

**TAKE MY LIFE, LET IT BE**  
**Romans 12:1-2**

**Intro:**

**Gifts:**

- **What kind of gift giver are you? How would those close to you (right now) answer that question?**
- **What about when you need to get a gift for the person that has everything?** You want to give them something they'll appreciate, maybe tell others how awesome you are for getting them such a gift.
- In your heart, you want them to treasure and hold on to the gift for a long time, but...they have it all, don't need anything. **Some people are hard to buy for** - that's why we have **gift cards!**
- Or **maybe you aren't much of a giver at all**, don't like giving gifts. Too busy. Waste of time. Waste of money. They won't like it anyway. Your idea of a generous gift is **the jelly of the month club**. ("That's the gift that keeps on giving!")
- Or maybe you're just selfish and you give more to yourself than you do to others. You're more known for your self-indulgence than your generosity.

**Seriously...**

- **What do you have to offer God** - the one who really doesn't need anything? Think about it...**what do you, what do I, what do we, have to offer to God?** Especially when we consider who He is and what He has done for us?
- What can we give him to show our gratefulness? What would please him? **HINT: Not a gift card, you can't order it from Amazon, and it's not a tie! Jesus doesn't wear ties. A bottle of good wine-sure, but not a tie!**
- **What is it that we all have to offer God? Look in the mirror (or take a selfie) and it should be clear to you.**

**Today we're going to talk about that and a whole lot more.** In these two verses (shortest passage in our Romans series) Paul has much to say—about gospel gratitude, sacrificial service, personal transformation, how to discern the will of God, and **what it means to love God with our bodies and minds. That's a lot!**

**Overview** (because we're at a major transition in the book→where we are and how this passage fits in):

- **Romans 12:1-2** is the **bridge, hinge, pivot point (like a see-saw or scale)** in the book:
  - **First 11 Chapters:** what to understand & believe (indicatives-statements of truth) → **biblical theology**
  - **Last 5 Chapters:** what to do, how to live (imperatives-commands, appeals calls to action) → **biblical ethics**
- Two verses are **jam-packed with gospel goodness** and are some of the **most important in all the Bible. Why?**
  - **D.A. Carson:** they "capture the heart of what it means to live as a Christian."
  - **Michael Bird:** "In its barest elements [this passage] is about worship, worship with the body and worship with the mind," and it tells us that "those who bear Christ's name will learn to walk in Christ's way."

**BIG IDEA:** **Christians should offer their bodies in worship and service to God, and allow their minds to be transformed so that they know and do the will of God.**

1. **Because God has shown you mercy [in and through Jesus], worship and serve Him by offering your bodies as a living, holy and pleasing sacrifice.**

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

**Digging in to the details: 6 QUESTIONS to ask and answer about this verse:**

**1- WHO (is Paul speaking to)? you brothers**

- Specifically: Paul uses the word **adelpho**, most often translated **brothers**, but he's speaking to everyone in the church in Rome...brothers & sisters
- More generally: individual Christians and the church from the 1<sup>st</sup> century down to today and beyond

**2- WHY (should they do what he's going to ask/plead with them to do)? Therefore... By the mercies of God**

- **therefore**
  - **Marker/Signpost** for the reader/hearer...Paul is making a turn...get ready to follow him! (**ILLUSTRATION: GPS directions: listen and obey or you'll be re-routed**)
  - Marks the **transition** from theology to ethics, from what to understand and believe to what to do now that you believe.
- **By the mercies** (plural)
  - Generally: mercy/compassion of God for his people.
    - **Boq:** "The only thing that saves a human race lost in sin is the **mercy** of God. Mercy is...that compassion-based response of God to the plight of humans that causes him to forego what they deserve, punishment for sin, and give them what they do not deserve, forgiveness."
  - Specifically: the mercies God has shown those that have faith in Christ (as Paul has explained **Chs. 1-11**). What are those **mercies**? **Just a quick summary...**

1:16-17	Delivered to us the Gospel –the power of salvation to everyone who believes, and through which the righteousness of God is revealed.
3:22	Through our faith in Christ alone, made us righteous.
3:24-26, 30	Justified and redeemed us.
4:7-8	Blessed us with forgiveness and covered our sins so that they are no longer counted against us.
4:24-25	Counted us righteous and justified us.
5:1	Justified us and given us peace with him.
5:2	Granted us access and given us the hope of glory.
5:2-3	Given us joy – even in our sufferings.
5:3-5	Allowed our suffering: to produce in us endurance, character, and hope—hope that we will not be put to shame.
5:6-8	Died for us – when we were dead in our sin and unworthy of his grace.
5:9-10	Justified us by his blood, bore the wrath we deserved, reconciled us by his death, and given us new life through his resurrection.
5:15-19	Given us the free gift of grace...that justifies us and makes us righteous in his sight.
6:4-8	United us with him in both his death and resurrection, and given us life eternal with him.
6:17-18	Set us free...from our bondage to sin and death, and made us " <b>slaves to righteousness.</b> "
7:4, 6	Made us his so that we may bear fruit and serve in the " <b>new way of the Spirit.</b> "
8:1-2	Promised us " <b>no condemnation</b> " and that we are free from the law of sin and death.
8:9, 11	Filled us with the Holy Spirit, which gives us life.
8:16-27	Adopted us, made us heirs, and promised us a future, certain, glorification.
8:23	Promised the redemption of our bodies.
8:26-28	Given us the Spirit, who helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us.
8:30	Called, justified and will glorify us.
8:31-32	Gave himself up for us, will stand by us, will not let us go, and will give us what we need.
8:37	Promised us " <b>that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, not height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.</b> "

