

Date : 1 December 2024
Theme : Making our salvation sure
Topic : Be transformed by renewing our minds
Key Passage : *Romans 12:3-8*
Key Verse : *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. Romans 12:6*

Introduction

Based on what God did in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ *Romans 1-11*, how should Christ' followers, who have had an encounter with the love of God, live?

Romans 12:1-8 points believers to live a life consistent with gospel living, walking not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Living a counter cultural lifestyle requires a change of attitudes with a renewed mind. This new image of ourselves means not patterning after the world but conforming to the image of Christ; from our carnal nature to our spiritual nature. This change process, transformation, involves the renewal of our mind. The power for change is the Holy Spirit whose manifestation comes in the form of His giftings or grace gifts.

Transformation and renewal are not one-time events, but an intentional process through humility, prayer, surrender to God, individually and as well as collectively, our gifts and talents intertwined with other members in the church *Romans 12:4-5*. Thus oriented to the Holy Spirit, He is the engine that drives our growth as a fellowship of believers.

1. How do we receive power for the transformation process?

a) Transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit

We are being transformed into Christ's image by the Spirit of the Lord. *2 Corinthians 3:18*. But this will not happen unless we yield to His working. Just as a teacher cannot do much unless his student co-operates with him, so too the Holy Spirit cannot do His work of transformation unless we make ourselves available to Him. It is not just a matter of time but the attitude of the learner. What should we be to let the Holy Spirit do His work?

b) Attitudes need to change

- Pride

This is everyone's problem: Thinking too highly of ourselves. *Romans 12:3*

We all tend to present ourselves as much better than what we really are.

Pride says *...I am good enough, through my own efforts, to merit God's acceptance...*

This attitude prevents the Holy Spirit from doing His work in my life.

Pride and ego are also cancerous to body life as they give rise to a superiority complex. 21st century individualism tends to demean and put down others while God calls us to show His presence to all. Only with metamorphosed heart, mind and life can we be a channel for righteous living.

- Humility

What is humility and how do we humble ourselves?

- Humility pleads for mercy while pride boasts of merit.

Humility identifies with needs of others but prides alienates through self-serving.

- Humble ourselves before God

Don't ask God to do this. God's Word says we humble ourselves.

- ① Examine our hearts before the Lord

Think soberly (as realistically as we can)

- ② Examine our level of faith (how far am I prepared to go in trusting His Word?)

- ③ Repent of self-righteousness

Self-righteousness wears many disguises and we usually do not recognise it ourselves. God's Word says it's in the form of lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. *1 John 2:15,16*

Do not conform to the world controlled by Satan.

God's vision for us is to conform to the image of Jesus.

- c) Know that God has distributed a measure of faith to every believer *Romans 12:3 NET*

This is the initial deposit of faith everyone is given. Our faith grows when it is tested.

As the transformation process progresses, we are being tested as to whether we are truly enjoying God's good, pleasing and perfect will for our lives. To the degree we accept and pursue it as genuine and worthy, is the degree His will is being fulfilled in us. This confirms that God's perfect will is working in us.

To carry out this work of transformation, the Holy Spirit provides the power which is manifested through His gifts, called spiritual or grace gifts. 7 gifts are listed. (There are many other gifts). These gifts are given freely. We must receive and use them. *Romans 12:6*

2. What is our part?

- a) Surrender control to the Holy Spirit

This is a daily offering of our lives to God as a living sacrifice. We say simply...*Lord I offer my life to You this day. Please take full control of my life. Show me Your way. Lead me....*

It is a sacrifice because we only have one life.

(No one can achieve anything significant without making sacrifices)

A surrendered life puts God's Kingdom first.

Example, Stephen, in the early church, was stoned for testifying for Jesus. Our Lord Jesus stood to receive Stephen's testimony and to acknowledge his sacrifice.

As the Judge of those who had trampled upon God's servant, our Lord rose from His throne to honour him.

- b) Put in place a lifestyle of spiritual disciplines.

Spiritual disciplines provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to manifest His power through us, as we make space for the Holy Spirit daily.

