

LESSON SIX**GOD'S ECONOMY IN HIS SELECTION & TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICING THE
BODY LIFE (1)**

Scripture Reading:

[Section 1]

CHAPTER 11

B. The Economy in God's Selection 11:1-32

1. A Remnant Reserved by Grace vv.1-10

- 11:1 I say then, Has God cast away His people? Absolutely not! For I also am an Israelite, out of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
- 11:2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage concerning Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?
- 11:3 "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars; and I am left alone, and they are seeking my life."
- 11:4 But what does the divine answer say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."
- 11:5 In the same way then at the present time also there has come into being a remnant according to the selection of grace.
- 11:6 But if by grace, it is no longer out of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.
- 11:7 What then? That which Israel is seeking after, this it has not obtained, but the chosen have obtained it, and the rest have been hardened;
- 11:8 As it is written, "God gave them a spirit of deep sleep, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, until this very day."
- 11:9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and a retribution to them;
- 11:10 Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see; and bend their back continually."

2. The Gentiles Saved through Israel's Stumbling vv.11-22

- 11:11 I say then, Have they stumbled so as to fall? Absolutely not! But by their misstep salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy.
- 11:12 But if their misstep has become riches for the world, and their loss, riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness be!
- 11:13 But I am speaking to you, the Gentiles. Inasmuch therefore as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry,
- 11:14 If perhaps I may provoke those of my flesh to jealousy and save some of them.
- 11:15 For if their being cast aside is the reconciliation of the world, what will their being received back be, if not life from the dead?
- 11:16 Now if the dough offered as the firstfruits is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are also.
- 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow partaker of the root of fatness of the olive tree,
- 11:18 Do not boast against the branches; but if you boast, remember that it is not you who bear the root, but the root you.
- 11:19 You will say then, Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.
- 11:20 Rightly said: they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be high-minded, but fear;
- 11:21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.
- 11:22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but on you, the kindness of God, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

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3. Israel Restored through the Gentiles' Receiving Mercy vv.23-32

- 11:23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.
- 11:24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into the cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree!

11:25 For I do not want you, brothers, to be ignorant of this mystery (lest you be wise in yourselves), that hardness has come upon Israel in part, until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in;
11:26 And thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come out of Zion; He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob."
11:27 And this is the covenant from Me with them, when I take away their sins."
11:28 According to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but according to the selection they are beloved for the fathers' sake.
11:29 For the gracious gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
11:30 For just as you once disobeyed God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,
11:31 So these also now have disobeyed, so that because of the mercy shown to you they also now may be shown mercy.
11:32 For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

C. The Praise for God's Selection 11:33-36

11:33 O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and untraceable His ways!
11:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor?
11:35 Or who has first given to Him, and it will be repaid to him?
11:36 Because out from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

[Section 3 & 4]

CHAPTER 12

VII. Transformation 12:1--15:13

A. In Practicing the Body Life 12:1-21

1. By the Presenting of Our Bodies v.1

12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

2. By the Renewing of the Mind vv.2-3

12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

OUTLINE:

GOD'S ECONOMY IN HIS SELECTION

- I. A Remnant Reserved by Grace—11:1-10
- II. The Nations Saved through Israel's Stumbling—vv. 11-22
- III. Israel Restored through the Nations' Mercy—vv. 23-32
- IV. A Praise for God's Selection—vv.33-36

TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICIN THE BODY LIFE (1)

- I. Transformation for the Body Life—12:2
 - A. Transformation
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 - 1. The Practicality of the Church Life
 - 2. A Corporate Life
- II. By The Presenting of Our Bodies—v. 1
 - A. The Begging of the Apostle
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 - 1. Many Bodies, One Sacrifice
 - 2. A Priestly Service which is Most Reasonable
- III. By the Renewing of Our Mind—v. 2
 - A. Do Not Be Conformed to This Age
 - B. Be Transformed by the Renewing of the Mind
 - C. To Test and Prove the Will of God

QUESTIONS:

SECTION 1:

- 1. What does God do when many of His people turn away from Him?
- 2. How did salvation come to the nation and what are the riches enjoyed by the nations in this salvation?