- And that's **just a sampling of the first 8 chapters of Romans. We could go on and on about the mercies of God!**

- **ILLUSTRATION: See-saw**
  - **one side: God's mercy & grace – A TON OF IT!**
  - **other side: heart of believer (YOUR HEART)**, overwhelmed with grace, overflowing with gratitude. Your heart **should soar HIGH with gratitude** and that gratitude should lead you to graciousness and generosity!
- **ILLUSTRATION: Unexpected gift**

- Think about the times you received an unexpected gift/blessing, or someone did something nice for you (when you didn't ask), or genuinely surprised you with their generosity, what did you feel—deep in your heart? **GRATITUDE!**
- And what do you say and do when you experience such grace and feel such gratitude? **You show it to the one who showed you such grace!**
- **And how much more grace has God shown us in Christ Jesus?!?** We were dead, blind, aliens, orphans, slaves to sin, outsiders, undeserving. And yet...in his **mercy** he showed us grace by sending his Son to die for us. **How grateful we should be! How generous should we be!**
- **But we can be cold-hearted and ungrateful. We can resist the weight of grace and embrace the world** that says we're OK just like we are and that we are entitled to comfort and peace and even desecrate grace and mercy! We can also take it for granted and forget about it. May it not be so!

### 3- **WHAT...is Paul asking them to do? WHAT...is God asking us to do?**

#### **I appeal: parakaleo**

- Other translations: urge, beseech, exhort, implore
- **Michael Bird:** "an urgent matter posed as a request"
- Call to obedience with both justification & expectation
- **What is he appealing to them/us to do?**

#### **To present/To offer:**

- **offer** – better because we often think of "present" as a one-time act when that's not what Paul has in mind. He's saying that we need to **continue make this offering. It's a continual offering.**
- **A WORD ABOUT OFFERINGS (joke about offering/money):**
  - **Not a quid pro quo (latin: "something for something")!** Jesus isn't Monty Hall and we're not making a deal with God. We don't make an offering because we expect to get something in return. We make an offering because of what we've already been given!
  - **Our offerings (all types) & our worship should be in response to grace—not a payment to get it!** We don't offer ourselves to God so that he will owe us something or to earn his grace. It should be in response to his grace. Should be cheerful, not under compulsion (cf 2 Cor 9:7).
  - Our offering is simply an opportunity to give back to God what he has given us, and what belongs to Him. He gave us life, now give let's give ours to Him.

### 4- **WHAT (are we to offer)?**

#### **Our bodies**

- Your **whole person**. Your **spiritual and physical existence** – everything you are.
- **NOT ONLY YOUR PHYSICAL BODY, but also your will, desires, abilities, talents.** No, you're not a super-hero, but you have the body He gave you. The question is, **how are you using it?**
- **Schreiner:** "One cannot consign dedication to God to the spirit and neglect the body. Genuine commitment to God embraces every area of life, and includes the."
- **God gave you a body and a life for a purpose, and that purpose isn't to use it in ways that dishonor Christ and grieve the Spirit.** If you are a Christian, **your body isn't yours to do with whatever you want.**
- **Michael Bird:** "Treat your body as a vessel of holiness rather than a temple of self-indulgence."
- **Yes, you should enjoy the good gifts he's given you:** life, family, friends, good food and drink, amazing experiences, humor, your spouse if you're married (see what I did there? 😊) → just do it to the glory of God and do it in accordance with what the Bible teaches.
- **How are we to offer our bodies?**

#### **As a sacrifice**

- **NOTE:** Paul shifts from plural to singular: "**brothers**" [plural] → "**present your bodies**" [plural] → "**as a living sacrifice**" [singular]. What? Why not "**living sacrifices** [plural]?" Because he is speaking (as he often does) to **both the individual and the church**. He is saying that: **Christians should offer themselves individually, but should do so together as the church.** It is a **collective offering** that Paul has in mind and that he says Jesus deserves. This is how we, the church, the bride of Christ are to love, honor, thank and serve Him. **Read more on this in 1 Cor. 12 and next week as Pastor Shane unpacks the next section of Romans 12.**

