

1. **Introduction:** Before encountering the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul persecuted believers. He was convinced that everyone, who believed Jesus to be the Christ, was a threat to Judaism and must be stopped. Jesus' dramatic interaction with Paul changed his life forever. Imagine the situation. Paul was walking along the Damascus Road perhaps thinking about how he would find and punish believers. He is suddenly confronted by a man he believed to be dead, a man whose memory he has been trying with all his power to erase. What a shock to see Jesus! The man is not dead. He is alive! He is God as He claimed.

The risen Jesus told Paul to stop persecuting Him and use his life to serve Him. That is exactly what Paul did, willingly suffering great personal harm to devote the rest of his life spreading the good news about Jesus. Jesus is Messiah, and Messiah had done the seemingly impossible by arising from the dead. Through His life on earth, Jesus had made possible a righteousness apart from the Law, a righteousness enabling all who believe to obtain judicial righteousness before God by trusting Jesus and His salvation work. Through Jesus, salvation is available to believing Jews and Gentiles alike.

Thus far in this letter, Paul has written a comprehensive account of the Gospel in which he shows step-by-step how God revealed and is implementing His astounding plan to provide a righteousness apart from the Law. He described how Christ died to pay the penalty due our sins and was raised for our justification, how believers are united with Christ in His death and resurrection, and how the Christian life is lived, not under Law, but in the Spirit. He described how God plans to bring together the fulness of Israel and the Gentiles into His new community of believers. Paul has written of time and eternity, history and eschatology, justification, sanctification, and glorification. Now, in a great doxology, Paul pauses to fall down before God and worship.

2. **Romans 11:33-36:** *“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?*

³⁵ *“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”*³⁶ *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”*

- God’s thoughts and decisions are unsearchable. What God does is untraceable (inscrutable). It is absurd to think anyone could teach or give God anything.
- For in God and through God all things originate. We cannot know His mind nor claim to offer Him advice. His thoughts are unsearchable.
- There is no gift we can give Him that would put Him in our debt.
- We are not God’s counselor; He is ours. We are in debt to God. We know God and are redeemed only because of what He has done.
- Both revelation and redemption are entirely initiated by God’s grace.
- Whether or not they know it, people are completely dependent on God because *“For from him and through him and to him are all things.”*
- This is true from beginning to end – from the first person on earth to the coming of the new creation.
- Glory to God forever! True knowledge (theology) of God will always produce worship (doxology).
- Beware of anyone who desires to have theology without doxology or doxology without theology. Knowledge without worship or worship without knowledge are dangerous. Theology and worship are an indivisible pair.

3. **Introduction to Romans Chapter 12:** Chapter 12 begins a portion of Paul’s letter where he stresses the need to apply to everyday life the things he has said. Paul appeals to believers to live lives aligned with God’s will.

- He considers relationships. What is a believer’s proper relationship to God (12:1-2), to self (12:3-8), to one another (12:9-16), to evildoers and enemies (12:17-21).
- In chapter 13 and 14 Paul will continue his comments on relationships. He will discuss proper relationship to the state (13:1-7), to the law (13:8-10), to the day of Christ’s return (13:11-14), and to the “weaker” members of the Christian community (14:1-15:13).

4. **Romans 12:1**: *“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.”*

- God in Christ paid the penalty for and suffered the wrath due believer’s sins.
- Every believer is declared judicially righteous. Every believer receives the indwelling Holy Spirit enabling and beginning the process of sanctification in which believers progressively become ethically righteous.
- God promises that every believer will ultimately be glorified (made holy), cleansing them of every vestige of sin including any inclination to sin.
- God prepares a place for believers to dwell with Him in everlasting life.
- On the basis of the astounding grace of salvation, Paul appeals to believers to commit to live life consistent with God’s will.
- This chapter has 3 main ideas, (1) Consecration, (2) Humility, and (3) Love.
- “Consecrate” means to dedicate to a higher purpose.
- A believer is to have an attitude of humility toward their self and an attitude of love toward other people, but their proper attitude toward God is the higher purpose of willful dedication of self to Him.
- Paul says consecrate your body as a living sacrifice to God.

5. **What Paul Means by Presenting Your Body as a Living Sacrifice**: God’s gift of salvation to a believer creates a new relationship with Him.

- Why does Paul say, present your body to God as a living sacrifice?
- Animals sacrificed in Judaism were ritually killed and the animal’s body and blood presented to God in different rituals.
- In contrast, a believer presents their body, which includes their blood, as a living sacrifice to God. That act of worship is consistent with their new relationship “in Christ.”
- Having sacrificed themselves, believers who have presented their bodies as a living sacrifice continue to live, able to worship and accomplish tasks for God.
- Why does Paul say presenting our body as a living sacrifice is an act of spiritual worship? It is more common today for Christians to speak of giving their “spiritual heart” to Jesus.

