

Romans 12:1-8

PREVIOUS

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Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

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Our Responsibilities Under Grace - Part 5

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

We are reminded in [Romans 6:6-7, 7:12, 14, 18 and 23-24](#) just how our bodies are prone to be sinful. The propensity to sin is still in them. So it only makes sense to yield them back to Christ. It makes no sense to go back the way we used to be. We used to be helpless and our bodies took power over us. Therefore, we lived in sin as sinners. But now that we are believers and God's life lives in us, we have the option of yielding to Him. The only logical thing for a believer to do is to take this body and yield it back to the One who gave His for us.

The way you start presenting your body to Him is with a renovation of your mind which results in a transformation of the character. I want to make sure we understand that. All this sinful body, the mind of the flesh, is resident right between in your mind. It facilitates the sinfulness that the body desires to do. Therefore we need to have our minds renewed. As a man thinks, that is the way he will be.

I have been telling you the word "transformed" is in the passive voice. Dr. Zodiates corrected me. It is in the middle voice. In other words, I choose to be transformed. I am involved in it.

Have you ever hugged somebody and they just stood there? You are involved in the action, but they are not.

What we are talking about here is you are both involved in the action. You are willing. I like a hug when somebody hugs back. You know, it just makes it right. When you are both participating in it, that is what he is talking about in Romans 12. It is not just God transforming me; I have a willing part in this thing. I have made a choice.

This transformation that takes place after we renovate our minds is a beautiful thing. Once we are transformed and it begins to show itself, we begin to see life in a different way than we have ever seen it before. I don't know how to express it except what is right here in the Word.

The first thing Paul deals with is, you start seeing the church differently than you have ever seen it before. One of the problems we have in the local church is that people have preconceived ideas of what "church" ought to be. They think they know what the church is and they drag it into the church. Paul knew something about man-made religion. He was a Pharisee. He knew something about what men could do to have a form of godliness but deny its power. He says, "You are going to have a brand new realization. Once you have presented yourself, once you have your minds renewed and a transformed life, part of this transformation is a brand new realization you have. You start looking at things differently than you have ever looked at them before."

In verses 3-8 he talks about the new realization you have towards the church. It is not what you think it is. It is what God says it is. That is what the church is. The church is not just some local body on a corner. The church is a world-wide organism. It is not an organization, it is an organism. Now there is a local church, yes. But the church goes around this world to include all people who have put their faith into Jesus Christ. They begin to realize, as they present themselves to Him that they are a functional part of the body of Christ. Now that they are gifted there is something they can do that perhaps others cannot do. They are important to the body of Christ.

In verses 3-8 he talks about the body of Christ like it is a big pie, and God cut the slices in that pie. In other words, He puts you where He wants to put you. We are all spread out in this great big pie. Maybe I got a smaller piece of pie than you got, and you got a bigger piece than I did. But I am not to ever worry about that because if it is by grace, I don't deserve any of the pie to begin with. So I begin to realize that I have a measure of faith to believe God and to work in that piece of pie that God has given to me. Maybe the influence that I have does not go outside the church walls. Maybe yours does. But there is no problem here because I am willing to stay within the piece of pie that God has given to me. To him that is given much, much is required. It is a brand new understanding. The church is not something you just come to on Sundays. Church is something that is going on all the time. It is Christ's presence on this earth in human form, in the human form of believers. And each one has a different aspect of giftedness.

You see, the gifts in the body are like a big diamond. You have to be so careful. You may be gifted here and see things through the strength of your gift, but you may misunderstand somebody else who sees it out of the strength of their gift. You don't just need one gift, you need all of them to complete the picture. When we are functioning as God wants us to function, then the world sees us but they don't see us. They see Christ and all of His aspects manifested in our life.

Let's look at the text again. Verse 3 says, "For through the grace given to me." Paul says, "I wouldn't even be an apostle if God had not given grace to me. I don't deserve it." He says over in one of his epistles to Timothy, "I am the chief of all sinners." He says, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment." That word "sound judgment" is *sophronos*, a mind-set that doesn't go to the extreme: understand that God has allotted to you something.

Paul goes on to say, "as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." When you think with sound judgment, the way you judge and perceive things, your mind-set, your attitude towards that, is never to an extreme. You aren't exalting yourself because of the big piece of pie you got. You realize that you don't deserve it. You are not worried because you got such a small piece of pie. You are not discouraged because somebody else has more influence than you do. You don't do that. You have sound judgment. And it is all based on the renewing of the word of God. You base everything on what God has said. So therefore, you can stand. Your attitude is not to an extreme. You have sound judgment.

