

## Romans 12:1-8

### Living Sacrifices

The first 11 chapters of Romans show us that **God in His mercy has done much for us**. Our sins are forgiven, we have right standing with God, and we are going to be glorified. However, the good news of salvation is more than just a **personal fire escape**. We are invited by God to become **agents of His power and Christ-like ambassadors of His will**. **We are to work under His direction, so that His grace can flow down from heaven, through us and then outward to others**. The more Christ-like we are, the more effectively God can use us to channel His grace to the world.

**So how do we become Christ-like ambassadors of God's will?** The Bible teaches us how to do this in a teaching or doctrine called **'sanctification'** (Greek word *'hagiasmos'*). **Sanctification is defined as the process of change to become holy or set apart for the special use or service that was intended by the designer. In the theological sense, sanctification is the process whereby a Christian lives an increasingly Christ-like life and so is able to live more and more according to God's design and purpose. The process commenced with our salvation and continues progressively throughout life as believers make on-going choices to reject and separate themselves from evil, worldly things and ways and instead embrace God and His will and ways. A holy, sanctified character cannot be transferred to us or imputed – it is not handed to us on a plate by God – it is something that must be pursued earnestly and unswervingly by the believer. It then becomes our individual possession built into us little by little by the Holy Spirit as a result of our obedience to God and His word and following the example of Christ.** Romans 12:1-2 are a brilliant summary of what the process of sanctification involves.

#### Romans 12:1

**"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."**

Paul begins this section of Romans with the Greek word *'parakaleo'* translated as **'I urge you'**. It carries the idea of standing alongside someone and **strongly encouraging** them to **make the right choice**. Paul knows that what he is about to write is so important that he doesn't want his readers to miss or gloss over the teaching, but rather he wants them to **fully embrace it**.

Paul continues his plea to his fellow Christians by reminding them that they **owe everything they are and have to God and His mercy**. We are saved, justified, have the righteousness of God imputed to us, become children of God, receive the Holy Spirit and the promise of glorification (among many other things) all because of the mercy of God. So Paul is stating that he is **not going to make any unreasonable request**, but ask only what is right and proper in view of all God has done and has promised to do for us.

The word 'offer' used in this verse is the Greek word *'paristemi'* which means 'to present or to place beside'. This word conveys the same idea as when the Old Testament Jews offered sacrifices to God. What Paul is asking us to offer is not an animal sacrifice, but our physical bodies – how we live and react to our surroundings. Paul is telling us to **spiritually lay our lives on the altar before God** by offering up ourselves to Him. God wants us to **completely surrender** ourselves to Him and **place our bodies unreservedly at His disposal**. We are to **entrust** the whole of our life to Him and **hold nothing back**. We are to **voluntarily submit** ourselves to God and give Him the **Lordship** of our lives and thus the **controlling power** over our lives.

**Will God accept any old offering?** No! God only accepted offerings in the Old Testament that were the best and in good shape. These offerings were a type or fore-shadowing of what we are to do today as Christians. **When we offer our bodies to God, we must do so free of anything that is unworthy or that blemishes us – we must be holy and set apart for God. We must give God our best – He deserves nothing less.** The offering of our physical body to God is to be a living sacrifice which is holy or undefiled, dedicated or set apart exclusively to the Lord and His purposes. Keeping short accounts of sin with God is vital here. We need to take stock of ourselves and where we are going wrong in God, and we need to put it right.

The sacrifice also needs to be **pleasing to God** and so it needs to be something that honours God's character. **Because we are a Christian and because we want to show our gratitude to God for all He has done for us, we should keep our body in such a condition so that as we present it day by day, there will be a sweet smelling aroma that will go up to God and He will happily accept our offering.** Christians are meant to glorify God with their whole being – each and every part of us. The only way to do this is to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God.

**“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

God **does not force us** to offer our bodies to Him. He doesn't pick us up and throw us onto His altar. He wants us to **choose to climb up on His altar and become His living sacrifice** by choosing to live a life that is radically separated from a secular worldview and adopting instead a Christ-like purpose and way of life. God wants us to choose to fully surrender our physical body to Him and unreservedly adopt His way of living, so that He can achieve His plans and purposes in and through us. We need to **choose to keep our body** ready to do whatever God asks by refraining from sin, not using our body selfishly or for our own ends, and not abusing our body which, after all, is the temple of the Holy Spirit. **Never abuse, but always use to the glory of God.**

**“Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”** (1 Corinthians 10:31b)

God also **doesn't tie us to the altar** when we first offer up ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. We must **continually choose** to offer ourselves, because the moment we stop and we **climb down off that altar**, we tend to let **sin and self-centredness** slip in.

Our consecrated bodies are to be a living, deliberate, on-going sacrifice given over and over again throughout our lifetime.

The NIV paraphrases the final phrase of this verse when it states **'this is your spiritual act of worship'**. The Greek word *'logikos'* is translated as 'spiritual' in the NIV, but it would be better translated as 'reasonable' as in the AV, because *'Logikos'* means **'pertaining to the reasoning faculty, reasonable, rational'**. *'Latreia'* translated as 'worship' in the NIV would better be translated 'service' as in the AV, because the word primarily means **'hired or intelligent service'**. So, the **sacrifice that we offer to God of our bodies is to be our intelligent and reasoned service**, in contrast to those offered by ritual and compulsion. The offering of our bodies as a living sacrifice should be done in a **rational and justifiable manner which is always consistent with Scripture**. We need to do this because: it is not what people do, but why they do it that counts. Humanists and others often live good lives, but only Christians offer up their life to God as a living sacrifice. The offering of ourselves to God is to be in accordance with the spiritual intelligence of those who are new creations in Christ and are mindful of the mercies of God.

However, the NIV paraphrase is in keeping with the spirit of this verse, as it is **also true that we should do all that we do in life as an act of worship of our God** who has done and is continuing to do and will do so much for us. We worship God with the whole of our life by offering our body as a living sacrifice to serve only the interests of our Lord and Saviour.

