

Introduction

1. Chapters 1-8: the Gospel
2. Chapters 9-11: God's plan for Israel and the Gentiles
3. Chapters 12-15: Practical application/response to the truths of chapters 1-11

A. Acceptance of the Gospel should lead to a transformed life (1-2)

1. The main charge (comprised of two related commands) for chapters 12-15—the entire practical application section of the book—is found in the v. 1-2:
  - a. Everything else in chapters 12-15 is a description of what it looks like to carry out this charge
  - b. The charge that Paul issues here is actually a response to the Gospel and God's redemptive plan for Israel and us gentiles
  - c. Look at Romans 11:33-36 for Paul's euphoria over God's awesome goodness and grace
  - d. Immediately following this praise, Paul calls on his readers to respond: **"Therefore..."** (12:1)
2. The FIRST command is found in v1: Paul calls on his readers and us to present our bodies as sacrifices to God (1): **"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."**
  - a. Paul does use the imperative here, but rather makes an appeal (though, it carries the weight of a command): **"I urge you..."**
  - b. His appeal is based on **"the mercies of God"**
    - 1) Though dia with a genitive is generally translated **"by"** or **"through"**, the NIV gets it right by translating this as **"in view of God's mercy"**
    - 2) We could also translate this as **"because of God's mercy"**
    - 3) The mercy to which Paul refers is what's described in chapters 1-11
  - c. Paul's charge is to present our bodies as sacrifices to God: **"to present your bodies a living, and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God..."**
    - 1) Bodies here is to be understood as our whole selves, not simply our physical bodies (e.g. present yourselves, your lives)
    - 2) This is seen in the three adjectives Paul uses to describe our sacrifice:
      - a) **"living"**: whereas the OT sacrifices, as well as pagan sacrifices, were dead, our sacrifice is to be our lives
      - b) **"holy"**: to be holy means to be separated or dedicated to God for His use, His purposes
      - c) **"acceptable to God"**: this word is used only 9 times in the NT and in all but one it refers to something that is well-pleasing to God; something that satisfies Him
  - d. Paul describes this as our **"spiritual service of worship"**:
    - 1) Some translations say, **"your reasonable service"**
    - 2) More accurately the words refer to something true or genuine which is reflected better in the NIV: **"this is your true and proper worship"**

- 3) So, our greatest form of worship is to present our very lives as a living, holy and God-pleasing sacrifice
3. Paul's second command is found in v2 and it's tied to the first in that it describes **how** it's possible to live such a life—we must be transformed (2): **“Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God— what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.”**
    - a. Rather than being **“conformed to this present world (age)”** we are to be **“transformed”**
      - 1) To be conformed means to be shaped or formed into something, in the case the present world
      - 2) To be transformed means to be changed—this word is used 4 times in the NT, twice to refer to Jesus' transfiguration and twice to refer to our transformation into the likeness of Christ
      - 3) Both of these words are in the passive voice (e.g. to be acted upon from the outside)
      - 4) So, there are only two choices: we either allow ourselves to be conformed to the world or to be transformed to Christlikeness
    - b. Paul describes the means by which this transformation takes place: **“by the renewing of your mind”**:
      - 1) To renew means to make something new and different
      - 2) So, in order to be transformed, we need to have our minds renewed which means a new and different way of thinking
      - 3) Paul describes this transformation process in Ephesians 4:17-24 (READ)
      - 4) Only the Word of God has the power to renew the mind: Psalm 19:7-13 (READ)
      - 5) This is why the paths of the wicked man and the righteous man are so different in Psalm 1—the righteous man delights in the law of the LORD and meditates on it day and night (READ Psalm 1)
    - c. As a result of this renewed mind, we are able to determine God's will: **“so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good, and acceptable and perfect.”**
  4. So, the over-riding command or charge by Paul to us is that in response to the Gospel and God's amazing mercy, we should live transformed lives and offer our lives up as living sacrifices to God