In verses 4-5 he compares the physical body to the body of Christ. He says, "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Then in verse 6 you see where he is headed. "And

since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let each exercise them accordingly." So, we all have different grace gifts, gifts that we don't deserve. They are not talents and abilities that you have before you get saved, although those things are also useable in the kingdom of God. But what God does is infuse into you the Holy Spirit, the Giver of all the gifts, and a particular function that encompasses your personality, your individuality. The beautiful thing is, when God saved us, He didn't throw away our individuality. But He transformed it and put Himself within us. You may have abilities and talents before, but now this gift that God has given you, the function that God has designed for you, begins to take place.

Well, Paul mentions seven gifts, and as I told you, I think this is the most complete list. Over in [1Cor 12](#) he is talking about the diversity of the body. In [Ephesians 4](#) he is talking about gifted men. In [1Peter 4](#) he is talking about two different kinds of gifts, serving and speaking, but he doesn't really qualify it. Right here is the purest place, I think, you find the gifts.

Our gifts fall into one of these seven categories. First of all, he says, "prophecy." I think prophecy is preaching. He is not talking about the office of the prophet; he is talking about the gift of prophecy. There is a difference. Ephesians tells us that the apostle and prophets are relegated to the foundation of our faith. Now we have the gift of prophecy. Anybody can have the gift of prophecy, as God has chosen to cut maybe your slice of pie in the area of prophecy. It says, "according to the proportion of [his] faith." There is no pronoun "his" there. It is the faith. The faith always refers to the revelation and the mysteries of God that is revealed in His Word, the gospel. So a person with the gift of prophecy has the ability to observe and to discern and to interpret, certainly, and to apply, but to take the Word of God and to confront others with what the Word of God has to say. It may be in the pulpit, or it may be someplace else.

The gift of prophecy has to be just as accurate as the gift of teaching. The word comes from the word prophetes, which means prophet. If you will study the word "prophet" you will find that these were the men who took what God had shown them and confronted people with it, always. A teacher is not so much interested in confrontation as he is clarification. A person with the gift of prophecy puts it right in your face and makes you make a choice, "What are you going to do with this?" God has designed certain ones to have the gift of prophecy. I do not believe it means to foretell. I believe it means to tell forth, to declare forth. This is where I am coming from. You study the Word yourself, but I really believe that is what he is saying here.

Secondly, is the gift of service. In 12:7 he says, "if service, in his serving." The gift of service is the guy who looks for the practical needs in the body. I love people like this. They never want any credit. They are always behind the scenes. They see something that is practical and move right towards it. It may not be in the same way. It says, "in his serving". Ek is a preposition that means motion out of. Eis is a preposition that means motion into, and en is a preposition that means remaining within. I think Paul has already clarified what he is talking about: remaining within the piece of pie that God has given to you.

The gift of service will manifest itself in a multitude of ways. You may show yours one way and somebody else may show his a different way, but it will always be within that which the Holy Spirit empowers and directs. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit who is author of these gifts. He is the one who is directing them. So don't ever compare yourself to somebody else. The gift of serving is very important, but it is also very individual.

It goes on to say, "or he who teaches, in his teaching." You see, it is not the teacher but the gift of teaching. He is not talking about the position. He is talking about the gift. The word means to clarify God's word. What a beautiful gift this is, to be able to clarify it in such a way. People I have known to be true teachers love it when a class is sitting there and you come to that place and they say, "Aha!" That is what they are looking for. They love that. They feed off of that. They thrill with that. The gift of prophecy is different. The gift of prophecy is when they say, "Aha, oh me!" That is the gift of prophecy. But a teacher is satisfied with the "Aha." He has clarified it. They have understood it. He has done his work. They walk away that way.

You can also have the gift of teaching in many areas. As a matter of fact, all of us are commanded to do what all these gifts are when we are not functioning in the body. I am commanded to teach to my family. I am commanded to serve. I am commanded to do all of those things. And the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts lives in me to empower me to do that. But when it comes to the function of the church, then it becomes narrower and there is a piece of pie that each of us has.