SECTION 2:

- 1. How will God restore Israel, His chosen people?
- 2. How is transformation related to the Body life?

SECTION 3:

1. Please explain the meaning of “transformation”.
2. And please explain what the “Body life” is.

SECTION 4:

1. What does it mean “to present our bodies a living sacrifice?” Please explain with examples why this is needed for the practicing of the Body life.
2. For the Body life, why must we not be conformed to this age, and why must our mind be renewed?

[Section 1]

GOD’S ECONOMY IN HIS SELECTION

In this message we come to the second point in the section on God’s selection, God’s economy. God has an economy, a divine arrangement, in His selection. This divine arrangement or administration is over the entire world and the whole human race. This administration under God’s sovereignty is His divine economy.

I. A REMNANT RESERVED BY GRACE

In 11:1 Paul asks, “I say then, Has God cast away His people? Certainly not!” If we did not have Romans 11, we would certainly think that God, after having chosen Israel, must have changed His mind. Chapters nine and ten of Romans seem to indicate that God has given up Israel. Because some people think this way Paul asked, “Has God cast away His people?” Then he answered the question himself, saying strongly, “Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite out of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says in the case of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what does the divine answer say to him? I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal” (11:1-4). Elijah, a prophet of God, pleaded with God against Israel. However, God told Elijah not to accuse the people before Him because He had reserved to Himself seven thousand men who had

not bowed the knee to Baal. Paul continues, “So then at the present time also there is a remnant according to the selection of grace. But if by grace, it is no longer out of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace” (vv. 5-6).

Paul was saying, “Not only were seven thousand men reserved by God in the time of Elijah, but at the present time, the time in which we are living, God still has a selection according to grace. Today also there is a remnant reserved.” The principle is the same for our own time. Regardless of how far Christianity has degraded, we believe that among the thousands and even millions of Christians there are a number, a remnant, that have been reserved by God.

Verse 6 says, “But if by grace, it is no longer out of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.” Never forget that we have all been reserved by grace. It is not the result of our work; it is altogether by His grace. If it were otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.

II. THE NATIONS SAVED THROUGH ISRAEL’S STUMBLING

God’s economy in His selection is firstly with the remnant reserved by grace and secondly with the nations, the Gentiles saved through Israel’s stumbling. In verse 11 Paul says, “I say then, have they stumbled that they might fall? Certainly not! But by their false step salvation has come to the nations to provoke them to jealousy.” In 9:32 Paul said that Israel “stumbled at the Stone of stumbling.” Now in 11:11 he says that they have not stumbled that they might fall. Paul developed his argument very carefully, saying that they stumbled, but that they did not fall. In the next part

of verse 11 Paul describes their stumbling as a “false step.” As a result of this false step of unbelief, salvation has come to the nations. In 11:12 Paul says, “Now if their false step is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the nations; how much more will their fullness be?” The false step made by Israel has become the riches of the world and their loss the riches of the nations. Let us read verses 16 through 18. “Now if the dough offered as the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow-partaker of the root of the fatness of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches; but if you boast, remember that you do not bear the root, but the root you.” Who is the root of the olive tree and who is the dough offered as the firstfruit? In 11:28 Paul says that Israel is “beloved for the fathers’ sake.” The “fathers” refers to the patriarchs, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These three patriarchs were the root of the olive tree and the dough offered as the firstfruit.

