulfill God’s purposes. True Christian worship includes living holy and pleasing to God seven days a week. Inspired by the love and sacrificial example of Jesus Christ, holy living for Christians involves loving God and others as Jesus commanded. In John 14:15, Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” ([see the IBSC on John 14:15-23](#)).

(Romans 12:2) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The evil pattern of this world becomes more and more obvious from watching and listening to what the media has to offer over the Internet, movies, television (including news reports), radio, and music. Many people aspire to live according to the pattern that the media in this world promotes

in many ways. Christians strive to avoid living according to the patterns this world sets; and churches especially guard against letting this world set their moral and spiritual agendas. Paul wrote that the followers of Jesus Christ need to renew their minds and be transformed to overcome the world's influences, which will include the prayerful resolve not to live according to this world's patterns. Transforming our minds will involve regular, daily Bible reading and study to see the world and ourselves through God's revelation and to learn how we should live in a world that is hostile to God and God's Word. Worshiping the true God in acceptable ways, daily Bible study, prayerful obedience to God, and a commitment to live holy and pleasing to God in everyday situations will renew our minds and transform us day-by-day. With renewed minds, when those of *this world* present their ideas and ways of thinking to believers, believers will be able to use their knowledge of God in Jesus Christ that they have learned from the Bible to test the appropriateness of what they are hearing and sometimes seeing in this world. Furthermore, God may test us to help us learn what is acceptable Biblical behavior. The Bible reveals God's mind, and the Bible is the infallible objective standard by which believers can test what is true and false, and right and wrong. The Bible can be used when we test for deadly spiritual and worldly diseases, which can sometimes lead to deadly physical diseases and spiritual death. As they prayerfully study the Bible and request the help of the Holy Spirit, Christians can know and approve the will of God in every situation with the confidence that God's will is always good, pleasing, and perfect for God, others, and themselves. Everything God does and everything God asks us to do is always loving, good, acceptable, and perfect.

(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.

When Paul wrote this verse, he may have been thinking of Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Christians face the danger of thinking they are better or more important than those who are not Christians or of thinking they are better than

someone else because they do not practice the sins some other Christians struggle to overcome as they trust in the Lord Jesus to save them from their sins. All Christians need to remember that they are saved by the grace of God through faith; therefore, no Christian can claim superiority over another Christian. With “sober judgment,” Christians need to examine themselves, and pray for the Lord to help them live pleasing to God. They need to ask the Holy Spirit to help them discover and turn from any sins they may have been practicing unawares. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul wrote: “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” The Lord Jesus has given every Christian the faith they need to serve Him and achieve His purposes, and Christians will serve the Lord in a variety of different ways; therefore, Christians should not think more or less of themselves as they serve the Lord with the gifts that He has given them.

(Romans 12:4) For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

Just as our human bodies have many parts, so Christians are a part of the body of Jesus Christ, the Church, and the Church has many different functions that need to be carried out by the different members in the Church. Every “body part” has been created by God to bless the whole body, and each body part has an important function to perform. So, in the Church, everyone is important, and everyone has a role to fulfill in the Church. No “body part” is to consider itself more or less important than any other “body part.” Christians pray for the Lord to show them their function and for the gifts and the spiritual and physical power to fulfill that function.

(Romans 12:5) so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Jesus Christ is not divided, with one part of Him here and another part of Him there with many disconnected parts spread everywhere. Christ has one body, the Church. Wherever Christians live around the world, they are connected and part of the one body of Jesus Christ. Since they are

connected to Christ, they are connected to each other. Since individual Christians are part of the one body of Christ, what they do or fail to do influences the body of Christ, the Church. Just as the hand, foot, and eye are connected to help us see where we are going to help someone, each individual member of the body of Christ around the world can bless other members or parts of the Church. If they cannot be physically present with one another, they can be prayerfully and spiritually present to help one another. The same Holy Spirit guides and empowers every individual Christian to do their part in the body of Christ.