## **Romans 12:2**

**"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."**

The phrase **'conform to the pattern'** is the Greek word *'syschematizo'* which indeed does mean 'to model after, conform to the pattern of'. The most common use of the word in secular literature is in reference to **moulding clay around a form or casting metal**. Interestingly, Paul does not use the Greek word for 'world' or 'universe' here, but the Greek word *'aion'* a term meaning **'era, period of time, or age'**. The world was not originally evil; it has been temporarily bound to its present fallen condition.

So, in this present age, we are living in a fallen creation and its system which is ruled by evil, selfishness, greed, deceit and violence that **often masquerades** as something better than it really is. The **devil**, who has dominion over this age, is **cunning** and he **knows how to orchestrate and control the world**. He uses powers like the **media** to control public opinion, and **wars and civil unrest** to destabilise authority, and is doing everything he can to **thwart the purposes of God** and **bind the people in the world to him**. He has **blinded** the eyes of those in the world so that they cannot see how **enslaved** to him they really are and that he is **herding them** like sightless animals to their destruction. As Christians, we **must not let him blind us so that we too are**

unwittingly moulded into the pattern of this world and led away from God and His plans and purposes for us.

The JB Phillips translation of this verse is excellent when it states, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds from within.” The enemy dominated world is determined to squeeze us, as Christians, into the shape it thinks is most likely to thwart God’s plans for us. It demands our compliance and uses every devious tactic possible to achieve its ends, all of which result in it moulding us into the pattern it has for us if we succumb to its pressure. For some, this shaping pressure will involve active persecution and enemy attack or the fear of it – the fear and intimidation created being the main weapons used to get us to step away from God’s plans. For others, the world and the enemy would try to hide their true nature behind a veneer of acceptability and try to shape us by lulling us into a state of complacency where we believe that everything is alright when it blatantly isn’t. In this state, we are missing out on most of what God has for us and we either don’t know that we are missing out or we don’t care. For others, the world and the enemy will try to get us to compromise so much that we fit into the world’s shape quite nicely even though we profess to be a Christian. The enemy doesn’t need to do much to us, as we are already doing it to ourselves – but he will encourage this attitude by feeding into us thoughts like, ‘It’s alright. Look at how well your life is going. You are prospering, so everything is fine. Just turn up to church on a Sunday and you will be okay. Don’t worry about anything else!’

As Christians, we are to reject the pattern of the world. God has other plans for us that involve finding pleasure in Him and His will and in goodness, selflessness, trust, sacrificial living, gentleness and truth. We must choose between the two alternatives: to be conformed to the pattern of this world (the enemy’s plan) or to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (God’s plan). There is no middle ground.

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2:15-17)

Our faith in God is the most important expression of our victory over the world. It tried to squeeze us into its mould completely and keep us there, but our faith in God and Jesus’ victory over the enemy have enabled us to break free. We have seen the truth and it has set us free. This God-given freedom has enabled us to know God and His will, and to see the world and the enemy’s plans for what they are. The world will fight back, but we have on our side the one who has overcome the world. We are born again into Christ and His victory. The world and the enemy will try to get us to look at everything but this truth, but our position and our victory in Him are assured. We have a part to play in our walk of faith with Him, and that is to believe the truth

that God has revealed to us and to **offer ourselves** as a living sacrifice to God, **choosing to do His will** rather than our own will or what the world wants us to do.

**"This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John 5:3-5)**

**So, if this is our position in Christ, why do we so often live as if it is not?** We are to behave differently from the fallen world system into which we were born. When we became a Christian, God made us a **new creation**, an overcoming child of His, but we still have the **same brain with all the old mind-sets and ways of thinking**. These need to change if we are to live as God wants us to live. He has made the way – He has provided the victory and the position that we can live in the good of; He has given us the Holy Spirit and whatever power is needed to do His will; and He has provided His Word to guide and inform us – but He wants us to **allow Him to adjust our moral and spiritual vision and thinking to conform to His mind**. He wants us to **think like Him** and live in the good of our new life in Him. To do this we have to be **transformed by the renewing of our mind**.

The word 'transform' is translated from the Greek word *'metamorphoo'* meaning **'to transform, to change into another form'**. This word is best illustrated in nature when a **caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly**. *'Metamorphoo'* describes a **fundamental transformation in the nature of something without altering its identity**. For example, an **acorn and the tree it produces** are the same individual; however, the nature of the acorn has been radically altered. The **present continuous tense** used here also indicates a **process of transformation** rather than a single act of transformation.

Our **minds are so important** to the life God wants us to live that we can only be transformed into the person God wants us to be, if our minds are renewed. God wants to **change us from the inside out by helping us to think like Him**, but this process is **not forced on us**. When we become a Christian, God does **not use us as a puppet** or cause us to become **unthinking robots**, who have to obey His every command. We have a choice about what we do. **If we want to live as God wants us to live**, then we need to **make right, godly choices**; choose to offer up our lives to God as a living sacrifice; and choose to allow God to renew our mind. **As we submit more and more of who we are and what we do to God and His Word**, He responds by **renewing our minds** – so that we have Christ-like thinking that enables us to be transformed into Christ-likeness.

**What do we need to do to enable this process?**

- **Feeding on the Word of God**, so that we learn to **view the world through the grid of Scripture** and we **learn to respond as the Scripture prescribes**. The Word of God provides us with an **active alternative to all the negative thoughts and attitudes of our old nature**. Ours mind, like a computer, are **only as good**

as what we feed into them. Feed in rubbish and get rubbish out. Feed in truth and what God wants and get a renewed mind and a transformed life.

- **Learning to walk in step with the Holy Spirit of God. He has been given to us by God to enable us to live as God wants us to live.** He lives within us and seeks to help us every step of the way as we live our Christian life. The Holy Spirit uses Scripture, His gifts, our experiences, trials and hardships, as well as other Christians to renovate us from the inside out. **We should not be controlled by our sinful nature, but by the Spirit of God** (Romans 8:9).
- **Obedying God** when we know He is asking us to do something. This directive may come through the Word of God or by some other form of communication from Him. This also means **choosing not to sin**, as we know this is what God wants us to do.
- **Disciplining our minds.** When the enemy or our sinful nature drops a wrong thought into our minds, we need to recognise it for what it is, throw it right back out again and replace it with something that God wants us to think about. We must train our minds to think in the new Christian way.

