Romans 12:1-8

Intro: Now we are moving on to the practical division of the book. Paul has laid out sound doctrine and he is moving on to godly behavior. The two are vitally related to one another, because doctrine is the root and godly life is the fruit.
--Eternal life, if truly possessed, is not merely duration but quality. We are to be living out our eternal life here on earth. It is very obvious to Paul that life in the Spirit, and under grace, is to look very different than life in the flesh and under the law.

Verses 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.***
--We have a progression of *Therefore's* in the epistle from: **3:20; 5:1; 8:1; to 12:1.**
--Paul says, ***I beseech you***. And really his pleading will go through the rest of the epistle. But the plea here, as remarkable as it is, is not a plea from Paul but a plea from God! The Bible is going to take for granted that everything Paul exhorts us to is echoed by the Holy Spirit in us.
--And please take note that this plea comes to ***brethren*** by the ***mercies of God.***
--***Brethren***, all of them: old, young, mature, immature, near to God, far from God, those walking sanctified, those walking backslidden and unclean—all of them. God knows who He is pleading with. We all need His mercy.
--The mercy of God finds us all in disobedience. If you feel condemned, and Satan is trying to convince you that for some reason you should not present yourself to Him as a living sacrifice (maybe you feel like an imperfect sacrifice), then God pleads with you to be persuaded by His mercies! They are new every morning.
--All true service to God begins with the presentation of something inward and outward. The word for ***present*** or *bring near* is the word used for transferring the sacrifice from the giver to the priest for inspection. So we are to present ourselves—body, mind, and spirit—for God's inspection and use.
--The Holy Spirit is looking for bodies. He doesn't have a body but He wants to use ours. Remember Paul's earlier exhortations ***to present yourselves to God as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (6:13).***
--How do we present ourselves?
1) *As **living** sacrifices!* OT sacrifices were dead, but we are offering something alive.
2) *As **holy** sacrifices!* OT sacrifices were not always holy. Some were unclean. But we have been made clean in Christ Jesus.
3) *As **acceptable** sacrifices!* Not all OT sacrifices were acceptable to God. Sometimes God rejected the offerings of His people because of their sin and hypocrisy. But for the sons and daughters of God, filled with His Spirit, the presentation of our minds and bodies is something that is well-pleasing to God.

--The wonderful point is that because of the work of Christ—*now* we can please God. *God is much happier with our simple service than we are!*
--Based on everything else that Paul has already told us, this type of presentation is totally rational and also spiritual (as the word ***reasonable*** has the idea of both).
--Nothing about surrendering our lives as a living sacrifice to our Lord and Savior is weird or nonsensical. Especially in light of His mercies! Why does anyone live for Jesus? Because of everything Paul has said in chapters **1-11**.
--**(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.***
--Paul gives us a little more detail on what the life of a living sacrifice looks like.
--First, he warns us not to be ***conformed*** to the fashion of this world. The Greek word has the idea of being *schemed-together-with*. Every age has its own fashion of evil.
Galatians 1:4:** ***Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*
Ephesians 2:2:** ***In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*
--When we were unsaved we were like our present evil age: given to drugs, sexuality, money, alcohol, image, fame, material goods, etc.
--We should understand that the life of Christ in us will put us at odds with the acceptance of this present world—the very same world that rejected and crucified Christ. Fighting this lonely, or out-of-place feeling is futile. The Christian should understand why he feels like a stranger in this world.
*Tozer (Man: The Dwelling Place of God): *"The weakness of so many modern Christians is that they feel too much at home in the world. In their effort to achieve restful "adjustment" to unregenerate society they have lost their pilgrim character and become an essential part of the very moral order against which they are sent to protest. The world recognizes them and accepts them for what they are. And this is the saddest thing that can be said about them. They are not lonely but neither are they saints."**
--The Greek word for ***transformed*** is used in the transfiguration accounts of Jesus, and the only other spot it is used in the NT is:
2 Corinthians 3:18:** ***But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*
--Our past process of conformation was halted in salvation. The new process of transformation began with life in the Holy Spirit. Paul is encouraging us to continue to surrender to this new law and not to turn back to the old way of life.

--The verbs there are both passive. Which means we submit to either the influence of the world's spirit or to the influence of the Holy Spirit and each will have its work on us. *Sun tanning + Everything tends to wilderness as no middle ground*
--This is certainly a process, we are being conformed, and that process should continually deepen and grow. If you are not growing, you are declining—declining because you are being conformed to something else. We cannot leave God without following something else.
*Scroggie (Salvation and Behavior): *The true safeguard against spiritual conformation is spiritual transformation.**
--A large part of this process beings with ***the renewing of your mind*** which is so often polluted and deceived and wounded in the present evil age. God is patient with our wrong thoughts of Him and His salvation. Yet, He will do the work in us.
--That word ***renewing*** is only used in one other place in Scripture:
Titus 3:5: *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*
--God is up for the home renewal project He acquired when He purchased us in His own blood. This is the HGTV house flip that actually matters!
Colossians 3:9-10: *And do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.* (Eph. 4:22-24)
--The outcome of this life and process is pleasing God and proving out His type of life on earth. The willed life of God. *It is a lifelong process!*

