


Practicing What You Preach

Romans 12:1-8

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Part of Paul's Letter to the Romans Romans 12

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Practicing What You Preach

Romans 12:1-8

The first eleven chapters are a detailed picture of Paul's understanding of the Gospel, but as we turn to chapter 12, Paul's focus is about to change.

Therefore...

—Romans 12:1 (NIV11)

Paul wants us to understand that a complete picture of Christianity can never rest simply on knowledge, on information, even on theology - "Therefore" means that God expects us to do something with this Good News.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

—Romans 12:1 (NIV11)

Paul not only *instructs or teaches* his readers but now begins to also “urge” them to act, based on the Gospel, on everything he’s written up to now.

Pagans tended to sacrifice in order to *obtain mercy* in their lives, but the biblical faith Paul is writing about teaches that the divine mercy that we’ve *already received* in Christ Jesus is the basis and reason we offer a sacrifice.

The Gentiles primarily held to Greek thought that the body as matter or material was evil and existed primarily as the container for the soul – so body is bad, and spirit is good.

When Paul encourages believers to “offer your bodies,” he’s working from a Hebrew concept of the body, mind, spirit, and soul as a unified whole, that can’t be separated out, one part from another.

Too often in our culture today people, without recognizing its historical roots, approach our bodies from the Greek perspective, rationalizing that their body and spirit or soul are different, and so what they do at work or in private or out-of-town doesn’t affect the rest of their lives.

The body of the believer, of the follower of Jesus Christ, is the *temple* of the Holy Spirit and the instrument through which the Holy Spirit works.

19Don'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, 20for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

—1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT)

Paul is telling us that in gratitude for God’s mercies, we are to respond with our whole being.

*Then I [Isaiah] heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said,
“Here am I. Send me!”*

—Isaiah 6:8 (NIV11)

The essence of what Paul means for followers of Jesus is to offer our whole selves to God in ways that are both honoring and “pleasing” to God.

Paul points us to worship being a way of life, a way we live our lives each day, all day, wherever we find ourselves, always in God-honoring ways that point others to Christ.

13Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. 14For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

—Romans 6:13-14 (NIV11)

It’s harder to practice what we preach because the world around us does not hold these same values.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

—Romans 12:2 (NIV11)

The Bible shows us that there are really only two patterns for living life in this world - following and trusting God or following and trusting Satan.

Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live.

—Galatians 1:4 (NLT)

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds

of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

—2 Corinthians 4:4 (NLT)

We're to live in gratitude for all God's mercies for us in Jesus Christ by sharing the Good News with those who still belong to this world.

... you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

—1 Peter 2:9 (NLT)

The negative way Paul first speaks of being holy to his readers in Rome is for them to not “conform to the pattern of this world,” but then he puts his command in a positive light, “be transformed”.

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

—2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV11)

For the Christian, Paul is saying two things are happening as we reflect on and seek to live out “God's will,” the Good News that he's described in the first eleven chapters of Romans – an ongoing *renunciation* of the ways of this world, of evil, and, at the same time, an ongoing *participation* in living out the values of this new world, the Kingdom of God.

“The renewing of [our] mind,” means to set our mind on, meditate on and reflect on the theological truths Paul has been explaining in the first eleven chapters of Romans.

These first two verses of chapter 12 sum up how we proceed to live out the first eleven chapters, and it is an ongoing intentionality to practice what we preach.

In the remaining portion of this letter, Paul now begins to give concrete examples, and how to discern what it looks like in each of our lives,

since each one of us is unique.

3For 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. 4For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

—Romans 12:3-5 (ESV)

Paul begins with a caution, that none of us who are believers should think too highly of ourselves, for we are all saved by God's grace.

Every believer receives one or more spiritual gifts for the sake of the body of Christ, given to us to be used for the purpose of the body.

When we fail to live out our faith and serve within the body of Christ, we are no longer striving to be part of God's Kingdom but the kingdom of this world, whose master is Satan.

Satan has always been a deceiver, and he's an expert at getting us to miss the significance of focusing on following Jesus.

6Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

—Romans 12:6-8 (ESV)

The role of the church is to help you live out your gifts for the sake of the body of Christ.

...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action [works], is dead.

—James 2:17 (NIV11)



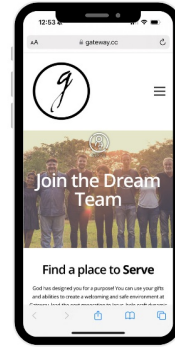
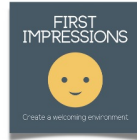
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