

ROMANS

Lesson 12

Romans Chapter 12

In this lesson and the next, we are going to be studying my two favorite chapters in all of the Bible: Romans Chapters 12 and 13. These are what I call my "life scripture," because they contain precepts that I try to live by; and these two chapters are the two the Lord has used more than any other to give me spiritual insight into my life and into the world around me.

In the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, Romans 12:1-2 reads, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will."

That transforming power, that new life, that Christ gives us through the Holy Spirit is totally life-changing. God, through Paul, tells us to be transformed, and that is to be changed, through the renewing of our minds. The Contemporary English Version (CEV) that we are using for this study says that we are not to "be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think." The sense here is that our transformation, our change, is a process, a metamorphosis, that over time changes us into a completely new creature.

Good examples of this metamorphosis or transformation are the process of changing limestone into marble, coal into a diamond, or a caterpillar into a butterfly. In all three of these processes, God starts with something that has little or no beauty and creates a thing of beauty and worth. Over time, with heat, pressure, endurance, and patience a completely new thing emerges from the process that is by far so different from its origins that no one could recognize what it originally looked like.

That is the perfect picture of Christ's transforming power through the Holy Spirit. As we learn to see things through God's eyes and not our own, as we learn to see that all of God's creation is His and is His to do as he pleases, we begin to grow and transform. Along the way, we will learn much about ourselves, our strengths, our weaknesses, and our sins; and we'll learn of the great grace that God has so graciously bestowed on us.

As we are transformed we will no longer be as we once were in our lost and sinful state. In looking back over my life, I can see that through this long and steady process, God has been changing me, transforming me, into something completely different. I no longer am anything like I once was; and the blessing is that He's not done with me yet. This change, this new life that we have in Christ, gives us insight and wisdom through the Holy Spirit into the world around us, and also into God's great plan for mankind. Just as for Paul in writing these two chapters, we will begin to see that this world is not the world of Jesus, but rather of Satan. In John 8:23, Christ tells us, "...You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." As followers of Christ then, Paul is commanding us to be transformed, to become new creations of God that are not of this world.

As we study these two chapters, we will focus on what "this world" is, and how we can define it, and we'll look at what it means to be transformed, to be changed, into a new creation; and how our thinking will change, once we realize that we are not of this world either.

Read Romans Chapter 12 from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) below, or from your favorite version.

Romans 12

Christ Brings New Life

¹Dear friends, God is good. So I beg you to offer your bodies to him as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing. That's the most sensible way to serve God. ²Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.

³I realize how kind God has been to me, and so I tell each of you not to think you are better than you really are. Use good sense and measure yourself by the amount of faith that God has given you. ⁴A body is made up of many parts, and each of them has its own use. ⁵That's how it is with us. There are many of us, but we each are part of the body of Christ, as well as part of one another.

⁶God has also given each of us different gifts to use. If we can prophesy, we should do it according to the amount of faith we have. ⁷If we can serve others, we should serve. If we can teach, we should teach. ⁸If we can encourage others, we should encourage them. If we can give, we should be generous. If we are leaders, we should do our best. If we are good to others, we should do it cheerfully.

Rules for Christian Living

⁹Be sincere in your love for others. Hate everything that is evil and hold tight to everything that is good. ¹⁰Love each other as brothers and sisters and honor others more than you do yourself. ¹¹Never give up. Eagerly follow the Holy Spirit and serve the Lord. ¹²Let your hope make you glad. Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying. ¹³Take care of God's needy people and welcome strangers into your home.

¹⁴Ask God to bless everyone who mistreats you. Ask him to bless them and not to curse them. ¹⁵When others are happy, be happy with them, and when they are sad, be sad. ¹⁶Be friendly with everyone. Don't be proud and feel that you are smarter than others. Make friends with ordinary people. ¹⁷Don't mistreat someone who has mistreated you. But try to earn the respect of others, ¹⁸and do your best to live at peace with everyone.

¹⁹Dear friends, don't try to get even. Let God take revenge. In the Scriptures the Lord says,

"I am the one to take revenge
and pay them back."

²⁰The Scriptures also say,

"If your enemies are hungry,
give them something to eat.

And if they are thirsty,
give them something
to drink.

This will be the same
as piling burning coals
on their heads."

²¹Don't let evil defeat you, but defeat evil with good.

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Our goal over this lesson and the next is to understand what Christ meant by "I am not of this world," and what Paul in Romans is telling us that we must change in order to also not be of this world.

For this lesson then, I would like you to carefully read through Chapter 12—you may need to do it more than once—and I would like you to make two lists. The first list is a list of all the things that Paul tells us is the way that the people of this world think and act. Then, on the second list write all of the ways that Paul tells us to change so that we do not think and act as this world.

1. So, let's make a list of all of the things in Chapter 12 that Paul is telling us regarding how "the world" thinks and acts. Examine the specific verses below, and complete the following sentence as you make your list: "People of this world..."
 - a. Romans 12:2
 - b. Romans 12:3
 - c. Romans 12:14
 - d. Romans 12:16
 - e. Romans 12:17
 - f. Romans 12:19
 - g. Romans 12:20
 - h. Romans 12:21

2. Now, let's make a list of all things that Paul tells us we are to do in order to live a life as a changed person, i.e., a new person in Christ. For the verses below, complete this sentence: "Followers in Christ will..."
 - a. Romans 12:1
 - b. Romans 12:2
 - c. Romans 12:3
 - d. Romans 12:4-5
 - e. Romans 12:6-8
 - f. Romans 12:9
 - g. Romans 12:10
 - h. Romans 12:11

- i. Romans 12:12
- j. Romans 12:13
- k. Romans 12:14
- l. Romans 12:15
- m. Romans 12:16
- n. Romans 12:17-18
- o. Romans 12:19
- p. Romans 12:20
- q. Romans 12:21

Paul writes such encouraging words to us in this chapter, "never give up" and "defeat evil with good," for example. As you re-read your list of the characteristics and behaviors of this world, you can see Paul has given us a good description of the world around you and me today. This is the world of Satan, the "prince of the air." It is not Christ's world.

We are to live as citizens of his kingdom. Paul tell us in 2 Corinthians 5:20 that "we are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us" (NIV). Our second list begins to show us how we need to change our thinking and our behavior so that we may become those ambassadors—true servants of the King of King and Lord of Lords.

I pray today that, just as the Holy Spirit is doing with me, through this chapter he will also do with you in your life, i.e., continue his work of changing you into something of beauty and worth in God's eyes. May all that we do honor Him, as we present ourselves as a living sacrifice.

In Christ,

Wes