

# Romans 12:1-8

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] So turn with me to Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12. Let me just say again, we're meeting for prayer, 8 o'clock on Wednesday. We'd love you if you're part of the church family here to join with us.

Join us in prayer. We believe, we know that unless God works, we can't do anything. And so this meeting once a month where we kind of don't have house groups and we all come together as a family to pray together is really important.

It's a great priority. I was going to preach on the whole of Romans 12. And then I looked last Sunday, I preached for 45 minutes in the morning. And you were very kind.

But that is not, that's too long. And so I've kind of cut my sermon in half this week. I hope we won't be near that. We're going to look at verses 1 to 8.

And you'll see there's a word there, isn't there, right at the start, that whenever you see it, you need to kind of take note of it. I appeal to you therefore.

[ 1 : 05 ] Whenever you come to a therefore, you've got to ask, what's it there for? And so he says there, doesn't he, I appeal to you therefore to your brothers, brothers and sisters, the church family in Rome.

I appeal to you. And again, that should ring a bell. This word therefore doesn't always use the same word. But he's saying we've reached a certain point.

We've looked at something and then we're about to move on. Let me show it to you. So if you go back to chapter 3 in verse 20. Chapter 3 in verse 20, it says there quite literally, Therefore, it's not so clear in the ESV, Therefore, by works of the law, by works of the law, no human being will be justified in God's sight.

That first word in verse 20, it's therefore. We've reached a certain point. We're about to move on. We've proved that no human will ever get right with God by obeying the law.

And so he goes on, verse 21, with a clear definition, But now the righteousness of God has been manifest, has been shown, apart from the law. That's the point we've made. And now we're moving on.

[ 2 : 27 ] Again, just look with me, chapter 5 in verse 1. Therefore, Since we've been justified by faith, that's what I've just shown you. How do we get right with God?

We get right with God by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. It's not what we do. By faith in him. Therefore, Since we've been justified by faith, we have peace with God.

That's what I've established. That's what I've proved. We've been justified by faith. Now we're ready to go on. Well, what are the results of being right with God? What are the results of justification? And he makes the point.

And then he moves on. And then he goes to chapter 8 in verse 1. Just look there. There is therefore, because all I've taught you in 5 to 8, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That's what we've established, he's saying. That's what I've taught you. It's a wonderful truth. When we are in Christ, when we have put our trust and we are resting in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will never be condemned.

[ 3 : 33 ] And then he goes on to show what does life in the Spirit look like? What does it look like to be living in God's Spirit? It's here in chapter 12, this therefore.

We're about to move on from what we've been taught. Chapter 11, we've been taught what God has done. But now he's going to move on.

Look at, I'll show you at the end of chapter 11. He says this, he says, verse 36, for from him and through him and to him are all things, to him be glory forever.

I appeal to you therefore, because of that. This is glory coming to God, to him be glory forever and ever. Therefore, therefore I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

So can you see, we bring glory to God by the people that we become. There are four sections in Romans. You've got chapters 1, verse 18 to 320.

[ 4 : 46 ] You've got the lack of righteousness. Do you remember those dark chapters that showed you a lack of righteousness? And then from chapter 3, 21 to the end of chapter 8, you've got the provision of righteousness.

How God has provided exactly what we need. Chapters 9 to 11, those tricky chapters, it's the refusal of righteousness. And then we come, in chapters 12 onwards, to the end of the chapter, and the application of righteousness.

The lack of it, the provision of it, the refusal of it, and then what does it look like to live it out? He's been telling us so far what God has done for us in Christ, and he's now moving on to explain, well, what is your response going to be?

What will your response be to what God has done? What will we do for him and for his glory? In other words, he's saying this, that doctrine is not enough.

You have a duty. It's not just what God has done for us, but what we will do for him. There needs to be behavior as well as belief.

[ 5 : 56 ] You have to believe the gospel, and then if I can put it this way, you have to behave the gospel. You have living as well as learning.

And we learn about God. And then in the light of that, we learn how to live for God. And so what should our response be to what God has done?

Five headings that we're going to look at over two weeks. First two this morning. So the first heading is in verses one and two, and it's surrender. It's surrender. We have been saved by God to surrender ourselves.

We are to give ourselves completely to God. We cannot say, thank you God for saving me. Thank you for God for working in my life.

Now, goodbye. I'll get on with my life. No, we are saved to serve God and to please God, to enjoy God, and to glorify God.

[ 7 : 04 ] That is the first and most important aspect of our response. It's the great commandment. Do you remember it? In Matthew chapter 22, we often quote it, that someone comes and asks Jesus, well, what is the most important commandment?

