

Romans 12 - 14



Small Group Resource
August 2026

Romans 12: 1 - 8



BIG Idea!

SACRIFICIAL LIVING

Paul begins Romans 12 with an appeal to his audience; live sacrificial lives in view of God's mercy (Rom 12:1). In other words, Paul is asking us to consider the sacrifices Christ made for us and respond appropriately. That is, to model our own lives on Christ's example. Paul explains that life in Christ has nothing to do with what a person can *offer* God. Indeed, the God of Christianity differed greatly from the transactional gods of antiquity. Rather than offering a sacrifice to gain favour, Jesus has *become* the sacrifice so that we might have a relationship with God. From this perspective, we can understand a Christian's call to sacrificial living not as an action to be performed, but as a relational commitment. It is, in a sense, a choice to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

In verses 2-8, Paul explains how this choice should result in a supernatural transformation of our whole being. We are called, as Christ-followers, to a new life. A life of humility and of communal cooperation.



DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

In the Greco-Roman world, gods and kings were not expected to suffer for their subjects. There was a structured society, featuring the rich and powerful at the top, with the poor and lowly at the bottom. The idea that a king or god might choose to sacrifice themselves for disobedient creatures beneath their station was laughable. Yet, this was the belief of the church in Rome. A belief which, according to Paul, should move the Christian to respond in kind, offering themselves as living, Christ-like sacrifices. While this concept may seem innocent enough today, Paul's appeal to *live* as sacrifices must have sounded like a contradiction to his ancient audience. Sacrifice was a substitutionary term, a fate bestowed upon an item or creature distinctly separate from one's own person. Therefore, Paul's call to *embody* sacrifice underscores the potential costs involved for those early Christians. Yet, Paul's intention here is to do more than prepare his audience for persecution. His repurposing of sacrifice mirrors the repurposing of our bodies and minds. Just as the old system of sin and sacrifice has passed away, so too has the old way of living. Christians are called to a *new* life; life in the Spirit (Rom 8:1-11). In stark contrast to the stratified nature of their world, Paul called upon the church in Rome to posture themselves as Jesus did. To forgo ego and status. To concern themselves with the welfare of the other. Just as the Trinity exists in deferential harmony, Paul appeals to this community to value one another, to cherish each other's gifts and, ultimately, pursue love for the sake of the love that Jesus first extended to them.



1

PRAYER POINT

What can you pray for this week, for yourself, your family and friends?

2

ACTION POINT

Consider how do we might switch from worldly thought and action, to Christ-like thought and action?

3

MISSION POINT

If we never verbally communicated our faith would people be able to tell by our transformed nature alone?

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading:

Romans 12: 1 - 8

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Imagine living at a time when animal sacrifice was commonplace. Now imagine Paul employing that same language to describe what the life of a Christian was like. What does that tell us about Paul's perspective on the Christian walk?

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

What sacrifices come as a result of following Jesus today? How do they affect us?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. What does it mean for us to be living sacrifices?
3. Tom Wright says in his translation of Romans "don't let yourself be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age." What are the things in our time that try to shape us to live contrary to living in a Kingdom way?
4. Do you ever find it difficult to soberly evaluate yourself and your gifts?
5. If All Saints was perfect at being a "living sacrifice", what would the community around us notice?

PRAY for each other that we would be aware of which body part we might be and that we would use our God given gifts well.

Romans 12: 9 - 21



BIG Idea! SACRIFICIAL LOVING

Paul now gets very specific and practical in explaining to us how we are to be the new humans and to live counter-culturally. We are called to refuse to bow to evil and its ways of creating disunity and separation. Instead he calls us to live in such a manner that it may just be the catalyst for others to consider reaching out to the loving God we serve. This begins with how we treat our church family in our devotion, forgiveness and honour but also extending to those we would consider our enemies. Our natural tendencies for revenge and pay back when we are wronged are challenged and as the people of God we are encouraged not to repay evil for evil but show care and provide for all we encounter even those who oppose us. I do not think we are meant to read this as a list of things to do or not do, creating another set of rules to follow, Rather Paul is provoking us to seek the inner transformation that comes through the Holy Spirit to become those who are capable of extreme love even in the face of hardship and suffering injustice. Not an easy path to walk but it is a path that brings heaven on earth. This is the way that we as followers of the Messiah King Jesus are called to live and therefore become conquerors.



