

Romans 12

Good morning and thank you so much for joining us. We're continuing our verse-by-verse study in the book of Romans, so would you please turn in your Bibles to Romans 12?

We are now entering the home stretch of this incredible book. The rest of Romans instructs every Christian how to respond to the justification we've received. See the Bible doesn't just tell us what to do and what not to do, God's word also gives us very practical instructions to live out our faith, and that's what we're going to see this morning.

The title of this morning's message is HOW TO LIVE FOR GOD

Let's pray

I'd like you to join me this morning in a journey for a few moments, a brief trip down memory lane. Harken back to 1984 if you would please. 1984 was a big year for 6-year-old me, because a new cartoon came out called Transformers. **SHOW PIC**

If you know anything about the transformer toys, they were normal everyday items like cars and boomboxes that could transform into something completely different, and incredibly spectacular. **CLOSE PIC**

You and I share more in common with that old cartoon than we might expect at first glance. Because of Jesus, and His work on the cross, and the HS working in our lives, we've been transformed, haven't we? I bet you look and act way different than you used to before Christ!

But our transformation is not finished, is it? There's more sanctification to be had, more of the transforming into the image

of Christ to be gained for all of us isn't there? And Romans 12 tells us how that happens.

Yet before Romans 12 lists all of the practical instructions for us, verses 1 and 2 deal with the Christian's most important relationship: our relationship to God.

Now there is a lot to these verses, so we are going to start off by breaking down verse 1...

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, it's as if Paul is saying, "In light of the previous eleven chapters, in light of the previous three hundred and fifteen verses, in light of who you are in Christ and what you enjoy because of Christ, I beg you..."

by the mercies of God, Think of all the mercies of God Paul has explained so far: **SHOW PIC OF BELOW**

- Justification from the guilt and penalty of sin
- Adoption in Jesus and identification with Christ
- Placed under grace, not law
- Giving the Holy Spirit to live within us
- Promise of help in all affliction
- Assurance of a standing in God's election
- Confidence of coming glory
- Confidence of no separation from the love of God
- Confidence in God's continued faithfulness

CLOSE PIC OF BELOW

These are just a few of the blessings that we do not deserve because of God's mercy.

So, Paul pleads with us, by the mercies of God...

...1 that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God,

SHOW PIC OF BBQ When we studied the book of Leviticus, we saw the Levitical sacrifice was a butchered carcass burned on the altar. But in the NT God no longer likes His sacrifices well done.

CLOSE PIC

Today, God wants a sacrifice that's alive. God desires living sacrifices.

The sacrifices of the new covenant in Christ don't consist in taking the lives of animals, but rather in surrendering our own life to Jesus. And this is done in practical ways.

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. **16** But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

And

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In order to truly live for God we're to surrender ourselves to our master...

Let's read all of verse 1 **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

God calls each and every one of us to make a choice about the way that we live for Him, and it's a reasonable request from God.

God does not and has not made unreasonable demands upon us. The gospel is reasonable. God said in **Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together,"**

Says the LORD,

"Though your sins are like scarlet,

They shall be as white as snow;

Though they are red like crimson,

They shall be as wool.

When you really stop to think of it, it's reasonable to present our bodies to God. It's reasonable because God is all powerful, and all knowing, it's reasonable to present our bodies and our lives to Him so He might guide and direct us.

In fact, when you logically think about it, it's unreasonable for us to try and figure out things on our own, it doesn't make sense to attempt to work out our own plans apart from God's leading!

The reasonable thing, the rational thing, the smart thing is to just turn our lives and decision-making factors over to God so that He would direct our lives.

To be clear, to present our bodies means that God wants not just our work and service, no God wants us!

See lots of Christians do all kinds of work for God, but they never fully give themselves to Him. **1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body[fn] and in your spirit, which are God's.**

The first step in living for God is to give our body. The second step is to renew our mind. Verse 2,

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed The word “transformed” is the word we get for “metamorphosis.” Interestingly, this word is used only two other times in the New Testament—one to describe what happened to Jesus **Matthew 17:2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.**

The other use of this word describes what will happen to us when we see the Lord **2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

Let's read all of verse 2

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. It's wisely been said that every Christian is either a thermometer or a thermostat.

SHOW PIC Some believers are thermometers - they conform to the temperature around them. They try to be cool or gravitate toward "what's hot." The crowds dictate the life they live. **CLOSE PIC**

SHOW PIC But God wants us to be a thermostat. Rather than register the temperature, or being controlled the temperature, we should be setting it! **CLOSE PIC**

So the second step for us to live for God is the renewing of the mind.

See Jesus changes our heart, but we have to change our way of thinking. It's up to us as individuals to put on our new identity in Christ, and cultivate character by discarding the old logic, the

previous sinful habits - and put on a new way of life through Christ.

SHOW PIC

You've all seen the popular bumper sticker that says "God is my co-pilot." But this phrase doesn't give God His rightful place. God wants and deserves to be our pilot, not our co-pilot **CLOSE PIC**

To live out our lives for God we're to surrender our body V1, renew our mind V2, and third, humble our heart in V3...

