

PAUL'S TEACHING ON SPIRITUAL FORMATION

ROMANS 12:1-2

ADEOYE, EMMANUEL

(EVANGELIST)

12 I beseech[a] you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your [b]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. NKJ

RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS MEAN RIGHT LIVING

Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior! Paul's emphasis on renewing the mind; they understood that one's attitudes and values affected one's lifestyle.

But Paul's basis for renewal is different from theirs; he bases it on the new kind of life available in Christ, which most of Judaism expected only in the world to come. If we have a right relationship to God, we will have a right relationship to the people who are a part of our lives. *"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20).*

RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS MEAN RIGHT LIVING

In all of his letters, Paul concluded with a list of practical duties that were based on the doctrines he had discussed. In the Christian life,

doctrine and duty always go together. What we believe helps to determine how we behave. It is not enough for us to understand Paul's doctrinal explanations. We must translate our learning into living and show by our daily lives that we trust God's Word. The key idea in this section is relationships. The term.

"RELATIONAL THEOLOGY" is a relatively new one, but the idea is not new.

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD (ROM 12:1-2)

This is the fourth "therefore" in the letter. **Rom 3:20** is "therefore" of condemnation, declaring that the whole world is guilty before God. **Rom 5:1** is the "therefore" of justification, and **Rom 8:1** the "therefore" of assurance. In **Rom 12:1**, we have the "therefore" of dedication, and it is this

dedication that is the basis for the other relationships that Paul discussed in this section. What is true dedication? As Paul described it here, Christian dedication involves three steps.

1. YOU GIVE GOD YOUR BODY (V. 1).

Before we trusted Christ, we used our body for sinful pleasures and purposes, but now that we belong to Him, we want to use our body for His glory. The Christian's body is God's temple (**1 Cor 6:19-20**) because the Spirit of God dwells within him (Rom 8:9). It is our privilege to glorify Christ in our body and magnify Christ in our body (**Phil 1:20-21**).

Just as Jesus Christ had to take on Himself a body in order to accomplish God's will on earth, so we must yield our bodies to Christ that He might continue God's work through us.

We must yield the members of the body as "instruments of righteousness" (**Rom 6:13**) for the Holy Spirit to use in the doing of God's work. The Old Testament sacrifices were dead sacrifices, but we are to be living sacrifices. There are two "living sacrifices" in the Bible and they help us understand what this really means. The first is Isaac (**Gen 22**); the second is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaac willingly put himself on the altar and would have died in obedience to God's will, but the

Lord sent a ram to take his place. Isaac "died" just the same - he died to self and willingly yielded himself to the will of God. When he got off that altar, Isaac was a "living sacrifice" to the glory of God. Of course, our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect illustration of a "living sacrifice," because He actually died as a sacrifice, in obedience to His Father's will. But He arose again. And today He is in heaven as a "living sacrifice," bearing in His body the wounds of Calvary. He is our High Priest (**Heb 4:14-16**) and our Advocate (**1 John 2:1**) before the throne of God.

The verb "present!" in this verse means "present once and for all." It commands a definite commitment of the body to the Lord, just as a bride and groom in their wedding service commit themselves to each other. It is this once-for-all commitment that determines what they do with their bodies.

Paul gives us two reasons for this commitment: (1) it is the right response to all that God has done for us "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God" (*italics mine*); and (2) this commitment is "our reasonable service" or "our spiritual worship." This means that every day is a worship experience when your body is yielded to the Lord.

2. YOU GIVE HIM YOUR MIND (V 2A)

The world wants to control your mind, but God wants to transform your mind (Eph 4:17-24; Col 3:1-11). This word transform is the same as transfigure in Matt 17:2. It has come into our English language as the word "metamorphosis." It describes a change from within. The world wants to change your mind, so it exerts pressure from without. But the Holy Spirit changes your mind by releasing power from within. If the world controls your thinking, you are a conformer, if God controls your thinking, you are a transformer.

God transforms our minds and makes us spiritually minded by using His Word. As you spend time meditating on God's Word, memorizing it, and making it a part of your inner man, God will gradually make your mind more spiritual (see **2 Cor 3:18**).

