

## Renewed Minds & Transformed Lives

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*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another (Rom 12:1-5).*

Paul's letter to the saints at Rome is an explanation of how God brought salvation to the world through the Messiah. To do this, he explains the past. He documented humanity's past rejection of God. Also, Paul explains the future. He writes about God's plans for humanity's coming judgment. In this part of the letter, Paul deals with what life is to be like for the family of God in the present age.

The present age in which Paul and the saints in Rome were living was evil. Likewise, the present age in which we live is evil. Thankfully, God provides rescue from the present evil age through the Messiah (Gal. 1:3-4). Therefore, we must not allow the present age to shape how to think and live. We must seek the renewal of our minds.

The world constantly tries to reshape our thinking. As Paul explained earlier in the letter, there are right ways and wrong ways of thinking (Rom. 1:21). Wrong thinking leads to wrong living. Darkened hearts and foolish minds will incur the wrath of God (Rom. 1:32). Therefore, our minds must be renewed. This is easier said than done. We must not allow our thinking to be shaped by worldly, sensual living. Our thinking cannot be shaped by selfish, impulsive desires. Renewing our thinking by the mercies of God will result in transformational living.

Transformation is a complete change. There is to be no part of our being left unaffected by our faith in the Messiah. Saints who think they can serve God without being transformed do not understand Jesus. As was explained in Romans chapter six, those who have been baptized have taken on a new life. New promises have been made that must be kept. The extent of this new life may not be fully understood in the beginning; however, through renewing our minds, we will be transformed in time.

We must give a thoughtful analysis of how we are living. Some Christians do not think about the impact their life has on themselves, those around them, or the family of God. As Christians, the burden of proving the validity of our lifestyles is on us. By renewing our minds and transforming our lives, we can become living, breathing proof of the power of the Gospel.

## Unity in God's Family

In verse three, Paul begins to consider the wider purposes of the newly gathered family of God. Paul introduces the theme of unity. This subject will be discussed in greater detail in chapters fourteen and fifteen. However, he begins to articulate this critical concept at this point.

Paul did not want the saints in Rome to get the wrong impression about themselves. He has already condemned the Jews for their false sense of superiority and warned the Gentiles of taking on a similar misguided view of themselves. Being unconditionally loved by the Creator, the Messiah, and the Spirit should be special enough for us without needing to use our backgrounds to elevate ourselves.

Unity in God's family is not solely based on the fact that everyone is important. Everyone is; however, unity is based upon a common faith. Paul reminds the saints at Rome of this. Each had been given a measure of faith. Their faith in what God did through the Messiah is ultimately what brought them together and what would keep them together.

This passage is also noted for Paul's use of describing God's family as a body. He does this similarly in 1 Corinthians chapter twelve. The point of this becomes quite obvious. Yes, in Christ, we all have different backgrounds, abilities, and even struggles; however, we are all necessary for the body to function properly in the world.

As members of the family of God, we must heed the lessons of unity explained in this letter. The world continues to promote and perpetuate division. Tragically, division is often present in the family of God. Its evidence can be seen on social media and in our assemblies. Political, racial, and social tensions are presently straining and breaking our relationships just as they have in the past.

If we are going to have peace as brothers and sisters in the family of God, we are going to have to renew our minds and seek transformation. The world uses division to accomplish selfish goals. They use differences to divide and conquer. We can easily allow the tactics of division to shape our minds, thus, harming God's family.

Unity will not come by ignoring issues that divide us. We must be willing to talk. Unity will not come by majority rule. Unity will not come by broadly declaring "Jesus is the answer" without specifically defining the problem or how it is to be fixed. Unity will come by love for Jesus and each member of His diverse family. For the sake of unity, we must be willing to discuss our differences, acknowledge the hurt we may have caused, and seek reconciliation with our Father and our family. Only those of renewed minds will pursue unity to such an extent.

## **Conclusion**

As Christians, can we describe our new lives as transformational? The answer to this question is based in our thinking. Are our minds being renewed by the Gospel? Or, has the world been shaping our thinking? If our minds are being shaped by a political party, we will cause division in God's family.

As this letter continues, Paul works to bring Christians of different perspectives together. In order that they would glorify God with one voice, they would have to renew their thinking (Rom. 15:5-8). This was challenging then as it is now. Are we willing to meet the challenge for the sake of God's glory?