- **Back to this idea of sacrifice**, which is a **common theme/concept** throughout the Bible. **How is this connected to the sacrificial system of the OT, and how is it connected to the Jesus' sacrifice?**
  - **Worship** has always been accompanied by sacrifice, but the **form of sacrifice** has changed under the new covenant:
  - **Sproul:** "When the perfect sacrifice was made, that was the end of the Old Testament sacrificial system. But there is still a New Testament sacrificial system. It is not a sacrifice that we give in-order to make an atonement, but a sacrifice that we give because an atonement has been made for us. **To be a Christian means to live a life of sacrifice, a life of presentation, making a gift of ourselves to God.**"
- **David Livingstone (great missionary to Africa):** "I never made a sacrifice. We ought not to talk of 'sacrifice' when we remember the great sacrifice which he made who left his Father's throne on high to give himself up for us."
- **Grace should always lead to gratitude and gratitude should always lead to generous giving and sacrifice.**

#### 5- **WHAT (kind of sacrifice)?** 3 adjectives...

##### (1) **Living**

- We are **dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus** (Rom. 6:1).
- We are living because God has given us life, so our sacrifices are our **living** selves. Paul is telling us to live our new lives for Jesus, for the glory of God.

##### (2) **Holy**

- **Set apart** for service and obedience to God. Our conduct and character should flow out of being set apart.
- **Consecrated:** devoted irrevocably (permanently, no take backs) to God—not to ourselves or others. Our sacrifice should be pure and wholly done for Him.

##### (3) **Acceptable/pleasing to God**

- Remind us of OT sacrifices that were **pleasing** and fragrant to God
- **Generally:** Worthy of his acceptance, will receive divine favor

#### 6- **WHY (sacrifice ourselves)?** **[it's] your spiritual worship** (ESV, NRSV, RSV)

- Also "spiritual service of worship" (NASB), "spiritual act of worship" (NIV84), "**true and proper worship**" (NIV), "**reasonable service**" (KJV),
- **Logikēn:** rational, reasonable, logical, genuine, rationally true, authentic, fitting
- **Latreian:** service, worship, dedicated labor and allegiance
- **Put those together:** "worship/service that makes sense"
- **Schreiner:** It is eminently reasonable, given the mercies of God, for believers to dedicate themselves wholly to God. Since God has been so merciful, failure to dedicate one's life to him is the height of folly and irrationality." **PETE IN O' BROTHER:** "That don't make no sense!"
- **Our sacrifice (worship and service) is NOT based on** myth, wishful thinking or fear. We haven't been duped or manipulated or threatened. It's based on the truth of who God is and what He's done. It's based on the objective truth of the Gospel.
- We've been saved from death, given new life, adopted, set free, made righteous, and justified. And one day soon we will be glorified and be with Jesus. **Our rational service, our living sacrifice makes perfect sense.** It's the most logical thing we can do. It doesn't make sense not to do it.

#### **APPLICATION: OUR SACRIFICE SHOULD BE...**

##### 1. **Comprehensive, Consistent & Corporate**

- **Comprehensive:** All of who we are, including our bodies. Everyday and for all our days.
- **Consistent:** All the time. Not just when people are watching. And not just on Sundays or when we're around other Christians.
- **Corporate:** Together...as the church, the family of the redeemed. Our sacrifice is a family project.

##### 2. **Grateful, Gracious, Generous & God Glorifying**

- **CHRISTIAN: The life you have is the life he's given you!** You are alive now and forever because of his mercy, so...
- **Live sacrificially for others.** Bear others' burdens. Show generosity at your own expense. Act selflessly when you see the needs of others.
- **Michael Bird:** "Share the pain of another person's loss, grief, rejection, and need as if it were their own."
- **Glorify God in your worship and service.**

**AS TO THE SPECIFICS, I CAN'T TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT THIS SHOULD LOOK LIKE IN YOUR LIFE. YOU MUST WRESTLE WITH THAT QUESTION, AND I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO DO THAT IN COMMUNITY. BUT AS FOR ME,** I try to make this verse foundational to what I do and decisions I make:

- How to fight temptation (physical) and use my body?
- How to love and honor my wife and care for my children?
- How to go about my work?
- How to make big decisions, and help others do the same?
- How to look at life, death, the time I have left on this earth?
- What to do when faced with suffering and choices I never thought I'd have to make?
- How to serve this church and Jesus? How to live out the Great Commandment and Great Commission?

