

Title: Gifts for Living
Series: Living Free
Text: Romans 12:1-8

Introduction: Romans chapters 1 through 11 are doctrinal in nature, now Paul gets practical. Francis Schaeffer had a book by the title *How Should We Then Live* that would fit nicely the transition from doctrine to practice.

Paul in rapid fire succession gives multiple imperatives on dozens of topics of Christian living. Without the foundation of the first part of Romans one might replace the old letter of the Law with a new letter of the Law.

We are free now to be who we were always meant to be. We are free to love in a new and deeper way. We are free to enjoy our relationship with the Father without fear.

Paul now teaches us the responsibilities of our freedom.

READ THE TEXT: Ask someone from the group to read Romans 12:1-8 or read it together as a group.

I. Transformed from the inside out [Romans 12:1,2]

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.*
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.*

A. Therefore by the mercies of God. Paul has several critical ‘therefores’ in Romans.

- (1) the **therefore** of God’s judgment (Romans 2:1)
- (2) the **therefore** of justification by faith (Romans 5:1)
- (3) the **therefore** of no condemnation (Romans 8:1)
- (4) the **therefore** by all these - God’s mercies (Romans 12:1) – how should we live?

Since you have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and received the manifold mercy of God *how should you then live?*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: A good rule of thumb when you see a “therefore” in scripture is to ask yourself, “*What’s it there for?*” It usually indicates a shift from a case that has been made to a call for action, as we see in this passage. Paul’s appeal to his readers here to take certain action is based upon “the mercies of God.” In fact, Paul’s language is very strong. He says “*I beseech you...brethren...*”

- Let’s review. How have we seen God’s great mercy demonstrated in the previous chapters we’ve studied in Romans?
- Can anyone share an example from your own life of how you were motivated to greater surrender or consecration of your life by an experience or revelation of God’s mercy?

B. Present your *bodies* as a living sacrifice

The old covenant system of ritual sacrifices has been forever eliminated by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. There is no need to return to the Law or the observances of Jewish festivals or the rite of circumcision, but **there still is a sacrifice** we are instructed to do – present your *bodies* as a living sacrifice to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What do you think Paul means here “to present your bodies a living sacrifice”? Perhaps the best way to understand Paul’s exhortation here is to break it down into pieces. What did Paul mean by these powerful words – *bodies, present, living sacrifice*?

- What does the word “**bodies**” mean?

Note: In the original language (Greek), the word “bodies” here means *more than just the physical body*. It really carries the sense of *the whole of our being*.

- What does Paul mean when he exhorts us, then, to “**present**” our bodies as a “**living sacrifice**”? This is not the first time he exhorts us to “**present**” ourselves.

- Romans 6:13 *present yourselves to God*

- Romans 6:19 *present your members as slaves of righteousness*

“Present” is a **continual action** – it is not a one time thing. We do it every day.

- What does Paul mean by the words “**living sacrifice**”?

The idea of the “living sacrifice” just reinforces the sense of continual action found in the word “present.” The sacrifice of our lives is not a one-time sacrifice that leads to death. This, in some respects, would be easier. Once you’re dead, the sacrifice is not again needed. But Paul is calling us to offer the whole of our life and being daily, continually to God as an act of worship.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What are some specific ways that we can present our bodies as living sacrifices?

- Can you share some specific examples of how you have done this in your own life?

1. Its desires. The summons of discipleship in our generation is seen most clearly in the *sexual stewardship* of our bodies.

It is easier to agree to stop cheating, stop lying, stop cussing, stop hurting others but when the Lord requires us to present our sexual lives to Him- if we want to fully follow after Him – many balk for our sexual needs are extraordinarily powerful desires.

2. Its strength. The Scripture says we are to dedicate the strength of our bodies to the service of the Lord.

- *Thou shall love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.*

3. Its care. The body is to be honored in life and in death. We honor the body by prioritizing optimum health.

- *Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*

4. In worship. The first part of Romans says we are to have spiritual and reasonable worship and that involves the body.

- *The lifting up of my hands, as the evening sacrifice Ps 141:2*

C. Reasonable Service

Our service or ministry to God is to be intelligent and rational. Paul's spirituality is not supra-spiritual but very practical and down to earth.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In other translations (NIV), "reasonable service" is rendered "spiritual act of worship." Perhaps someone can read it in the NIV. How does this reading of the verse "enlarge" our view of what worship really is?

D. Not Conformed but Transformed

God said, Let us **FORM** man in our image.
The Devil said: I will **DEFORM** man by sin.
The World said: We must **CONFORM** man in our image.
Jesus Christ says: I will **TRANSFORM** man by grace

The *world* in Romans 12:2 is not a reference to the physical world but rather the *spirit* of the age in which we live. The forces of this present world are powerful – very powerful. They are dark and demonic. They try to squeeze all people into their mold.

Conform – *suschematizo* – means to fit a superficial scheme, to accommodate – to be squeezed into a mold

Transform – *metamorphosis* – to change radically in inner character, condition or nature

To not be conformed to the world is not to *withdraw* from the world, but rather to take the world out of us.

Let me lay siege to **a lie** some may be entertaining today: *I can not change*. Yes, you can! It begins by presenting your body – its appetites and desires - as a willing sacrifice to God and then by renewing the mind.

F. Renewing of the Mind

It is critical to see that transformation happens by **changing our mind-set**. *Think right and you will feel right* is more true than we often want to accept.

Renewing the mind is changing how we evaluate life and makes decisions- but also it changes our values, vision and desires. Transformation changes our **default setting** from selfishness to love.

How does one renew the mind? It is a work of the Holy Spirit.