We need to be clear regarding the difference between the dough offered as the firstfruit and the lump. Suppose you have a lump of dough for baking cakes and you take a piece of dough out of that lump. That piece of dough may be called the firstfruit. In the Bible the dough offered as the firstfruit was not for the people to eat; it was first offered to God and then given to the priests to be their food. These three patriarchs were and still are the first piece of dough offered to God as the firstfruit, and all of their descendants are the whole lump. Likewise, the three patriarchs were and still are the root of God’s cultivated olive tree (Jer. 11:16), and all of their descendants are the branches. Therefore, Paul’s argument is that if the dough offered to God is holy, then the entire lump is holy. This means that all the Israelites are holy. Furthermore, if the root, the patriarchs, is holy, then all the branches, the descendants of the patriarchs, are also holy. Although Israel has stumbled, they did not fall. They have been cut off temporarily; later they will be grafted in again.

In Romans 9 the chosen ones of God are likened to clay and in Romans 11 they are likened to a lump of flour used for making cakes... Although clay is useful in making vessels to contain Christ for the glory of God, the lump is for the satisfaction of God; it is offered to God as food for His satisfaction. A piece of lifeless clay cannot satisfy God. Only in the lump do we have the living element which satisfies God.

While the dough is for God’s satisfaction, the root is for our satisfaction. Romans 11:17 says that we, “being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow-partaker of the root of the fatness of the olive tree.” The entire olive tree

depends upon their fatness. Praise the Lord that we, the wild olive tree, have been grafted into God’s cultivated olive tree that we might be fellow-partakers of its root of fatness! This is our enjoyment. God enjoys the dough; we enjoy the root. Both the dough and the root are of the plant life, the life which satisfies God and man. Both the wheat and the olive produce enjoyment and satisfaction for God and man. Hence, it is not a matter for us Gentiles to change our religion, but to receive the life of the root, which life is Christ.

[Section 2]

III. ISRAEL RESTORED THROUGH THE NATIONS’ MERCY

“And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?” (vv. 23-24).

For I do not want you, brothers, to be ignorant of this mystery, lest you be wise in yourselves, that hardness has come upon a part of Israel until the fullness of the nations comes in” (v. 25). The “fullness of the nations” refers to the converts among the Gentiles. Now is the time when a great many Gentiles will be converted. Hence, the “fullness of the nations” has not yet been completed; it is continuing at the present time.

In verse 26 Paul declares, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come out of Zion, He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” At that time all the remaining Israelites will be saved. “And this is the covenant from Me to them, when I take away their sins. According to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but according to the selection they are beloved for the fathers’ sake” (vv. 27-28). Notice the two “sakes” in verse 28: “your sake” and the “fathers’ sake.” They are enemies for our sake, but beloved for the fathers’ sake. “For the free gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (v. 29). God’s gifts and God’s calling are eternal, without repentance, without change. Once God’s gift is given, it is given forever. Once God has called us, He has called us for eternity. He would never repent of His gifts and calling. How we thank God that “with Him there is no variation” (James 1:17, Gk.). “For just as you once disobeyed God, but now have obtained mercy through their disobedience, so these also now have disobeyed that through your mercy they also now may obtain mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all” (vv. 30-32). Here we see that Paul uses both disobedience and mercy as means for his argument. Man’s disobedience affords God’s mercy an

opportunity, and God's mercy brings man salvation. God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. This is God's economy. What can we say? All that we can say is, "Hallelujah for His mercy!" He has even used our disobedience as an enclosure to keep us as vessels upon whom He shows His mercy.

IV. A PRAISE FOR GOD'S SELECTION

At this point Paul lifted up a praise to God, a praise for God's selection. "O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments and untraceable His paths! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, and it will be repaid to him? Because out of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (vv. 33-36). It seems that in Romans 9 through 11 Paul has given us a map by which we may trace God's paths. God receives praise and glory in three stages: in the past, for all things have come out of Him; in the present, for all things are through Him; and in the future, for all things will be to Him. All things came into being out of God in the past, all things exist through Him in the present, and all things will be to Him in the future. God's His choice, not according to anything else. All things are of Him, by Him, and for Him. "To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICING THE BODY LIFE (1)

Transformation is for life practice. As we have seen, sanctification is for the life process. Since the day we were justified we have been participating in this process of life. This life process will sanctify us and eventually glorify us. The life practice is somewhat different from the life process. For the practice of life we need transformation, for we can never have the proper practice of life in our natural life. Nothing natural is useful for the life practice. The natural element must be transformed into an element that is spiritual and holy. Hence, for the sake of the life practice we need a thorough transformation. Furthermore, the Holy Word reveals that the practice of life is mainly with the church, with the Body life. The local church life is the practical kingdom of God on earth today.