**“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”** (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

- **Spending more and more time in God’s presence so that we get to know Him – His character and His ways – and our hearts begin to beat in time with His.**

**“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”** (Philippians 4:8)

Our mind renewal is a continual, progressive process. **Gradually and supernaturally, our mind begins to think as God thinks, desire what God desires, love as God loves, and see things with the same perspective as He sees them, and we are progressively transformed into His image.**

The trouble is that, because of the fall, we become so accustomed to thinking in a certain way – a way of **thinking that is patterned by this world** – and we often **go on thinking in this way**, even after we are born again. We react as we used to react to people and what they think and say; and we react to situations we encounter armed only with our own strength and worldly intellect, when we have so much more. If we **allow this state to continue**, the change in us that occurred when we became a Christian becomes **compromised**. In effect, we **lose our first love for the Lord** and begin to **do things as the world dictates**. We need to **retrain our minds and stop them running back into old worldly grooves and mind-sets**. Thinking in this way is effectively **forgetting who we are in Christ** or, at the very least, not fully living in the good of who we are in Christ. This has the effect of **reversing** the transformation of our minds that God is trying to enable. We are instead **going back to our old, worldly**

ways of thinking – the enemy is trying with all his might and cunning to encourage this. So instead of being transformed by the renewing of our minds, we are being remoulded into the world's pattern.

Going down this route only leads to Christians who are failing to live in the way that God intended and so they are missing out on God's best for them. So many Christians do this. It is no wonder that so many of our lives are so ineffective for God. No wonder we are so frustrated with ourselves and our Christianity. If we, as Christians, are living as the world wants, then we are being unnatural to our position and state in Christ. We shouldn't do this. If this is happening, we must take ourselves and our minds in hand, bring them back to God and His truth and live in the good of it. We can be born-again, but living as if we are not. We should let it be evident to all, including ourselves, that we have been changed by God. We should throw away the mask that hides the glory of God within that we so often hide behind so that we fit in better with the world and its pattern, as it does not belong to us anymore.

**“Take off your old self with its practices and put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”** (Colossians 3:9b-10 - modified)

Be who you are in Christ. We have been transformed into a new creation when we were saved and we should be being progressively transformed into Christ-likeness. This transformation should shine through our lives in everything that we do. It should be a natural thing and it often is when we are first saved. If we do not give the impression that it is a glorious thing to be a Christian, we have completely misunderstood our position in Christ and the outstanding resources available to us in Christ. We are so privileged. We have the favour of God and His Holy Spirit living within us. We have the Bible and the ability to understand it which is God's very words to us. We have eternal life in the presence of our loving God and a glorified body to look forward to.

**“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”** (Ephesians 4:22-24)

This verse talks about the attitude of the mind (AV better translates 'attitude' as 'spirit' as the Greek word here is *pneuma*) being made new or transformed, because the mind is just an instrument and it is what controls or motivates it that counts. This is the ultimate power of control which determines everything else. Whatever controls our minds will control the way we think and, therefore, act. The spirit or attitude of the mind which directs all its processes is what must be renewed, not the physical brain itself. The direction of our mind needs to be controlled and changed. We must allow God by His indwelling Holy Spirit rather than the world or the enemy or our old sinful nature to be the manager or controlling principle of our

mind. If the Holy Spirit is directing our minds, then He will enable us to be transformed into Christ-likeness by the choices we make.

In summary, as Christians, we are to yield our lives as a living sacrifice to God choosing to live as He wants. He has gifted to us the Holy Spirit to be the new manager of our minds, instead of the world, the enemy and our old sinful nature. We need to choose to allow our new mind manager to enable us to have a new way of thinking, and when we think in this new way, we will act in a new way. Then we must train our minds to keep thinking in the new Christian way by feeding on the Word of God, learning to walk in step with the Holy Spirit, obeying God, discipline and spending time in God's presence.

This is why, when we begin to consider how we are to live as Christians, we do not start with the details of living, we start in the realm of the mind and understanding. Jesus demanded, not a reformation of behaviour, but a transformation of character. To the Christian, behaviour is the end product and not our primary concern. God is not satisfied with mere external physical obedience, He wants a transformed life led and informed by a transformed, renewed mind.

**“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed (*metamorphoo*) into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)**

So, with any problem in life, we as Christians are to go back and put it into the setting of who and what we are in Christ and then we will see the problem in proportion and in context and as it really is. For example, if you have a problem with a sin, then you need to look again at all God has done for you and not focus on the sin. When you have a problem in life like a sin that you don't seem to be able to overcome, we should stop focussing on it. We should know that we are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:6) and that if we do sin, repentance and asking for God's forgiveness removes the sin altogether (1 John 1:9), but our minds can be locked into a sin-loving pattern that we need to break. In order to do this, we should stop concentrating on the sin and go back to God and realise afresh who we are in Him. The enemy will try to keep our eyes fixed on the sin and get us to condemn ourselves and feel like failures, and get us to miss the whole that God has done for us in Jesus. We must not let this roaring lion succeed, as he is constantly looking for victims to devour. He can shout very loud and look powerful, but he has no mastery over us in Christ. We have been justified by God and we have the righteousness of Christ. The power of the enemy and sin over us is gone unless we make wrong choices. In Christ, we have the victory and we can be overcomers, no matter how great the sin or whatever the problem. We need to remind our mind of these truths and live in the good of our position in Christ. When we think and live like this, the Holy Spirit will help root out the wrong mind-sets and replace them with Christ-like thinking. Then we can turn around with a renewed mind and see the problem for



what it really is, know that we have the power in Christ to deal with it, and be able to overcome it.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death....Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” (Romans 8:1-2 – 5-9)

