

Start your study here

Read Read, Record, Reflect, Respond

Prayerfully	Reflectively	Extensively	Creatively	Intensively	Specifically	Effectively
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Repeated
Alike
Different
Accentuated
Related
Think Context!

Romans 12:1-8

- 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.
- 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.
- 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you
 not to think of himself more highly
 than he ought to think,
 but to think with sober judgment,
 each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
- 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. (ESV)

Review: God greatness should motivate our response
 Observations: 1) Transition 2) Commands 3) Comparison 4) Passive and Active verbs
 Question: Identify the “things” that need to be “done” in Romans 12:1-2. That is, what are the commands?
 What is the starting point? What does the starting point look like?
 What do you have control over? What must be done by God?

Major transition: “therefore” summarizes the whole book up to this point
 “appeal” may not be strong enough “exhort” is better—from logical/methodical to emotional—
 urgency—exhortation comes with Apostolic authority not simply suggestion

God never asks us to do anything for Him until He tells us what He has done for us.	
Theology/Position	Practice
Romans 1-11	12-16
Galatians 1-4	5-6
Ephesians 1-3	4-6
Philippians 1-2	3-4

Romans 12:1-8

1 I appeal to you **therefore**, brothers,
 by the **mercies** of God, διὰ by, because—cause/grounds of the exhortation
 to **present your bodies**

Whole self including the body

as a living sacrifice,
 holy
 and acceptable to God,
 which is your spiritual worship.

Translation: as a sacrifice,
 living,
 holy
 and acceptable

Sacrificial language—consecration
 Aorist active infinitive functioning as an imperative,
 picking up the force of 2 imperatives in v 2 which are
 present tense. Aorist “sees the whole event” not a
 once-for-all, so with the present imperative perhaps
 best to see this as a decision leading to a lifestyle.

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.

could be purpose
 but more likely
 result

“that by testing you may discern
 what is the good and acceptable and perfect
 will of God”

Do you want to know God’s will for
 you? Be transformed by the renewing of
 your mind. When you are “thinking
 correctly” in tune with God—then you
 will be able to discern (do) His will

3 **For** by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you
 not to think of himself more highly
 than he **ought to think**,
but to think with **sober judgment**,
 each **according to** the **measure of faith that God has assigned**.

Having exhorted the Jews (2:1-3:20) and the Gentiles (11:11-32) with the danger of pride—this instruction naturally flows
 Not picking on any one group—every believer needs to hear this

contrast

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.

comparison

Unity and interdependence

6 Having gifts that differ
according to the **grace given to us**,

Diversity (purposeful diversity)

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. (ESV)

w/ amplification

w/o amplification

w/ amplification

“gifts”
 Grace gifts—emphasis on enablement for
 ministry or better grace to accomplish a
 ministry
 Focus is lesson on what we get than on
 what we do.

result

Working Idea (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

Believers have been showered with the mercies of God; the natural response is one of consecration through decisive and continual transformation of their thought process and behavior in keeping with God’s will not the world’s pressure

One primary way that believers are different than the world and thereby do the will of God, is in their focus on others

Main idea:

Honor God at all times through a life transformed by correct thinking that leads to correct living—living out God’s will.

Teaching idea/explanation:

The passage has two sections:

The introduction to the whole practical section, 12:1-2, which is very familiar. The challenge with this section is making the familiar significant, taking what people have heard and make it into something people will apply.

The second section, 12:3-8—the first concrete application of the life not conformed to the world but transformed—is about using what God has given and ministry enables, to the fullest. To passionately live out what God has entrusted to us.

I would encourage you to spend a significant amount of time in the first section because it lays the groundwork for the rest of the book.

Introduction

What comes first—thinking or doing?



Talk about it

Why do we focus so much of our effort (in Christianity) on changing behavior rather than thinking?

How can you change the way you think?

Review

God is faithful to His Word. He keeps His promises, even His promises to Israel when they rebel against Him. Paul is an illustration of a Jew who stood opposed to God but who became a recipient of God’s mercy and grace—not only in his personal salvation but in his vocation as a missionary to the Gentiles.

Summary

IN 12:1 – 2, PAUL has encapsulated the gospel imperative: honoring God at all times through a transformed life that is in keeping with his will. In 12:3 – 15:13, Paul unpacks some of the specific components of that will. He begins in 12:3 – 8 by reminding us that we live out our transformed existence in community. Central to our community life is a fair and sober estimate of ourselves in line with the Christian faith and with the gifts God has given us.¹

Overview

Paul has briefly touched on the practical significance of what he writes throughout Romans 1 – 11 (see, e.g., 6:11 – 13, 19; 11:18, 20). But beginning in chapter 12 Paul turns his full attention to the ethical implications of the gospel. The “therefore” at the beginning of the chapter gathers up all the teaching of chapters 1 – 11 and confronts us with the all-important question: “So what?” Granted the manifold mercy of God as set it forth in the letter, what are we to do? Paul answers that question in 12:1 – 15:13 by touching on several key areas where Christians need to display the reality of God in a new way of living. This larger section divides into two smaller ones, with 12:1 – 13:14 going over

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 401.

several general areas of Christian obedience and 14:1 – 15:13 concentrating on the dispute between the “strong” and the “weak.”