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. To think soberly means to think things really are. Who are we really? We are nothing special apart from Christ.

Even the faith we do have has been a gift from God! 1

Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Our tendency though is when the Lord starts using us is to get a little puffed up- 'hey look what I did' type of thing. God is faithful when we start thinking that we're something, getting a little big for our britches, the Lord has ways of knocking us down to size doesn't He!

We should always remember that God can use anyone to do His work. He used a donkey, didn't He?

4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

More than once in the Bible the church is compared to a body. 1

Corinthians 12: 12 For as the body is one and has many

members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

SHOW PIC If you're an adult of average weight, it's amazing what your body does every 24 hours: Your heart beats 103,689 times, your blood travels 168 million miles, you take 23,040 breaths, you inhale 438 cubic feet of air, you eat 3.25 pounds of food, you drink 2.9 quarts of liquid, you move 600 muscles, and you exercise 7 million brain cells. **CLOSE PIC**

No wonder we feel tired!

Our bodies are made up of several trillion cells all linked together, functioning as one unit. And although there are many individual parts to a physical body, they all work together.

And so is the Body of Christ. We're many individual members, but we make up one body. We're a blend of unity and diversity, working as one. And each individual member of the body contributes to the whole by using the gifts God gives each of us

And the next several verses of Romans 12 will remind us that the will of God for one Christian will likely differ from His will for another believer concerning life and ministry within the body of Christ, the church

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: The ancient Greek word for spiritual gifts is charismata, which means a gift of grace. These gifts are supernatural enabling's - not learned skills or natural abilities that you can pick up by studying a how-to manual. These are given by God for us to serve Him by serving others.

1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Sadly, the differing of gifts within the body of Christ is where a lot of conflict occurs in the Christian church today.

See, if my gifting is not the same as your gifting, I can grow frustrated when you don't respond to things the same way that I do. How we need to remember that God has made us all uniquely and differently!

SHOW PIC OF HAMMER I heard the story how Brother Hammer was appointed to preside over the Master Tool Convention. Brother Screwdriver objected, saying, "Brother Hammer, you're too noisy to preside over this meeting. You're always driving home your point, always nailing people. I call for your resignation immediately." **CLOSE PIC**

Brother Hammer responded,

SHOW PIC OF SCREWDRIVER "Well, what about you, Brother Screwdriver? All you ever do is spin around in circles." **CLOSE PIC**

"That may be true," said Brother Screwdriver, **SHOW PIC OF PLANE** "but at least I'm not like Brother Plane. His work is so surface, so shallow. What right does he have to even be here?" **CLOSE PIC**

"If you're going to kick me out," protested Brother Plane, **SHOW PIC OF RULER** "what about Brother Ruler? He thinks he's always right, measuring everyone else by his standard." **CLOSE PIC**

"At least I don't rub people the wrong way," said Brother Ruler, staring at Brother Sandpaper."

ANY IDEA FOR A PIC HERE? Just then, the Master Craftsman walked in. And, as He used each tool at the perfect time, He created an object of great beauty.

A lot of times, we look at the gifts of other people and the way God made them, and get irritated because they don't think or act just like us. And this irritation will remain until we finally come to the point where we understand that there are many members in the body—each one with a part to play and a function to fulfill.

Now beginning in verse 6 it lists several gifts, first starting with prophecy...

...6 if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

Remember prophecy isn't always "fore-telling" in a strictly predictive sense. That can be prophecy, but prophecy more often is "forth-telling" the heart and mind of God, which may or may not include a predictive aspect.

Prophecy is to be practiced in proportion to faith. If a person can't prophecy in faith and trust that God has really spoken to them, then they shouldn't do it at all.

Just think about all the supposed 'Christian prophets' who were wrong about the 2020 election!

7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; Christians sometimes make a mistake by thinking that the ministry means standing behind the pulpit. But true ministry means serving one another.

he who teaches, in teaching; Teaching simply means instructing.

8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; exhortation and teaching actually go hand in hand, because exhortation encourages people to practice what they've been taught.

Those who are taught but not exhorted become like the dead sea, they only take in and never live out the Christian life.

Yet those who are exhorted but not taught become excited and active, but have no depth or understanding of what they should properly do, which means they will then burn out quickly or will work in wrong ways. Teaching and exhortation go hand in hand.

...8 **he who gives, with liberality**; giving with liberality means giving with no strings attached. It's not the attitude of "I'll give so long as I approve where this money's going," or some other demand attached to the giving.

he who leads, with diligence; the word diligence means careful and persistent work or effort. It's easy for leaders to become discouraged and begin to lose their zeal and excitement for serving Jesus. Suddenly, the path of least resistance seems more attractive, especially when in the midst of trials for leaders. But true leaders for God remain focused on serving God with diligence.

he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Why cheerfulness with mercy? Well, it can be challenging enough to show mercy, but even harder to be cheerful about showing that mercy.

Those who cheerfully care for people who are struggling or going through traumatic times have the gift of mercy.

Now we could spend a lot of time talking about these gifts further, but I would encourage you for these gifts, as well as the rest of romans 12, to study Jesus. See as you read these verses and study the gospels, you'll see how Jesus did all of these things.