The spiritual experiences of sanctification, glorification, and conformation do not exist for themselves. Sanctification is not for sanctification, and conformation is not for conformation. Both of these experiences are for the church life. As we shall see, after chapters eight and eleven Paul begs us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. The

purpose of this presentation is not for us to be more spiritual, but for us to practice the Body life.

I wish to point out that the church is Paul's final word in the book of Romans. When we listen to someone speak we always wait for his concluding word, and the concluding word in the book of Romans concerns the church. Therefore, if you stop at chapter eight you will miss a great deal, separating yourself from the final word of Paul's discourse. We must proceed all the way to Paul's conclusion.

Why did Paul write the book of Romans? He did not write merely for justification, sanctification, or even for glorification. Romans was written ultimately and consummately for the church life. The consummation of the book of Romans is the church. Praise the Lord that Paul was so strong and rich in the matter of the church that he took five chapters to emphasize it. He took five chapters to cover the church life in a wonderful way. In Romans Paul does not present the church life in a doctrinal way, but in a very experiential and practical way. As we come to Romans 15 and 16, we shall see that Paul describes and presents the churches in the way of experience and practice, not in the way of doctrine.

Apparently the last five chapters of Romans describe the behavior of Christians. However, what is the main item, the main aspect, of a believer's behavior? It is the church life. The church life, the Body life, is the main structure of a Christian's behavior. After he has been saved a believer's behavior is primarily concerned with the church life.

Consider the contents of Romans 12 through 16. Undoubtedly the focus of Romans 12 is the Body life. From the beginning of chapter fourteen through the first part of chapter fifteen we have a long portion dealing with the matter of receiving the saints. The receiving of the saints is also for the church life. Furthermore, chapters fifteen and sixteen are a practical record of the church life, not of a church in the heavens, but of churches in localities on the earth.

[Section 3]

I. TRANSFORMATION FOR THE BODY LIFE

A. Transformation

Transformation is a good word. In Greek this word includes the meaning of change, to have a change. Transformation does not merely denote a change; it means that a substance is changed both in nature and in form. In English the words transformed or transformation also mean a change in both nature and form. This type of change is a metabolic change. It is not just an outward change, but a

change in inward constitution as well as in external form. This change occurs by the process of metabolism. In the process of metabolism an organic element filled with vitamins comes into our being and produces a chemical change in our organic life. This chemical reaction changes the constitution of our being from one form into another. This is transformation.

Suppose that a person has a very pale complexion and that someone else, wishing to change his colourless complexion, applies some colouring to his skin. This, no doubt, produces an outward change, but it is not an organic change, a change in life. How then can a person truly have a colorful face? By daily absorbing into his body healthy food with the necessary organic elements. Because your body is a living organism, when an organic substance enters into it a chemical compound is formed organically by the process of metabolism. Gradually this inward process will change the coloration of your face. This change is not outward; it is a change from within, a change resulting from the process of metabolism.

According to the Bible, this metabolic change is termed transformation. In the process of transformation the life of Christ is added to our being. When His life, which is organic and filled with vitamins, permeates our being, a spiritual, chemical compound is formed. This changes our constitution both in nature and in form. This is transformation. It is not outward correction or external adjustment. It is absolutely an inward metabolic change in our organic element, a change in life and with life by the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). In the process of transformation the divine element is wrought into us. If we keep in mind this proper understanding of transformation as we approach Romans 12 through 16, we shall realize that this portion of the Word is altogether different from what our natural concept would lead us to believe it is.