1. Obeying the daily nudging of the Holy Spirit. When we listen to the Spirit's correction and encouragement we are changed degree by degree. He is the perfect counselor and teacher.

2. Activating the power of Word of God

- W. Tozer when speaking of the Bible once said... *Read it much, read it often, brood over it, think over it, meditate over it—meditate on the Word of God day and night. When you are awake at night, think of a helpful verse. When you get up in the morning, no matter how you feel, think of a verse and make the Word of God the important element in your day. The Holy Ghost wrote the Word, and if you make much of the Word, He will make much of you*

Joshua 1:8 *don't let the word depart from you mouth... you will prosper at everything*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Can anyone share a personal experience of how some area of your life was transformed as a result of meditating and acting on the Word of God and/or acting on the “nudging” of the Holy Spirit?
- It's easy to talk about renewing our minds in the Word, but for someone who is a new believer, what are some *practical* tips you can give on how to read and meditate on the Word in such a way that it brings transformation to your life?
- Share some of your own practices in applying the Word to your life.

II. Joined to His Body Romans 12:3-5

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.

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.

A. Make a clear-headed assessment of yourself

Phillips Translation: *As your spiritual teacher I give this piece of advice to each one of you. Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you.*

To think more highly of ourselves than we ought is to think we can be grow apart from the dynamics of community. Deception: **Somehow I am above or beneath participation in the local church.**

Can any member of the Body of Christ grow long term unconnected to the Body? No

B. Many Members with Different Functions

1. Every one is unique. We do not have the same function. We are individually members of one another. You are one of a kind.

2. Everyone is needed. The Bible says that the church will not mature and grow up unless '*each part does its share*'. **Eph 4:16**

I Corinthians 12 also says that no one can say to another member of the body, 'I have no need of you', for we are created to be interdependent.

III. Gifts from your Creator Romans 12:6-8

6. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

7. or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

8. he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

The word for *gift* is *charismata* and the word for *grace* is *charis* – you can easily see the relationship between gift and grace. Gifts are given by grace and operated in God's grace.

A. Great Diversity of Gifts

I Corinthians 12:4-6 *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all...*

...let us use them Romans 12:6

B. Three Categories of Spiritual Gifts

1. Gifts of the Father – Creation gifts – Romans 12

These are gifts of common grace and as such all people enjoy them both the saved and the unsaved. You are born with these gifts – they are hard-wired in your personality.

2. Gifts of the Son – Ascension gifts – Ephesians 4

There are offices of leadership in the local church. The five-fold ministry is to be received and honored as gifts from Jesus Christ.

3. Gifts of the Spirit – Manifestation gifts – I Corinthians 12

These are the supernatural power gifts that are used in ministry. They are in the broad areas of proclamation, revelation and miracles.

These lists of gifts in Scripture are not necessarily exhaustive but are highlighted for our benefit.

C. Seven Motivational Gifts

6. *...if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;*
7. *or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;*
8. *he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Descriptions of Motivational Gifts

1. Prophecy: It comes from the Greek word " *propheteia* " (4394) that means to speak forth

Other titles are: Perceiver, Intuitive, Justice

Characteristics: Warning, Morally bold, Sees right and wrong

2. Ministry: It comes from the Greek word "*diakonia*" that means to be an attendant or a minister, to use the office of deacon, and relief.

Other titles are: Finisher, Hard worker, Server

Characteristics: Practical, Loves to entertain, Meticulous, Observes the needs of others

3. Teacher: It comes from the Greek word "*didasko or didasklia*" to teach or to give instruction.

Other titles are: Communicator, Presenter

Characteristics: Logical, Objective, Systematic

4. Exhorter: It comes from the Greek word "*paraklesis or parakaleo*" a calling to one's side to aid.

Other titles are: Encourager, Helper, Builder of people, Counselor

Characteristics: Positive, Uplifting, Encouraging

5. Giver: It comes from the Greek word "*metadidomi*" to give over, share, or impart.

Other titles are: Steward, Resource

6. Leadership: It comes from the Greek word "*proistemi*" that means to stand before, to be over, to rule, to maintain, to practice, or to preside.

Other titles are: Director, Overseer, Pioneer, Visionary

Characteristics: Objective, Responsible, Organized, Goal-oriented

7. Mercy: It comes from the Greek word "*eleeo*" to compassionate by word or deed (by God's grace), have compassion, pity on, have (obtain, receive, show) mercy (on).

Other titles are: Comforter, Counselor, Helper

Characteristics: Not judgmental, empathetic, personable, kind

IV. Gifts: Discover them, Embrace them, Develop them, Use them

ACTIVITY:

- Get paper and pens for each group member and ask each member to write their name at the top of the page. Have everyone pass their sheet to the person on the left and write a strength or gift (preferably, one of the seven motivational gifts) that they see in the person whose name is on the sheet of paper. Perhaps they could write one line of how they either appreciate that gift in the person or where they've seen that gift at work in the person. Once this has been completed, everyone should fold the paper over just enough to cover their words and pass it to the left to the next person. Continue to do this until the paper makes it all the way around the circle to its owner. Then take a few minutes to read your papers (either silently or out loud, depending on how much time you have). Have people share how they were encouraged through this activity. Note: If your group is very large, you may want to break up into smaller groups to do this.
- Alternate activity: A less time consuming activity would be to have everyone share one of their top gifts/strengths from the list of motivational gifts above and how they enjoy using the gift. Others from the group can affirm them in how they've seen this gift operate in their lives.

APPLICATION:

- How can we as a group give opportunity for every group member to use his/her gift(s) in our life group?
- Brainstorm on tasks and roles that could be filled by group members. Make it your goal that every group member has a role to play from week to week.