Why does Paul include the subjects he does in these chapters? Some interpreters think he is writing quite generally, providing a brief summary of the key areas of Christian obedience. The many parallels between Romans 12:1 – 15:13 and the ethical sections of Paul’s other letters might suggest there is something to this idea. But Paul’s rebuke of the strong and the weak in 14:1 – 15:13 is almost certainly directed to a real dispute in the Roman community. Moreover, as we will see, several of the topics Paul takes up in 12:1 – 13:14 have particular relevance to Rome. Therefore we should probably take a mediating view on Paul’s purpose in these chapters. He wants to give a general outline of what commitment to the gospel looks like in real life, but he fashions that outline in such a way that it relates especially well to the problems facing the Christian community in Rome.²

Romans

Stephen C. Kilgore

<i>Prologue</i>	Justification: The Need for it	Justification: What it is	Justification: How it affects me	Justification: Why Israel rejected it	<i>Duties Toward the Assembly</i>	<i>Duties Toward the State</i>	<i>Duties Toward Weak & Strong</i>	<i>Epilogue</i>
	God’s Righteousness reveals man’s sin	Way of Salvation	Life of Salvation	Scope of Salvation				
1:1-17	1:18-3:20	3:21-5:21	6:1-8:39	9:1-11:36	12:1-21	13:1-14	14:1-15:13	15:14-16:27
	What a Mess! Sin	What a God! Salvation	What a Difference! Sanctification	What a Program! Sovereignty	How to Live! Service			
<i>Doctrine</i>	Doctrine of Justification				Duties of the Justified <i>Practice</i>			
The Righteousness of God Revealed What to Believe					The Righteousness of God Reflected How to Live			
The Transforming Power of the Righteousness of God								

Preview

Action of the Justified: Toward the Assembly Romans 12:1-21

Foundation of Conduct

Function of Conduct

In Humility

In love

3

8

9

21

Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

Do not be conformed—be transformed

² Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 393-394.

Outline

I. Prologue: *Paul's commission to preach Christ to the nations* 1:1-17

II. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36

God's Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ

A. The Need of It 1:18–3:20 *What a Mess!*

The Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation: The Universal Need of Righteousness

The Bad News: All condemned for sin—no exceptions

B. What It Is 3:21–5:21

What a God—The Way of Salvation

Justification: The imputation of righteousness to all who believe

C. How It Affects Me 6:1–8:39

Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness

The Purpose of Salvation: Conformity to Christ's Image

1. Believer and Sin 6:1-23
2. Believer and the Law 7:1-25
3. Believer and the Holy Spirit 8:1-39

The believer's relationship to the Holy Spirit gives assurance of victory in Christian life.³

To have victory over sin—you must live in the Spirit

D. Why Israel Rejected It 9:1–11:36

Vindication: Israel's Rejection of God's Righteousness

1. Israel's Rejection Considered in Light of God's Sovereignty, Justice and Mercy 9:1-29
2. God's Present Dealings with Israel 9:30-10:21
3. Israel's Rejection is not complete or final: God will save 11:1-36

III. Duties of the Justified—Righteousness of God Reflected 12:1–15:13

The Justified Believer is to Act According to His Position before God

A. Duty Toward the Assembly 12:1-21

Action of the Justified: Toward the Assembly

What remains to be said about God's righteousness? Only the very pragmatic matter of how it should be applied by believers (12:1–15:13). First, it should be applied among fellow believers (12:1-21). This is accomplished by a consecration of our lives to God, in light of all that he has done for us (12:1-2). Once we have committed ourselves to him, we can begin to serve others. This service should be done by the employment of spiritual gifts for the benefit of the body (12:3-8), and with an attitude of sincere love—both for believers and unbelievers (12:9-21).⁴

“Therefore” Service 12:1

1. Foundation of Conduct: Consecration 12:1-2
2. Function of Conduct: Focused on Others 12:3-21
 - a. In humility: Using God-given enablement 12:3-8
 - b. In love: Demonstrate Christian Ethics 12:9-21

Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be Aware

12—16 “Therefore”

Paul now turns to the implications and applications of the truths he has been teaching.

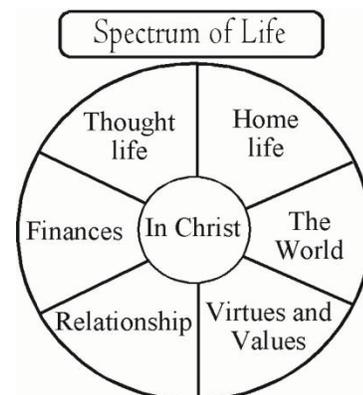
How do we

sinners by nature, actions and intent,

graciously justified and eternally saved through Christ's redemptive cross-work,

who desire to live lives that are pleasing to God,

yet have an inability to do it out of our own determination, duty and power relate properly in all our spheres of life



³ Dr. Harold W. Hoehner's outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

church and family
world and government.



So what follows is not simply “tacked on” to the important doctrinal material. It is a natural and necessary continuation and completion. Paul’s theology has practical ethical implications and so must ours. We must have right thinking and right behaving.

“. . . to balance *orthodoxy* (right beliefs) and *orthopathy* (right affections) an *orthopraxy* (right actions). . . these are the three movements of the healthy, growing spiritual life. This balanced path of growth—changing the mind and heart in order to change the outward actions—keeps us from the deadly trap of self-deception in which we believe, but do not grow, in Christ.”⁵

Therefore our study of Romans 12-16 functions as the applicational challenge to the book. In these concluding lessons we must continually be asking the “so what” question.

- How will the truths of Romans 1-11 be fleshed out in Romans 12-16?
- What will it look like?
- How can we demonstrate who we are?

It is important to remember to keep the applications for Romans 12-16 tied to the truths of Romans 1-11. Do not be tempted to move from God’s gracious provision for salvation and sanctification to a man-driven, duty based, effort only, Christian life.