- Giving our heart (the mission control center of our being) to Jesus is simply another way to say, “consecrate your whole person, body and soul, to God.”
- Physical and spiritual acts during our mortal life are linked. Our physical body is the instrument through which our spiritual heart acts.
- Worship is expressed through actions initiated by our spiritual heart but performed by our bodies. No act of worship by mortal beings can consist totally of inward, abstract functions.
- In this life, the soul is intimately embedded in the body and functions through the body. To consecrate our body means consecrating our whole person. A life consecrated to God is a process of worship that continues until death.
- Through faith in Christ, each new believer commits to leave their former life of sin and begin to live a life pleasing to God. That means they commit to whatever life changes are necessary to meet God’s requirements.
- In the first few chapters of Romans, Paul says human depravity (of the spiritual heart) reveals itself through a person’s body (through tongues that deceive, lips that spread poison, mouths full of cursing and bitterness, in feet which are swift to shed blood, and in eyes that look away from God).
- A believer consecrated to God reveals their commitment through actions of the body (lips speaking truth, lips spreading the gospel, hands lifting those who have fallen, hands lovingly doing the mundane tasks of everyday living).
- **Matthew 15:18**, *“But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.”*
- **Luke 6:45**, *“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”*
- **Matthew 12:34**: *“You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”*
- Consecrating your body to God means committing to make the thoughts, words, and deeds from your redeemed heart pleasing to God.
- How does that happen? That is the subject of the second part of Paul’s appeal.

- Paul knows believers cannot be fully consecrated to God unless they are willing and able to be different from the standards of the world around them.
- In particular, the moral attitudes of the fallen world create problems.
- The spirit of this world (in contrast to the world to come) is selfishness, not love. Its pursuits are pleasing self not God.
- It is dominated not by the influence of Christ but by the evil one's influence (John 14:30; Galatians 1:4) Ephesians 2:2).
- A believer consecrates their whole person to God meaning they intend to conform to God's pattern and not to the pattern of the fallen world.

6. **Romans 12:2**: ***“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.”***

- Conforming to God's pattern requires the transformation of a believer's fallen nature which can only be accomplished by renewing their mind.
- How can a mind be renewed? The first step is regeneration which enables a person's mind to grasp the things of God.
- Before regeneration everyone is trapped in the fallenness of their mind, attracted to the desires of the flesh and pressured by the ideas and actions of the fallen people around them.
- That doesn't mean that unbelievers cannot be “good” by society's standards. They can through the provisions of God's common grace.
- So, Paul says to believers, ***“Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”*** How is that to be accomplished?
- Paul has given the starting point – consecrate your whole person to God.
- Consecration to God is made possible by regeneration, justification, and the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- The transformation Paul speaks of is inward transformation. This inward transformation will ultimately affect observable words and actions but must first transform the invisible heart (our mission control center).

- The power of the indwelling Holy Spirit enables renewing of the mind so that a person is transformed into a person capable of rejecting worldly pressure to squeeze them into its mold.
- Renewing of the mind is accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit as He uses the study of Scripture, obedience to Scripture, and prayers to increase understanding and ability to discern God’s will.
- The increase in a believer’s understanding and obedience is a result of the transformation wrought by renewing the mind.
- Renewing the mind is the Holy Spirit’s “follow-up” to regeneration.
- The proper response of a believer to God’s grace and mercy is to follow God’s pattern and avoid the pattern of this fallen world.
- A renewed mind with changed actions motivated and empowered by God’s transforming grace, is the only way to stay in God’s pattern.
- When a believer consecrates their whole being to God, the reward is the renewing of the mind to enable thoughts, words, and deeds pleasing to God.
- A renewed mind is able to discern God’s will, recognize His will as good and acceptable and perfect, and will desire to be obedient to that will.
- The pressure the surrounding world exerts to conform to its standards is enormous. The risk that a believer will conform is significant.
- Throughout Scripture we find God appealing to His people to not be conformed to this world. Here are two additional examples.
- Through Moses, God says, ***“You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. ⁴ You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God”*** (Leviticus 18:3-4).
- Jesus said ***“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them”*** (Matthew 6:7-8).
- The message could not be clearer. God’s people must avoid conforming to the moral structure of the prevailing culture.

