

Romans Chapter 12

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Introduction:

Don DeWelt writes:

In the chapters to follow, Paul is to call upon believers to do many things, both for God and man, but now there is but one injunction which was inclusive of all others: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." When this is done, all other expressions of devotion and service will issue forth.

Note, please, that the body does not present itself. "We" must offer it up to God. By God's grace and in response to his mercy, we do have control over this body of flesh; we can make it an offering to God, or Paul would never have called for it. Other Christians have done it; they are now doing it. Can we do less?

OUR GIFT TO GOD

Romans 12 NLT

(1) And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice -- the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him.

- **And so . . .** points back to the previous chapter. Here is a reminder:

For everything comes from Him and exists by His power and is intended for His glory. All glory to Him forever!
Amen. (Romans 11:36 NLT)

So all of creation is intended for God's glory. That defines our reason for existing and our purpose for life. So Paul asks the

members of the church at Rome to align themselves with the purpose that God has for each person.

- **I plead . . .** Paul didn't use his authority as an apostle, but he used persuasion based on what **God** has **done** for every believer in making a way for Jews and Gentiles to be His saved people.
- **Give your bodies . . .** Our obedience is strictly our own choice. Further, it is not just our minds, but includes what we do with the **bodies** that **God** has provided. Our daily conduct is important to **God**. Consider our true ownership as believers:

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NLT)

- **Living and holy sacrifice . . . Under the Old Covenant** thousands of animals were sacrificed to **God** on a "one and done" basis. Ours is to be a **living**, ongoing, **sacrifice**. We are priests **sacrificing ourselves**.
- **He will find acceptable . . .** Other translations indicate *pleasing to God*. We can make God happy by our choices.
- **Worship Him . . .** This definition of **worship** is not limited to Sunday when the pitch-pipe sounds or the music begins. It is all inclusive of life itself. It is not just passive but has an action component that can be seen by others.

(2) Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

- **Don't copy . . .** the world makes choices on what is *trending* and the choices change fast but **God** wants to **change the way we think**.

- **The change in thinking** causes us to **please God**. His ultimate goal in our lives is **perfection** just as Jesus was **perfect** in His life. He was raised with brothers and sisters and a mother and father, yet He did not sin. As he grew older, He worked at carpentry and satisfied His customers. He did not yet have the Holy Spirit, but still He was free of sin. The Holy Spirit came at his baptism.

And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in Him. (1 John 3:5 NLT)

GOD'S GIFTS TO BELIEVERS

(3) Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

- Now Paul *does* use his apostolic **authority** and gives his readers a **warning**: Be careful how you **evaluate yourselves**.
- **By the faith God has given us. . .** This is not the normal use of **faith** in Scripture. God asks us to develop personal **faith** based on the evidence that He has provided. **J.W. McGarvey** comments:

. . . so we would here distinguish between natural, saving faith which is the possession of each Christian to this present hour, and miraculous faith, or faith which had power to work miracles, which was unquestionably dealt out as here described, so that different miraculous powers were displayed by different Christians.

McGarvey's comment harmonizes with verse 6.

(4) Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, (5) so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

- Paul frequently uses this illustration in his writing. 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Colossians 2:19. The **body** of **Christ** has a unity and diversity similar to the human body.

Because we are parts within the same body, **we belong to each other.**

(6) In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you.

- God has given us different gifts for doing certain tasks well. These are not talents believers are born with, but **gifts** given from the Lord for a task at hand.
- The first case is **the ability to prophesy**. Speaking forth the message of Jesus with Divine authority. This **gift** was in common use in the church of the first century, but phased out as the *written message* became permanent. Nevertheless, the church of the first century had living prophets who were commissioned by apostles. Here is a case of the creating a prophet:

Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:5-6 NLT)

We must include another passage:

Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah. Crowds listened intently to Philip because they were eager to hear his message and see the miraculous signs he did. (Acts 8:5-6 NLT)

Philip received prayer and the laying on of hands from the apostles in Acts 6 and in Acts 8 he was using his new gifts. The gift of prophecy faded as the source of the gift -- the

apostles -- died. The rest of the gifts were permanent in nature.

(7) If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well.