In order to help you and your class keep application as the focus—Questions to ask:

Nine Questions to Ask	Personal Application with ‘SPECS?’
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there an example to follow? 2. Is there a sin to avoid? 3. Is there a promise to claim? 4. Is there a prayer to repeat? 5. Is there a command to obey? 6. Is there a condition to meet? 7. Is there a verse to be memorized? 8. Is there an error to mark? 9. Is there a challenge to face? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sin to be forsaken? 2. Promises to be claimed? 3. Examples to be followed? 4. Commands to be obeyed? 5. Stumbling block or hindrance to be avoided?

When communicating application. . .

- **Be Textual**—One interpretation, many applications: but don’t generalize from the passage. The application must be tied to the text.
- **Be Concrete**—Visible reality of application: what will the application look like if accomplished?
- **Be Specific**—Give a course of action: what steps should be followed?
- **Be Direct**—Do not be afraid to speak about serious issues, and don’t minimize sin.
- **Be Realistic**—Do not expect complete radical change and do not discourage people when they fail.
- **Be Relevant**
 - Remember the message of Scripture does not change but our society does.
 - Exegete your situation as well as your text for personal application.
 - Exegete your audience/culture, as well as your text. For public application: know your world and people, their needs and problems.
 - Ask the same questions about your culture that you would about an ancient culture: values, world—views, money, communication, family, etc.
- **Be Practical**

⁵ Bruce Demarest, *Satisfy your Soul* (Colorado Springs: NavPres, 1999), p. 29.

A working grid of relationships for application:

The Christian life has been described as a whole new set of relationships. As we study God’s Word, there will be some effects and needed changes in all our relationships as a believer:

to God:

- Relationship to enjoy
- Commands to obey
- Promises to trust
- Prayers to express

to others:

- At home
- At church
- At work
- In the world

to Yourself:

- Identity to understand and enjoy
- Experiences to evaluate
- Personal values, priorities, standards
- Future expectations

to the enemy:

- Responding to him
- Recognizing his tricks
- Avoiding sin
- Wearing God’s protection

12:1-8 Our service towards others begins with our consecration to God

Question

What has Paul already told us about living the spiritual life?

Romans 6

It starts with a realization of our relationship with Christ. That starting point for our walk with Christ, after being justified, redeemed and reconciled, is an understanding that I have been united with Christ—dead to sin and alive with Him. This is a truth I must know/consider and is the basis of yielding to Him (“present your body as instruments of righteousness”).

Romans 7

I am incapable under my own strength to win the battle with sin. I must understand my utter helplessness and dependence on God.

Romans 8

God has provided not only the Son as our Savior but the Spirit as our Empowerer.

12:1-2 Foundation of Conduct: Consecration

Interaction: Group activity

Identify the “things” that need to be “done” in Romans 12:1-2. That is, what are the commands?

What is the starting point?

What does the starting point look like?

What do you have control over?

What must be done by God?

12:1

“I appeal” is not a strong enough word to translated what Paul says here. He uses a word that is more of an exhortation but softer than a command. “I exhort” or “I urge you” is somewhere between “I command” and “I beseech or beg,” somewhere between using the authority to command and the absence of authority in begging. Paul says I entreat you, with the sense of someone lovingly coming alongside to present a message with a strong appeal—who also has apostolic authority.

There is a change in mode—from more logical to more emotional, therefore some translations use the word, “urge” to show the urgency in his tone—as though at a turning point in time, a need for a change, a need for a reminder with a mixture in tone of excitement yet seriousness.

What Paul has to say is no less passionate or important than what he has said. As a matter of fact, if his readers do not apply what he has said and will say in Romans 12-16, Paul may have wasted his time.

“I exhort you, therefore because of the mercies of God”

God’s mercies are our motivation.

The basis or motivation for right response and right living: God’s Mercy

One simple but necessary reminder:

God never asks you to do anything for him until he tells you what he has done for you.

Because God wants worship and devotion not simply compliance and duty, Paul grounds his ethical instructions in God’s gracious mercy.

In Romans, Paul shows us that God truly has been merciful and has done much more than we deserve:

He revealed sin, so we would know what right and wrong was

He provided mercy through the atonement, the substitutionary death of Christ

He transferred justification—the declaration of righteousness, Christ’s righteousness to us

He has adopted us—we become His heirs through our adoption into God’s family

He sanctifies us—through our union with Christ

He provides the Spirit to help us live

He gives hope for Israel, and hope for us of glorification

What an awesome, merciful God!

That is our motivation: **God’s character—His mercy—found concrete expression in our redemption, in our salvation.** That is the basis for our conduct. The motivation for us to live godly is gratitude, not a desire to avoid punishment or necessarily seeking rewards—but our conduct is to be in loving response to the mercies of God.

Therefore, in light of God’s mercies. . .present your bodies

Paul doesn’t stop with motivation—from the **motivation for living**, Paul turns to the **dedication of sacrifice.**

“present”

To **present or offer** —is a technical term for sacrifice. Giving a sacrifice to God in the Old Testament was a decision that could not be taken back. So with us, we are to make a decision, of our will, to present, offer, to yield, our bodies to God.

Aorist infinitive – “present” it is an aorist (point in time, seeing the action as a whole) infinitive. The infinitive influenced by the two imperatives which are present tense. So the aorist infinitive is not “once-for-all” (preaches well but is wrong) is probably softened by the present imperatives, to have a **decisive but ongoing focus**—perhaps best seen as a **decision leading to a lifestyle.**

To present has a constative feel: when you look at the whole of life whenever you see God’s mercies—**present your bodies; always, continually, actively.**

To understand the implications of “present” it is to see Paul’s previous usage of the word in Romans chapter 6.