**Offer my body as a living sacrifice...**

## 2. Don't conform to this world; be transformed [to the image of Christ] by the renewal of your mind.

**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

**Two commands:** (1) don't conform, (2) be transformed! (Sorry kids, not talking about the movie.)

### (1) Don't be conformed to this world

- **Phillips:** "**Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its...mold.**"  
**ILLUSTRATIONS:** hamburger, cookie or biscuit. Don't let the world make a biscuit out of you!
- **World/age: "eon" → world or age**
  - **Literally:** "Don't be conformed (molded) to this **age**."
  - **What did this mean in Rome? Bird:** "On the ground in Rome, "**this age**" would mean the Greco-Roman way of life, a way of wickedness described in 1:18-32. Despite the historical grandeur, cultural wealth, and promotion of values like justice in the Roman Empire, truth be told, the Romans were often little more than Latin-speaking savages dressed in a toga. The Roman Empire was cruel, repressive, and **merciless**, especially to non-elites and those on its margins." That was the world/age that Paul was immediately referring to.
  - **More generally: Age:** Beliefs and philosophies of this fallen world. Not just the world and its people, but also the worldviews and practices that come from their fallen state and the influence of the devil.
- **What does Paul mean (about not conforming)? Does he mean we're supposed to be weird, trouble-makers, rebels? Sproul:** "Some people interpret this passage to mean that the real test of spirituality is to show the whole world that we are out of it, in the sense of being irrelevant, insignificant, odd and peculiar. But that is not what Paul is talking about here...But we are conformists from the time we are born until the time we die. We always feel peer pressure, the tug and struggle to be in line with contemporary tastes and standards. That's why watching contemporary culture and its customs is a very dangerous way for a Christian to educate his or her own conscience [e.g social media!], because something that may be part of the acceptable standard of life in a given community may be radically alien to the kingdom of God. **Christ calls us to a special kind of nonconformity: a refusal to conform to the sinful patterns of the world, to patterns of disobedience.**"
- **Christian: Don't be conformed to this world/age, but rather...**

### (2) But be transformed by the renewal of your mind



- Thankfully, Paul doesn't just tell us **what not to do**, he gives us **the remedy: PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION – WITH OUR MINDS!** He is saying: “**Christian...use your brains, don't check them at the door!**”
- The Christian faith requires the regular filling, exercising, and use of our minds. We are to love God with our minds (in addition to our heart, soul & strength).

**Why is it so important to have a new mind? So that you can KNOW AND DO the will of God.**

**So what is the will of God?** Much has been said and written about that question, and we don't have time today to dig deep into that question but we can **look at what Paul says here in v. 2 about God's will and our responsibility.**

***That by testing → you may discern → what the will of God is, what is good and acceptable and perfect***

- “Test & Discern” = **dokimazo** = **test and approve** → **prove** → **TEST AND KNOW FOR SURE**
- **What's the main way we know, that we *test and know for sure* what the will of God is? His Word!** And by being a committed part of a church that will help us understand and obey it.
- **Sproul:** “Do you want to know what the will of God is? You have to study the Word of God. You have to think like God. You have to have a new mind. And if you want a new mind you have to study the Word of God more rigorously than you have ever studied anything in your life. **There is no magical way to know the will of God, apart from knowing the Word of God. If you want to live a godly life, then it is indispensable to your spiritual growth that you dig into the Scriptures deeply, to understand what God is revealing. This is part of the sacrifice of the Christian life.**”
- **Bishop N.T. Wright:** “Fill your head with Scripture, hymns, novels, art, and songs which will strengthen your cerebral capacities [**mind**] to understand and articulate your faith. Christian faith cannot bide intellectual laziness.”

#### **APPLICATION:**

1. **Focus your mind on God's Word.** Read and hear it, study it, meditate on it, and allow it to be your authority. **Want to know God's will? Know his Word!**
2. **Get your mind aligned with God's purposes and plans.** Endeavor to think like and be on mission for Jesus. It's not enough to affirm the truth of Scripture. The devil does that **You must obey, actually DO** what God says to do. That's how you can test and know the will of God.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

**UNBELIEVER:** God is merciful and you need his mercy. He has been merciful in sending Christ to bear the punishment your sins deserved – YOUR sins deserved. And in and through his sacrifice, He has conquered sin and death—so that YOU would have life eternal. (**Rom. 5:8**). I appeal to you not to offer a sacrifice or perform some religious act, but rather to simply repent and believe. Experience the mercy you desperately need. There is no offering, no work, no sacrifice, no service, no worship you can offer to receive salvation. It's a gift from a merciful God. Receive that mercy.

#### **BELEIVER:**

- As we've talked about today and studied in Romans for weeks, God has been incredibly gracious to you. Be an grateful people. Give generously and start with giving yourself.
- **Brothers and sisters, let's dedicate ourselves—our bodies, our minds, everything we are—to the Lord, like the words of the old hymn) that we'll sing together in a few minutes:**

Take my life and let it be  
 Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
 Take my moments and my days,  
 Let them flow in endless praise.

**TAKE OUR LIVES LORD AND LET THEM BE CONSECRATED FOR THEE!**