

*Nuggets and Gems from the Bible*

**TRANSFORMATIONS**

**FOR THE**

**BODY LIFE**

**WITNESS LEE**

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# TRANSFORMATION FOR THE BODY LIFE

The most practical section in the book of Romans is the section on transformation (12:1—15:13). Transformation is for life practice. Sanctification, covered in 5:12—8:13, 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. 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.

Many so-called spiritual Christians truly love the Lord and pursue the growth of life according to Romans 6 and 8. However, after Romans 8

and even after Romans 11 there is another section, indicating that even if we have attained the standard revealed in Romans 8 we still are lacking because we do not have the church life. The spiritual experiences of sanctification, glorification, and conformation do not exist for themselves. These experiences are for the church life. 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.

Many seeking Christians do not like to talk about the church life. They seem to say, “As long as we are spiritual and sanctified and are growing in life, everything is fine. The Lord will build us together one day spontaneously.” I would say strongly that their book of Romans has only eight chapters, only half of the book. They do not seem to realize that Romans has sixteen chapters. But in the book of Romans we have five complete chapters that dwell on the matter of the church. Life is not for life—life is for the Body. Life is for the church.

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. 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.

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 Body life. After he has been saved a believer's behavior is primarily concerned with the church life. Do you realize that our church life is ninety percent of our living? We have even coined a new word—"churching." Day after day we are churching. We are churching people. I can testify to you that I am churching day and night. We spend a great deal of time, money, and energy that we may

continue churching. We do not care for time, the cost, or the energy—we only care for the church. We are churching all the time. The Apostle Paul held this concept of churching when he wrote the book of Romans. We need to practice the processed life, which is unfolded in the section on sanctification in [chapters five through eight](#), in the church life, and for this we need transformation. Therefore, the transformation in life is for the practice of life, and the practice of life is conducted mainly in the church life.

## TRANSFORMATION FOR THE BODY LIFE Transformation

Before we consider [12:1-2](#) I want to give a definition of transformation. Transformation is a good word. In Greek this word includes the meaning of change, to have a change. Thus, the King James Version rendered this word in [2 Corinthians 3:18](#) as “changed” instead of “transformed.” However, the King James Version translated the same Greek word as “transformed” in [Romans 12:2](#). To render the Greek as “changed” is very inadequate. 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 colorless complexion, applies some coloring 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.

## The Body Life

### *The Practicality of the Church Life*

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 and becomes real in the practice of the Body life. Christians today do have the term “church,” but lack the Body life. As far as the Body life is concerned, there is a void in the experience of many Christians. Thus, there is the need for the real recovery of the Body

life that the Lord may have His church built on the earth today in a practical way.

### *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.

It is a sad thing that today very few Christians have seen the corporate life or are willing to pay attention to it. Most of the seeking Christians

devote their full attention to Romans 8, pursuing the experiences of the Spirit of life. But they do not realize that the experiences of Romans 8 are for the corporate life in Romans 12. 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.

## **PRESENTING OUR BODIES**

### **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. Compassion is richer and deeper than mercy. God not only has one kind of compassion, but many kinds of compassions 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.

## A Living Sacrifice

### *Many Bodies, One Sacrifice*

In verse 1 Paul also begs us to present our bodies “a living sacrifice.” In 6:13 and 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, the YMCA, 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.

### *A Most Reasonable Service*

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. People who do not like to have the church life are the most foolish of people. To practice anything other than the church life is foolish, but to give up everything for the church life is logical and reasonable. Nothing is more reasonable than churching. To spend two dollars on a worldly item or amusement is foolish, but to spend two million dollars on the church life is reasonable. If I had a hundred lives, I would give them all for the church life. However, I would not give even the smallest fraction of my life to the worldly things, for to do that would be stupid. What a reasonable service it is

to give ourselves to the church life! I can testify that I have been in the Lord's work for more than forty years and that I do not have the slightest regret about it. Whenever I think about the church I am excited. Every time I think about the church life and about my ministry for the church life I am in the heavens. What a reasonable service it is!

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. In the past years many people have said to me, "Brother, I stand with you. Because the burden of my business is so heavy I cannot be in the church life, but I am one with what you are doing." Others have said, "I'm too tired to attend the meeting. You go to the meeting, and I'll stay home and pray for you. I can't go to the meeting physically because I'm so tired, but my heart and spirit will be there with you."

These words sound pleasant, but they are a deceit. We must realize that we are in our bodies. Where our bodies are, we are. Suppose that all the saints should say that they are too tired

to attend the meeting. What would happen to the meeting? Thus, Paul begged the brothers to present their bodies. If you mean business for the Lord's purpose, you need to present your body. We need to come to the meetings bodily. Do not say that you will be in the church spiritually but not bodily. You need to present your body.

## THE RENEWING OF OUR MIND

### **Not 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. The English word “modern” is an equivalent of the Greek word rendered “age.” The Greek words translated as “Do not be conformed to this age” may be translated as, “Do not be modernized.” Hence, to be modernized means to be fashioned, conformed according to the present age. 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.

## 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. However, I doubt that the mind in Romans 8 has been transformed or renewed. 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.

## To 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. Do not apply the mention of the will of God in 12:2 to your personal human situation, to the matters of marriage, employment, or housing. Some people pray, “O Lord, I am going to buy a new house. What is your will? How many bedrooms and bathrooms should it have? How much should I pay for it? Lord, I want to know Your will.” Forget about praying in this manner, for the more you pray and seek the Lord’s will in this way, the more you will find yourself in darkness and out of His will. The will mentioned in 12:2 is to have the church life. The house that you purchase, the job that you have, and the person that you marry should all depend on the church life. Even the clothes that you wear should depend on the church life. If you are right with the church life, you will know

what you must do. Everything must be for the church life, for to have the church life is the unique will of God. This is good, well-pleasing, and perfect. And this is for the Body life. The presenting of our bodies, the transforming of our souls, and the renewing of our minds are all for the Body life.

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