Romans 6:12-13 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not **present** your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but **present** yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. (ESV)

Romans 6:19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once **presented** your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now **present** your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. (ESV)

Paul says, knowing that you have died to sin in Christ, believe it, realize the identification with Christ, present, give yourself to God—dedication of your body to God.

Before salvation, we were slaves or puppets/marionette of sin. We were bound to sin. The strings that moved us were moved by sin/our sinful desires and the power of Satan. But in Christ, the strings have been cut. We are no longer bound to obey their tugs. But there are phantom pains. When someone has a limb amputated because of disease, they often continue to experience the pain of the disease—phantom pain. So we, even though sin’s strings have been amputated, we feel the phantom pain and sometimes long to obey its impulses. So we must consciously give ourselves over to God.

Presenting your bodies must begin with a decision—it doesn’t just happen. Then it must become a habit, practiced—continually presenting your bodies to God.

I spent hours as a child dribbling a basketball before I ever stepped onto a basketball court (we didn’t have one near us.) My Dad gave me a ball and taught me to dribble without having to look at the ball. When I started playing basketball, I didn’t have to think about dribbling (the ball, that is), it was automatic. I know that if I pushed the ball down, it would come right back. Someone who dribbles well, makes the ball look like if it is on a string. Though the ball is free, it responds to the dribbler. **Practice, habit, changes character.**

“bodies”

Though we will be told the process starts in the mind (12:2) it must control the body—our whole self and the means of doing good and evil (Romans 6:12-13, 19).

Present your bodies as a sacrifice that is living, holy, and acceptable to God means we practice; we make it a habit to give ourselves to God—but it must start with a decision.

Possible variation in translation “as sacrifices, living, holy and well pleasing”

Cranfield (1979: 600) observes rightly that many English readers gain a wrong impression of the text since some English versions translate the phrase “living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing to God,” which suggests that “living sacrifice” is somehow separable from the adjectives “holy” and “well pleasing” in the Greek text. In fact, all three adjectives (“living,” “holy,” and “well pleasing”) follow *θεσίαν* {living}, and thus there is no exegetical warrant for isolating the word “living.” Nor is it likely that *ζῶσαν* {sacrifice} is intended to contrast the state of humans with animals since the latter were alive when sacrificed as well (contra Dunn 1988b: 710).⁶

By the way, the use of the word “cultic” is not to be confused with “occult” or “a cult.” It is an academic/formal term to refer to the whole of the Old Testament sacrificial system.

“living sacrifice”

But Paul used a contrast that would have gotten the attention of his readers. Paul says, *a living sacrifice*—all animal sacrifices were alive until they were sacrificed. And while there may be an intended contrast with the believer’s living sacrifice—because it is a decision of the will, this is not to be a squirming sacrifice that gets off the altar. But like Isaac, who willingly laid down on the altar, only to have God provide the substitute, we too are to willingly lay our bodies down, because of the substitution of Christ in our deserved place on the cross.

There may be more to Paul’s analogy. He may, beyond the contrast, be focusing on the present

⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, vol. 6, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 644.

condition of the believer.

Rather, the word “living” denotes the spiritual state of believers. They are now “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11, 13; 8:13). It is precisely those who are alive in Christ who are called to give their lives to him as a sacrifice. The terms ἁγίαν {holy} and εὐάρεστον {well pleasing} have cultic associations as well. The former term denotes the idea that the sacrifice is dedicated to God, while the latter evokes OT notions of sacrifices that are pleasing and fragrant to God.⁷

Paul often uses the believer’s present condition based on what Christ has done for them—position—to be the motivation for present correct living—practice. This is what he did in Romans 6:1-14. See also Colossians 2:6-7; 11-15; 3:1-4.

“holy”

The word, “sacrifice” has another modifier also. **Holy**—set apart, sanctified to God. The lamb used for Passover was set apart for a time to insure and prove that it was spotless and unblemished. The Lamb was holy.

Consecration.

And because this sacrifice meets the Lord’s requirements, it is acceptable and pleasing.

“which is your spiritual worship”

The phrase is metaphorical. Literally it means “reasonable or logical service of worship.” It is the **least**, but also the **logical** response of the one for whom Christ has died. Having *encountered* God’s mercies we *express* our worship through the decisional act of presenting our bodies to God.

In contrast to ritual sacrifice, this is reasonable.

In contrast to ritual, *this* is true worship.

All that needs to be said is that Paul used the term with the meaning “rational” or “reasonable,” as was common in the Greek language.³ His purpose in doing so was to emphasize that yielding one’s whole self to God is eminently reasonable. Since God has been so merciful, failure to dedicate one’s life to him is the height of folly and irrationality.⁸

The word λατρείαν is another cultic term.⁴ What is remarkable is that Paul has applied the language of the cult to everyday existence (so Cranfield 1979: 601; Käsemann 1980: 327; Dunn 1988b: 708). **The worship described does not relate to public assemblies but to the yielding of one’s whole life to God in the concrete reality of everyday existence.** Paul’s application of the OT is of immense importance here. Activity and language that focused on the cult in the OT is now extended to embrace every facet of the believer’s existence. Neusner (1971) has emphasized how the Pharisees expanded their conception of purity so that it included everyday life. Paul does much the same thing but in a very different way. The worship and sacrifices of the OT can no longer be confined to the cult. The cultic language is spiritualized to include the whole of one’s existence.^{5 9}

⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 644.

³Cf. Murray 1965: 112; Cranfield 1979: 604–5; Fitzmyer 1993c: 640; Reasoner 1995: 294; Byrne 1996: 363. This fits with D. Peterson’s interpretation (1993: 275); he prefers the translation “understanding worship.”

⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 645.

⁴Cf. John 16:2; Rom. 9:4; Heb. 9:1, 6; in the LXX, Exod. 12:25, 26; 13:5; Josh. 22:27; 1 Chron. 28:13; 1 Macc. 1:43; 2:19, 22; the verbal form is used with a clear cultic sense in Luke 2:37; Acts 7:7, 42; Heb. 8:5; 9:9, 14; 10:2; 12:28; 13:10.

⁵For the spiritualizing of the cult in Judaism see Behm, *TDNT* 3:187–89. For the same motif in Paul see Grundmann, *TDNT* 2:59; Kittel, *TDNT* 4:142; cf. Schreiner, *ISBE* 4:273–77.

⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 646.

12:2

Having been **motivated** by God’s mercies, and having **dedicated** our lives through the presentation of our bodies as sacrifices, Paul now turns to the **Transformation of our Character**.

“do not be conformed”

First the **negative command**: Do not be conformed

Do not be poured into the world’s mold, just like Jell-O. Do not copy the pattern of the world. Now, I haven’t made much Jell-O in my life, but you all know how Jell-O congeals as it takes on the form of the mold in which it was poured.

So like repentance, the first thing we must do to be transformed, is to turn from something.

2 Timothy 2:22 So **flee** youthful passions and **pursue** righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along **with** those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (ESV)

—do not be **conformed** to this world. The implication of the word “conform” is often thought to refer to an **external function**, mere representation. Paul says, don’t imitate the world and don’t try to copy the world’s pattern.

And that is true, but his use of the word “age” makes it clear that Paul is not only concerned with external behavior, but a way of thinking that leads to external behavior.

Believers have been internally changed, so they should not be a representation of the world in behavior or worldview.

Don’t let the world push you into their mold of behavior or belief.

It is instructive to note that he contrasts being conformed to “this age” (τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, *tō aiōni toutō*) with “the renewal of the mind” (τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός, *tē anakainōsei tou noos*). **This suggests that conformity to this age embraces thinking patterns that are alien to the renewal of the mind.** If this is the case, such conformity can scarcely be confined to the external since one’s thoughts are indicative of who one is. Moreover, the NT usage of συσχηματίζεσθε and μεταμορφοῦσθε demonstrates that they do not invariably mean external and internal conformity, respectively. For instance, in Phil. 3:21 the related verb μετασχηματίζει (*metaschēmatisei*, he will change) is used to say that Jesus will change the believer’s present body to be “conformed” (σύμμορφον, *symmorphon*) to the glorious body of Jesus. The terms μετασχηματίζει and σύμμορφον are practically synonymous. In any case, it is difficult to sustain the case that the transformation of the body is merely outward so that the mind is untouched. Moreover, the verb μεταμορφοῦσθε may designate outward form. In Mark 9:2 (cf. Matt. 17:2) the verb designates the external change that Jesus experienced at the transfiguration (cf. Isa. 44:13; Dan. 3:19; Wis. 18:1). Thus most contemporary scholars no longer accept the attempt to distinguish between these terms.¹⁰

Interaction: Questions

How does the world seek to make us conform to its pattern?

Marginalize us

“That is your belief, faith is personal and private.”

Mock us

“Christianity, like all religions is a crutch for the weakminded.”

Amalgamation

“Christianity is just like all other religions.”

How have Christians allowed the world to become their mold?

Consumerism—our focus on our own possessions rather than loving the lost

Comfort—our unwillingness to step out of our comfort zone to be salt and light

¹⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 647.

We seem to lose our distinctiveness. We look like those around us.

We lose our influence when we stop being distinct, when people can distinguish us from any “religious person.”

We lose our influence as we sanitize our beliefs and our values.

We lose our influence as we focus on defending our rights rather than serving others.

We lose our influence as we privatize our relationship with Christ rather than sharing it.

We lose our influence as we isolate ourselves, confining ourselves to safe “Christian environments” rather than boldly and creatively investing in relationships and areas of influence.

The world is trying to influence the way we think, act, and believe—don’t be conformed.

“but be transformed”

But on the contrary, (the strongest Greek contrast) be **transformed**.

The **positive command**. This word is where we get our English word *Metamorphosis*, a complete change, to change the form; where the lowly worm becomes the beautiful butterfly. An internal change where the inward nature is revealed. It is the same word used in Christ’s transfiguration, where His inward or true glory was revealed.

We were saved for transformation. God saved us to **transform** us! A complete change: New Birth, New life.

Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the **washing of regeneration** and **renewal** of the Holy Spirit, (ESV)

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (ESV)

“by the renewing of your mind”

“by means of the renewing of your mind”

This is the “How-To”

The transformation is not done by will power but by brainwashing. Letting the Holy Spirit through the Word of God renew our central control system, the mind.

What you do proceeds from the mind.

The “body” of verse 1 and the “mind” of verse 2 should not be rigidly separated. Paul views human beings holistically, and thus there is an intimate connection between what one thinks and what one does.¹¹

There are many interesting features about the mind.

One is that our memory acts like a roadway system. If a road is well traveled, grooves begin to be worn in the road’s surface. In our minds, the more we go back and forth on a thought, the more the pathway is grooved and the easier it is to find. So the more we think on this, as Paul says in **Philippians 4:8 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.** (ESV), the more natural those thoughts and the resulting behaviors become.