(Romans 12:6) We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith;

Every Christian has received God's grace and gifts; therefore, they live daily in and by the grace of God. The grace of God enables Christians to do the will of God and rightly use the gifts God has given them. In 2 Peter 3:18, the Bible commands us to: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." As we use God's gifts, we pray to God for His grace to use His gifts more effectively for Him and others. We sometimes need greater courage to use our God-given gifts; so, from the gospels we learn to ask Jesus to "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). We may think the "gift of prophecy" is more important than the "gift of exhortation." We may "think" a person with the "gift of prophecy" is more important than a person with the "gift of exhortation," but God thinks about where His various gifts are needed in the Church; then, God puts the people of His choice in these places with these gifts. God's gifts are not just for "professional clergy," but for all who follow Jesus Christ. No Christian is more important than any other Christian. The faith we have as individual Christians helps us know and do the will of God when using our gifts. The gift of prophecy can include foretelling the future or predicting the future based on a revelation from God that is consistent with what the Bible teaches. The gift of prophecy can also include predicting the future based on a Holy Spirit inspired interpretation of the Bible and what will happen if certain commands of Christ are obeyed or not obeyed by an individual or a nation. For example, Christians can foresee or predict the future when they look at this world around them and compare what they see to what they read in

Romans 1:16-32. The gift of prophecy has also been interpreted to mean preaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

(Romans 12:7) ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching;

Some interpret “service” to mean the responsibility, the role, or the office of deacons in the Church. The gift of service is more than an office in the Church and is given to all Christians. Service can include seeing someone in need and doing what can prayerfully and wisely be said and done to help that person. Service can include praying for missionaries and the persecuted Church around the world. Some seem to have the gift of service with a Holy Spirit inspired perception that makes them seem remarkable in seeing and meeting the needs of others. Others manifest this gift when they seem to be the first to volunteer whenever they learn something needs to be done.

The gift and office of teacher also exists in the Church. The gift of teaching includes explaining and applying the Bible’s teachings while prayerfully trying to serve as a Christian example for others to follow. The gift of teaching includes affirming and reinforcing people’s faith and trust in Jesus Christ and the Bible, the Word of Christ written. Some may excel in teaching more than others, but to some extent all Christians have a gift of teaching, for every Christian can be a living example of what it means to follow Jesus Christ. In 1 Peter 3:15, the Bible gives this command to all Christians: “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”—the defense of our Christian faith involves teaching.

(Romans 12:8) the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Some churches used to give (and perhaps some churches still give) an “Exhorter’s License,” an official certificate, to those qualified to exhort or encourage Christians. Rather than a license to preach, they were given a license to exhort because God had gifted them in this area of service. You

can search on the Internet for interesting images of “Exhorter’s Licenses.” Traditionally, an official or licensed Exhorter in the church exhorted (urged and encouraged) those in the congregation to do what the Bible taught after a minister or evangelist preached his sermon. An Exhorter’s License was sometimes given and considered the same as a Minister’s License to preach the gospel and perform the ordinances of the church; such as, baptize, preside at the Lord’s Super, and conduct marriages. God has particularly gifted some in the Church (even if they are not “professionals”) with the ability to encourage others in a variety of ways (not just after a sermon or a Bible lesson) and urge people follow Christ and the Bible’s teachings (especially if they need help to overcome temptations and sins).

Though they do not seek to let their “left hand know what their right hand is doing,” some in the Church are noted for contributing generously to various church causes and helping the needy (Matthew 6:3). The Holy Spirit gifted them with a variety of resources and the motivation to give generously in a variety of ways. With the help and inspiration of God, some of the poorest in the Church have also been some of the most sacrificial and generous givers.

In summary, the enthusiastic leadership and service of some in the Church is the gift of God’s grace for the benefit of the Church. The interest in and intention to cheerfully perform acts of mercy are also a gift of God’s grace. All these gifts are important, and every member in the Church has gifts from God to share in and through the Church.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. As Christians, what and how should we sacrifice to God?
2. As Christians, how can we be transformed?
3. What would happen if everyone in the Church had the same function?
4. How should Christians think about themselves?

5. In the Church, why do members have different gifts?

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Contact: lgp@theiblf.com.