Christians should never conform in a mechanical way to a certain pattern of behaviour as this is legalism. Christian conduct grows from the renewal of the mind, it is not something we force or drive ourselves to do in our own strength. It is a yielding of our minds and, therefore, our lives to the controlling principle of the Holy Spirit within us. It is the outward of expression of something within. After all, we are now new creations in Christ Jesus.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

As we have seen, we do need to develop new thoughts and attitudes in God, but we must not allow our thoughts to become rigid and un-teachable or have unbending attitudes that are unwilling to mature or change. The danger we all face is to so unbendingly make up our minds about something that even though God is shouting at us to think again, we cannot hear because we think that we have got that bit of knowledge sorted out. We need to stay open to God and be malleable in His hand so that He can shape us and our minds in the ways that He needs and is best for us. This is how we move on into maturity in God and this is how we can avoid Satan’s deceptions. The cults started by making this mistake and so have many Christian teachings that have led people to stray from the truth. We can stay malleable in our Master Potter’s hands by allowing the Word of God to test our beliefs and ways of thinking; by staying open to Holy Spirit’s leading; and being umpired by the peace of God.

We have been translated out of the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13-14) – we should live in the good of this. The people in the world though are still slaves of Satan. We must feel sorry for them and seek to win them for Christ, but we must not allow them to mould our way of living into their worldly pattern, not matter how difficult and cursed they may be towards us. We are in the world, but we are no longer of it. We need to train our minds to think like this. We must say to ourselves day by day: ‘I no longer belong to the darkness; I no longer belong to the ‘no’ people; I am of the people of God; I am in

His kingdom'. We should be preparing ourselves for the glory that is coming and live for this. We should not live just from day to day, hand to mouth, allowing the world to influence us while we react to it. We should have a totally new view of living. We need to realize that we are a pilgrim in this world on the way to eternity, one of God's children going in the direction of home. We must keep our eyes on that and walk in the light of that.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:9-12)

"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good." (Titus 2:11-14)

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord....Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:8-10,15-18)

Some tests to prove that our minds do have the Holy Spirit as its controlling principle and, therefore, are to some extent renewed are:

- We understand and appreciate who God is and what He has done for us. Our new mind will want to read the Word of God, will have a better understanding of it and will want to apply it to our life in an appropriate way.
- We desire with all our heart to obey God and serve Him in whatever way He wants. This is because we know what is for our eternal best.
- We will want to know God's will and bring our life into conformity with it. As Christians, the will of God should no longer be something that is grievous, but something we should love. We should delight in the will of God and desire it above all else. We should want to know it and carry it out more and more. God's will is perfect and it what it proposes for us is perfect. It is always good, always right, always best for us, and always has our highest interests at heart.

The words translated in the NIV as 'test and approve' is from the Greek word *'dokimazo'* which means 'to prove by testing, to assay (trial of metal or ore for quality), to discern through observation'. It is to make sure something is kosher or that it is what it says it is. Once we are in the process of the transformation of our mind, we will also be more able to know what the will of God is for us. We will be able to test everything fed into our minds and find out what is of God and what isn't. So, the more transformed our minds, the more able we will be to discern and understand what God wants us to do in this life and the better we will know how to co-operate with Him in the accomplishment of His will.

**Why is there a good, pleasing and perfect will of God?** Good because God is good by nature and so His will cannot be anything but good. He works all things together for our good and carrying out His will brings only our eternal good. Pleasing, because doing God's will is something that we can do that will always be pleasing to Him. It also pleases Him when we spend time trying seeking His mind and His will by reading His Word and communicating with Him. God's will is also always perfect. It is the best thing that can be done and it certainly is the most perfect thing that we can do in any situation.

Paul's words in this passage are a call to respond. While God has promised to transform us we can choose to remain stubbornly aloof and resist His work, or we can tune into what He's doing and participate in His transforming process.

### **Romans 12:3**

**"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."**

We have been looking at the process of renovating our Christian lives by a gradual, progressive transformation into Christlikeness, Christ-like thinking, and God usefulness. We are to offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice and make choices in life that enable Him to renew our minds.

When Paul, in verse 3, writes 'by the grace given me'; he is saying in effect, 'As one who once nurtured an exalted view of myself, let me give you some humble advice'. Paul has just explained the whole process of God-enabled life transformation and is now pointing out that this process is dependent on how we view ourselves. We are to avoid thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought and instead have sound or sober judgement about ourselves. The Greek word translated as 'sober' is *'sophroneo'* which means 'think with a sober or sound mind, think in a self-controlled way'. We are to have a balanced, sound-minded, self-controlled, faith-inspired view of ourselves. In other words, we are to see ourselves as God see us.

Christianity emphasizes humility. Any boasting or appearance of self-satisfaction or any self-assertion is a negation of our position in Christ. Our relationship with God is

not secure because of anything we provide – we brought nothing into the relationship at the beginning and we don't have anything to give that we didn't first receive from Him. We are who are and what we are because of Christ and His gifts to us – this is not of ourselves, so we cannot boast. God made us with the capacity and the gifts to do what we do, so His grace deserves all the credit and the glory for everything we achieve. To over-estimate ourselves and our gifts is pride and we are to guard against the subtle development of arrogance.

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”

(1 Peter 5:5b-6)

God’s promotion plan for us, as Christians, is to know ourselves in Him and know our place in His will. If we humbly accept who God has made us to be – remembering always that He has a discipleship improvement plan that He wants us to undertake – and we humbly accept whatever tasks He, as our Lord, wants us to carry out in our service for Him, then we are doing what we should and He will lift us up in due time.

God does not love us more or less because of our relative value to Him in comparison to other believers. In terms of worth or value before God, we all stand on the same high platform – we are not in a competition. All believers are chosen by the sovereign will of God; the choice is the result of unmerited favour; and this grace is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Any notion that any believer is better than another is folly.

To think of ourselves as too lowly, for example, seeing ourselves as a worm or a failure or incompetent, when God sees us as His righteous sons and has called us to some form of faith adventure, is not to see ourselves as God sees us, but as the enemy would want us to view ourselves. After all, the enemy wants us to feel inadequate or unable to achieve any task that God has set for us no matter how big or small. The enemy wants to limit our potential, whereas God wants us to live up to our potential in Him. God wants us to see ourselves as He sees us – an overcoming, God-empowered child of God and servant of the Almighty, who is imputed with Christ’s righteousness, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and who can do anything that He asks of us.

