

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

To be transformed is to become something we are not - a divine work of the Holy Spirit. First, we change our mind concerning sin. Jesus' words become real. **John 16:8** *And He, when He comes, will convict the world regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment.* Convict is a legal term - guilty as charged. **Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* The Word of God is alive and active. When we go to His Word and apply it to our lives, it becomes alive and we begin to transform - become what we are not. God's Word is powerful and it will change us.

As we look at the woodworking project of Pastor James, we see an illustration that our lives need a bending and shaping that comes with applying God's Word. This bending and shaping makes us fit for service in His Kingdom and church. Freedom Fellowship is about feeding the Word but also so that we grow up to feed others. We transform, learn of our gifts, and then give them away to other people. We are the body with many gifts, letting God transform us to be what He wants us to be.

We are divinely shaped for service - a work of the Holy Spirit. It is a process like the wood in the illustration is useless until it is formed and fitted and can also break under the pressure of bending if not prepared beforehand. As the wood is put in a dark steam box, the steamy hot place gives the wood the right properties to be formed into a special piece. We need to go through the process of getting ready to be formed. That process of allowing the Holy Spirit to saturate our lives and put us in the right conditions allows us to conform into what He desires us to be. The uncomfortable place we are possibly in today is God divinely preparing and transforming us for His purpose.

1 Corinthians 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you except something common to mankind; and God is faithful, so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

Temptations are more than just sinful desires, but there are also temptations to give up, to not believe God's Word, to believe God's love is bigger for someone else, or to believe God won't use me. BUT God is faithful and will not allow us to be tempted, stretched, pressed, or pushed over more than what we are able to endure. He will put us in those tough positions to transform us.

Why are we being changed? It is not for our own benefit or comfort. It is for the body of Christ so that we bring others into the Kingdom of God. God wants to transform us to a life of service.

Romans 12:6-8 *However, since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them properly: if prophecy, in proportion to one's faith; if service, in the act of serving; or the one who teaches, in the act of teaching; or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives, with generosity; the one who is in leadership, with diligence; the one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

This is not all of the gifts, but a portion and as we look at these gifts, choose which are ones that you desire or have:

- Prophecy - the ability to see underneath the surface as God reveals.
- Service - one that loves playing second fiddle, not worried about getting the praise, is on the team and full of support.
- Teaching - develops others.
- Exhortation - the love of building others up - encouraging.
- Giving - seeing needs in others and meeting those needs joyfully.
- Leading - pressing on in front of others and having others follow.
- Mercy - love for the least of these.

What is the difference between gifts and fruit? Gifts are given. Fruit is produced.

Romans 12:9-16 tells us what the fruit of these 7 gifts are.

Prophecy: v9 *Love must be free of hypocrisy. Detest what is evil; cling to what is good.*

Service: v10 *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.*

Teacher: v11 *Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

Exhortation: v12 *Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.*

Giving: v13 *Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*

Leading: v14 *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

Mercy: v15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

Every believer is given gifts of the Holy Spirit. Every gift can be sought after but the gift without the fruit is useless. How is this fruit produced in our lives? The gift must be given back to God to be useful for His service. Submit it to God and ask Him to produce fruit. When we give the gifts to God, He will bring an anointing on our lives. That anointing transforms us and makes us useful to the Kingdom. **1 John 2:20** *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.* God wants to give the gift and the anointing. It's not something we can work up, purchase, or study but ask for the anointing. **Exodus 30:22-23** *Moreover, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Take also for yourself the finest of spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, 250, and of fragrant cane 250, and of cassia 500, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin. You shall make from these a holy anointing oil, a fragrant mixture of ointments, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil.*

Myrrh is the oil of death representing dying to self. Cinnamon taken from the inside of a tree is called the fragrance of life standing for upright living - the inside character. Sweet cane releases an aroma as it is crushed representing our humility. Cassia comes from the outside of a bark, grown in water representing the Holy Spirit giving life. All of this crushing, purifying, and pressure is then infused in olive oil and represents the Holy Spirit of God. Anointing oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit – a physical reminder of what the Holy Spirit does in us.

Are you in need of an anointing? An anointing to allow God to transform your gift for His service? An anointing of power to produce fruit? Are you searching for what God will do with your crushing, with your dark place? Let God transform us by submitting to the power of the Holy Spirit.