You'll see how Jesus ministered mercy; how He ruled diligently; how He gave sacrificially; how He perfectly spoke in prophecy.

Study Jesus, and you'll find the perfect example of how these gifts are to function in His body of believers.

The rest of chapter 12 gives us instructions on what we are to do, and how we're to behave as believers in light of all that Christ has done for us. I've counted 26 behaviors of a Christian in these verses, and what's amazing is if you want, you can do an in depth study and find examples in the gospel of how Jesus did every one of these.

We'll break each of these verses down...

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Of course, love with hypocrisy really isn't love at all is it?

Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. The committed Christian should detest evil like our Lord does. Seeking out and pursuing good things helps us wean our hearts away from what is evil.

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, Christians should love one another like brothers and sisters love each other.

in honor giving preference to one another; Giving recognition and appreciation to those who deserve it is a tangible way of expressing love. And we're to do this by giving preference to others over ourselves.

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; It's very tempting for Christians to slack off in their diligence when they've been Christians for some time. Though changing circumstances and the seasons of life may affect where and how we serve the Lord, we should always look for ways to serve Him.

12 rejoicing in hope, Notice it doesn't say rejoice in results! We serve God and rejoice in hope. This means we're to do all these

things with an eye towards heaven because most often we don't see the results of our labor while on this earth.

patient in tribulation, Tribulation means deep and serious trouble. Patient doesn't mean just putting up with something, but rather patience is an active, steadfast endurance.

...12 continuing steadfastly in prayer; It's wisely been said the fastest way to humble a true Christian is to ask them about their prayer life! We're exhorted multiple times not just to pray, but to continue in prayer.

We shouldn't just pray, but we should be devoted to prayer, prayer is to have high priority in our lives.

13 distributing to the needs of the saints, We should never be so self-centered as believers that we fail to reach out to others and contribute to their needs.

given to hospitality. The ancient Greek word for hospitality is literally translated "love for strangers." It means to be a "hospital" for the hurting, lonely people who come our way.

Entertaining is a big deal in our society today. The only TV show I watch is house hunters. And most families talk about a space for entertaining. Yet there's a big difference between entertaining and hospitality.

Entertaining says, "I want to impress you with my home, my decorating, my cooking."

Hospitality says, "This house is simply a gift from my Master. I use it however and whenever He desires."

Entertaining needs to impress, but hospitality aims to serve.

Entertaining puts things before people, saying, "As soon as I get the house clean, I'll start inviting people over."

Hospitality puts people first, saying, “No furniture? No problem. We’ll picnic on the floor.”

We’re to be less concerned with entertaining and more concerned for hospitality

The rest of chapter 12 describes the love we’re to have for ALL people.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. We aren’t to have a hateful attitude towards anyone, not even towards those who persecute us. Jesus spoke of this same heart in **Matthew 5:46: For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same** **47 And if you greet your brethren[fn] only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors[fn] do so?**

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Have you ever noticed that sometimes it’s harder to rejoice with those who are rejoicing than it is to weep with those who are weeping. “How come they lucked out? How come they got that? Why does he get the big breaks?” It’s hard to rejoice with those who rejoice because often times our hearts are in the wrong place.

Notice Paul doesn’t say, “Preach to those who are weeping.” No, he says, “Weep with those who are weeping.” When someone is weeping, often times there’s no sermon needed, in fact it can be a hindrance. We just need to weep with them and bet there for them.

16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Verse 16 instructs every believer to live a life of

humility. And if we refuse to set our mind on high things and in associate with the humble, we'll simply be acting like Jesus.

Our society is predicated on folks climbing corporate ladders, social ladders, intellectual ladders, and sadly even spiritual ladders. There is no ladder climbing in God's kingdom.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. This is our temptation isn't it? You hurt me so I'm going to come back and hurt you. Little OT justice-eye for eye right-no the New Covenant says don't repay evil.

Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. Our conduct should influence both believers and unbelievers alike

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. We know that as believers we are not of this world. But we're commanded, as much as is possible with us, to be at peace with everyone.

But notice verse 18 starts with the word "if". The word "if" indicates that it may not always be possible.

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,"[fn] says the Lord. The Bible clearly tells us that we will be mistreated and persecuted. And when that happens, Christians should not try to avenge ourselves. We're to leave the issue of vengeance to God, trusting His judgment will be perfect.

And because of this...

20 Therefore

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."[fn] In Paul's day, when a fire went out in a home, it was difficult to

reignite it. Therefore, if someone's fire went out, the women would carry live coals in clay jars upon their heads to share with the person who had no fire.

Likewise the person who receives good for evil feels uncomfortable because of his neighbor's love. This guilt may convict them in a gentle manner.

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Paul again concluded his exhortations with a summary. Being overcome by evil means giving in to the temptation to pay back evil for evil. When people do wrong they expect to receive evil from those that they have wronged. When they receive kindness instead their hard hearts often become softer. The best way to get rid of an enemy is to turn him or her into a friend.

We cannot do these things naturally can we?

Luke 11 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 If a son asks for bread[fn] from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"