

Romans 12: 1-8

Romans Chapter 12 begins a new section that we can call *The believers guide book for practical Christian living.*

C.I. Schofield's heading for verses 1 and 2 is "Dedication."

In these verses, God places great emphasis on the physical bodies of Christians. Our bodies are very important because they are the only contact we have with the world around us.

It is vitally important that the Christian allows the Holy Spirit to take charge of his or her redeemed body.

It is important because the Christian is also God's contact with a needy world.

Therefore it should be no surprise to us
that V 1 begins --

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

In 1 Corinthians 6: 19-20 we are brought face to face with the responsibility that we have before God for our physical bodies.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

However, in spite of the fact that our bodies and our spirits are purchased, owned, and occupied, by the God Head, in spite of the fact that we are already His, Paul beseeches us in V1 to **"present your bodies a living sacrifice."**

Yes, even though we belong to God by virtue of His creation and by His redemption, still He desires the free-will *offering* of our bodies.

One day God is going to redeem our corruptible bodies--"**For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**"

So let's dedicate our **"bodies a living sacrifice"** for the furtherance of His agenda.

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Jesus was the grand example of someone Who was willing to present His body as "**a living sacrifice.**"

We see that over in Hebrews 10: 4-7: "**For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.**

⁵ Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."

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Now a donation is not a sacrifice, and God
wants a *sacrifice*.

God wants our entire life to be sold out to
Him.

It's not what we give, but what we are
that's a living sacrifice.

I believe it was D.L. Moody that once heard
a preacher say "The world has yet to
see what God can do with the man that
is completely sold out to Him."

That night, Moody said "I will be that man."

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I heard about a pig and the chicken that
were walking past the church one day.

A sign on the lawn said "Church supper,
bacon and eggs."

The chicken looked at the pig and said, *I
think we should make a contribution.*

The pig said, *It's OK for you to talk. For you it is just a donation, but for me it would be a real sacrifice.*

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One of the requirements in presenting our **"bodies a living sacrifice"** is that they be **"holy, acceptable unto God."**

1 Corinthians 3: 16-17 says **"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"**

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

You see, we are responsible to not defile our bodies, and if we do sin, we are responsible to confess and forsake that sin.

For as you might expect, God will not use
dirty vessels.

2 Timothy 2: 20-21: **"But in a great house
there are not only vessels of gold and
of silver, but also of wood and of
earth; and some to honour, and some to
dishonour.**

²¹ **If a man therefore purge himself
from these, he shall be a vessel unto
honour, sanctified, and meet for the
master's use, and prepared unto every
good work."**

As in any good household, God washes the
dishes before He uses them.

His servants must be **"holy, acceptable unto
God."** Romans 12:1

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We are so concerned about being acceptable to our fellow man, and, in a way, we should be.

2 Corinthians 8:21 says -- "**Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**"

But our real concern when we choose an action or attitude or direction in our life should be Is it "**acceptable unto God**"?

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And finally verse 1 says, "**which is your reasonable service**" or divine service.

Of course, we can never pay back God in the least degree for what He has done for us.

And yet He desires our service, and even rewards us for it.

And while we are on the subject of service,
let me say that today we have a rather
unbiblical view of Christian service.

First of all, we think of Christian service
as mostly taking place in the church.

Actually, it is a 24-hour-a-day job.

God wants us to serve Him in our
neighbourhood, in our homes, and on the
job.

God might want you to bake a pie, or rake
leaves, or if you are able, shovel snow
for a neighbour that is in need.

Yes, that's also Christian service.

Jesus said **"And whosoever shall give to
drink unto one of these little ones a
cup of cold water only in the name of a
disciple, verily I say unto you, he
shall in no wise lose his reward."**

And Jesus wants us to serve Him in the work place also.

"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;

²³ **And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;**

²⁴ **Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."**

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Secondly, we hold the view that the pastor is full-time and paid, while the rest of us are volunteers.

I don't want to show a lack of appreciation for the many hours of dedicated work that is done by so many here in this

church and elsewhere. That's really not my point.

However, I believe the Bible teaches us that there are no volunteers, and no unpaid workers in God's service.

Yes, God loves a cheerful giver, and there are many in this church who willingly give freely of their time in His service.

But, in the final analysis, we are not really volunteers.

We are, in fact, His servants, and it is our responsibility to serve Him where He directs.

That thinking may not be popular today, but that is exactly the way Paul viewed his service for God.

