

Romans 12: 1-8 (ESV and NLT) – A Living Sacrifice

Main point: Be transformed by God and not the world.



Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: In the previous chapters of Romans, Paul has told his readers that God has saved all people through God's abundant mercy. [*What is mercy?*] Based on the sureness of God's mercy, Paul gives these instructions to the new believers in Rome.

Focus of the study:

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do 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.

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many parts, and the parts do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts one of another.

⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. If God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If your gift is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, lead with zeal. And if you have a gift for mercy, showing kindness to others, do it cheerfully.

Questions:

1. *Paul makes an appeal that these believers should do what?*
 - a. Present their bodies as a "living sacrifice." *We'll get back to that in a bit 😊*
2. *What is Paul's instruction in v. 2?*
 - a. Do not be conformed to this world...
 - i. *What is this world like? How does it want to form us?*
 1. "Look out for No. 1"; self-centered
 2. Dog eat dog: competition with everyone else; might makes right
3. *What does Paul say to do instead of conforming to the world?*
 - a. "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind."
4. *I wonder what it means to renew your mind? When you renew your wedding vows or you renew a promise you made to a friend, for example, what does that mean?*
 - a. Remember it and recommit to it.
5. *In the second part of v. 2, Paul tells his readers to do what?*
 - a. "Test [ideas, words, news] and then discern what is the will of God."
6. *How do we know God's heart and mind? What does Paul say is the will of God?*
 - a. "What is good and acceptable and perfect."
7. *What do you think God values in our hearts and actions?*
 - a. God's own heart and mind: goodness, perfection, kindness, mercy, love
8. *Paul continues in v. 3: "Do not think more highly of yourself than you should." How does Paul say we should think of ourselves?*

- a. With sober judgment: *I wonder what this means?*
 - i. Be honest when evaluating yourself
 - b. With faith: Measure yourself with the eyes of faith, eyes that God gives you
9. *If you look at yourself with sober judgment and faith, what will you likely see?*
- a. Reality ... rather than only what you want to see 😊 but with grace too, like God does.
10. *What is Paul's next argument? (read v. 4-5 again)*
- a. "For (i.e., because), as in one body we have many parts, and the parts do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts one of another." *I wonder what that means? How does a body function?*
 - i. Different parts (*name them!*)
 - ii. Different jobs (*name them!*)
 - iii. All connected
11. *What if a body were all ears and legs? What could it do well? What could it not do at all?*
12. *So, are all of us here today exactly the same? How are we the same? How are we different?*
- a. Each person is unique, created by God, and in the image of God
13. *Are we unique? YES. And are we connected? YES.*
14. v. 6: "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them." *What gifts/abilities does Paul list? How/when have you seen any of these gifts at work in your life or other people's lives?*
- a. Prophecy, serve, teach, encourage, give, leadership, mercy/kindness
15. *What other kinds of gifts, talents, and jobs do you or other people have in the world? How did you / how do you use those abilities?*
- a. *Generate ideas:* teachers, doctors, nurses, moms, dads, homemakers, soldiers, administrators, engineers; singer/music, outgoing, analytical, good at fixing things....
16. *How are we supposed to work and live, and why? Is "every man an island"?*
- a. We must live and work together; as a team, because we need each other.
17. *Let's go back to the first verse of this section: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice ... which is your spiritual worship." And also v. 6: Having gifts that differ, let us..." do what?*
- a. use them!
 - b. *I wonder what it means to be a living sacrifice? How are we supposed to use the abilities God has given us for others?*
 - i. We use our gifts and talents for the good of everyone.
 - ii. We are conformed, influenced in our actions, not by the world, but by God and God's values of love, mercy, kindness, justice.
 - iii. Don't copy the behavior and customs of the world; copy what God does.

- Ask for prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

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