God will call some members of the body of Christ to do great things for Him. The measure of faith God has given these servants of His is great. Their lives in this world will not be easy, but their God-given faith demands certain God-inspired actions. The truth is though that we have all been hand-picked by God to do something unique and special for Him that we alone have been individually designed to accomplish. So we also need to think of ourselves with the eyes of faith and see what God wants us to do and know that if He wills it, all things are possible. Our faith, in whatever measure we have received it from God, will also demand certain God-inspired actions from us.

## Romans 12:4-5

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

The main way that God's Word describes the true Christian church is the body of Christ. The body of Christ is that body of born-again believers who have been joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. The body of Christ (the church) is the visible expression of Jesus on earth. We are to carry on His ministry – what a responsibility we have! Fortunately, Jesus gave to the believer the authority of His name and the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:15-18; Acts 1:8) so that, on His behalf, we can do our part in achieving God's will here on earth. All Christians are united in this task with each disciple of Jesus having a part to play.

I believe that God is grieving over much that He sees in His church. We are a far cry from the church that Paul was writing to and that turned the world up-side-down for God. So much of the flesh is ruling instead of our Lord and Saviour. Much needs to change and come back in line with what Paul is teaching here.

The most amazing thing about the fully healthy, properly working human body is that all the many parts with all their differing functions are in balance and work in harmony together. Each part has no real meaning in and of itself and cannot function in isolation. The value of each part is how it contributes to the functioning and activity of the whole. Each part depends on the other parts and they all interact and help each other, so that the body can function as it should.

The body of Christ is also an organic unity, like the human body, which means there is a living connection between its many parts with their differing functions – we belong to each other and with each other. The body of Christ is more important than its various components – we all have different functions in God that need to be joined harmoniously together into a unit that works under our Head's guidance. We couldn't even hope to do this work on our own, but together we are greater than the sum of the parts.

Not one member of the body of Christ can function as God intends outside the body or exist on their own – the individual members only have meaning as they are related to other parts and as they, all together, are related to the Head. If we want to achieve our full potential in God, then we need to do our small part in the whole body under the direction of the Head and give up going our own way and doing our own thing. Christianity is not about achieving our own plans and purposes. It is all about serving God and achieving His plans and purposes. There are also no spare parts in the body. God didn't create you and come up with a blank. He has designed you to be the best person to fulfil your part in the whole. So, the body of Christ works harmoniously when all the particular parts fulfil their function and this happens when

they are called upon to take part in the total action of the body for a specific purpose as directed by the Head.

“And God placed all things under his (Jesus) feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (Ephesians 1:22,23)

Jesus Christ is the Head and ultimate authority of His body, the church – He’s the boss. He should be the one calling the shots, not us. He is the one Head over everything for the church, and so has the right to arrange the parts of the body and make appointments within the body as He sees fit (1 Corinthians 12:28a).

Sometimes, He may make His will known to parts of His body through His delegated authority (i.e. local church leadership and 5 fold ministries). Members of the body though should know in their spirit that they are doing what God wants them to do, and then they should accept their place and work at it in the best way they can operating always as the Head directs and the Spirit of God enables. It is the Head who directs and co-ordinates each diversely different member for the good of the whole and to enable His will to be achieved.

“He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.” (Colossians 2:19)

This verse describes a church member who has gone his own way and was worshipping angels. Paul believed that this man had lost his connection to the Head of the church, Jesus Christ and it is our connection to the Head that enables the body of Christ (the church) to receive God’s life and grow; and to function as a co-ordinated, God-designed, God-structured, mutually supportive unit. Jesus established the church and, as we obey His control and direction as Head of the church, He is building it, supplying it with everything it needs and causing it to grow.

Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:1-8)

As Christians, we all derive our life from the same Source, Jesus Christ. We cannot function if we are separated from the Source. If we want to operate fruitfully as we outwork our function in the body of Christ, we must remain attached to the Source.

The [life giving sap](#) that Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Word supplies, gives us the life we need to carry out God's will and so be fruitful in our service for Him. When we are attached to the Source, we can [ask Him for anything we need to fulfil His will](#), and it will be given to us. Fruitfulness for God, as we carry out our God-given functions in His way and in His timing, is how we [show that we are attached to the Source and so are His disciples and how we bring glory to God](#).

Too many of us have a [weak connection to our Source](#). We are like a [damaged branch struggling to receive life-giving nourishment](#). Some of us are [struggling to stay alive](#). This is a far cry from the fruitful, life-filled members of His body that Jesus Christ, our Head, really wants. We need to [improve our attachment to Him by](#):

- [offering ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice and so giving ourselves more fully to Him](#).
- [obeying His directives](#).
- [spending time in His presence \(in prayer, praise and worship\) and drawing directly from Him](#).
- [feeding on His Word](#).

Fruitfulness for God is proof of a good connection or attachment to God. If we are not fruitful, we need to [examine ourselves prayerfully and find out why – and then sort it out with God](#).

Though the body of Christ has many members across the world and throughout history, we all form [one body](#) and we all [belong to each other](#). Some parts of the body of Christ have a [worldwide or a nationwide](#) function (for example, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) and so are an [integral part of many local expressions of Christ's body](#). Not many of us will have this type of calling in God, so I am now going to concentrate on [localised expressions](#) of Christ's body.

### **Features of the local expression of the Body of Christ:**

- We must learn to think of this [church as a living community of people with each member having faith, life from God and gifts from God](#). For the body to function properly, [each part must function according to the grace given that part](#), so that the total life of the church may operate and [function to God's glory and purpose](#).
- [God knows what we are like and what every other member of this church is like and He deliberately put us together](#). In fact, we [need one another](#). We form an [organic unit that God has designed to fulfil a specific role](#). This role is mainly carried out within our locality, but it will have extensions beyond as well.
- If [one part](#) of this local expression of the body of Christ [isn't functioning or is injured](#), the [whole body will suffer](#). If this is happening, then [other parts](#) of the body need to [rally around and help and enable healing](#), when possible. If [one](#)

part cannot keep up, the others compensate. When disease attacks, the whole body should react and try to limit the damage.