3. YOU GIVE HIM YOUR WILL (V. 2B).

Your mind controls your body, and your will controls your mind. Many people think they can control their will by "willpower," but usually they fail. (This was Paul's experience as recorded in **Rom 7:15-21**). It is only when we yield the will to God that His power can take over and give us the willpower (and the won't power!)

that we need to be victorious Christians. We surrender our

will to God through disciplined prayer. 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. For many years I have tried to begin each day by surrendering my body to the Lord. Then I spend time with His Word and let Him transform my mind and prepare my thinking for that new day Then I pray, and I yield the plans of the day to Him and let Him work as He sees best. I especially pray about those tasks that upset or worry me - and He always sees me through. To have a right relationship with God, we must start the day by yielding to Him our bodies, minds, and wills.

Paul was writing to Christians who were members of local churches in Rome. He described their relationship to each other in terms of the members of a body. (He used this same picture in **1 Cor 12; Eph 4:7-16**.) The basic idea is that each believer is a living part of Christ's body, and each one has a spiritual function to perform. Each believer has a gift (or gifts), to be used for the building up of the body and the perfecting of the other members of the body. In short, we belong to each other, we minister to each other, and we need each other. What are the essentials for spiritual ministry and growth in the body of Christ?

CASE STUDIES

- ❖ BARNABAS - **ACT 4:37**
- ❖ ONESIPHOROUS - **2 TIMOTHY 1:16:**
- ❖ PHOEBE - **ROMANS 16:1-2**
- ❖ AQUILA AND PRISCILLA - **ACT 18:1-3**
- ❖ GAIUS 3JOHN 2
- ❖ TIMOTHY AND TITUS - **2 TIMOTHY 1:5-9**
- ❖ MATTHEW TAX COLLECTOR AND OTHERS - **MAT 9:9-13**
- ❖ THE CORINTHIANS: THEY GAVE THEMSELVES FIRST - **2COR 8:5**

FAITHFUL COOPERATION

Each believer has a different gift, and God has bestowed these gifts so the local body can grow in a balanced way. But each Christian must exercise his or her gift by faith. We may not see the result of our ministry, but the Lord sees it and He blesses. Note that "exhortation" (encouragement) is just as much a spiritual ministry as preaching or teaching. Giving and showing mercy are also important gifts.

To some people, God has given the ability to rule, or to administer the various functions of the church. Whatever gift we have must be dedicated to God and used for the good of the whole church.

It is tragic when any one gift is emphasized in a local church beyond all the other gifts. "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of

healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" (**1 Cor 12:29-30**)

The answer to all these questions is no! And for a Christian to minimize the other gifts while he emphasizes his own gift is to deny the very purpose for which gifts are given: the benefit of the whole body of Christ "Now to each man the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (**1 Cor 12:7, NIV**).

Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with.

**SUMMARY ON PAULS
TEACHING ON SPIRITUAL
FORMATION**

FIRST: The Worshiping Community Is Where Spiritual Formation Takes Place

SECOND: Paul Thinks of Community Of People Rather Than Place

THIRD: Paul's Appreciation Of "God In Christ" Was Instrumental In Making Him A "CHRISTIAN" Christianity Greatest Theologian

FOURTH: His Teaching On The "Priesthood Of All Believers" Are Radical **1 PET 2:9**.

FIFTH: Paul uses the sacrament of baptism and the Lords supper as central teaching in which the community can understand, commit to and be spiritually formed by"

SIXTH: Paul is careful to distinguish between communities

of believers in a locality and his communities of traveling missionaries(the former was for

edification and to build up the believer in the faith and the later was to spread the gospel

CONCLUSION

In the church at Corinth, the believers were tearing down the ministry because they were abusing spiritual gifts. They were using their gifts as ends in themselves and not as a means toward the end of building up the church. They so emphasized their spiritual gifts that they lost their spiritual graces! They had the gifts of the Spirit but were lacking in the fruit of the spirit - love joy, peace, etc. (*Galatians 5:22-23*).

KEY NOTE: *HEBREWS 10:24*