- **Serving others . . .** It is possible to **serve** others half- heartedly. Rather than doing just the minimums required, do more than expected.
- **Teach well . . .** Some try to **teach** without preparation. They depend on someone's writings without even learning how to pronounce the difficult words. Others like the spot up front so they can impress the class with their knowledge. This type of teacher will probably settle on an obscure point and talk it to death. God needs **teachers** who will finish the class with members having learned new and useful information. Teachers speak to the intellect while those with the next **gift** speak to the heart.

(8) If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

- **Be encouraging** Our sinful nature enables us to identify the negatives and failures around us. There's nothing encouraging about the latest political dispute, neighborhood dispute or church dispute. We need to locate upbeat events and stories and show that God's side will win.
- **Give generously** God has blessed some of His people with the ability to **give**. That person should give generously to legitimate needs. God has so blessed this writer and it is a responsibility to see that needs are met.
- **Leadership** Leadership includes planning, encouraging to action and following through.
- **Show kindness gladly** Believers must be interested in showing **kindness** to those with a need.

- *The sick* should receive our attention. Whether a phone call, a get-well card, a personal visit at home, or at an institution like a hospital or nursing home.
- Comforting *the dying* with your presence and prayer. Perhaps even sing a song or read a poem. Comforting *the bereaved* by sitting quietly while they get their thoughts together. It's not a time to discuss our own experiences.
- Visiting or corresponding with *those in prison*. It is not our task to make decisions about their incarceration, but to listen, encourage and pray. Keep communication on a hopeful note.
- *Befriending* the disenfranchised. Murphy came from the deep south to Vancouver for a quick visit. While here, he had a stroke that destroyed his speech and walking. He had been a ship captain on the Mississippi River, but that came to an abrupt end. Now he's alone in the world. I first met Murphy while calling in a nursing home. When he was discharged, he was moved to city-owned housing and given an electric wheelchair. I've taught him the gospel (feedback is very difficult) and he loves the saints at church. He gladly rides the bus so he can be in the church assembly. He knows where he is loved.

MARKS OF TRUE BELIEVERS

(9) Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.

- **Really love others** We may be able to convince others that we **love** them but not feel that way inside. Paul says "**don't.**"
- **Hate the wrong** By contrast to **love**, have **hatred** for what is **wrong**. Have strong *feelings* for **wrong**, not just an *intellectual* opposition.
- **Hold to the good** Sift through the options and select the **good** and hang on.

(10) Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

- **Love each other.** This implies that readers are part of a *church family*. Smorgasbord church attendance doesn't fit.
- **Genuine affection** In verse nine Paul has said not to pretend to **love** and he strengthens the command here with the requirement of being **genuine**.
- **Honoring others** When others are being **honored**, be present and supportive. Even more, delight in their birthdays and **honors** for their achievements. Further, the Lord does not approve of *social classes* in His family.

(11) Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.

- **Never be lazy** The Book of Proverbs speaks of this:

A lazy person is as bad as someone who destroys things.
(Proverbs 18:9 NLT)

Paul spoke of laziness when he wrote to the new believers at Thessalonica:

And now, dear brothers and sisters, we give you this command in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Stay away from all believers who live idle lives and don't follow the tradition they received from us.

(2 Thessalonians 3:6 NLT)

Today, **laziness** may not result in inactivity. Commercial interests have sold us games and toys to take up our time and keep us from productive work. Now we can be busy while **lazy**. Games and toys may have a place in our lives, but not as a substitute for being productive.

- **Work hard** This speaks of being focused on doing something that will count in eternity.
- **Serve with enthusiasm** **Enthusiasm** means "inspired or possessed by a god." The English word was first a religious word and eventually became a secular word.

- Paul used the word in 1 Corinthians when he was discussing the future:

So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless. (1 Corinthians 15:58 NLT)

There is no sign of **laziness** or drudgery in these words.

(12) Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.

- More emotion: **Rejoice**. We have heaven with Jesus to look forward to.
- **Patient** Paul does not say that believers will not have **troubles**, but he tells how we are to react to them: **patiently**.
- **Keep on praying** It must be a part of our daily routine, not something to do when we think of it. It points to a *prayer list* because our memories decline with the passing years.