- Within the body of Christ, our motivation for all we do should be mutual service prompted by love and compassion and a desire to obey our Head, Jesus Christ. Remember, your attitude to our local church will reflect something of your attitude to its Head, Jesus Christ.
- We must be content with being the part the Head has made us to be and carry out this function the best we can in His way, time and power. As privileged members of a God's church and with a certain God given function to fulfil within that church, our interest should never be in what we want to do, but in what Jesus Christ, our Head, is doing and what He wants us to do. Our activity is only part of that.
- Our task is to keep our eyes and attention fixed on the Head, so that when He initiates an action, we are immediately responsive and do our part to insure that this action is carried out.
- We should strive to remain spiritually healthy, so that we can do our part in the functioning of the body, because without us (no matter what God calls us to do), the body will suffer and be in trouble as it tries to fulfil its function. To stay spiritually healthy, we need to deal with the 'me first' mentality and with any sin that diseases us, and we need to feed on God's Word, spend time in God's presence, and get in step with the Holy Spirit.
- Our calling by God to the body of Christ is a tremendously rich calling which demands a body of people who are functioning in the same realms of power and authority in which Jesus ministered (John 14:12). Before men can ever be entrusted with such authority and power, there must be recognition of the divine principles of headship and a submission to Christ, the Head of the body.
- The church is a living organism that is meant to be actively achieving God's will and not a passive organisation as it so often is. Passivity is usually the result of a sick body or a body with damaged parts that fail to function as they should. The individual congregations that make up the church of Jesus Christ are often a far cry from what God wants them to be because of this. Too few, doing too little and often doing it in the wrong way. No wonder so many congregations are in such a mess.

### **Romans 12:6-8**

There are gifts of ministry that God gives to the body of Christ in general and they tend to operate at the level of the worldwide or national church in whatever area Jesus Christ, the Head of the body, determines they are needed. Their main function is to prepare God's people for works of service. Often these gifted men and women are working at a local level, but they should move on when Jesus Christ needs their gift to operate somewhere else.



"It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 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." (Ephesians 4:11-13)

In Romans 12:6-8, Paul is mainly teaching about local church gifts or ministries.

"We have different gifts (charisma), according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." (Romans 12:6-8)

This list from Scripture can also be added to from 1 Corinthians 12:27-31.

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts."

The roles or ministries believers are called to by God can be thought of as God's gifts of grace (charisma - things of grace) to the church and the world that enable His will to be done on earth. These gifts of grace should be the foundation of our life and service for God. It is more than particular gifts of the Spirit; it is more like the hand of God coming upon someone's life to single them out for a particular work or area of working. Without these gifts of grace, the church would not be able to function as our Head desires.

- **1. Prophecy:** This is the Greek word '*propheteia*' which signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God. People with this gift have the ability to bring prophecy to a local church (of which they are usually a member) on a regular basis. The importance and frequency of the prophecy brought will depend on the level of the person's faith. People who regularly provide a corporate tongue and/or interpretation are usually prophetically gifted. Prophets should always remain faithful to God's written word.
- **2. Serving (or ministry):** The Greek word here is '*diakonia*' which means 'a servant, attendant, minister, or deacon'. These people have a special ability to give assistance or aid in any way that is necessary to enable the functioning of the body of Christ, i.e. these people are gifted by God to serve the local body of Christ, e.g. fabric deacons. Serving is often the least desired public gift and is least honoured in this age, but in God's economy it is an exalted position and comes next to prophecy. Those with this gift rarely have to be

told what is needed; they simply discern needs, know how to help, and then do so without any need for notice or expectation of applause.

- **3. Teaching:** The Greek word here is '*didaskalia*' which means 'to instruct'. A person with this gift has the ability to analyze, interpret and communicate clearly and systematically God's truth to His people usually in the local church of which they are a member. They have the ability to communicate God's revealed truth with understanding, ease and clarity. They help others learn accurate facts, discover principles, see practical relevance, and apply them.
- **4. Encouraging (or exhortation):** The Greek word here is '*paraklesis*' which primarily means 'a calling to one's side and so to one's aid'. It also means to urge another person to pursue some course of conduct; or to encourage, comfort or exhort. People with this gift have the ability to strengthen people for fresh faith, obedience and victory in their Christian lives and motivate them into action for God, usually by using the authority of God's Word.
- **5. Contributing to the needs of others (or giving):** The Greek word here is '*metadidomai*' which means 'to impart or share with'. These people have the ability to accumulate and distribute money and other things that other members of the body of Christ need, and they should do this generously. Supernatural gift givers don't want a plaque or a building named after them, they just see a need and then seek to meet it.
- **6. Showing mercy:** The Greek word here is '*eleeo*', which means 'an outward manifestation of pity; to feel sympathy with the misery of another and especially sympathy manifested in act'. These people have the ability to get alongside and comfort those who are suffering and, where possible, give them help. Those with the gift of mercy exercise an extraordinary ability to sense the need of those who are hurting – they know what to say and how to say it, and when to remain silent. This should be done cheerfully and is often aimed at those who the majority ignore or have no time for.
- **7. Those able to help others (or helps):** The Greek word used here is '*antilepsis or antilempsis*', which properly signifies 'a laying hold of, an exchange; a help; rendering assistance, especially of help given to the weak and needy'. These people have the ability to devote themselves to helping those associated with a local church who need it, e.g. provide pastoral care.
- **8. Administration (or government):** The Greek word used here is '*kubernesis*', which means 'to guide, govern, pilot, or steer'. These people guide or govern a church on an administrative level, e.g. treasurer or church secretary.
- **9. Leadership (or rulership):** The Greek word here is '*proistemi*', which literally means 'to stand before and hence to lead, or attend to or care for (indicating care and diligence)'. A person with this gift has the ability to lead others and manage the affairs of the church. This should be done diligently or with zeal. Elders are the main form of local church leadership and other church leaders operate under their overall spiritual guidance and leadership. Christian leaders are not called to lord it over their flock, but to be examples of

Christlikeness to them. They should show a blend of authority (because of what God has graced to them) and humility (because it is all of God).