At the end of Romans 8 the life process reaches its completion. In chapter one we were sinners, mean, vile, and filled with evil. However, after passing through several chapters and coming to the end of Romans 8, we have been sanctified and conformed as sons of God. What a difference! At the end of Romans 8 we have become conformed sons of God, sons beloved of Him forever. After speaking of these things Paul is ready to speak about the practice of life. At the beginning of Romans 12, Paul is prepared to tell us how to practice the very life in which we have been and are being processed. The practice of this processed life is the church life.

B. The Body Life

1. The Practicality of the Church Life

We have already pointed out that the focus of Romans 12 is the Body life. The Body life is the practicality of the church life. Without the Body life, the church life is only a term. The church life is realized, becomes real, in the practice of the Body life.

2. A Corporate Life

The Body life is a corporate life. We can realize this by looking at our physical body. Our physical body is a corporate entity composed of many members. All the members have their life and function in the body. If any member becomes separate or detached from the body, it loses its life and function. No member of the body can be independent of the body or become individualistic. We must realize that none of us as members of the Body can be a complete entity. Every one of us is simply a member of the Body. We need to remain in the Body for life and function. So many Christians do not have the riches of life and are unable to function at all simply because they are detached from the Body. Romans 12 reveals the importance of the practice of the Body life. It shows us that we are members one of another in one Body. We, being many, are one Body, one entity. In the Body we can function and express Christ in a corporate way.

God's goal is for us to live a Body life, which is a corporate life. His redemption, justification, and sanctification are for this goal. If we do not pay our attention to the Body life, we shall surely miss God's goal. To be redeemed, to be justified, to be sanctified, and to be conformed to Christ—all are for us to have the proper corporate life. We should not stop with the experiences of sanctification and conformation in Romans 8. We need to see that the experiences of sanctification and conformation in the Spirit are meant to bring us forward to Romans 12 that we may practice the corporate life. Simply to be sanctified individually or to be spiritual in an individualistic way is not God's way of sanctification and spirituality. Genuine sanctification and spirituality are for the Body life. May the Lord have mercy upon us that we may see this and practice it by the experiences of sanctification in the Spirit of life.

[Section 4]

II. BY THE PRESENTING OF OUR BODIES

A. The Begging of the Apostle

Romans 12:1 says, "I beg you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your most reasonable service." In 12:1 Paul speaks in a begging way, revealing the

importance of the matter concerning which he is about to charge us. It unveils God's desire and purpose. For centuries and ages God has had a particular desire—to have a body for Christ. Hence, the Apostle said, "I beg you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God." Notice that it is not "compassion" in singular, but "compassions" in plural. In 9:15 we have seen that compassion is richer and deeper than mercy. God not only has one kind of compassion, but many kinds of compassion upon us. He has had compassion on us in selecting us. He has had compassion on us in calling us, in saving us, and in bringing us into His life. It was through these compassions of God that the Apostle Paul begged us to present our bodies to God. If we realize the compassions of God and are moved by them, we shall do what the Apostle begged us to do.

B. Presenting Our Bodies as a Sacrifice

1. Many Bodies, One Sacrifice

In verse 1 Paul also begs us to present our bodies "a living sacrifice." In 6:13, 19 he encouraged us to present the members of our bodies as weapons for fighting and as servants for serving because Romans 6 is a matter of warfare and service. However, in the church life it is a question of sacrifice, of offering ourselves to God for His satisfaction. The church life as a whole is an offering for the satisfaction of God. Although many bodies are presented, the sacrifice is one. Why are there many bodies but only one sacrifice? Because the many members are one Body and the many believers are one church.