What spiritual disciplines will help in this process?

i) Listening time

Some people call this solitude. We set a time to be quiet, to ask the Holy Spirit to show us His will and to listen to His still small voice.

(*Deuteronomy 1:45* relates an incident of how God responded when His people (Israel) refused to listen to Him. We are told *...but the Lord would not listen to your voice...* and why not? *...I spoke to you but you would not listen...* *Deuteronomy 1:43*)

ii) Mediating on His Word

Our bible reading time must be kept. Urgent matters can wait. God speaks to us through His written Word. As we become familiar with His language, the renewed mind has the mental and insight capacities to discern the Spirit's voice – that it is good, acceptable and perfect, as well as the spiritual taste so that when something is of God, it tastes good to us. We delight in it. We approve of it.

iii) Be filled with the Holy Spirit

We receive this gift from our Heavenly Father through the laying of hands by Spirit – filled leaders. At such times, the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to us.

What if we do not feel the Holy Spirit's power in the beginning?

c) We are to fan the Holy Spirit's flame. *2 Timothy 1:6-7*

A fire do not stoke itself. It requires fuel and attention or it will eventually die out. Likewise, we have to give to the gifts the energy it needs to stay lit and burning bright.

Therefore, we are not to be reticent with His gifts, or say we are still waiting for God to give us more evidence of His gift. Instead of waiting for God to do something more, He is actually waiting for us to use that which He has already placed within us.

We do not need to receive more anointing. It is our responsibility to release that He has given. If we do not actively cultivate the gifts, our lives slip into a powerless, religious rut.

3. What are the Holy Spirit's spiritual gifts?

The power of the gospel transforms us in every aspect – from living for self to become intertwined with others in the Body of Christ in the church. We are called to a lifestyle that appreciates other members' gifts and talents through which the Body can function and use in the building of Jesus' church.

a) Gifts are *...given by grace and exercised by faith. Romans 12:3-8*

- Given by the Holy Spirit, not earned or worked for
- Given for fulfilling His will / purpose and calling
- Super natural, powered by the Holy Spirit, Irrevocable *Romans 11:29*

b) Manifestations of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts. *Romans 12:7-8*

- i) Prophecy
 - Forth-telling God's message and truth.
 - Always aligns with God's Word.
 - ii) Service

Serving in practical ways to meet needs (wisdom to see a need and to meet it).
 - iii) Teaching / Exhortation

Teaching is the impartation of biblical truths, training of ministry skills, forming habits and building spiritual disciplines.
 - iv) Giving

The exercise of excellent stewardship, to generate / give wealth as God directs.
 - v) Leadership

The most neglected gift but one that makes things happen.
The ability to cast vision and direct corporate action so as to achieve forward goals.
 - vi) Showing mercy

A supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit to show compassion and care for those suffering.
Cheerful in showing mercy.
- c) A simple way to remember these gifts
- Spoken gifts **PET**
 - Prophecy (bringing a message relevant to the situation)
 - Exhortation (providing direction)
 - Teaching: (Imparting wisdom / knowledge to a problem). Habits, values and skills.
 - Service gifts **SML**
 - Service (activity to extend God's love to meet needs)
 - Mercy (action to alleviate the burden of suffering)
 - Leadership (authority to move people (synergy) toward a God-given vision of service)
- d) How do we activate our gifts?
- Remember you are a member of God's team. *Romans 12:4*
As we actively serve the Body of Christ, God begins to direct us into an area of service.
 - Delight in the different gifts God has given to each individual *Romans 12:5-8*
Whilst serving, the Holy Spirit will lead us towards an impactful and fulfilling work.
Our gifts are confirmed as we serve with our leaders.
 - By prayer. Ask for the desired gift
(*Psalm 37* says God gives us the desires of our hearts when we delight in Him).
 - The Holy Spirit's promptings in specific situations.
 - You are passionate about certain things and you enjoy doing them.
 - You feel inspired about the difference made in a particular sphere of ministry.
 - Your God-given motivational bent (your personal interest).