DIGGING Deeper! Context:

Paul transitions into demonstrating what it means to practically live out how to be the new humans that he has spent the previous chapters explaining, describing, and elaborating on. He emphasises that the gospel narrative is not merely about achieving an academic theological understanding of the Kingdom but that it demands practical application. To truly follow Christ means to become a living sacrifice, using our diverse spiritual and natural gifts to intentionally encourage and bless others.

At the core of this lifestyle is “*agape*” love—the essential thread of all Christian life. Far from a fleeting emotion or a sexualised notion, *agape* is a deliberate choice to prefer others through an honouring, devoted, family-like affection. It is a love defined by actions, ruled not by fickle feelings but by the choice to benefit and bless others.

The specific instructions that follow speak directly into the divisions of the Roman church at the time. Segregation and fierce disagreements ran rampant: Gentiles criticised Jewish Christians for legalism and not being true believers, while Jewish believers claimed that Gentiles were not following holy days, festivals, or sabbath, and food laws. Paul is adamant that both factions are entirely wrong. Having already spent the last few chapters defending the vital importance of the Jewish narrative within the gospel story, he uses this letter to intentionally instruct his hearers ahead of his planned visit. He reminds them of a grander story; he exposes the triviality of their destructive arguments and challenges their selfish and small minded quarrels.

This message remains urgently necessary for us today. In a world that is becoming increasingly polarised, tribal, and separatist—where we are tempted to only associate with those who think exactly like us—Paul reminds us that such division is not the way of the Kingdom and that true worship requires actions of radical love and kindness to all we encounter, whether considered friend or foe.

1

PRAYER POINT

What can you pray for this week, for yourself, your family and friends?

2

ACTION POINT

Consider who in our past might be considered an enemy. How might we bless them today?

3

MISSION POINT

What message might those who don't know Jesus yet take away from how you interacted with them this week?

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: **Romans 12: 9 - 21**

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

The term to “heap coals on their head” is a metaphor from Proverbs 25: 22. It is thought to be about taking a pan of coals to your neighbour to share fire with them as an act of kindness.

In this context it is more likely about treating your enemy with love making them feel shame, and remorse. A kindness that would melt the hardness and lead a person to repent and change for the good.

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. What does it mean for love to be real?
3. What does it look like to hate evil in your context?
4. What does it mean to love your enemies this week?
5. Make a list of all the action words and class them in the Good to do and not good to do?

PRAY for each other that we would see how God wants us to be a part of his global mission.

Romans 13: 8-14



BIG Idea!

LOVE: the centre of the new covenant community

After Paul dealing with very functional ways to live the christian life as a new human in chapter 12 and a short section about the ruling authorities of the day, he returns to the main premise, of the practical application of how to live a life of a disciple of Jesus. Where chapter 12 is a list of what sincere love looks like, we start to see in chapter 13 that sincere love is also at the heart of new covenant ethics and how it fulfils the pre-existing mosaic laws. He states clearly that to love your neighbour is indeed the fulfilment of the mosaic law. This reminds us of the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 22 where he states that the greatest commandments are to love God and love our neighbour. This is the new way that Jesus teaches and puts love at the highest priority which Paul again picks up on in this practical section of the letter to the Romans.

The Romans are encouraged to recognise the time they are in. The comparison of day and night; light and dark give the framework of clothing ourselves with Christ and putting off those activities of the night. He specifically mentions stealing, wild parties, drunkenness, orgies, shameless immorality, bad temper and jealousy. There are many list of activities of the flesh in the new testament and all include similar actions as those listed here. The key Paul states is to put on; to clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ and not to make allowances for the lust of the flesh.

DIGGING Deeper!

This section of Romans continues to provide short sharp instructions of how to live in practical ways as a disciple of Jesus Christ by clothing ourselves with him. In the ancient world wearing a particular armour or national dress would associate you with a particular army or nation. And marching under a flag aligns you with a people, ruler and set of beliefs. The question that arises is how? How do we clothe ourselves with Christ as the apostle Paul encourages? How do we clothe ourselves with the armour of light? Firstly, our baptism make our intentions clear. We are people of the way; Jesus the Messiah followers, which shows solidarity with all other Christ followers that have gone before. By acknowledging the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah we are freed from the power of sin and death and clothed on the inside by the presence of the Holy Spirit who transforms and empowers us to be able to stand against the sinful desires of darkness. Secondly by our actions of love, humility, service and truth we model the very actions of the one we serve. We end up doing what Jesus might do in the circumstances that we find ourselves in. We begin to look just like him and therefore others will notice who's tribe we belong to. Thirdly we avoid any situations that would open the door to gratifying sinful desires and actively throw off the sin that might entangle us. (Heb 12: 1)

There are times when you dress like your sibling you may be mistaken for them. This is the very goal we are after, in that we would indeed look like the one who freed us from the power of sin and death. That others may mistake our actions for the loving care of the all loving, all compassionate God.

