God ultimately raises up leaders for one primary reason: His glory. He shows His power in our weakness. He demonstrates His wisdom in our folly. We are all like a turtle on a fence post. If you walk by a fence post and see a turtle on top of it, then you know someone came by and put it there. In the same way, God gives leadership according to His good pleasure.

Matt Chandler

ROMANS CHAPTER 12

Prayer Study # 452

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Romans 12 Amplified Bible (AMP)

12 *I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship.*
2 *Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].*

While we still have 4 chapters to go, Paul is beginning to come to the close of his letter to the Romans, and he follows his usual pattern of giving practical advice. He appeals to the Roman Christians to present their bodies as living sacrifices to God. To the Greeks, and by extension to the Romans who followed the patterns of Greek culture, this was nonsense. They believed the body was nothing more than a prison for the spirit, and it was to be despised. The Christian viewpoint was that the body was the temple of the Holy Spirit and belonged to God as much as the spirit and soul. They could serve the Lord as much with their bodies as with their spirit and soul, and they reminded their audiences that God Himself took on the human body to live in and to work through. This body was bought with a price. It is not the "body of sin," for that has been crucified or reckoned dead. It has been raised to walk in newness of life.

Paul summarizes this verse in 1st Corinthians 6:19-20: *Or do you now know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

The physical body was very important in the writings of Paul. In verse one, he is saying that dedicating the body to holy living is our reasonable service and spiritual worship to God. The word for *worship in* the Greek is *latreuein.* This word came to mean

that to which one gives one's whole life. Thus, Paul seems to say that true worship is the offering of everyday life to the Lord. Barclay puts it this way: "I am going to the factory, the shop, the office, the school, the garage, the mine, the shipyard, the field, the cowshed, the garden, to worship God."

To enter this type of worship, the Christian, according to verse two, has to have a radical transformation, which emphasizes not being conformed to the world but being transformed from it by the renewal of the mind. *To conform* means *to imitate.* We renew our minds through reading, meditating, and studying the Word of God. Only the Word of God, as applied by the Holy Spirit, can renew the mind (2nd Timothy 1:7; Philippians 2:5; 2nd Corinthians 10:1-4; Romans 1:28; Luke 10:27: Isaiah 26:3; Romans 8:5-7). This transformation is not of the outward form but of the inner personality.

Kevin Conner sees these two verses as a priestly scene and summarizes them this way:

a. The believer is a priest.
b. His body is the sacrifice.
c. Presenting it is his priestly worship.
d. The will of God is the most important thing in the universe.

3 *For by the grace (unmerited favor of God) given to me I warn everyone among you not to estimate and think of himself more highly than he ought [not to have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance], but to rate his ability with sober judgment, each according to the degree of faith apportioned by God to him.*
4 *For as in one physical body we have many parts (organs, members) and all of these parts do not have the same function or use,*
5 *So we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ (the Messiah) and individually we are parts one of another [mutually dependent on one another].*
6 *Having gifts (faculties, talents, qualities) that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them: [He whose gift is] prophecy, [let him prophesy] according to the proportion of his faith;*
7 *[He whose gift is] practical service, let him give himself to serving; he who teaches, to his teaching;*
8 *He who exhorts (encourages), to his exhortation; he who contributes, let him do it in simplicity and liberality; he who gives aid and superintends, with zeal and singleness of mind; he who does acts of mercy, with genuine cheerfulness and joyful eagerness.*

In verse three Paul is telling us that the believer should never overestimate nor underestimate his value before God and men. The Lord hates conceit and pride. The degree or measure of faith believers are given differs according to what their function is in the body of Christ, as verses 4-8 clarify.

Paul loved to talk about the Body of Christ, meaning the believers who met

together in His name. Here he addresses the function each member of the Body has, and he emphasizes that we all do not have the same gifts.

Barclay gives several rules for life that are included in these verses:

a. We need to know ourselves. We cannot get very far in life until we know what we can and cannot do.
b. We need to accept ourselves and to use the gift the Lord has given us and not be envious of someone else's gift.
c. We need to remember that whatever gift any individual has comes from God. There *charismata* are gifts, which an individual could never acquire on his own. They are a gift.
d. Whatever gift we have, we must use it, and the motive of use must be not our personal prestige but the conviction that it is for the common good in the Body of Christ. These gifts include prophecy, the gift of service to others, teaching, exhortation or encouragement, sharing with simple kindness, leadership, and mercy.

9 *[Let your] love be sincere (a real thing); hate what is evil [loathe all ungodliness, turn in horror from wickedness], but hold fast to that which is good.*
10 *Love one another with brotherly affection [as members of one family], giving precedence and showing honor to one another.*
11 *Never lag in zeal and in earnest endeavor; be aglow and burning with the Spirit, serving the Lord.*
12 *Rejoice and exult in hope; be steadfast and patient in suffering and tribulation; be constant in prayer.*
13 *Contribute to the needs of God's people [sharing in the necessities of the saints]; pursue the practice of hospitality.*

Barclay summarizes verses nine through thirteen by giving the twelve concise rules for everyday life that Paul gives in this section:

a. Love must be completely sincere.
b. We must hate that which is evil and cling to that which is good.
c. We must be affectionate to one another in mutual love.
d. We must give each other priority in honor.
e. We must not be sluggish in our zeal.
f. We must keep our spirits at the boiling point.
g. We must serve the Lord and seize the day.
h. We are to rejoice in hope.
i. We are to meet tribulation with triumphant courage.
j. We are to persevere in prayer.

k. We are to share with those in need.
l. Christians are to offer hospitality.

14 *Bless those who persecute you [who are cruel in their attitude toward you]; bless and do not curse them.*
15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice [sharing others' joy], and weep with those who weep [sharing others' grief].*
16 *Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits.*
17 *Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is honest and proper and noble [aiming to be above reproach] in the sight of everyone.*
18 *If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*
19 *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave the way open for [God's] wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay (requite), says the Lord.*
20 *But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.*
21 *Do not let yourself be overcome by evil, but overcome (master) evil with good.*

In verses fourteen through twenty-one, Paul gives a series of rules and principles, which should guide our relationships. Again Barclay summarizes this for us:

a. Christians must meet persecution with a prayer for those who persecute them. The great Biblical example is Stephen who died praying for forgiveness for those who stoned him to death (Acts 7:60).
b. We are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.
c. We are to live in harmony with one another.
d. We are to avoid all pride and snobbishness. The church should be the place where all earthly distinctions are gone and where there is no respect of persons.
e. We must make our conduct fair for all to see.
f. We are to live at peace with all.
g. We are to keep ourselves from all thought of taking revenge.

There are three reasons for this last rule. First, vengeance belongs to God and not to us. Secondly, to treat people with kindness instead of vengeance may move them. Vengeance may break the spirit, but kindness will break people's heart. Lastly, to walk in vengeance is to be conquered by evil.