(13) When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

- **Help people in need** *Financial need* was covered in verse eight, but there are others ways to help. *Transportation* for those who lack it, *repairs* for those who don't know how or lack the strength. Simply *reaching high* for those who must not climb. Paul says that believers are to be **ready to help**.
- **Hospitality** There are times when *food and housing* are needed. Believers are to eagerly fill that gap, even for strangers. They might be refugees from persecution.

(14) Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them.

- Handling **persecutors**. It may be that the one in need has been our enemy -- maybe even appearing friendly at first. Our fleshly nature may say they deserve the troubles they may be

experiencing. God's prophet here is telling us to **pray** for God's **blessing** on them.

- We must not ask **God** to cause them harm (**curse**) but ask **God** to bestow His favor on them.

(15) Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep.

- Being **happy** with the **happy** is not so difficult unless we are jealous, but **weeping** with the **weeping** may take work. The person **weeping** doesn't need to have a cheerleader urging them to snap out of their discouragement, but someone who can understand their heartaches. We are to that person of compassion.

(16) Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

- Get along. Don't try to make an argument whenever we see the opportunity, but find a way to be conciliatory.
- **Enjoy** We are not above others who have less than we do. The bank president is to **enjoy** the company of the person who picks up empty cans for a living.
- **Know it all** We must not converse with others as though we are experts in everything. Regard the views and opinions of others as important. Ask pleasant questions without disputing. Show other that we value their views.

HOW TO RESPOND TO EVIL

(17) Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.

- Retaliation. Others **will** do evil to us, whether unknowingly or intentionally. We must **not** respond in kind. Some have thought this was a new teaching from Christ, but consider this statement from the Law of Moses:

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18 NLT)

- **Honorable** Two areas where this needs to be applied are money and relations between men and women. We must be careful in handling the money of others. This has the burden of careful bookkeeping, but it must be done so others can see we handle the money of other people **honorably**.

We must be careful about how our actions are interpreted by onlookers in our dealings with those of the opposite sex. I have Bible classes in my home, but never with ladies alone. Teaching by phone avoids any grounds for criticism from others. I have several such sessions each week.

(18) Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

- **Live in peace** Paul implies that **peace** is not always attainable, but it should be our goal, whether a mate, a neighbor, a fellow employee or a fellow student.

(19) Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD.

- Leave **revenge** to the **Lord**. It not our assignment in life to achieve justice. Deuteronomy 32:35. If a law has been broken, a Christian may turn to the legal system to obtain justice. The Lord, the Judge of the Universe, will take **revenge** at the appropriate time.

(20) Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

- This is a quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22.
- **Heaping burning coals** sounds like 1st class wrath, but we like **Albert Barnes** writing on this portion:

So the apostle says that the “effect” of doing good to an enemy would be to produce pain. But the pain will result from shame, remorse of conscience, a conviction of the evil of his conduct, and an apprehension of divine displeasure that may lead to repentance. To do this, is not only perfectly right, but it is desirable. If a man can be brought to reflection and true repentance, it should be done.

In regard to this passage we may remark,

(1) That the way to promote “peace” is to do good even to enemies.

(2) The way to bring a man to repentance is to do him good. On this principle God is acting continually. He does good to all, even to the rebellious; and he designs that his goodness should lead people to repentance; Romans 2:4. People will resist wrath, anger, and power; but “goodness” they cannot resist; it finds its way to the heart; and the conscience does its work, and the sinner is overwhelmed at the remembrance of his crimes.

(21) Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

- Satan is the ruler of this world. He's headed for eternal hell and he wants to take as many as he can with him. The believer's instructions are to **do good**. Destroy our enemies by **doing good** for them.

This chapter demonstrates that being a Christian is not a spectator sport nor a smorgasbord at the restaurant, picking which assembly to meet with. Arriving late to the assembly and leaving the moment the final prayer is spoken will not allow us to get involved in the lives of others in the way the Lord has in mind.

MUSIC BOX

Come, let us sing to the LORD! (Psalms 95:1 NLT)

| Verse | Link: | Put in Browser: |
|-------|-------------|---|
| 1-2 | When I Sing | http://bitly.ws/qD8o |