B. One way that we lead a transformed life is by having a proper view of our place within the body of Christ (3-8)

1. Paul is going to address this area in three parts by discussing:
  - a. Spiritual gifts—which we will cover today
  - b. Love for one another—next week
  - c. Blessing those who persecute us—next week
2. The world's way of thinking and behaving is often to think we are better or more important than others—we see it all the time in the way people think and behave (e.g. social media is dripping with it—people constantly tearing each other down and building themselves up)
3. However, Christians are to see themselves differently (3): **“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;”**

- a. The word that Paul uses here means to have unwarranted pride in oneself or in one's accomplishments or worth
  - b. It means to be haughty, conceited, prideful—in essence, thinking you are better or more important than you really are
  - c. In the context of this verse, Paul is referring to those who think they are more important or more spiritual than other members of the body of Christ
4. Instead, we are to **“think so as to have sound judgment”** (3b)—or as other translations read, **“to think with sober discernment (or judgment)”** (NET/EVS/NIV) or **“think sensibly”** (CSB)
- a. In other words, we are to think of ourselves in a reasonable, sound way that ultimately aligns with a very simple Biblical truth
  - b. This truth is that God has given each believer spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ, and each of us is to serve the body with these gifts: **“God has allotted to each a measure of faith”** (3c)— **“measure of faith”** here is a reference to the spiritual gifts:
    - 1) We are all members of one body, but with different functions within the body (4-5)
      - a) There are many members: **“For just as we have many members in one body...”** (4a)
      - b) And we all have different functions within that Body (4b): **“and all the members do not have the same function”**
      - c) But, we all make up the Body of Christ (5): **“so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”**
    - 2) We are to serve the body using the gifts we've been given (6-8):
      - a) Each of us have been given gifts, but they differ from one to another: **“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace give to us,”** (6):
        - Think of “grace” here in terms of kindness—we have been given different gifts by God based on His kindness
        - This is not Paul's way of saying some get a better gift because God gives them more grace
        - Rather, the emphasis is that God has been kind to all, and therefore has given to the body various kinds of gifts
      - b) Each of us is to use our gift to serve the body: **“each of us is to exercise them accordingly...”** (6b)
        - This phrase does not exist in the Greek but is supplied by the translators in the NASB because it correctly reflects the intent of the text. Other translations handle communicating the idea in different ways.
        - Those with the gift of prophecy should prophesy (8)—this refers to prophetic utterance, something extremely valuable for the first century church but likely suspended with the completion of the canon
        - Those with the gift of service should serve (7a)—this refers to those who always seem to look for ways to help
        - Those gifted with the ability to teach, should teach (7b)—refers to those who demonstrate a proper handling of God's Word
        - Those who have a unique ability to exhort, should exhort (8)—this refers to the ability to encourage and comfort others
        - Those who have been given special ability to share, should do so liberally (8b)—this likely refers to those that God has provided the means and desire to share what's been given to them

- Those with the gift of leadership, should lead with diligence (8c)
  - Those with the gift of mercy should do it with cheerfulness (8d)—refers to those with the special ability for empathy and compassion
- c. So that we don't get lost in the forest of spiritual gifts and forget Paul's main point in this portion of today's passage, remember that this discussion of spiritual gifts began with the caution to not think more highly of our selves than we should:
- a) We are all members of the body of Christ
  - b) We have all been given gifts and functions in the body
  - c) We are no more important in the body than any other member
  - d) We've simply been given different gifts, each one being just as valuable and important as the others
  - e) Paul reiterates this in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 (READ)

C. Conclusion
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1. God has lavished upon us His mercy and grace through the Gospel and given us forgiveness and eternal life as a free gift
2. In response to this mercy and grace, we are to be transformed into the likeness of Christ
3. Instead of being conformed to this world, we are to allow our minds to be renewed and our behavior changed as a form of living sacrifice and true act of genuine worship
4. Paul has shared with us one way today where we can demonstrate this transformation—rejecting the world's way of thinking in regard to value and worth, and recognizing that we are all equal members of the Body of Christ, with a set of gifts and functions to carry out