Why does Paul use the word "living"? Because he compares this sacrifice with the sacrifices of the Old Testament. The sacrifices offered in Old Testament days were all slain, but the church is not a slain offering; it is a living offering full of Christ as life. In chapter eight we see that the believers are filled with Christ as the life-giving Spirit. When they come to chapter twelve to offer themselves as a sacrifice to God, they are a living offering filled with the Spirit of life.

Furthermore, the sacrifice is holy, meaning that it is separate from common things and that it possesses God's nature. Our God is holy. He is absolutely different and separate from all other things. This holy nature of His has been wrought into the members of the Body. So the Body is holy and unique. It is different from a club, and every kind of social organization. The Body is holy, and nothing common can be brought into it. Thus, this offering is the only thing that is well-pleasing to God and is for the Body of Christ. For the practice of the Body life this offering is needed. We need to offer our bodies for the Body of Christ.

2. A Priestly Service Which Is Most Reasonable

To offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice is our most reasonable service. The words "present" and "sacrifice" mentioned above indicate that the "reasonable service" is a priestly service. If we have a sober mind and if we intend to be reasonable, fair, and logical, then we certainly must have the church life.

When Paul began to speak about the church life, he implored the believers to present their bodies because as human beings nothing is more real and practical than our body. If your body is not in the church life, please do not say how much you yourself are for the church life. Thus, Paul begged the brothers to present their bodies. If you mean business for the Lord's purpose, you need to present your body.

It is good for you to come to the meeting even if you sleep through most of it. It is better to come to a meeting and sleep than not to come at all. You may attend a meeting and sleep through it all except for the last few minutes. Perhaps during the last five minutes you will be inspired and receive a great help.

III. BY THE RENEWING OF OUR MIND

A. Do Not Be Conformed to This Age

Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, that you may prove by testing what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect." Paul tells us not to be "conformed to this age." We should not be molded by this age. What is this age? The age is the present, practical world life, which is the opposition to and substitute of the church life. The entire world is a Satanic system, a system constituted by Satan. The Greek word for world, *cosmos*, denotes an organization, a system. Satan has systematized every person and every item of human life. This world system is composed of many ages. Just as the universal church is composed of many local churches, so the world is composed of many ages. Every local church is a part of the universal church, and every age is a part of the world. Each age has its modern fashion. Since an age, being the present, practical world life, is a part of the world system, you cannot be in the world without being in one of the ages. You cannot touch the world unless you touch one of the ages. Therefore, in order to forsake the world you must also forsake the age.

The world opposes the church, and the ages oppose the churches. If we mean business to have the church life, we must give up the age. Since the present age opposes the church life, we cannot follow the age and be fashioned according to it and

still truly experience the Body life. A person who is possessed by the modern age may attend the Sunday meetings, but he cannot practice the church life. If we want the Body life, the practice of the church life, we must not follow this age nor be conformed to it. This is the reason that Paul told us not to be conformed to this age.

B. Be Transformed by the Renewing of the Mind

We should not be conformed to the age, but transformed by the renewing of our mind (Eph. 4:23; Titus 3:5). To be conformed to the age means to adopt the modern fashions outwardly; to be transformed is to have an organic element wrought into our being to produce a metabolic change inwardly. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The mind in Romans 12 is different from the mind both in Romans 7 and Romans 8. In Romans 7 the mind was alone, acting independently. In Romans 8 the mind was dependent, being set on the spirit. Simply to set our mind on the spirit is inadequate. The mind should not only be dependent, but also renewed. Romans 12:2 tells us that we need a renewed mind. The mind is renewed not only by outward teachings, but by the element of Christ being added to it. When the Lord Jesus spreads Himself from our spirit into our mind, our mind will be renewed. By the renewing of our mind our soul is metabolically changed. In this way we experience transformation in our soul, a necessity for the church life. If we intend to practice the church life, we need to experience such a transformation in our soul by the renewing of our mind.

C. To Test and Prove the Will of God

We need the renewal of our mind and the transformation of our soul that we “may prove by testing what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect.” What is the will of God? The will of God is to have the Body life, the church life.