- Instead, as the Holy Spirit transforms them through the renewing of their mind, God's people are to cooperate by practicing Christian disciplines such as study of Scripture, praying, and associating with other believers.
- Both "conform" and "transform" denote continuing attitudes. The idea is to persist in refusing to conform to the fallen world's ways and to persist in letting ourselves be transformed according to God's will.
- The first step in resisting being conformed to the world is, as given in 12:1, to willingly consecrate your whole person, body and mind, to God!
- Believers are to be living sacrifices utilizing the active involvement of will and rationality. A living body is a whole person. When life is gone, the body remains. It can be a sacrifice, but it cannot make a sacrifice.
- It seems obvious that "sanctification" and "being transformed by the renewing of the mind" are intimately related, possibly referring to the same process.
- Regeneration comes first, making us alive to God through a new spiritual heart (mission control center), and able to hear and believe the gospel.
- Everyone who does believe is justified by God (declared righteous before God and pardoned from the penalty of sin).
- Though pardoned and having received righteous standing before God, a believer's fallen sin nature is not eradicated which guarantees future sins.
- The Holy Spirit indwells regenerated, justified new believers and works to sanctify (eliminate present and future unrighteousness).
- In this process, the Holy Spirit makes possible sanctification but, unlike regeneration and justification, the believer is to be actively involved.
- Sanctification is ongoing for the remainder of mortal life. At death (or when Jesus comes again) the Holy Spirit completes the transformation process making each believer like Christ. Scripture calls that final step glorification.
- Glorification eliminates every vestige of sin and sin nature. A believer is then prepared and able to live everlasting life with God.
- What (if any) difference is there between sanctification and being transformed by the renewing of the mind?

- Both involve gradually eliminating the effects of our fallen nature. The Holy Spirit is in control and the believer is actively involved.
- The term sanctification emphasizes “making holy.” Being holy is necessary to be able to live everlasting life with God.
- The idea of transformation through the renewal of our mind emphasizes “making us strong in character” to be able to resist the world’s pressure and avoid being molded into its moral pattern.
- Both “making holy” and “making strong in character” are a necessary part of the Holy Spirit’s work in eliminating the effects of our fallen nature.
- “Making holy” and “making strong in character” are complimentary aspects of one process. Renewing the mind is necessary for both holiness and strength of character.
- After being justified, the renewal project of making holy and strengthening character continues throughout mortal life. It is completed when the Holy Spirit glorifies us at our death (or when Christ comes again).
- Glorification makes us like Christ, having no taint of sin or our fallen nature. We will be holy and fit to live life with God, having minds that are pure and wills that are focused on acting according to God’s will.
- Regeneration makes the “heart” capable of right moral decisions. Renewing of the mind enables thinking right thoughts and making right decisions.
- Proverbs 23:7 (KJV) reminds us that ***“as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”***
- Actions follow thoughts and decisions.
- Matthew 12:3 says, ***“out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.”***
- To be transformed into a likeness of Christ, it is obvious that both our heart and mind must be transformed.
- In several places Paul writes about things we can do to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He transforms us.
- Philippians 4:8 says, ***“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”***

7. **Romans 12:3-8**: *“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.”*

- Having established believers’ obligation to consecrate their whole self to God, Paul says believers should possess “humility.”
- Believers should think about themselves with sober judgment, that is, a careful and accurate judgment of capabilities and weaknesses.
- They must avoid either too high or too low an estimate of their gifts and capabilities. Too high often leads to pride, while too low often leads to false humility. Both are dangerous.
- God gives different gifts to different people so that all necessary functions of the church can be carried out with excellence.
- All varieties of God’s gifts are necessary and useful. Thinking soberly about faith necessarily will lead to thinking soberly about gifts.
- Faith in Christ is the one necessary gift every believer possesses.
- The recognition that it is God who gives gifts should cause each believer to soberly evaluate what they can do, what they cannot do, and what they should do as members of one body in Christ.
- While the gifts of God to his people are of endless variety, Paul chooses to give a sample of 7 gifts. These 7 gifts can be put into 2 categories, which might be called “speaking gifts” and “serving gifts.”
- God gives a variety and strength of gifts sufficient to meet the church’s needs.
- The speaking gifts Paul lists are prophesying, exhorting (encouraging), and teaching. The serving gifts are serving, giving, leading, and showing mercy.

- Paul's point is that whatever gift(s) you have been given are to be exercised conscientiously for the common good of the church, the body of Christ.
- The diversity of members making up the body of Christ are dependent, not only on Christ, but also on one-another.
- The variety of God's gifts to believers supports the one-another dependency in Christian fellowship.
- Believers different gifts all flow from the same source. As God's grace made Paul an apostle, so that same grace gives different gifts to all members of Christ's body.
- Each believer should recognize their gift, develop their gift, and use their gift for the benefit of Christ.

8. **What is Next:** Romans 12:9-16.