

Devotion: August 20, 2020

Romans 12:1-8 (The Message)

1-2 So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

3 I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

4-6 In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

6-8 If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

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It is time to ask a very important question, and it's time to seek the answer. What does God really want of you? Have you ever wondered? Maybe you've heard some preacher talk about surrender and sacrifice. Do you understand what surrendering to God means? Do you know what Paul means when he writes about "*presenting ourselves as living sacrifices before God*" (Romans 12:1)?

In human terms, surrender means "give up" or "give in." Maybe you've surrendered to your friends' or spouses' influences from time to time. But, God wants us to surrender, too. God wants us to surrender to his influence. When we do this, we don't lose: We win! When we "give up" control of our lives, God gives back some incredible gifts. You have been given very special and unique gifts, and God wants you to develop them. It's true! You have hopes and dreams, right? God wants you to tell him about them! God wants you to trust him! God will work in your heart to bring focus to your dreams and hopes, showing you how to maximize your spiritual gifts to their greatest potential.

Here is a prayer I found in Glen Martin's *Beyond the Rat Race*:

Lord Jesus, I have been in control of my life, but I now want your Spirit to be the One who runs my life. I am giving you all of my rights. Please take control of every area of my life. Whenever I am tempted to take back control, please point that out to me and help me have the courage and strength to resist successfully the temptation or desire to take control again of my life. Show me how to live on top of my circumstances and not under them. Help me keep my eyes on you, Lord Jesus, instead of on my problems. Let me see you, Father, as the One who can and will meet every need of my life. Let me be sufficient in you and not in my own abilities and strengths. Help me to have the right balance between living in your control and exercising diligence as I respond to each facet of my life. Whenever pressures come that have been unbearable or debilitating, show me your perspective--anything I've been doing wrong or thinking improperly. Then show me how to correct my faulty actions and thoughts so that I can continue to walk in your Spirit's control. Thank you that you want to do these things in my life even more than I do. Remind me of that when my faith gets weak. Amen.