What is the greatest commandment? And let me read to you from Matthew 22, verse 37, where Jesus says, doesn't he, he says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. We are to surrender, to surrender to God. You know, children, you're playing, I was going to say you're playing with guns, but you're playing with pretend guns and you're battling and then somebody says at the end of the game, I surrender.

You drop your weapons. You're fighting or wrestling with your brother or sister and how does the fight end? Somebody has to say, I surrender. You give up. And we are to surrender ourselves to God.

So look with me at three ways we're to surrender to God. And look at verse 1, we're firstly to surrender our bodies. Do you see that? He says, present your bodies as living sacrifice.

[ 8 : 28 ] We're taught that our bodies are God's temple. We've seen that, haven't we? That God, by his Holy Spirit, dwells in the Christian. God, God, the Holy Spirit, lives in our bodies.

Our bodies are no longer to be used for sinful purposes, for rebellion against God. Christians are not to do that because they are holy, they belong to him.

So just as Jesus Christ, in order to accomplish God's will on earth, he took for himself a body. The Lord Jesus had to have a body.

He couldn't come into this world as a soul and win the world and pay for sin with a soul. He took on a body for himself. His body was essential.

And so in a slightly different way, we must yield our bodies to Christ. We must use our bodies so that he may continue God's work through us.

[ 9 : 37 ] The Old Testament sacrifices, do you remember them? The lambs, the pigeons. They were dead sacrifices, weren't they? But can you see in verse 1, we are to be a living sacrifice.

The Lord Jesus Christ, he is the last dead sacrifice. But we are to present our living bodies to the Lord Jesus.

It is one action, decisively and definitively. But it has ongoing effects. It's like a man and a woman getting married.

And on the day of their marriage, they make promises to one another. And those promises are made on that day. And the rest of their lives are the living out of those promises. The rest of their lives are obeying the promise.

And so we have given ourselves to the Lord Jesus when we become Christians. And now we have to fulfill that commandment day after day, week after week, year after year.

[ 10 : 40 ] We can speak of it simply, can't we? Negatively. That we present our bodies as a living sacrifice. And so we do not do destructive things with our body.

We don't take destructive drugs. We don't let our lives be marked by drunkenness. We don't give ourselves to immorality.

No, we present our bodies as a living sacrifice and we keep them from sin. But it's not only negative, is it? It's positive. It's practical.

It's really detailed. But if we had time, we could think about it for the rest of today, that we would use our hands for God. That we would use our feet for God.

That we would go where God wants you to go. That we would do what God wants you to do. That we would use our eyes for God. That we would not look on things that God does not want us to look upon.

[ 11 : 46 ] But we would make a point of looking where God wants us to look. And so we see people who are needy and people who are in trouble. And we look at his word and we gaze at his glory.

and we use our ears for what God wants us to hear. And we do not use our ears for what God does not want us to hear.

And we use our mouths to speak. And we do not speak destructively but we speak what God wants you to speak. We say what God wants you to say.

And so we present our bodies morning by morning as a living sacrifice. Can you see that it is something to give our whole lives to?

On the sports field. In work. In our leisure. in our home. And then as well as our bodies can you see that there's our minds?

[ 12 : 49 ] Look at verse 2. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. And so we live in a world it's always been like this that wants to control our minds.

And so it exercises pressure from the outside on our minds. And so children in school you need to be careful and cautious and we as parents need to be careful and cautious to see that our children are not damaged or threatened or hurt in any way by that which is untrue or unbiblical.

And we need to be prepared to do something about it. And so if we're going to send our children to schools there is, isn't there a considerable amount of unlearning that we need to do when they get home?

It's always been like that. The media assault our minds with all sorts of things that aren't true.

There's an uncleanness, isn't there, in our popular culture that wants us to pull us away to something that is not Christian, that is not honoring to God.

very often the world of politics and the world of business is far away from what God commands and what God desires. The answer is not to hide yourself away, become a little hermit.

[ 14 : 21 ] The answer is, Paul says, do not be conformed. Stand out. Do not be conformed. Don't be like it. Don't fit in.

Don't live two lives. Don't be a Christian on a Sunday and one kind of person in church and the rest of the week be a completely different person.

Because you're not that person. You've been put in Christ. And so we're not to be molded by the outside pressure.

To not be conformists. Rather, we are a people that have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And we are to be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

And so that means that we don't accept the messages that we're bombarded with blindly. We think. We learn to think. We are transformed by the renewal of your mind.

[ 15 : 28 ] The Holy Spirit changes our thought processes into those of Christ. and the means that he uses are what? Well, it's his word, isn't it? By meditating on it.

By thinking on it. By hearing it. By discussing it. By living, seeking to live it out seven days a week, 24 hours a day in all that we do.

