

Romans 12

The NFL's preseason starts today. I like the game, but I've never been any good at football. I've never been anything more than an armchair quarterback. I can sit in front of a TV and know a good play or a good player when I see one. I even play fantasy football with some guys in the church here. Last year they got me into two different leagues. I even won one of them – first place out of ten teams. But I honestly can't really play the game. Too slow, too small, bad hands – I stink at it.

Some people are like that with their Christianity. They are fantasy disciples. They watch other people live out their faith and have opinions – sometimes very strong opinions. They know how it should be done and whether or not someone is doing it right. They know good Bible teachers from bad ones, good churches from bad ones and so on. But they personally stink at discipleship.

This is not good. In the body of Christ there are no fantasy disciples. No armchair disciples. We each have a position to play and we have to get into the game.

- I. God's will is that we allow Him to transform us. 12:1-2
- II. God's will is that we use our spiritual gifts in the context of a church. 12:3-8
- III. God's will is that our character display the attributes of Jesus. 12:9-21

We should respond to God's great mercy by offering ourselves to do His will.

- I. God's will is that we allow Him to transform us. 12:1-2

- A. God no longer asks for slain animals on the altar. He wants our lives to be sacrificed on the altar to Him. A few Christians have to die for Jesus; All Christians have to live Jesus.

“Reasonable service,” which is “logical ministry,” (Believer's Study Bible)

“Most of the problems we find in trying to live the Christian life probably arise from trying to half live it.” (Disciple's Study Bible)

“The key to spiritual victory and true happiness is not in trying to get all we can from God but in giving all that we are and have to Him.” – John MacArthur

- B. On being conformed to this world:

1 John 2:17 (NKJV) And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

This world is temporary. Why conform to something that will inevitably be dissolved?

- C. *be transformed* a verb “metamorphose”, like the noun *metamorphosis*.

*Matthew 17:1-2 (NKJV) ¹Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ²and **He was transfigured** before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*

*2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

D. A renewed mind is a mind that thinks like the Bible.

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV) Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

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II. God's will is that we use our spiritual gifts in the context of a church. 12:3-8

When John Wesley was young, he met someone he called a “serious man” who made a lasting impression on him. This man said to the young Wesley, “Sir, you wish to serve God ... Remember you cannot serve Him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.” He was very confident, this serious man, and Wesley never forgot his message. “You must find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.” These words forever sounded in Wesley’s ears, determining his theology, and fashioning his ... meetings and methods.
http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/Wesley_Journal.pdf (p.22)

A. 12:3 When we think too highly of ourselves we lose sight of how severely we need others.

B. 12:5 Many people consider themselves “members of a church”. This verse tells us we are “members of one another.”

C. 12:6-8 Clarifying a few gifts:

i. 12:6 *gifts* Gr. *Charismata* These are some signs of a truly “charismatic” church.

ii. *prophecy* This includes the predictive sections of Bible prophecy, but it is not limited to that. Prophecy is sometimes divided into *predictive* and *didactic* (or *instructive*) elements.

In the New Testament, as in the Old, the prominent idea is not prediction, but the inspired delivery of warning, exhortation, instruction, judging, and making manifest the secrets of the heart. (Vincent's Word Studies)

1 Corinthians 14:3 (NKJV) But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men

1 Corinthians 14:24-25 (NKJV) ²⁴But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. ²⁵And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

iii. 12:7 *ministry* or *servicing* related to the words “deacon” or “deaconess”

iv. 12:8 *exhortation* Gr. *paraklēsis* Related to “Paraclete” one called to another's side to help or encourage.

- a) In Acts 4:36, the name Barnabas means “Son of *Paraklēsīs*”
- b) This person aims at the heart or the will of others rather than teaching them doctrine.
- v. *He who gives* There is a gift of giving. If God gives it to you, it costs you money.

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III. God's will is that our character display the attributes of Jesus. 12:9-21

A. 12:9 Our love needs to be the real thing.

1 Peter 1:22 (NKJV) Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

- i. *Abhor what is evil* Hate it, or “turn from” it. Reject evil.
- ii. Cling to what is good. Be glued to it; be firmly attached to good things.

B. 12:10 *In honor giving preference to one another* When it comes to honor, we should not try to receive the most, but be the one to confer the most honor on others.

12:13 *given to hospitality* Hospitality = the love of strangers or love of foreigners.

“Pursuing (as if in a chase or hunt) hospitality” (Robertson)

“The verb indicates not only that hospitality is to be furnished when sought, but that Christians are to seek opportunities of exercising it.” (Vincent)

C. 12:14 Here's what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:43-45 (NKJV) ⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

D. 12:15 People who are grieving don't usually need advice as much as they need friends. Be a friend to those who are grieving.

Of the two, however, it is more easy to sympathize with another's sorrows than with his joys because in the one case he needs us, in the other case he does not need us. Just for this reason the latter is the more disinterested and so the much nobler. (New Commentary on the Whole Bible)

E. 12:16 Compare with v.3 earlier.

F. 12:19-20 Quoting Deu 32:35 and Prov 25:21-22

G. Our attitude should be love not retaliation. When Paul tells us not to avenge ourselves, notice that he is not implying that people should just be allowed to get away with things.

i. The avenging of wrongs is God's job not ours. He can do this really well – way better than we can.

ii. God also uses the governing authorities to carry out His will. Read Rom 13:1-4

iii. Again: Love not retaliation. That's how we overcome evil with good.

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Conclusions:

We have to get into the game of discipleship. There are no fantasy disciples. No armchair disciples.

- God's will is that we allow Him to transform us.
 - This means giving God both our body and our mind.
- God's will is that we use our spiritual gifts in the context of a church.
 - Each of us has a gift that God wants us to use in building up the body of Christ.
- God's will is that our character display the attributes of Jesus.

Luke 23:33-34 (NKJV) ³³And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Acts 7:59-60 (NKJV) ⁵⁹And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1 Peter 2:21-2:25 (NKJV) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

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