Then Paul moves from teaching to exhortation: "or he who exhorts, in his exhortation." The word "exhort" or "exhortation" is parakaleo. Para means to motion alongside, and kaleo means to call, to call alongside. The gift of exhortation is more one-on-one. It takes the same Word of God that the preacher confronts with, that the teacher clarifies, and he takes it and counsels with it, to give guidance, come alongside someone. Oh,

how needed this is in the body of Christ. So we have the gift of exhortation. And really, it is a love gift because the Holy Spirit is called the great Paraclete, He is the one that comes alongside and comforts individually in our lives and reveals truth and gives instruction.

Well, he moves on and says, "he who gives, with liberality." I love people who have the gift of giving. I have to give, just like the person with the gift of giving. But the gift of giving is something supernatural that the body needs, to give example, to help others in their command to give. A gift of giving is with liberality. The word "liberality" there means not abundance as much as it means without double motive, which means he will probably give in abundance. When you have a double motive, you give a token gift. But when you don't have a double motive and the Holy Spirit of God is moving you, the abundance is possible. It is not possible when you are doing it out of the flesh. It is possible when you are doing it under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God. It means there are no strings attached to what he does.

You know, money is power in our world. Some people use that as power in the church. I know you know that. Some people will say, "Well, I will just go away and I will keep my money to myself. I will just take my money and go someplace else." Well, if it is your money, then help yourself. But if you understand that you are a bond-servant and own nothing in this world, and God gave you what you have and you are a simple steward of that, then maybe you need to rethink what you just said, because when you give it, you don't give it to the church, you give it to God. And you don't worry about what goes on because God will take care of that. You do as God instructs you to do.

The gift of giving does exactly that. You can't move them emotionally. You can't stir up the gift of giving and say, "Come on, you have to give," and hope that gift of giving will set into action. No, he only moves as God tells him to move. And when he does, there is no double motive, there are no strings attached. And it will be in abundance. You need that in every church. Remember, God, who gives the gift of giving, gives the gifts to give. He gives the ability to get it in order to give it. So, if you are a very wealthy person, you had better ask yourself the question, "Did I make this on my own or did God allow me to do this because He has given me the gift of giving? I have the gift of getting, so I must have the gift of giving." See, one day we will all stand before God and answer to Him for what we have done with what He has entrusted to our lives.

The next gift that he mentions, the sixth gift, is the gift of leading. Romans 12:8 says, "he who leads, with diligence." Now, some people think the gift of leading is organization, etc. Well, maybe so, but the word is *proistemi*. Pro means before, and *istemi* means to stand. To stand before, to lead and to preside. If you have a room full of people with the gift of leading, can you imagine presiding over that room? But then again, it wouldn't be that way because it is Holy Spirit directed; it is Holy Spirit empowered. It is the gift of being able to take a stand in front of somebody and say, "This is what we are going to do, let's go."

James, at the counsel of elders, after he heard all these gifted leaders speak, said, "Okay, gentlemen, this is what we are going to do." That is the gift of leading. You have to have that in the body of Christ.

There is a synonym for this word that is found in a very familiar passage in Hebrews 13:17. I want to make sure we have an understanding. When you have a group of elders in a church, the elders are not there so that everybody in the church feels the same way they feel. As a matter of fact, as diverse as churches are, you will never have that happen in our lifetime. But they are there to say, "This is what God is saying." They are not the only ones who can hear from God, they are the ones who make sure that God is heard. There are people who have to have the gift of leading to stand up and say, "This is what God said. We are confident of that, totally unanimous in that. This is where we believe we ought to go." The people then line up behind them and trust God to work through that and to do what He said He was going to do.

Look at [Hebrews 13:17](#): "Obey your leaders [plural], and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

Now the word for "leaders" there is *hegeomai*. It is a synonym for *proistemi* that we are looking at in Romans 12. Here are groups of people who are given an assignment, to give watch over the souls of others. We found that the leaders in the church are to give direction, discipline and to protect the doctrine in the church. That is all we can really find in the New Testament there to do. But when they step out to lead, the word "obey" here is *peitho*. *Peitho* means to allow yourself to be persuaded by the people God has put over you who have the gift of leading, trust the Holy Spirit leading them through unanimity to lead you, get in behind them, let them do this without grief. That is the way the church is supposed to function. Obviously you would want the elders to have the gift of leading because they have to take stands and do things that are very, very important and

sometimes are not very popular. Somebody who has the gift of leading will take that stand.

Now, Paul gives a restriction to it. He says, "he who leads, with diligence." Now the word "diligence" gives us the clue here. It is the word *spoude*. It has the idea of earnest effort, but it also has the idea of urgency and haste. Have you ever known somebody who couldn't come to a conclusion about anything?

