

A RENEWED MINDSET - ROMANS 12:1-8

Translation

¹Therefore, brothers, I urge you, in view of the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—your true worship—²and do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of the mind so that you may approve what is the will of God—that which is good and pleasing and perfect.

³For by the grace which was given to me, I say to all who are among y'all: do not think more highly of yourselves than what is necessary to think, but think so as to think reasonably with respect to each because God apportioned a measure of faith. ⁴For just as in one body we have many members, and the many members do not have the same function, ⁵so we—the many—are one body in Christ and, individually, members of one another, ⁶having at the same time gifts that differ according to the grace which was given to us—whether prophesying, according to the proportion of faith; ⁷whether service, in service; whether the one who teaches, in teaching; ⁸whether the one who exhorts, with encouragement; the one who gives, with simplicity; the one who rules, with eagerness; the one who has mercy on people, with cheerfulness.

Central Idea

Paul desires to see the Romans give themselves as a sacrifice to God and have their thinking transformed, particularly how they understand their giftedness.

Exegetical Outline

- I. The overarching exhortation Paul gives the brothers based on the preceding chapters is to present themselves as a sacrifice and to not be conformed but be transformed. (1-2)
 - A. Paul's first exhortation is for the brothers to offer their bodies as living, holy, and acceptable sacrifices as their true worship. (1)
 - B. The second exhortation Paul gives the brothers is to not be conformed to this age. (2a)
 - C. The third exhortation Paul gives the brothers is to be transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they can know God's will. (2b)
- II. The first way of thinking Paul wants transformed in his spiritual brothers is how they think of themselves and of their relationship to other believers. (3-8)
 - A. The first exhortation is for the brothers not to think of themselves as greater than they actually are. (3a)
 - B. The second exhortation is to think reasonably about themselves. (3b)
 - C. The basis for thinking reasonably is that God has apportioned their faith. (3c)
 - D. The nature of relationship between believers is unity and interdependence amidst a diversity of function and gift. (4-6a)

1. An example of unity and interdependence amidst diversity is the human body. (4)
 2. The context for unity among believers is their mutual relationship with Christ. (5a)
 3. The character of the relationship between believers is interdependence. (5b)
 4. The reason for the diverse functions among believers is the bestowal of different gifts according to the grace given the believer. (6a)
- E. Examples of different gifts functioning to serve the whole are prophecy, service, teachers, exhorters, givers, leaders, and those who show mercy. (6b-8)
1. An example of a gift is prophesy, which should be done according to the proportion of the believer's faith. (6b)
 2. An example of a gift is service, which should be exercised in serving. (7a)
 3. An example of a gift is the one who teaches, which should be exercised in teaching. (7b)
 4. An example of a gift is the one who exhorts, which should be done with encouragement. (8a)
 5. An example of a gift is the one who gives, which should be done with simplicity. (8b)
 6. An example of a gift is the one who leads, which should be done with eagerness. (8c)
 7. An example of a gift is the one who has mercy on people, which should be practiced with cheerfulness. (8d)

Introduction

For eleven chapters, Paul built a foundation for the exhortations he issues in Romans 12:1ff. In fact, he refers to the content of this treatise as the “mercies of God” (Rom 12:1). Therefore a brief review of the theological real estate Paul covered in chapters 1-11 is in order so that we can more fully appreciate not just where Paul is coming from, but also what exactly God has done to warrant the exhortations that come in chapter 12.

The first four chapters revolve around the availability of a desperately needed righteousness from God. Paul begins by establishing that all mankind is under the judgment and wrath of God because God made Himself known, and man rejected Him (Rom 1:18-32). The Jews are in even hotter water because God gave them the law, and they rebelled against it—a felony not overlooked by mere circumcision (Rom 2:1-3:8). In summary then, every man, woman, and child is unrighteous and unable to help themselves (Rom 3:9-20). But God made a righteousness foreign to man available uniquely by faith (Rom 3:21-4:25).

Chapters 5-8 depict the power of the gospel for salvation. First, peace with God is available through faith (Rom 5:1-11). This peace is available because Christ undid Adam's folly and rebellion (Rom 5:12-25). As a result, those who are in Christ are dead to the rule of sin and alive to rule of God (Rom 6:1-14). Then because the believer is alive to the rule of God, he or she is now a slave not to sin but to righteousness and ought to live accordingly (Rom 6:15-23). Furthermore, the law only exacerbated man's lust for sin, but the people of God are no longer under the law (Rom 7:1-25). Now, life in the Spirit releases the believer from condemnation and the fear of death (Rom 8:1-13). In addition, the Spirit's work promises a favorable end to the story (Rom 8:14-39)—“a triumphant conclusion: justification will assuredly lead to glorification” (Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 392).

Finally, Paul engages the question, “How does the gospel relate to Israel?” God has not forsaken Israel and the promises He made her. For those promises were made to those who walked by faith, not merely blood relatives of Abraham (Rom 9:1-29). Besides, Israel is at fault for her failure to believe (Rom 9:30-10:21). Nevertheless, some Israelites are being saved, coming to faith in Christ, and thus the promises continue towards fulfillment (Rom 11:1-10). Paul also rebukes Gentile believers who thought themselves superior to the Jews (Rom 11:12-36).

Exegesis and Commentary

Present Yourselves (Romans 12:1-2)

While Paul might argue that his previous eleven chapters were practical, now he moves into explicit application. The “therefore” of verse 1 communicates that chapters 1-11 were the foundation for his what he is about to exhort the Romans to do. He also identifies the Romans as “brothers,” evoking a sense of kinship between himself and his audience. “I exhort you,” Paul writes, using a verb stronger than simply asking but not assertive as a command (Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: New Testament [ZIBBC NT]*, 3:73). That verb often signals a transition, introducing a new topic or section in the moral

treatises of the day (ZIBBC NT, 3:73; Schreiner, 642). So, shifting gears from the theological dissertation, Paul appeals to the Romans “in view of¹ the mercies² of God.” In other words, the motivation for the Romans to comply with Paul’s forthcoming instruction comes from all that Paul recorded of God’s works in the preceding chapters of his letter (Moo, 749)—in short, because God has made righteousness available to them by faith.

A Sacrifice (Romans 12:1)

The first exhortation Paul gives his brothers in the faith, is to present³ their bodies as a sacrifice. The language Paul uses is cultic, readily drawing “from the technical language of sacrifice ... in Greek literature and inscriptions” (Dunn, 2:709) Let me be clear: Paul is not telling the Romans to go immolate themselves on an altar. Paul intends a broader meaning of “body”—one that incorporates the whole person, their thoughts, their personality, and their interaction with the world (BDAG, 984 s.v. 1b; Schreiner, 644; Moo, 750-1; Dunn, 2:709).

Paul describes the nature of this sacrifice three way: *living*, *holy*, and *acceptable*. In affirmation of a theological usage of *body*, it would be hard for a burned-to-death body to qualify as living. More importantly, living meant that this act of submission would be an on-going, life-

¹ Neither cause nor source is a meaning normally ascribed to διὰ with a genitival object (Wallace, 741). As a result, Dunn prefers to understand διὰ as communicating the means or agency, converting the prepositional clause διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν to *through the mercies* (Dunn, 2:709). Yet other interpreters argue that διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν is the grounds or cause of Paul’s exhortation and should therefore be translated *by the mercies* (Schreiner, 642-3; Morris, 443). This translation is shared among NET, NASB95, NRSV, and NKJV. BDAG concedes that in contexts of urgent requests as seen here and in Rom 15:30, 1 Cor 1:10, and 2 Cor 10:1, διὰ is a “marker of instrumentality or circumstance whereby something is accomplished or effected” (BDAG, 224-5 s.v. 3f). Moo, while translating διὰ as *through* in his commentary, prefers NIV’s *in view of* or TEV’s *because of* because Paul insists upon his own instrumentality for God and not vice versa (Moo, 749; cf. 2 Cor 5:20). Hence, in light of this usage in an exhortation and the οὖν connecting the previous eleven chapters to this exhortation, *in view of the mercies* is preferred.

² NET, NASB95, NRSV and NKJV translate οἰκτιρμῶν as plural, *mercies*; however, NIV translates it as singular, *mercy*. BDAG asserts that while the plural is often used to give “concrete forms of expression taken by the abstract concept,” in this case the plural has little distinction from the singular because of the parallel word in Hebrew, a singular term with a plural conjugation (BDAG, 700). Nevertheless, the plural translation is retained here.

³ Aorist infinitives have an undefined aspect (Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* [BBG], 299). Without any contextual clues or limitations, it is better to think of παραστῆσαι as such and not as a “once for all” event, as is commonly associated with the aorist tense (Moo, 750).

long sacrifice (Moo, 750-1). Second, holy means to be set apart for the service of God, also carrying the flavor of being worthy of God (BDAG, 10-11 s.v. 1b). Lastly, when Paul speaks of an acceptable sacrifice, his Jewish readers likely heard echoes of Old Testament, especially the denunciation of unacceptable sacrifices in Hosea 8:13, Amos 5:22, and Micah 6:7 (Dunn, 2:711; cf. Schreiner, 644).

Paul then explains that this presentation is the Roman's true⁴ act of worship.⁵ In view of all that God had done—the mercies Paul articulated in chapters 1-11—the right response, the thoughtful response, the genuine response was for the Romans to offer themselves as a sacrifice to God. God's acts warrant nothing more and nothing less.

Conforming (Romans 12:2a)

In follow-up to his admonishment for the Romans to offer their true worship, Paul issues two imperatives aimed at accomplishing verse 1 (Moo, 754; Schreiner, 646). The first is for the Romans to not be conformed⁶ to this age. In Jewish thought, two ages existed: this one,

⁴ NIV, NASB, and NRSV translate λογικός as *spiritual*, but NET and NKJV translate it as *reasonable*. Moule translates it as *rational* (Moule 325), and Moo as *true* (Moo, 752-3). NEB translates λογικὴν λατρείαν as “worship offered by mind and heart.” Mounce prefers *rational*, in the sense that presenting oneself as a sacrifice just makes sense in light of what God has done, His mercies (Mounce, 232). The attractiveness of *spiritual* is its contrast with “the externalities of Israel’s temple cult” (Bruce, 223). It is used in hermetic writings opposite ceremonial (MM, 378). BDAG renders it as “pertaining to being carefully thought out, thoughtful,” arguing that its usage in 1 Pet 2:2 means “in contrast to ‘literal’” (BDAG, 598). Morris and Moo both concur that neither the spiritual nor the rational sense of λογικός should be excluded, so Moo translates it as *true* (Morris, 434; Moo, 752-3). While dissatisfied with Moo’s answer, a better synthesis eludes me.

⁵ Λατρεία can mean either worship or service (BDAG, 586). In the LXX, it refers to activity, either worship in general or a single cultic act (TDNT, 4:61). EDNT defines it as *sacrificial worship* (EDNT, 2:344-5). To avoid thinking that Paul is asking for a single act, *worship* is preferred.

⁶ Cranfield asserts that the imperative can be translated “Stop conforming” because the negation of a present imperative means to stop an on-going action (Cranfield, 2:607). Because Paul seems pleased with the Romans’ spirituality (cf. Rom 15:14), this seems unlikely (Moo, 755). For the same reason, the reflexive middle imperative of συσχηματίζω (“do not conform yourselves”) found in TEV also seems unlikely. NIV uses the simple “intransitive” active: “Do not conform.” This may be permissible because in a simple active, “the subject performs or experiences the action” (Wallace, 411). Regardless of whether they are conforming or being conformed, conforming would still be happening—thus taking the emphasis off of who or what is causing the conforming. Nevertheless, the passive imperative (“do not be conformed”) is preferred, as in NET, NASB, NRSV, and NKJV, as it parallels the next imperative.

which is evil, and an age to come, which would be blessed (Schreiner, 647). The Roman Christians, like Christians throughout history, would have been under siege with the values, priorities, and ways of thinking espoused and embodied by the evil age around them. They faced a culture seeking to insidiously invade their lives. They risked looking, acting, feeling, and thinking more like what was around them than like Christ.⁷

Transforming (Romans 12:2b)

Yet rather than advocate some form of escapism from the culture, the age, the evil around them, Paul puts forth a different plan (Dunn, 2.713). Paul wants the Romans to be transformed. It is almost as if Paul thought that change was inevitable for the Romans—they would be shaped one direction or another. So anticipating change, Paul wants them to change in the right way, in the right direction. The metamorphosis Paul then espouses would not be a one-shot vaccine. No, it would be an on-going process.⁸ Nor would it be a change that the Romans could just do. Like being conformed to this age, being transformed would happen *to* them⁹ over time by an outside force—that is, God (Dunn, 2.713). As this metamorphosis unfolds, the good age to come would invade the current, evil age (Schreiner, 647).

Looking further at the transformation Paul desires, the means for such a change is the renewal of the mind.¹⁰ The Romans needed to think more heavenly, not earthly, more in accord

⁷ Morris adamantly asserts that the strong contrastive conjunction *ἀλλά* means that *συσχηματίζω* and *μεταμορφόω* are not synonymous, and that *συσχηματίζω* has to do with outward conformity while *μεταμορφόω* speaks to inward transformation (Morris, 434-5). BDAG defines *συσχηματίζω* as “to form according to a pattern or mold” (BDAG, 979), and *μεταμορφόω* as “to change inwardly in fundamental character or condition” (BDAG, 639-40 s.v. 2). However, if the countermeasure for conforming to this world is the renewal of the mind, then *conforming* is much more than surface deep (Schreiner, 646-7). Hence, here they are treated more synonymously.

⁸ The present tense of the imperative *μεταμορφοῦσθε* means that the aspect of the verb is on-going, continuous (BBG 310-1).

⁹ The passive rendering of *μεταμορφοῦσθε* (“be transformed”) is preferred (cf. Schreiner, 642; Moo, 748).

¹⁰ The pronoun *υμων* is added after *νοος* in **Ⲙ**, a prominent Alexandrian witness dating to the fourth century AD, as well as secondary Alexandrian witnesses such as minuscule 33, 81, 104, 1175, and 1506. Strongly affiliated with the Byzantine text-type, this reading is also found in the ninth-century-AD uncial L and the vast

with their new life in Christ, not in accord with their former master, sin. While the Romans could not author this metamorphosis, they could nurture it by having a mind exposed to Christian teaching, by asking the Spirit to critique their ways of thinking and impress upon them the mind and heart of God.

The goal,¹¹ then, of the transformation is for the Romans to continuously¹² approve the will of God as they go forward in life. *To approve* meant to “accept as trustworthy” (EDNT, 341). The will of God is that which is good, pleasing, and perfect¹³—though not from the Roman’s perspective, but from God’s point of view (Schriener, 648). The Roman would be effective in discerning God’s heart and mind and subsequently act rightly with confidence.

Right Thinking (Romans 12:3-8)

In verses 3-8, Paul proceeds to articulate what a renewed mind looked like, how it thought.¹⁴ Again, Paul presents a pair of exhortations—another set of one-two punches—this

collection of Byzantine minuscule. In addition, it is seen in the important uncial Ψ, which dates from the ninth or tenth century AD.

However, stronger evidence sides on the reading that excludes $\upsilon\mu\omega\nu$. This second reading is strongly affiliated with the Alexandrian text-type, being found in significant witnesses of Ψ^{46} , B, and 1739 as well as the lesser witnesses of A and 1881. This text-type dates the reading to at least the second century AD. Moreover, the reading is also strongly affiliated with the Western text-type, as it is witnessed in D, F, and G. For a reading to align with both Western and Alexandrian text-types, it is readily dated to early second century AD. The external evidence then awards the second reading both a decisively earlier date and a wider geographic base, making it preferable.

With regards to internal evidence, one can easily see how the addition of $\upsilon\mu\omega\nu$ helps to clarify the meaning of which or whose mind needs renewal. Hence it is easier to see a progression from not having $\upsilon\mu\omega\nu$ to having it, but not vice versa. So if the more difficult reading is preferred, then the second reading—the one without the additional $\upsilon\mu\omega\nu$ —is again preferred (cf. Metzger, 466; Schreiner, 648; Dunn, 2:707).

¹¹ The $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ clause could also be considered a purpose clause, making the translation, “Be transformed ... in order for you to approve...” (Schriener, 648)

¹² An infinitive in the present tense communicates a continuous aspect to the nature of the action (BBG, 302).

¹³ NET, NASB95, NRSV, and NKJV all treat the collection of adjectives ($\tau\omicron\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\upsilon\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$) as an apposition to “the will of God” (cf. Schreiner, 648; Moo, 757).

¹⁴ While Käsemann asserts that there is a sharp delineation between verses 1-2 and 3ff (332), the transition $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ is “used to express cause, clarification, or inference” (BDAG, 189). Moo believes verses 3ff are what a “transformed way of life” looks like (Moo, 760), but I think a more direct link from “renewing the mind” to “do

time telling them how to and how not to think about themselves. He deploys an analogy to help explain the new way of thinking. The he follows with a litany of examples of applying the new thinking.

Paul begins with “For I say,” a phrase that echoes the sense of “I urge” in verse 1 (Dunn, 2:720). Next, Paul establishes the authority upon which he can speak, “by the grace which was given to me.”¹⁵ The grace he refers to here is rather exceptional. It is his apostleship, a unique office with special authority (Moo, 760; Schreiner, 651; Dunn, 2:720; Morris, 437; cf. