

Take a deep breath. For before us is a “therefore.” What we have been reading has ramifications. Expectations! Activity! Action! We can’t sit still or be idle with that background, that legacy, that grace, those mercies. Mercies of God that He has accomplished for us and revealed to us in chapters 1-11 of the Epistle to the Romans. The door is open. Let’s go!

We have our work set out for us. He points to three essential aspects of our walk:

1. Personally with God;
2. With others as members of Christ and one of another;
3. Use of the gifts God has given us.

When studying this passage we tend to concentrate first upon our personal walk, then skip to the gifts we have. We focus upon ourselves and pass over our part in the Body of Christ. Actually our salvation, our personal walk and our gifts are all for the establishment and edification of the Church. If we don’t realize and walk in the light of this we risk becoming self centered. We might miss God’s will and purpose for our united testimony as Christ’s body made up of believers loving one another.

There are at least seven major actions Paul urges you and me to immediately undertake by faith. We are to:

- I. Present (once and for all) our physical bodies a living sacrifice to God holy and acceptable for His use.
- II. Be (continually) not conformed to this world (age).
- III. Be transformed (continually) by the (continuing) renewal of my mind.
- IV. Continually seek to know and do (prove) God’s will in my daily life for a lifetime.
- V. Think soberly (clearly) of ourselves in light of the measure of faith He has given each personally by grace.
- VI. Live and serve the Lord in view of our membership in Christ’s Body as loving members one of another.
- VII. Serve the Lord faithfully and diligently with the gift(s)
He has given each to glorify Him and benefit others.

We can now look at the basics in more detail.

- I. Present (once and for all) my physical body a living sacrifice to God holy and acceptable for His use.
 - A. A holy (set apart, pure and clean) sacrifice acceptable to God for His use.
 - B. A living sacrifice ready to be used as He desires. Nothing held back.
 - C. Specifically the believer’s body is to be presented. The body is viewed as the source of sin in our lives, Romans 7:22-25. It is what others see of us. In chapter 6 God has given us authority to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to Him and to consciously yield the members of our bodies to righteousness. He enables this act through the Holy Spirit now dwelling in our bodies. Knowing this we are to present our bodies to God a living sacrifice. This means all of our strength, time,

abilities (natural talents and acquired skills) and our spiritual gifts (mentioned below) are to be laid at the Lord’s feet, sacrificed to Him. Even if we think they might be used for Him we are to sacrifice them to Him. Then if and when He desires us to pick them up and use them for Him we do so. But the fact that we have them is not His permission to use them as we please for Him, much less for our own benefit.

- II. Be (continually) not conformed to this world (age). The world attempts to tamp everyone into its mold to conform all to it. We are not to allow it to do that. We are the light the world exposing its wickedness and ungodliness. We are the salt of the earth. While the people of God are here on the earth He holds back His wrathful judgement of it. Be not conformed to it indeed. On the other hand this does NOT say be un-conformed to the world. There is no godly virtue in being a non-conformist. Our faithful walk with the Lord will entail all of the lack of conformity necessary for a sufficient witness for God.
- III. Be continually transformed by the renewing of my mind. God has predestined all who love Him to be conformed to the image of His Son, ch. 8:28-9. We are continually being changed by the Spirit, 2Corinthians 3:18 (as a caterpillar in a cocoon) as we walk with the Lord reading and praying daily and serving Him. (Is this world really just our cocoon where we are presently being transformed?) The ultimate transformation awaits the Rapture, 1John 3:1-3, 1Corinthians 15:51- 57; 2Corinthians 5: 1- 4. But we can get on with it to be more like Him here and now. Seek to know and do (prove) God’s will in our lives daily and for a lifetime.
- IV. Don’t think too much of ourselves. Instead we are to:
 - A. Personally think of ourselves soberly (clearly) in light of the measure of faith given each of us personally by grace.
 - B. Think of ourselves as members of Christ dependent on Him for all..
 - C. Think of ourselves personally as members one of another. We belong! I am not independent of other believers.
 - D. Be aware Christ has given us gifts to use for Him for the building up of the body, not for self glory.
 - E. Be aware the gift(s) He has given you authorizes you to use them and we are responsible to faithfully use them, in faith and dependance upon His guidance and power through the Holy Spirit and in concert with all of the gifts He has given others.
 - F. Be aware that our gifts differ from one another and that no one person has all the gifts nor should be expected to fulfill all of the duties of all the gifts.

