

## **Romans, Part 33**

God wants believers to enjoy spiritual maturity and have full function in the body of Christ. To achieve this level of service, we must present ourselves by making a decisive dedication of our spirit, soul and body. Once this is truly settled, the practical side of our Christianity begins to develop.

**Romans 12:4-5 NKJV** For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

**Practical Christianity is a new life and lifestyle equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit to individually and corporately present a living testimony of Christ.**

This new life removes the performance struggle and enables the whole body and individual members to fulfill their function by the Spirit Who gives life. Once we make this decisive presentation of our bodies to God, the Holy Spirit is fully given to equip and empower us for His service. God does not just want us, He wants each of us to become perfectly united with Christ and with each other. Although we are many members of the one body of Christ and have various and diverse functions, we all are equipped to bear Christ's image. He wants all of us to become conformed into the image of Christ and function as a united body in Christ. We are not just the sum total of our individual parts acting independently and separately from each other. The body of believers (the church) is to be the united, surrendered, and Holy Spirit filled body of Christ. The ramifications of this union with Christ and one another, and the fullness of the Spirit enables us to be all that God has envisioned.

**Christ possesses the power to transform our bodies.**

**Philippians 3:20-21 NIV** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

**Couple that text with Romans 8:11.**

**Romans 8:11 NIV** And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

The Holy Spirit that is presently living and working in you will also transform our physical bodies. This ultimate transformation of our lowly mortal bodies will be in the resurrection when we will be made like Christ's glorious body. Yet, even now the Holy Spirit is powerfully working in us and is radically changing us into the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit's goal is the measure of

the stature of the image of Christ.

**What is your perspective of the “image of Christ?” What does it involve, act like, or look like?**

Individually, we are growing and maturing into that likeness and image of Christ. The body of the church is made up of Christ-glorifying individuals.

**Romans 12:4-5 AMP** For as in one physical body we have many parts (organs, members) and all of these parts do not have the same function or use, So we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ (the Messiah) and individually we are parts one of another [mutually dependent on one another].

In our own physical bodies, we notice when any part does not function as it was designed. God designed each part of our physical body with an assignment that contributes to the healthy function of the whole body. Should any part of our physical body malfunction, it impacts the whole body.

Likewise, we all are one body in Christ with many members that are mutually dependent on one another.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-13 NIV** The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

The unity and healthy function of the body of believers is God’s goal or plan. God wants to bring each of us together in Christ and merge our efforts and strengths into a healthy and mature body that is transformed into the likeness of Christ. In our last session, we noticed that God gives different kinds of gifts according to His grace that has been given to us. It is important for us to keep in mind that they are His gifts and that they function by His power.

**Ephesians 4:11 NIV84** It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

**Ephesians 4:12–13 NIV84** to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

**This equipping of God’s people serves to edify, encourage, and build up the body of Christ.**

The goal of the service or ministry is to bring unity of faith, the knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity of believers until we all come to the measure of the fullness of Christ. When Christ is fully formed in us, we function as a unified, mature and healthy body.

**Do you see why the maturity of the church is important?**

This is individually important. However, the maturity of the whole body of

believers produces an organism that possesses the full testimony of Christ. Any division, strife or weakness hinders spiritual maturity and the testimony. Do you see how personal weaknesses can impact not only your own spiritual health but also the whole body? When the body of believers function only as separate and self-interested parts, we lose the strength and function which God planned.

**Consider the difference that is made when we assume the position and function that God has apportioned to each of us with that of every other member fulfilling their part within the body of Christ.**

When this happens, true ministry/service and Christianity are demonstrated and Christ is glorified and revealed in our midst. As every part of the body functions, the ministry of the church is in the power of Christ and God is honored. When every member of the body fulfills their part within the body of Christ, harmony, peace, joy, and love are freely demonstrated and the whole body is edified and built up.

**Without this, the church is a dysfunctional group of people.**

Consider the impact when the body of individual parts function as a part of the whole. When we function as God intended, the fruit of the Spirit is manifested in our relationship to one another. When we do not surrender to the Lordship of Christ, a different kind of fruit is manifest. Jealousy, contention, confusion, and evil practices are the fruit of a life that is not surrendered to God.

**A human body that is working properly has many parts that do all kinds of different things.**

A body does not need two hearts or two heads. God has established the human body to have the necessary parts and each part has its function. When each part functions well, the body is at peace with itself. No one part has the function of the other parts of the body. When all of the numerous parts of the body are well tempered and fit together, each individual part facilitates the whole body and we take proper care of the need of the other part.

**Romans 12:6 AMP** Having gifts (faculties, talents, qualities) that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them...

All of our faculties, talents and qualities are to be used in a manner that reflect the nature and likeness of Christ. God's ultimate plan is to transform each of us into the likeness of Christ.

**Romans 12:2 NKJV** 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.

## **These two words describe the difference in those who truly surrender to God and those who don't.**

These words imply a similar meaning. The world wants us to **conform** to its manner, customs and patterns. God wants us to be **transformed**.

### **What is the difference in conformed and transformed?**

In this verse, conformed refers to fitting in the mold or molding into the form or set standards of the world or circumstances. In this verse, transformed means to have a form altered. Transformation is a radical change from the inside out that changes our thinking and actions.

### **Many people aspire to conform to the Christian life, lifestyle, morals and standards.**

On the surface, this is admirable and wonderful. Have you ever tried to be something that you were not? Did you ever play dress up as a child? You wanted to be like your mom or dad. You put on dad's shirt, pants, and shoes. You thought you were transformed into his likeness, but something was missing.

**Romans 8:28-30 NIV84** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

### **All of the things God has done for us are transformative in nature.**

If we are going to live as the body of Christ and function with the gifts and attributes of that body, we must be transformed. Transformation is not the rapture of the church. When the rapture takes place, we will have a new body. When we have that new body, the old things will not be remembered.

### **This transformation is a change in our function and character.**

This is Christ in you and His nature and character being worked out in your daily life. This is the power of the Holy Spirit working in you, giving you the ability to be a living testimony of Christ. This is your body offered up and surrendered to God. This transformation is newness of life and victory in Christ. It is not our striving to be something that we are not. It is living life in the power of the Holy Spirit with the gifts of the Spirit functioning and the fruit of the Spirit consistently being lived-out and expressed.

### **This kind of victorious life only comes through surrender to Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.**

That is why Paul said he had to crucify the flesh with its desires and lusts. This is why he said: "for me to live is Christ."

## **When we are transformed by the blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are made new.**

When we are truly surrendered and transformed, our lives are lived in the victory that overcomes the world. The truly transformed believer and church manifests the true nature and character of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is demonstrated and God is glorified in us. The next few verses demonstrate the nature and fruit of the Spirit being lived out in believers.

**Romans 12:9-12 NIV** Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

**Romans 12:13-16 NIV** Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

**Romans 12:17-19 NIV** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

**Romans 12:20-21 NIV** 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." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

We live like this because we are being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. These characteristics are a direct result of the power of the Spirit working within us and demonstrate that we are God's children.