And as we are transformed by the message of God's word, we become more spiritually minded.

And we are to surrender ourselves in our bodies and in our minds.

But then thirdly, in our wills. Can you see what it says in verse two? That by testing, that by discerning, you might discern what the will of God is.

what is good and acceptable and perfect. Do you see the way that a human being works? Do you see the way that you work?

[ 16 : 27 ] You have a body and you have a mind that controls your body and your will controls your mind.

That's the order. You have a body and your mind controls your body and your will controls your mind.

And it's when we yield our will to him. When we bow our stubborn knees to the Lord Jesus Christ that he empowers us to live as we should for him.

And it's only when we yield our wills to God that he makes our minds work properly. And it's only when our mind works properly that our bodies will work properly.

Do you see the order? Can you get the logic? And so what that means is this. Our problem is not usually the parts of the Bible that we don't understand.

[ 17 : 37 ] There are parts of the Bible that I don't understand. I've been preaching it 20 years. There are parts of the Bible that I don't understand and there are parts of the Bible that you don't understand. And we can often say there are things in the Bible that I just don't get.

I don't understand it. but I want to argue with you that's not the problem. The problem is the parts of the Bible you do understand. And you understand it perfectly and yet you don't want to obey it.

And we don't want to obey it. We've got a thousand problems like that for every one problem of the bit that we don't understand. But the change takes place when we pray very simply not my will but your will be done.

God must have his way in all things. And you and I pray that. I hope you pray it every day. In every situation Lord not my will but your will be done.

It's a great prayer isn't it? Lord today whatever happens help me to do your will not my will. And all Christian service begins with this continually daily placing ourselves on the altar.

[ 18 : 59 ] And it's a beautiful thing when we do that. When we do that long enough God's will becomes our will. It becomes what we want. We change so that our desires are wanting to follow God.

And it's what we love. So that's the first of our consideration surrender in our bodies and in our minds and in our wills. And then secondly in our service. Look at verses 3 to 8. And he uses that the picture of a human body.

There are many members in a human body. Many parts. Many parts in a human being in a human body. So you go to the hospital and there are all sorts of experts in hospital aren't there?

You meet the ear, nose and throat man. Or you can meet with the cardiology man. You can meet a doctor who only works with hands or with eyes.

It's no good really going to see Joe Maniali the ear, nose and throat specialist and say listen I've got a problem with my toes. There's no problem doing that is there? There's no good going to David Lafroy the cardiologist and saying I've got this real problem with my thigh.

[ 20 : 13 ] They will say to you you need to see a thigh doctor or you need to see a foot doctor. It's not their expertise is it? There's someone else that looks after stomachs.

There's someone else that looks after feet. Everybody's got one great thing that's his or her speciality. We're a bit like that. Look at verse 5. So though we're many though we're many verse 5 are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.

So we're all different. We've all got different personalities and different gifts and different skills. and yet we all need each other and we all belong together to minister together.

I'm not going to work through these passages in detail this morning but I want to make three applications again alright? I think it's really important and really valuable to recognise that every member every Christian every person who is in Christ has a part to play.

They have a part to play. There is no one in this church who is a Christian who is not gifted. Every one of you is gifted.

[ 21 : 32 ] Every single Christian in the world is gifted. There are no useless people. There are no people who are residual kind of just residual remains of the body.

which means that you and I have got a contribution to make. And that is how God has made you that is how God has saved you and I ask you well what do you think it is?

What do you think it may be? Well verses 6 to 8 he mentions some I'm not going to work through them but he mentioned some possible gifts. There are all sorts of gifts. So what does the sort of gift what does a young mum what does a mother of young children have?

She has the gift of looking after the children that's a lovely lovely gift it's an important gift. There's a danger I think where we can think that someone isn't doing something public some kind of special thing they're not doing in the church and we wonder are they using their gifts as a Christian?

What about the person who has to work loads of evenings just to kind of keep the wolf from the door just pay their bills that's his gift. one of his gifts is to be able to do that.

[ 22 : 50 ] What about an old lady whose strength is gone she can get to church once a week even sometimes not that and that's all that she can do what can she do? Well she can pray can't she every day for every single member of the church in a tiny little home and she prays and she sits and if she's got an extra pound she can give it to the church using her gifts the gifts God has given her the gifts of Christians vary widely and they're all important so it may surprise you that I'm not a medical expert but there are organs in our body aren't there and we wonder what on earth are they for?

Maybe there's parts of your body you're not very proud of you don't talk about them very much but if they weren't there your body would be damaged and harmed perhaps you would die they're important aren't they?

Every gift is important and so I would want to say if you're here this morning and actually you listen to this and you're a little bit troubled and you're worried in your mind and you say well what gift do I have?