Next Paul gives some examples of ways we can serve the Lord using our gifts. The list is representative, not comprehensive, and focuses upon the work to be done rather than the gift(s) we possess. Two other lists of gifts are given in the New Testament. All three lists look at gifts differently and none are comprehensive. Here Romans looks at examples of the work to be done and the manner and spirit in which it is to be undertaken. 1Corinthians 12 looks at gifts as the function and contribution of various members of the Body together to its edification (building up). Ephesians 4 lists five basic gifts the risen ascended Christ gave to men for establishment and edification of the entire Body of Christ on earth to equip the various members to fulfill their roles in the ministry of Christ here on earth.

Whatever gift we have, it is according to the grace given us. God's grace. A gift is not something we deserve or even expect. Seven are mentioned specifically here. We are to value these gifts and support those especially gifted but we all can do the work envisioned in this list to some degree, as we are enabled by the Spirit.

The first mentioned is prophecy. The word of God was long ago completed so new revelations are not to be expected. Yet prophesying is commended in 1Corinthians 14; 1Thessalonians 5 and 1Peter 4:11, etc. It is speaking God's mind for the current situation, applying the scriptures, both Old and New Testament, admonishing, encouraging, comforting and building up fellow believers as led by the Spirit. Prophesying is sometimes transcribed for use by readers not able to be present. Some is simply written words rather than spoken. While these writings (and now tapes and CD's, etc.) are of value they can gradually become "dated" as to specific applications due to changing times. However they should still be "mined" for valuable insights and exhortations. The scriptures do not become outdated. The scriptures can and should be continually freshly applied through Spirit led prophesying, spoken or written, to suit the times and current local needs. God and His word is in no way limited by time or location. Women can do this also, privately with head covered, 1Corinthians 11:1-16.

The next is ministry, "serving." Not as one standing before a congregation but one (he or she) who does the job of a deacon. They handle the work and details necessary for the meetings of the assembly and other activities of the assembly. They do meeting rooms, chairs, cleaning, audio systems, water, bathroom facilities, food preparation, opening homes for visitors, etc. Bless them.

Then there are those who are gifted to teach, instructing the believers, young and old, in God's word, explaining it and applying it to real situations, preparing and establishing the saints for what they will encounter in life ahead. (Women are not to teach doctrine, 1Timothy 2:11-14.)

The close companion of teaching is exhortation. This is

using the scriptures in the power of the Spirit to encourage and admonish individuals and the congregated assembly as a whole. Women can do this privately.

Giving? Is giving a gift? Isn't everyone supposed to give? Yes. But some seem to have a gift for spotting others in need and simply sharing what they have selflessly with them, with no regard toward receiving recognition as is the way in the world. Liberality with simplicity.

Ruling? Does the Church of God, the assembly, have rulers? Many denominations do, some with vast hierachal organizations, others with simply a "pastor" who takes responsible charge of church services, its order, business and many other spiritual functions. While the term "rule" has the idea of responsible leadership, this doesn't include presiding over the local assembly, or over it's meetings. Clearly, according to scripture, the Lord is in the midst of those gathered unto His name and the leading of the Holy Spirit is to be sought and depended upon there. Overseers and elders are mentioned in Acts 14:23, Acts 20:28 and later more fully in 1Timothy 3, Titus 1:5-13, and 1Peter 5:1-5. These fill the need for respected, caring, godly older brothers to maintain oversight and leadership in the assembly. They help maintain order and deal with any who might be causing confusion. One who is gifted to rule is to do so with diligence. We are not to let any need for decisive action be ignored, neglected or forgotten by the assembly nor are we to let disorder and sin continue without intervention. Carelessness or indifference is not becoming to the House of God. We are to have elders in the assembly who "rule." But not as lords over the flock of God.

Finally he that shows mercy is to be genuinely cheerful about it. The Greek word is related to our English word hilarity. What a happy opportunity to be God's merciful channel of blessing. So we find among us brothers or sisters who simply need to be shown mercy, even if they may have foolishly brought their troubles upon themselves. We all have benefitted from God's mercy on poor lost undeserving sinners. Show mercy. Cheerfully.

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

The gifts named in this chapter are mentioned rather informally. The "list" seems to gradually merge into a description of a variety of attitudes, Christian graces and conduct becoming to a believer. We will look at those next.

But take note! There is no mention of the **law** in Romans from here on (except twice in chapter 13 as being fulfilled in our walk in love). There no mention of **sin** or **sins** in Romans from here on (except once in chapter 14 in contrast to faith.) We are not to be occupied with these anymore.

By Ron Canner, January 16, 2008