Verse 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.***
--Paul, looks at his own life in the Lord's hands—***the grace given to me***—which was his spiritual gift of apostleship **(1:5; 15:15)** and links himself with ***the grace that is given to us*** **(6)** in the body of Christ. We should see these individually and together. What God has made me and where I fit in the body of Christ.
--The first thing Paul addresses in respect to our interaction with other believers is pride. The Christian, called out from the world, is not to seek his own glory, or the glory of the world, but God's glory and the honor and reward that comes from glorifying Him.
--In our progress we must also have a transformed view of ourselves. My opinion of myself should be God's opinion of me. We err when we see ourselves too high, too low. We must think of ourselves just right—or just as God sees us. The wrong view of ourselves will either make us have a superiority complex, inferiority complex, or be simple and not complex. *God-conscious vs. Self-conscious*

--Reality is true humility. It would not have been humility for Paul to abuse his authority as an apostle or to act like he wasn't an apostle.
--Notice, ***God has dealt to each one a measure of faith***—notice as well, he doesn't say knowledge or intellect. We are to be soberly aware of that and not to over-estimate or under-estimate its importance, but in simple obedience serve and please Him.

Verses 4-6a:
--***For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:***
--Our gifts from God are most immediately seen in relation to the Body of Christ!
--We are ***members*** of the ***one body in Christ*** by the operation of the Holy Spirit alone. *Man made church membership traditions are fine as long as they don't make the Word of God of no effect*
--There are many folds—one flock. Many branches—one tree. Many stones—one temple. Many soldiers—one army. Many stars—one system. Many citizens—one kingdom. Many plants—one garden. Many saints—one Church. Many births—one family. Many members—one body.
--The question being: *Do we know that we are* ***individually members of one another***? I don't have to create Christian unity as it is *already* and *only* established in Christ Jesus. I just have to acknowledge it. The Bible doesn't say we *should* be a body it says: ***we, being many, <u>are</u> one body in Christ***.
--Part of a renewed mind is seeing myself in immediate and indivisible relation to the body of Christ. Or do I see myself outside of it? Many relate to the body of Christ as a "critic" or "not a hypocrite" or with an "us/them" false ideal. Beware! God is not encouraging any division in what He has united. Christ is your Head and mine and nothing will change that. *That doesn't mean we cannot correct or call out or even discipline just like in a family.*
--If you are united to Christ, you are a part of His body, and you have a purpose, and a function, in the body. You are essential. If you suffer, we all suffer. It is God's choice what part of the body you are, but He gives all of us particular gifts that <u>*purposefully*</u> differ.
--These different gifts of grace make us both uniquely helpful but also specifically dependant on the rest of the body of Christ. Do we have what the world calls "a team spirit?" Are we thankful for others who differ from us? *I have learned so many lessons in this area!*

Verses 6b-8:
--***if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.***
--Paul mentions what some of the different gifts of grace are. This is certainly not an exhaustive list as other lists of spiritual gifts are mentioned in: **1 Cor. 12+14; Eph. 4; 1 Peter 4***

--No one has all the gifts, but everyone has some gift. Every gift—though it may function differently and at different levels—is given by the Holy Spirit and is itself the very grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.
--Do not despise your talent. Work the last hour of the day if you must! Heed God's merciful plea here to humbly use our various gifts for His good pleasure.
1) ***Prophecy:*** Is both foresight and insight; seeing and telling truth related to the present or future. Prophecy should also always be in proper relation to *the faith.*
2) ***Ministry:*** This is simply serving in all its various ways. The word is used of elders + deacons + others. Servants.
--The idea here is serving others. True ministry is self-giving—not self-gratifying. Are we ready to minister, or do we need ministry?
3) ***Teaches:*** Teaching covers all teaching. As a pastor, women teaching women, those children, etc.
--If you confuse people, put them to sleep, or the thought of speaking in public makes you want to die, teaching is probably not your deal.
4) ***Exhorts:*** This is an appeal to the will. We need these folks! They get people moving.
5) ***he who gives, with liberality:*** Without reluctance or strings attached. They become God's provision for His work. This is more than giving. It is being a giver.
6) ***he who leads, with diligence:*** Leading has the idea of ruling or administering. We need people to run stuff, and should do so with an eager and responsible attitude.
7) ***he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness:*** We need compassionate people (Especially us leaders!) The mercy or compassion shown should be in the spirit of cheerfulness, not grudgingly or by force. Paul expects our merciful acts to be done with a cheerful spirit, not a grudging or legalistic one.
--All spiritual gifts may not be equally important in a particular moment, but they are equally pleasing to God as a part of His continued life and work on earth.