¹¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 646.

But there is also a draw back to our minds and our memories. Did you ever wonder why remembering a scriptural passage is so difficult, but the dirty joke, angry thoughts of bitterness, or sight of something unwholesome seems indelibly etched into your mind? The same road ways.

In times of emotional stress, excitement, or arousal where we would normally associate the presence of adrenaline, there are cells in the brain releasing a chemical known as endorphins. Endorphins are the brain's natural opiates which help decrease pain but also serve as reinforcement of thoughts and behaviors. So in the excitement of an adrenaline rush, the brain begins to record, like a VCR, the thoughts and behaviors that occur. The purpose is survival. When in a fight an individual needs to survive. An individual in that environment may fight in the face of severe pain, which the endorphins have blocked. But in the case of a dirty joke or the sight of pornography, the excitement caused the endorphins to reinforce and inscribe on the brain, those thoughts and pictures.¹²

Why can't you seem to forget things you would like? Chemical reaction. Does that excuse going back and forth on the pathway—no. Does that excuse having looked at pornography—no.

Paul says, be transformed by the renewing of your mind, but first by not being conformed to the world. ***Don't let the world influence you, let God rule you.***

The will, the mind, and the body are intrinsically linked. Our bodies perform acts of righteousness or sin, based on the will of the individual, but that will is controlled by the content or focus of the mind.

What we want in the renewing of our minds is to yield (dedicate or present our bodies) to God's will—so that His will controls our mind (through renewing) so that our bodies are controlled. Get the picture: God's will, our minds, our actions.

Transformation by the renewal of the mind, then, involves the penetration of the coming age into the present evil age (cf. Titus 3:5 and the verbal form in 2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:10). The eschatological associations of the word ἀνακαινώσει are also confirmed by the related words καινός (*kainos*, new; cf. 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:15; 4:24) and καινότης (*kainotēs*, newness; cf. Rom. 6:4; 7:6). Believers resist the pressures to conform to the present evil age by the renewal of their minds. The downward spiral of thinking traced in Rom. 1:18–32 is reversed in those who are redeemed from sin. Their minds are not given over to futility but are renewed to understand the truth.⁷ The means of transformation does not bypass the human personality or the brain. Human beings are transformed as their thinking is altered. Second Corinthians 3:18 suggests that our thinking is altered as “we behold the glory of the Lord.” Gradual transformation “from glory to glory” (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, *apo doxēs eis doxan*) occurs as believers meditate and reflect on the beauty and splendor of the Lord.^{8 13}

“that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Translation options

¹² Neil R. Carlson, *Psychology: The Science of Behavior*, p.177.

⁷ For the links to Rom. 1 here see M. Thompson (1991: 81–82): mercy instead of wrath; sacrificing their bodies instead of refusing to glorify God; offering the body to God instead of dishonoring the body through sin; reasonable worship instead of worshiping idols; a renewed mind instead of a reprobate mind; approving the will of God instead of rejecting the ordinance of God. Cf. also D. Peterson 1993: 284; Fee 1994: 601.

⁸ M. Thompson (1991: 84–85) is probably correct in suggesting an echo of the transfiguration of Jesus here (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2).

¹³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 647.

“that by testing, you may discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”

Paul’s point is not that the aim of the transformation of character is the discernment of God’s specific will, but rather that the Christian’s ability to know and do God’s will, **naturally** results from the renewal of the mind.

God’s will is good (moral or beneficial), pleasing (acceptable), and perfect (complete, not lacking anything, nothing is overlooked).

These three qualities are not attributes of God’s will as the NIV and some other translations imply. Rather, Paul said that God’s will itself is what is good, well-pleasing (to Him), and perfect. “Good,” for example, is not an adjective (God’s “good” will) but a noun (God’s will is what is good—good, i.e., for each believer).

→ As a Christian is transformed in his mind and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God’s will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God’s will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.¹⁴

Presenting our bodies—not being conformed to this world—being transformed (by renewal of our mind) **is the Will of God. Romans 8:29** For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be **conformed** to the likeness of His Son.

God’s will, God’s plan is that we be conformed to the likeness of Jesus. This only occurs through transformation, which is the result of renewing our minds.

It appears from the context that the believer is not viewed as ignorant of the will of God, but as needing to avoid blurring its outline by failure to renew the mind continually (cf. Eph 5:8-10). Dedication leads to discernment and discernment to delight in God’s will. That there is an intimate connection between certifying the will of God and making oneself a living sacrifice is indicated by the use of “pleasing” in each case (cf. Philippians 4:18; Heb 13:16).¹⁵

The essence of successful Christian living is the *renewing* of our minds so that we might be able to *approve what God’s will is*—that is, to recognize and put into practice God’s will for every situation we face. God has not given to Christians a set of detailed commandments to guide us. He has given us his Spirit, who is working to change our hearts and minds from within, so that our obedience to God might be natural and spontaneous (see 7:6; 8:5–9; Je. 31:31–34; 2 Cor. 3:6–7; Eph. 4:22–24).¹⁶

Summary

Dedication leads to **discernment** and discernment to **delight** in God’s will.

Implication

Don’t be a conformist

God is not looking for conformists but non-conformists

Jesus would never have been accused of being a conformist

Renew your mind / Renovate your mind

Think of remodeling

Rip out old

Put in new

Remove and replace

¹⁴John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:487-488.

¹⁵Everett F. Harrison, *Expositors Bible Commentary*, Pradis Electronic Resources.

¹⁶D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), Ro 12:1.