You have some people in the body of Christ who say, "Oh, we have a problem here." But there is no haste, no urgency. They can't come to a decision. "Well, let's pray about it." And we pray about it and we pray about it and we pray about it and we pray about it. We just keep on praying about it. "Well, when are we going to do something?" "I don't know, we are praying about it." You need people with the gift of leading who can urgently and with haste and with great effort come to a decision and say, "This is what we are going to do." The body is desperate for it. So therefore, God has put those people in the body of Christ.

Well, now you come then to the last gift he mentions, the gift of mercy. It says, "he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." The word "mercy" is another love gift, as exhortation. Here is the difference, and you have got to see this. So often, without understanding what the church is, you are thinking that because somebody does something differently than you would have done it, they don't love you. You see, that is what happens. What you are really doing, if you are filled with the Spirit, you are just seeing out of your strength. But remember, there are seven sides to how love can be manifested within the body and how Christ ministers life and love through the body.

The word is *eleos*. You have two sides to it. On one side of the coin, mercy has a heart for people who are suffering but shows itself by what they do, by ministering to these people. Exhortation seems to have the exact same heart, love, but the person who has this gift expresses it in what they say, not in what they do. You see, folks, you have got to understand this. I am not you. You are not me. You are not somebody else. You are going to stay in the piece of pie God gave to you. Let God empower you. Quit worrying about what somebody else is not doing. Get busy about what God wants you to do. That is the body of Christ.

If you had never been in a church, then what does Romans 12 say? It tells you what the body is, how it is to function, where we are to stay. Don't go to extremes. Have sound judgment. You see, a lot of times an exhorter, for instance, will come along and speak to someone words of encouragement. But that person will walk away and say, "He didn't really love me. If he loved me, he would have done something about it." He did do something about it. But he didn't do it the way you wanted it done. Somebody else may come along and minister that way. The body is so diverse and yet so beautifully unified. It is a beautiful picture.

Maybe I am not serving you in a way that you want to be served. When you don't understand the gifts, do you realize how messed up people can get? If you are looking at a diamond from one direction, somebody else might be looking at the same diamond from another direction and not seeing it like you are seeing it. When you come into the body of Christ, that is when you understand that you are a part of the solution, not the problem. So when you are filled with the Spirit of God and you say, "You know, God, Wayne didn't get a very big piece of the pie. And God, I believe I need to come alongside him here because I can see where he is lacking, and I think I will be part of the solution." That is the way the body works.

Do you know what I love? I love to go to a restaurant where the waiters watch after each other. You know, you will have a corner over here and this is one person's corner. You will have another corner over here and that is that person's corner. Each waiter or waitress will have a certain area. But if you go to these places where they watch after each other's area, they walk by and over here is an empty glass of water, they will fill it up or get some tea or whatever is necessary. They cover for each other.

It is almost that way in the body of Christ. It is not exactly, but it is almost that way. It is like each one fits where the other one can't fit. When you see a need, you are part of the solution. You don't need a business meeting to say that the preacher ought to have done it. You are part of the solution. It says in 1 Peter 5, "You elders, don't overlord the flock." Do you know what that means? Don't do for the flock what the flock is designed to do.

That was the last gift mentioned. By the way, it says to do it with cheerfulness. He is talking about the overwhelming joy that motivates that gift.

Now remember, when you are walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit of God, surrendered to Him, you are going to see out of your strength that God has given you. It is not to create another problem by what you see. It is to become part of the solution for what you see is not there. That is the body of Christ, working together so that Christ might be seen in them.

What Paul does here is beautiful to me. He moves from the church, which is the body of Christ, a brand new realization towards it, and moves to the congregation. Not only are you going to see the church differently, you are going to see the people within the body in a way that you have never seen it before. I think we are desperate to hear this, folks.

Many people think the elders are the ones to bring every problem to. Oh, no. They are the last resort. You see, there are "one another" commands that you have got to understand. The body will never be a healthy body until the individual members realize their responsibility to other members in the congregation. You see the congregation differently than you have ever seen it before.

Look at [Romans 12:9](#). He moves from the church to the congregation. In verse 9 he says, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good." Paul uses a word here, love: "Let your love be without hypocrisy." And I want you to see that if it is the kind of love that God produces in you and in me, it can never be with hypocrisy. In other words, he is just taking you back to make sure you are surrendered to the Holy Spirit of God in every minute. If you are, then your love will not be with hypocrisy. Because when God's love is present, hypocrisy can never be a mix.