1

PRAYER POINT

Give thanks and praise to God for his freeing you from the power of sin and death.

2

ACTION POINT

Consider what radical actions of love could I do to make someone feel loved and honoured.

3

MISSION POINT

Do some extravagant act of care for someone else who has no ability to repay or return the favour.

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: Romans 13: 8 - 14

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Consider what activities might be going on in the church for Paul to write so explicitly in this passage.

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. What does it mean to be clothed with Christ?
3. The Romans were encouraged to understand the day they were in. What is the times we are living in?
4. Discuss what radical acts of love and care you could all be a part of as a small group together?
5. Who do you know who just give off an air of being so like Jesus?

PRAY for opportunities to show the extravagant love of God to others in your world.

Romans 14: 1 - 12



BIG Idea!

HUMILITY AND TOLERANCE

In chapter 14, we see Paul address one of the major flashpoints in the Roman church at this time; diet. Naturally, the Jewish section of the church adhered to strict culinary customs, while their Roman brothers and sisters did not. Paul uses this dispute to teach his audience about the nature of Christian community. That is, a community which treasures humility and tolerance.

Interestingly, Paul begins this appeal with his own weighted position. The former Pharisees labelling of the Jewish viewpoint as “weak” would have dispelled any notion that Jewish dietary concerns were ‘superior’ (Rom 14:1-2, 14:14). Moreover, in sharing his own opinion, Paul shows his audience that differing viewpoints should be expected with Christian communities. Non-salvational issues such as diet, Paul argues, are no cause for division. Rather, each member should regard themselves as fellow servants, responsible for themselves and their own conduct first and foremost. We are not called to pass judgement on one another, nor insist everything is done *our* way. God is the ultimate judge. Our calling is to serve Him in the model set before us by Jesus Christ.



DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

Behind each of Paul's Epistles are contextual issues specific to the time, place and demographic make-up of the receiving community. Paul's letter to the church in Rome is no exception. It's unclear whether tensions had existed between the Roman and Jewish factions prior to Emperor Claudius' eviction of Jewish inhabitants in 49 AD. However, they were certainly in evidence by the time Paul's letter arrived in 56-58 AD, following the return of the Jewish population after 6 years in exile. Similar to the situation we see in the book of Galatians, the observance of traditional Jewish religious customs appears to be at the centre of the controversy (Gal 1:6-9, 3:7-14). Unlike the situation in Galatia, however, there is no indication from Paul that these disputes are the result of one group trying to merge Judaic Law with the Gospel. Rather, the commitment to eating only vegetables likely refers to Jewish concerns around the preparation of meat in the Empire, such as those we see in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth (Rom 14:1-2, 1 Cor 8:4). In spite of these present issues, Paul warns his audience not to elevate their personal views to improper heights. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Paul reminds us that God is the ultimate judge (Isa 45:23, Rom 14:10-12). Our role on this earth is not to try and anticipate God's rulings on every minor issue. Rather, we are called to embody the characteristics of Jesus, maintaining a posture of humility and tolerance on such non salvational issues.



1

PRAYER POINT

What can you pray for this week, for yourself, your family and friends?

2

ACTION POINT

When approaching an issue, how do you determine an appropriate response?

3

MISSION POINT

Do you think the global Church is better known for its humility and grace, or for its opinions/views?

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: Romans 14: 1 - 14

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Consider the tension within this ancient community. One faction is learning to be Jewish in a post-Jesus world, having far more contact with Gentiles than was previously imaginable. The other faction has had their whole worldview flipped upside down.

Christ's victory came not through military might, but humiliating defeat. Worse, a group of people from a nation previously defeated and occupied by Rome have returned to the capital, insisting that their restricted eating habits become common practice.

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

Disagreement is a guarantee within any community. The question is, how do we disagree well?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you in this passage?
2. How do you typically deal with conflict/disagreement?
3. What are some ways you might improve when it comes to disagreeing well?
4. What did Paul mean when he said “...do not put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister?”
5. Can we ask the Holy Spirit to help us hold our views with humility and treat others with grace?

PRAY for each other for God to give us grace and mercy for those in our world.