1 Corinthians 9: 16 " **For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of:**

for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

¹⁷ For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."

You will find that the very first verse of this book makes Paul's job write-up perfectly clear.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."

Paul endured shipwreck, stoning, much travelling, hunger, and thirst, for the sake of the Gospel.

Did Paul say "Boy, I'm a great guy for putting up with all this hardship"?

No, as far as he was concerned, it was all part of the job, and he did it willingly.

And, yes, he did receive a reward.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

So, his attitude was, **" For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"**

Now Paul was not the only one who took this attitude concerning his service for God.

Jesus also taught the principle of servant-hood, rather than volunteerism.

The example He used may not fit well into our present-day philosophy.

However, it was quite fitting in the society He lived in.

You see, it was a time when servants and slaves were in common use.

Turn with me then to Luke 17: 7-10: " **But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?**

⁸ And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have

eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

⁹ Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

¹⁰ So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Here Jesus gives the everyday example of a live-in servant.

This man had faithfully done his field work. Apparently his master was not extremely rich, so only had a few servants.

As a result, this man worked in a dual capacity.

He had his outside work and also household duties, and both were expected of him.

So, in spite of the fact that he had already done a good day's work outside, he was required to serve the meal before he could sit down and eat.

Now this may seem to us as rather unappreciative and callous on the part of his master, but no doubt it was common practice in that day.

Jesus then used this everyday circumstance to teach a spiritual lesson.

That lesson was the principle of accepting responsibility in the Lord's work.

So, even though Jesus' example does not exactly fit our society, the point He made is still valid.

The point then is that we are God's servants, and when we serve Him even to the best of our ability, **"we have done that which was our duty to do."**

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So, am I saying that the pastor and the congregation should not show appreciation for those who give of their time and talents freely?

No, of course not.

And neither does God.

No, this attitude of servanthood that we have been discussing is not something that is without but something that is within.

This is not to be the attitude of the recipients, but rather the attitude of the servant himself toward his Master.

So don't consider yourself a volunteer, but rather a servant, or, more correctly, a bond slave (which is a servant of love) to your Lord Jesus Christ.

Find out what God wants you to do, and then do it with all your heart. It's "**your reasonable service.**"

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Let's go on to Verse 2 of Romans 12.

V 2 " **And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**"

---"**And be not conformed to this world.**"

In the dictionary, the word "conform" is described as follows--

To be in accordance.

To act in accordance.

To show identity or resemblance.

To bring oneself into harmony or agreement.

We're not to be " **conformed to this world.**"

The word world here is not referring to our planet, but rather the world system.

And by the way, Satan indicated to Jesus in Luke 4 that the world system belongs to him.

And this time, he *wasn't* lying.

Luke 4: 5-7 " **And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.**

⁶ **And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.**

⁷ **If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."**

Satan would have given the entire world system to Jesus if He would worship him.

Oh yes, Satan still had visions of taking God's place.

How ridiculous to offer Jesus this.

But he quite successfully gives bits of his kingdom to other people around the world who will serve him.

We must not be conformed to his system in any way.

The principle of his world system operates on force, greed, selfishness, and worldly pleasure.

Many times his system takes on the respectable form of religion, science, and culture.

Is it any wonder that Romans 12 warns us not to be conformed in any way to this world system?

In fact, it is made quite clear in 1 John 2: 15-17 that God will not operate in a believer's life if he is immersed in this world system.

1 John 2: 15-17 " **Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

¹⁶ **For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.**

¹⁷ **And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."**

Oh, you may not be doing anything really sinful, just meeting your daily needs, or perceived needs.

But if the world takes up all your time and money and energy and loyalty, with nothing left for God, then you have invested in a system that "**passeth away**" rather than doing "**the will of God**" that has eternal value.

V 2 "**And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**"

And so there are two possible paths for the believer: Obeying the desires of the old man, or yielding to the desires of the Holy Spirit; conformed to the world

or transformed into the image of
Christ.

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The word "**transformed,**" as it is used here,
is the same word that is translated
"transfigured" in Matthew 17:2

Jesus did not have a physical appearance
that made Him stand out in a crowd.

Isaiah 53:2 says, "**He hath no form nor
comeliness; and when we shall see him,
there is no beauty that we should
desire him.**"

And yet, on the Mount of transfiguration,
Jesus "**was transfigured before them:
and his face did shine as the sun, and
his raiment was white as the light.**"

That day, Jesus' real power and real glory
and real beauty shone through his human

body, and he was transfigured from within.