[Workers of miracles](#) and those with [gifts of healing](#) who regularly operate in these gifts of the Spirit could be added here. These gifts seem to have been more commonplace in Paul's day than they are now.

I believe that this [list is not exhaustive](#), so don't let it deter you from doing something else for God within our church that you feel called to do, as long as the church leadership are okay with it. [God is not limited to titles](#). He is far more concerned that the local church achieves His planned purposes for it.

We need to [find and then live in the good of the particular call](#) or gifting which is ours through our Head, Jesus Christ's choice - this is [the grace of God specifically for us](#). [Church leaders](#) may be prompted by God to [help us to discern](#) our calling/role, but [we should know it's right](#). Once we have found our role in God, we should be [controlled and directed by this gift of grace](#) that God has given us and work at it with all our heart, mind, soul and strength as it should be an [expression of our love for God](#).

- Are the ministry gifts [mutually exclusive](#)? [No](#) - you can operate in multiple areas.
- Will our ministry gift [change over our life of service](#) for God? Yes.
- If you feel [prompted to do something](#) by God and yet you [don't feel you have the gifting](#) to fulfil that role, [step out in faith](#). You may need some [leadership input or training/mentoring support](#) - you may also [be surprised](#) at what God can do through you!
- We might recognise that God has called us to do something for Him, but sometimes it takes a while for other [people in positions of responsibility to see that we are indeed called by God](#) to this and then [release us](#) into that role. [Patience](#) is required at such times, but God is powerful enough to make sure we get there in the end, if we [stand in faith](#) and we [get on and do the things that we can do](#) in the mean time.
- [Evangelist and intercessor](#) (prayer warrior) are not in this list of local church ministries, as [all of us in the local church are called to be witnesses](#) to Jesus Christ and so evangelize [and to pray](#) (some may be better at these than others).
- It is not our faith that determines the gifts that we receive, it is [God who distributes these gifts and He determines the type and amount](#). [Our faith though does determine what we can do with the gifts God has given us](#).
- We must not look at the gifts subjectively or in terms of ourselves, but objectively. They have been given to us, but they are [not ours, we are stewards of God's gifts](#), so we cannot boast.
- We [must not over-estimate our gifts](#) (pride) [or under-estimate them](#) and despise them, as [God has chosen them for us and He knows what is best](#).

They are the **greatest thing that we can do for God, as we are playing our part in the outworking of His plans and purposes.**

- The gifts are **not in competition** – the body of Christ needs them all. Functions **differ in degree and prominence**, but **not their ultimate value**. We are all important to God, no matter what He calls us to do.
- All members of the body of Christ have the same position in Christ. There is no hierarchy (apart from God and us) – only different roles and callings.
- Each gift in the local body of Christ is **interconnected** to gifts operating within other members of the body, so we definitely need each other. God has designed **our fellow local church Christians** to be our **perfect partners** to enable us to carry out our role.
- It is astounding that the ministry gifts, which have been given by the grace of God, have been **one of the greatest causes** within God's church of **sin (like self-assertion and boasting)** with all the resulting **quarrelling and tendency to division**. The fact that some **abuse God's gifts** in such a way and do things that go against the interests of God and the body of Christ is appalling. Jesus, when He looks down upon His body, the church, must often weep over how we treat each other.
- Once we know that it is our Head, Jesus Christ, who is really the One who has appointed us to carry out a certain ministry or task, we will also know that we have His authority to carry out that role or task. **God is the ultimate boss and He has asked us to do this for Him, so we do that task/role under His authority.**
- Authority in the body of Christ comes, not because of a title or position or office, but because of the grace of God that gives a person a title or puts them in an office or position. If we take the position ourselves or are promoted to it without God's grace, we will not have God's enabling to carry out that role.

### **How do we receive the gifts of the grace or ministry gifts?**

- **Seeking to know God and submitting ourselves to His Lordship.** First and foremost, we need to make sure that the Lord of our life is Jesus. We do this by **renouncing the self-life** (the worldly life) and instead **hand ourselves over to God** and begin to think of all we do in terms of our new or fully restored relationship with Jesus Christ. If we want to know what our ministry gift is, then we must seek to know God and submit ourselves to Him and His will and we **must tell Him that we do not care what we do, nor what recognition we get from others, as long as we are His, growing into His likeness, and functioning as He wants us to.**
- **Be available.** As Christians, we should be filled with a **burning desire to see the success of the kingdom of God** and the body of Christ in particular. We should do all we can to further it and be of service and use to our God. We **should not be lazy or complacent and let someone else do all the work,** because we are only interested in the benefits of being a member of a church.

When God asks us to do something for Him, our response should be: 'Here am I, Lord, send me!'

- **Know yourself.** One way to discover one's ministry gift is to [get busy serving!](#) [Are you particularly passionate about one area of service and so find that you want to learn about it and be around others operating in that gift?](#) God makes us as we are and so the desires that we have are often something that He has planted in us ready to germinate at the right time, so that we will reach out to God for that ministry gift when God needs us to have it.
- **Ask for help.** Talk to the church leaders and explain your desire to serve and ask for [help finding the best match between your desire, your natural and spiritual talents and the church's need.](#)
- **Faithfully serve.** Once you have a lead as to how to serve in the body of Christ, [commit to a minimum term of service.](#) You will undoubtedly [face challenges that the](#) demands of the role present and you may even be tempted to shy away or to quit. But [stick with it.](#) A moving ship is something that can be directed, whereas a static one is going nowhere. [Share your struggles](#) with your leader, [ask for help,](#) and faithfully serve to the best of your ability. Then, at the end of the term, [evaluate](#) and use your experience to find a more suitable role, if necessary. Eventually, doing this, you will find your place – [a square peg will find a square hole.](#) [When the work becomes a labour of love, when you feel energised by the tiredness, you will probably have discovered your place in the body, at least for that time in your life.](#) That is when the joy really begins! [When you make serving the body of Christ a priority, you won't be able to imagine life without it.](#) Furthermore, the rewards that come your way will be remarkable.