Look back in [Romans 8](#). You see, this love that God produces in us is the signal that we are believers, that we are under grace and that God is working in our life. That is the signal. Romans 8:3 says, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."

"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order." Condemned sin in the flesh means that He judiciously dealt with it; "that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

Now the word "requirement" is actually the word "righteousness." What the Law requires can now be fulfilled in us. How? Through Him. How do we know it is fulfilled in us? How do you know that? How do you know that you are under grace? How do you know that you are a believer?

Look over in [Romans 13:8-10](#). This is very, very significant and I think very, very important because I want you to know that the love Paul is talking about in chapter 12 is not a human love. It is something God has to produce with human cooperation within the individual. It says, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. Verse 9 continues, "For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Verse 10 goes on, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."

Look over in [Galatians 5:14](#). It says it even more distinctly and more clear. This love that we are talking about is not a human kind of love. What we call love on this earth is not maybe necessarily love. We are talking about a love that God creates within us. John tells us in his epistle that the world does not understand this kind of love. It says in verse 14, "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

What I am trying to show you is, when he says "Let love be without hypocrisy," if you are presented to Christ, renewed in your mind, surrendered to His spirit, your love that you have is His love produced in you and it can never have hypocrisy in it. It is a pure love without hypocrisy. The word "hypocrisy" comes from two words, an, which means without, and hupokritos, which means to pretend or simulate. It came from a word that meant inexperienced in the art of acting. You can't act this way because you are inexperienced. This is something that God has to produce in your life. It will be without hypocrisy, not pretense involved. God will produce this.

Listen, this love is the house that all the gifts live in. You can fake every one of the gifts, but I want to tell you something, friend, you cannot fake the fruit. If that love is not there, then you are not walking under grace, and you are not living in surrender to the Holy Spirit of God.

But not only that, it is the spring that all ministry flows out of. There is no ministry without this spring. Look over in [1Corinthians 13:1](#). You may be doing good socially, you may be doing good some other way, but it has no ministry in it. What do you mean by ministry? That which brings glory back to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. There is no ministry without this love. It says in [1Corinthians 13:1](#), "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift

of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." Nothing. I am nothing. I don't care how many miracles I can do.

Somebody repeated the miracles that Moses did when he was with Pharaoh. There are people who can do all these things. We think if it is supernatural that it is God, no, sir. What God does supernaturally and divinely has a mark on it and you can't fake this.

Verse 3 goes on, "And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." Love only comes as a production of the Holy Spirit of God from one who is surrendered absolutely to the Lordship of Christ, moment by moment and to His Word. If it is not there, it is not a ministry. It might be a good thing, but it is not a ministry. Remember what Isaiah said, "Our righteousness, our good deeds, are filthy rags in the sight of God." Because God wants the glory for what He does through man on this earth. It only starts by being surrendered to Him. So, it is the fertilizer that causes us to grow in the Word. I could go on and on.

Okay, Paul said, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil." "Abhor" means to detest it with horror. The word "evil" is poneros. It is a present participle and the participle means while my love is without hypocrisy, then I will be abhorring, detesting with horror, anything that is evil. The word is poneros. The word kakos means inherent evil. It may not be harming anybody. Poneros means intentional, injurious, evil to somebody else. It is talking about relationships, folks. When my love is without any kind of hypocrisy at all, then I will absolutely detest anything that would intentionally harm my brother. That doesn't mean I won't hurt him, if my intention is to heal him and to help him. But I will never do anything that would intentionally bring harm to him. That is what he is talking about.

Then Paul says, "cling to what is good." The word "cling" is the word for glue. You are glued to that which is good. It is passive voice. I understand that because as my love is being produced by the Holy Spirit, there is no hypocrisy in it, there is no pretense in it. Then what I do has the intention never to harm anybody. It is glued to doing that for others which is good, agathos. It is the word that means benevolent, spiritually beneficial good to someone else. Remember back in [Romans 7:18](#), Paul says, "There is nothing good [agathos] that dwells in me." Wait a minute. Then he clarifies it, doesn't he? "That is in my flesh." So there is nothing of flesh that we are talking about here. This is what the Holy Spirit of God produces in one's life.

The church of Ephesus in [Revelation 2](#) got off course, didn't it? "I have this against you, you disciplined, organized church, you have left your first love," Jesus said. "I have this against you. You forgot until you love Him, there is no loving anybody else." Call it what you want, it is not loving anyone else