Here in our portion for today in Romans 12:

2, we are admonished to be

"transformed" or "transfigured" by that which is without, by that which God wants to pour into us---not to be conformed, but to be transformed or transfigured more and more into the image of His Son, **"that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."**

How? --- **"by the renewing of your mind."**

Or to put it in the words of Paul in 2

Corinthians 3: 18, **"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass (or mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory**

to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In the world's mirror you will only see yourself.

But in God's mirror, that is the inspired Word of God, you will see Jesus.

And the longer you look, the more you will look like the image in the mirror.

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So those are the two paths that the believer can follow.

That decision will determine whether he lives his life in the wilderness or in the Promised Land.

V 2 " **And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."**

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So the first two verses deal with the dedication of our lives to the Lord. It is something that we need to do every day.

The rest of the chapter involves the working out of that dedication on a daily basis.

The next section, V 3-8, deals with the Christian's service in the church through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

V 3-V8 **"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.**

⁴ **For as we have many members in one**

body (that's the church, the body of Christ) **and all members have not the same office:**

⁵ So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

⁶ Having then gifts (that is gifts of the Spirit) differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

⁷ Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

⁸ Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

The human body makes a very good type of the church.

The head, which in our body is the control centre, is a picture of Christ, the head of the church.

But believers in the church, as is the case with the human body, are not all separately joined to the head.

Most parts are joined to the other parts to make up the whole.

As 1 Corinthians 12 tells us, God did not make all the parts of the body the same.

Nor did He give the same gifts to each part.

The eye and the ear perform their valuable functions, but they cannot hold us up or move us about as the legs do.

So if each member of the church is specifically gifted by God for a

particular work, then it is important that each one exercise his or her gift in order that the church will not be lacking.

At the same time, it is important that each of us has a realistic idea of what his or her work is.

So V 3 tells us to properly evaluate the gifts God has given us.

V 3 " For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Sometimes we can get an inflated idea of our importance.

That, of course, would be the influence of fleshly pride.

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I heard about a rooster that would stand on
the fence every morning, just as the
sun was rising, and crow loudly.

One morning he slept in.

And do you know what happened?

The sun came up anyhow!

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1 Corinthians 4: 7 " **For who maketh thee to
differ from another? and what hast thou
that thou didst not receive? now if
thou didst receive it, why dost thou
glory, as if thou hadst not received
it?"**

So those that have received a gift for the
edifying of the church have received
it--not for their own glory--but for
the work of the Lord.

But V 2 also says, concerning the gifts of the Spirit, that we are **"to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."**

We should have a realistic idea of our gifts
" according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

As we should not overestimate our service, neither should we underestimate the gifts that God has given us.

We should not be like Moses who doubted the abilities God had given him, and by doing so, angered the Lord.

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So there is no substitute for realistic thinking when it comes to the gifts and calling of God.

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V 4-5 **"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:**

⁵ So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

All members are not given the same gifts because the body of Christ has many different needs.

We see some of these gifts for the edifying of the church listed in these verses.

V 6 **"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith."**

Prophecy, as it is spoken of here, does not mean the foretelling of the future, but rather the gift of preaching.

1 Corinthians 14: 3 makes this clear: **"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."**

V 7 **"Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching."**

The gift of ministering is doing the everyday work of the church.

That covers a lot of areas and gifts, and is often not very visible, but it is a vital part for the wellbeing of the body of Christ.

Remember the seven men who were chosen to minister to the needs of the widows?

They had to have high qualifications.

Acts 6: 3 **"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report,**

full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

And, of course, teaching.

The teaching of the Word of God in our Sunday School and from the pulpit is essential to the spiritual growth of the church.

V 8 " **Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."**

He that exhorteth. Yes, we need people like that, don't we?---those who will encourage us in the Lord.

Then there are those whom the Lord has given the ministry of giving.

Those who quietly give of their substance for the furtherance of the ministry.

**"He that ruleth, with diligence; he that
sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."**

In the early church, the members were
instructed to go to the church rulers
rather than to the courts to settle
their differences.

As far as I know, God has not changed that
order, but we seem to have abandoned it
today.

Nevertheless, it was a gift of the Holy
Spirit that was given to some in the
church for the good of the body.

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The gifts of the Holy Spirit. We all have
them, and all of us should exercise our
gift.

What is your gift?

Do it with all your heart.

We need you.

