

Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer 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.” (NIV)

Introduction

Romans 12 marks the transition from the apostle Paul’s theological teaching in chapters 1-11 to his practical teaching. The “therefore” statement in 12:1 is thus the pivotal point in the book of Romans. In the first twelve chapters, Paul describes the gospel message he had introduced in chapter 1:16-17. Starting with 12:1 he considers the implications of believing the Gospel.

Although Paul did not plant the church at Rome, he felt compelled to write to them because he planned to visit the church on his way to Spain. As a result, Paul wrote this Epistle to introduce himself to the congregation and to give the church an overview of the gospel and what it means in the life of the believer.

The summary of the Gospel message as Paul describes it, is as follows:

1. **God wants to have a relationship with us.** – Rom 1:16: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”
2. **God hates sin and must punish those who sin.** – Rom 1:18 “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,”
3. **We are all sinners and therefore objects of God’s wrath.** – Rom 3:10-12: “There is no one righteous, not

even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

4. **Jesus, by his death and resurrection, has provided a way for us to get to heaven.** – Rom 5:1-2; 6-8
“.... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
5. **We also receive the gift of a relationship with God through faith.** – Rom 3:21-22: “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.”
6. **Faith in Jesus means action.** – Rom 10:9-13: “Believe Jesus rose from the dead and confess him as Lord before men and you will be saved!”
7. **Once we have put our faith in Jesus, we must live life through the Spirit.** – Rom 8:5: “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”

From chapter 12 on Paul expounds on how Christians should live as a result of what God had done for them.

Firstly, we are encouraged to rise up.

In the light of God’s mercy Paul encourages the believers to stand up for God.

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1. In Rom 12:1 the “I urge you” is not a demand – God could demand that we love him but he does not. We cannot demand that somebody we love should love us in return. In the old covenant God demanded commitment to him through performance of certain rituals and tasks before entering into His presence. Now, we love because he first loved us. We should want to respond to God’s love for us.
2. Verse 1 goes on to say Christians are “to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is their spiritual act of worship (or reasonable act of service).”

The word translated “worship” or “service” (*latreia* in Greek) at the end of verse 1, indicates that this is our divine service and by doing this we discover our life’s purpose. Think about it – it makes logical sense to respond to love. We know that animals will respond to a good owner because of the love and trust that has been shown by its master. Surely we, who are far superior to animals, should respond likewise to the love God has displayed in Christ.

Secondly, we are told how to rise up.

Paul encourages us to do two things:

1. We are told in Romans 12:1 “to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.” This activity mimics the Old Testament sacrifice but is far more powerful. The word “to offer” is the same word used when Jesus was presented at the temple (Luke 2:22). We are to offer our bodies rather than the bodies of animals. We are also to be “living sacrifices” as opposed to dead animals. I.E. GOD WANTS ALL OF US PHYSICALLY.
2. We are told in 12:2: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” In the same way that we are told to do something we are also told to stop doing something. The natural inclination of mankind is

to do evil. Since we are now to live by the Spirit we must stop doing what the natural ego wants. We do that by not being “conform any longer to the pattern of this world” I.E. GOD WANTS ALL OF US EMOTIONALLY, INTELLECTUALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.

Thirdly, we are told why we should rise up.

1. We rise up in response to God’s mercy;
2. We rise up to fulfil God’s call to holiness (1 Cor 1:2, Eph 1:4, Heb 12:14 & 1 Pet 1:15-16) When we offer our “bodies as living sacrifices” they are “holy ... to God.”
3. We rise up to hear what the master said in Matt 25:21: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” When we offer our “bodies as living sacrifices” they are “.... pleasing to God.”

Lastly, we are reminded that HE Transforms lives

A transformed life will be able to “test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Like Jesus, our goal should also be to do God’s will. Jesus said in John 6:38 “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”

1. The word “good” reminds us that God’s will is intrinsically good. There is nothing bad about God’s will.
2. The word “pleasing” teaches us that God’s will is beneficial.
3. The word “perfect” can also be translated as complete. The idea is that we will be fulfilled in every way when we do God’s will.

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