What Christian gift do I have? I want to say talk to your elder come and talk to me I'd be happy to talk with you sit down Marta Wilcox her dad did this kind of questionnaire where somehow you fill in the answer to these questionnaires and out pops at the end of it your spiritual gift I've not done it but it sounds amazing doesn't it and if you're sitting here thinking what is the gift that God has given me go and chat with Marta as well because there are no ungifted people and so what might God want you to be doing every member has got a part to play which means you have a part to play secondly every member must work in harmony together we must work in harmony together if some parts of our bodies don't function the whole body is crippled and that's true isn't it of far too many churches where there are people who do little or nothing for the church just turn up a couple of Sundays a month and they have gifts and yet the church doesn't benefit from their gifts and the church suffers from that or if gifts and parts of the body are at counter purposes imagine it's difficult to imagine but imagine my feet wanted to go that way and my head wants to go that way my brain would probably win but the body would be damaged and useless and we owe it to exercise the gifts that God has given to us in harmony with the other parts of the body to think I love my brothers and sisters in this church and I'm here for them and I'm here to live for them how can I live in a way that will help them and bless them and encourage them and so we need to realise our total interdependence as Christians and our mutual need for each other we need each other so not one of us can sit here this morning and say

[ 26 : 16 ] I don't need anybody you do and in some sort of way actually you need everybody in this church and they can be a blessing to you and you to them you speak to somebody and they're not a Christian and they're interested in finding out the gospel and you say come to our church and come on a Sunday morning your minister has decided to preach a series of 20 sermons on really complicated theology at the very highest level and you don't understand a word of what is going on and neither do they the person that you've brought one part of the body is not helping the other part of the body at that point is it or they come to church and nobody speaks to them they come in and they go out and they come the next week and they come in and they go out and nobody speaks to them and nobody shows any interest in them or any love the body the members of the body aren't working

I know of a church where a guy it's quite a large church he sat in the same seat all his life on the right and another member of the church sat all his life on the left and he told his minister he'd never spoken to the guy on the other side same church all their life one came in one door the other went out the other door they never spoke the body suffers and so our differences between us in this church family are not a problem they are a blessing they are a blessing it is good to have people in this congregation who are different to you different gifts different abilities different interests so we work together different gifts different interests so that we help each other so that we can delight each other I would not be attracted to a church that had 160 poor levies in it it wouldn't work very well

I can tell you but God makes us different Voss says this there is hardly anything that glorifies God and helps the church more than each person strictly minding his or her own business as God has committed to him or her each of us does what we're able to do and what we've been gifted to do and we enjoy doing and what you will have is you'll have a united church you'll have a church that is helping one another and which will grow and will attract people it won't be a perfect place there will be lots of mistakes made there will be frustrations but it will be characterized by love and then our last point and this is it I've done we exercise our gifts mainly through the church we exercise our gifts mainly through the church too many Christians act as isolated individuals they overlook the church they do as

Christians what they want to do and I think sometimes organizations which are seeking to help the church really don't help because they take people away from the church and God has promised that in his world he will work through his church now we know don't we that some of our witness has got no kind of direct application to the church when you go to work on Monday morning well I can pray for you and the church can pray for you but we can't do much else you know better than the rest of us how you can witness and serve and do what God wants you to do in your place of work but the church is the main way that God has appointed to work in his world and the church provides us with unique opportunities for every kind of service the church needs intellectually brilliant people and the church needs practically brilliant people the church needs intellectually okay people and it needs practically okay people the church needs those who are very strong and those who are very gentle the church needs all the abilities and all the characters and all types of human people we are not a cult we are not a sect we are not those poor people who look exactly the same who look exactly like the person who runs it in a biblical church there should be variety and the church needs to provide unique opportunities for every kind of gift to be used and so the church really needs you this morning it really needs you we need your help we need your grace we need your gifts no matter what they are a body needs to grow and so this body needs to grow there's needs for teaching for visiting for helping for loving for serving for caring for praying for each other and then moving out into the world and so this passage actually really challenges you and I to commit ourselves to a lifetime of service for

God in his church there's nothing more exciting there's nothing more demanding and the temptation will be to think it's just too much but I want to say to you there is no more exciting way in which to spend life grasp the vision we can change things by our service there's a lovely statement by James Philip in his commentary on this passage and he says this we all have a part to play and only a part and then he says this we cannot be ourselves by ourselves that is genius we cannot be ourselves by ourselves we all have a part to play and only a part but we cannot be ourselves by ourselves serving others loving others working with others helps you and

[ 32 : 52 ] I be ourselves are the people in our church they help you be yourself as you love them and serve them and bear with them and pray for them and work with them we become ourselves so may God make us such a church let's pray