### **Some helpful thoughts about ministry gifts:**

- We must [never transgress the law of God's love.](#) A man or woman who is filled with God's love can more safely be trusted with the better ministry gifts. Those not filled with love are in danger of using the gifts for themselves or their own aggrandizement and self-glorification. When the ministry gifts are used in the spirit of love, they have inestimable value to the life and growth of the whole church.
- Our ministry [gift may come to us super-naturally as we pray](#) or go about our Christian life, or it may come through the [laying on of hands](#) when it is often accompanied by a prophetic word to guide us in the use of the gift. However, most of the time, we will find that we are [stepping into a role that God opens up](#) before us that ends up being just right for us.
- We may feel hesitant and nervous when we start a new role. This is natural as we will [need to learn new skills, grow in faith and learn to trust our God-given gifts.](#) We will also need to [increasingly](#) learn to operate in the gifts [under the direction](#) of our Head, Jesus Christ, as He will often [expand](#) the role and seek to [stretch](#) our service for Him. He wants us to [grow and mature](#) in Him both in

who we are and what we do. When we know that [God is in something](#), we know [He will provide all we need](#).

- Ministry gifts are not natural gifts – they are given by God as He determines. Ministry gifts though are probably going to be super-imposed on our natural gifts, as God created us as He wanted us to be and He also gifts us super-naturally, so it is understandable that often the [natural and super-natural gifts fit together](#). In fact, our role or task for God will usually be suited to our natural gifts and our personality.
- [Sometimes we need to grow into a role that we feel is too big or hard for us at the beginning](#). We take this role on only because God has let us see with the eyes of faith that in Him we can do it.
- Sometimes, when we have a ministry gift, we need to be [persuaded that we do indeed have a gift](#). We may even fight against it. [Other people in the church can help](#) here and [bear witness to our gift](#) even if we cannot see it ourselves – this is part of the function of the body of Christ. The other part of this function that the body has with each other is to [lovingly question claims of a gift](#) that they do not see as evident.
- We are not to covet or desire ministry gifts for our own [selfish ends](#). Here we usually [envy what others have](#) and want it for ourselves and our own aggrandisement, rather than seeking to honour others above ourselves and do all that we do for the glory of God.
- We should be [content with the ministry gifts](#) that God has given us and with all our heart seek to [use them for His glory](#).
- [We will make mistakes](#) when we serve God using our ministry gift. We are [not yet fully transformed into Christlikeness and Christ-like thinking](#), so we will say and do some things in the name of God when it is really just from us. If we realise that we have made a mistake, then we need to repent, ask for God's forgiveness, gain other people's forgiveness when needed, rectify the mistake (if possible), [learn from the error](#) and [press on](#) in God.
- [Never abuse](#) any ministry gift. We should not want to receive a ministry gift or operate in one for ourselves or our [own importance](#). The ministry gifts are to enable us to serve God as He directs. To seek to use them to [manipulate other people or for selfish gain is a crime](#) against God. He may forgive it, but if we persevere in such an attitude, we will be judged severely.
- Make sure that you [don't neglect any gift or ministry](#) God has given you. God [cannot advance](#) us in gift, if [we fail to use what He has already given us](#). However, don't be surprised if we occasionally get the [proverbial boot up the backside](#) to get us moving. This may [come from God directly as we pray and read His Word](#), or it may come [indirectly from God through mentors, friends, or our church leaders](#). Make sure it is God who is pushing, because God knows how to pace us, but don't ignore or reject His correction or encouragement.

- Any ministry gift that we have from God is something to be **prized and valued**, and we should be **concerned to outwork it in the most effective way possible**. We need to **constantly polish this gift** of God, fan it into flame (2 Timothy 1:6) and use it to its greatest potential for the good of others. Going on conferences, studying God's Word, reading books, being mentored by those more mature in the gift than you, are all ways to improve our gift. BUT the most important thing we can do is yield our life more and more to God, learning to understand His will and obeying His leading. **This call of grace to serve our God should be the motivating power of our whole life and work**. We are saved by grace and called to live a life in submission to God's gift of grace to us.
- If God calls us to do a task for Him, then we should not be surprised that the **spiritual gifts necessary** to complete that task will be **made available** to us. These spiritual gifts may be **evidenced in others** who are called alongside us to fulfil this task **or in ourselves**. Look out for them. We **will also need to step out in faith as God directs** in order to see the gifts of the Spirit manifest. God knows what we are like, so He usually **starts small** or gifts us with a gift of faith to help us.
- If you are slogging away in an area of service for God and are bitterly resenting your task, you may now be doing the wrong thing in God. It might have been right at the beginning, but God has tried to move you on and you failed to notice or forgot to follow. Seek God and make sure you are in the right place doing the right thing for Him. If you feel that you are, then you need to tough it out, but you can ask Him for help and a time of refreshing. You also must always, no matter how you feel about your role in God, remember to feed on Him so that you don't burn out.
- When God looks at the various local expressions of His body, the church, I sometimes wonder if He struggles to find the people to do His will. I wonder whether He allows some to be raised up who are not really ready, just because they are the only ones who are willing. Perhaps this is why there are so many in the church in positions of authority who are not behaving as they should.

### **Conclusion:**

Let's ask ourselves what we can do for God and not what He can do for us. He will have naturally gifted us in certain ways and He usually calls us to roles that use those gifts. But let us not be limited to what we can achieve with our own natural abilities and strengths. God also loves to stretch us so that we can grow and mature in Him. Let's ask God what He wants us to do for Him as Head of the church, and then step out in faith and faithfully fulfil that task no matter how difficult (or even impossible) it may seem. It may be tough, but God will provide all we need (Philippians 4:19).

“May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

(Hebrews 13:20-21)