See for example:

2 Timothy 2:22 So **flee** youthful passions and **pursue** righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along **with** those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (ESV)

Worship is a way of life—daily, not just Sunday mornings.
God’s will is more about doing than knowing.

Remember: our beliefs determine our decisions which determine our outcomes

Beliefs → Decisions → Outcomes



Talk about it

If you want to change your outcomes, you must change decisions which are based on beliefs.

You can’t change the outcome by continuing to do the same thing

But this is what people do

They keep spending and wondering why they are in debt and can’t do what they want to do

They keep making the same decision in relationships and wonder why they continue to have their hearts broken

Need to understand our deeply rooted beliefs

About money

About relationships

About ourselves

When we change the way we think, we will change our way of behaving.

Application

Dedication, Transformation, Renewal.

Will you make the decision to be dedicated—to present your body to God?

Will you establish a plan—to be transformed?

Will you follow through—continually letting God’s Word renew your mind?

If your plan involves starting regular devotional time, start today.

If your plan involves getting into a small group that can help you grow, start today.

If your plan involves changing a thought pattern or action, start today.

What are your goals? When you look back in 6 months, 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, what do you hope to see? A different person? A different situation?

Will you be able to say, “I made the decision to be dedicated and transformed by the renewing of my mind and then I understood and acted upon God’s will”?

Renew Me

Lord, Renew me

I want to be what You have designed me to be.
I want to think about the world the way You do.
I want to see my life as dependent on You for every breath.
I want to live my life empowered every moment by You.

So Lord, renew me.

Renew my mind so my thoughts are Yours.
Renew my heart so my desires are Yours.
Renew my will so that my decisions reflect Your priorities.
Lord, renew me.

Renew in me the joy of my salvation.
Renew in me the wonder of who You are.
Renew in me the fear of Your Holiness.
Renew in me the love of You.

Lord, please renew me.

Renew my mind so my thoughts are Yours.
Renew my heart so my desires are Yours.
Renew my will so that my decisions reflect Your priorities.
Lord, renew me.

I need Your power daily,
Renew my strength.
I need to bow in dependence on You,
Renew my surrender.
I need to stay at Your feet,
Renew my submission.

Renew my mind so my thoughts are Yours.
Renew my heart so my desires are Yours.
Renew my will so that my decisions reflect Your priorities.
Lord, renew me.

Lord, please renew me so that I reflect You.

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So we do not lose heart.
Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.
(2 Corinthians 4:16 ESV)

You were taught with reference to your former life to lay aside the old man who is being corrupted in accordance with deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man who has been created in God's image—in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth.
(Ephesians 4:22-24 NET Bible)

12:3-8 The priorities of the well-developed body

Having established that the foundation of the believer's conduct is to consecrate his life to God, Paul now turns to the function of the believer's conduct, which is to walk humbly and lovingly.

12:3 Right thinking about ourselves

Interaction: Questions

How does Paul define true humility?

Why is it hard to find the proper balance?

True Humility

Notice the balance

Not thinking too high

But thinking correctly

Sober judgment—objectively

Paul's purpose in this paragraph is to foster unity among Christians by encouraging an attitude of humility and respect towards one another, particularly in the possession and use of

spiritual gifts. Paul urges us not to think too highly of ourselves, but to look at ourselves honestly and objectively.¹⁷

Humility is the ability to acknowledge the “true me”—what God has created me to be, with strengths. But it does not:

ignore the presence of one’s weaknesses
amplify and proclaim one’s strengths

each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned

We are to measure ourselves, not by each other, but by *the measure of faith* (*metron pisteōs*). Some take this phrase to designate the differing amounts of faith that God has given each of us (cf. the NIV and RSV). The context, however, suggests that Paul is speaking here of our common Christian faith, against which each of us is to measure himself or herself (JB: ‘the standard of faith’). When we do this, comparison of ourselves with other believers becomes relatively unimportant—particularly since God has given different gifts to the members of the church. Christ’s body (4–5). What is needed is a recognition of the beautiful God-given and Spiritled diversity and complementarity within the church (see 1 Cor. 12:4–31 for a similar emphasis).¹⁸

The standard of that measurement is “the measure of faith God has given you.” What is this standard? In light of the following verses, Paul may mean the specific amount of faith that God has distributed to each person. He is then encouraging us to look at ourselves in light of the gifts we have and to estimate ourselves accordingly. One person may have a great deal of faith and giftedness, while another has less. Each believer should recognize where he or she stands and pursue those ministries appropriate to them. But another possibility is that the Christian faith in general is the standard of measurement — a standard that is the same for all believers. On this view, Paul is asking us to look carefully to the gospel faith and its requirements as we assess ourselves. The decision between these two options is not easy, but we incline slightly to the second alternative.¹⁹

12:4-5 Right thinking about others

Unity
Diversity
Mutual belonging

We are not independent but interdependent on other members of the body of Christ. We were saved to be part of a body, not individual members.

Interaction: Questions

How is what Paul teaches counter-cultural ?

But in light of the diversity of parts/people, the body must strive in right thinking to maintain unity.

All natural abilities and spiritual gifts are from God and there should be no pride in their use. Instead, God also gives a measure of faith to each believer to enable him to serve.

12:6-8 Right thinking about grace-gifts

The utilization of gifts

What is distinctive about this list of “gifts” is that Paul’s emphasis seems to be on the utilization—the actual using of the gifts for the sake of the body.

¹⁷D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition*,. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

¹⁸D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

¹⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 402.

Gifts:

The emphasis on this term is more on the graciousness of the gift than on the specificity of the gift.

I believe that a good definition of gifts (*χαρίσματα charismata*) is God-given grace for ministry.

Most people emphasize the “ability” where Paul seems to emphasize the ministry.

So rather than call them spiritual gifts or divine abilities, they should be divinely-given ministries.

Key words:

charisma = “grace gift” emphasized that a spiritual gift is a gift from God not a naturally developed ability. This is the primarily word in Romans 12 where Paul is dealing with the “grace given” to believers (12:3, 6).

pneumatikos = “spiritual things” or “things pertaining to the Spirit” which emphasizes the origin of the ability. It is from the Spirit (or the ascended Christ as in Eph. 4).

Common definition

“A spiritual gift is a divinely given enablement for spiritual service within the body of Christ. Its purpose is to glorify God by maturing His people for ministry through its use.”
(William C. Schmidt)

“A spiritual gift is an ability supernaturally given to an individual by the Holy Spirit so that the recipient may utilize that ability to minister beyond his normal human capacity.”
(Edgar p. 13)

“a God given ability for service. Its origin is from God; it is an ability, whether natural or supernatural; and it is given for the purpose of service.” (Ryrie p. 83)

“A spiritual gift is a particular ability to minister to other people which is given graciously by the Holy Spirit to a believer.” (Showers p. 14 *Israel My Glory*, March/May 1988)

God-given ministry to accomplish for the benefit the body of Christ.

You can begin by teaching that the word *χάρισμα* does not inherently mean Spirit-given ability. *Χάρισμα*, as with any other word, needs to be defined in such a way that it fits appropriately with the passage in which it is found. Teach that *χάρισμα* generally means a concrete way that God expresses grace but can be defined more narrowly if the context suggests it. You can teach that Paul’s list-passages discuss ministries rather than abilities (though God gives general spiritual enablement to every spiritual task). You can teach that the items listed by Paul (teaching, prophecy, administration, exhortation, tongues etc.) are in fact ministries (large and small) given by God to members of the Christian community to build that community up in Christ. You can teach your class to get involved in ministry and not wait around until they have figured out what special abilities they do or do not have.²⁰

The word *χαρίσματα* (*charismata*, gifts) indicates that gifts are a manifestation of God’s grace, for Paul goes on to say that the gifts are due to “the grace that was given to us” (*τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν, tēn charin tēn dotheisaphēmin*). The gifts exercised cannot be attributed to the moral nobility of human beings. They are evidence of the graciousness of God, who has supplied his church with means to strengthen the community. The text implies that all believers have such gifts, for Paul simply says “having gifts” (*ἔχοντες χαρίσματα, echontes charismata*), which suggests that all believers enjoy such gifts. The gifts listed here are not exhaustive, for other gifts are cataloged in 1 Cor. 12:8–10, 28–30, and Eph. 4:11. Nor should any symbolic significance be read out of the fact that seven gifts are enumerated here (contra Fitzmyer 1993c: 647). If Paul had wanted to make that point, he would have called attention to the number seven. Further, contrary to the writer of Revelation, Paul does not employ numbers symbolically. The gifts itemized are

²⁰Kenneth Berdinga, *Confusing Word And Concept In “Spiritual Gifts”: Have We Forgotten James Barr’s Exhortations?* — *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Volume 43 (The Evangelical Theological Society, 2000; 2002), 43:51.

representative, showing the diversity of the unified body of Christ. The diversity of the gifts is underscored by the word *διάφορα* (*diaphora*, different).²¹

Implications

Much has been made of “spiritual gifts” and I must confess a reaction to the formalization and institutionalization systems of identifying gifts. Paul never seems to be interested in telling people how they know what their gifts are—it must be fairly simple. In each of the passages that Paul lists gifts, he provides a different list—so he must not have been worried about “specific gifts” but perhaps categories of gifts. This seems to be what Peter does in 1 Peter 4:10-11.

The main passages that discuss gifts all have unity and love as the focus. The discussion of gifts is used as a support for the need for unity among diversity through the service of others in love.

	Unity	Diversity	Maturity/Love
1 Corinthians	12:1-13	12:14-31	13:1-13
Romans	12:1-5	12:6-8	12:9-21
Ephesians	4:1-6	4:7-12	4:13-16
1 Peter	4:10	4:11	4:7-9

Summary

God desires that those who are being consecrated to Him in order to be transformed by the renewing of their minds think correctly about themselves and others, so that we realize the interconnectedness and interdependence that God has designed.

For the church body to fulfill what God desires, each individual must think correctly—humbly and sensibly about themselves and their role in the body. Each member has been given a ministry to accomplish for the benefit of the body.

<p>Implications/Application</p> <p>Key question: What difference does our church make?</p> <p>What if everyone (all believers) attended a church like Calvary—what the world be different? Better? Worse?</p>	 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Talk about it</div>
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Key Point

Honor God at all times through a life transformed by correct thinking that leads to correct living—living out God’s will.

	What do we learn About God?
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Merciful, Gracious, Giver of “gifts”

	Act on it
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How is your thinking being influenced by the world?
 What must you do to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind?”
 How are you thinking rightly and wrongly about your strengths and weaknesses?
 How are you ministering to the body?

²¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 655.

Romans 12:1-8

- 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.
- 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.
- 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you
not to think of himself more highly
than he ought to think,
but to think with sober judgment,
each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
- 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. (ESV)

Action of the Justified: Toward the Assembly

Romans 12:1-21

Foundation of Conduct

Function of Conduct

In Humility

3

8

In love

9

21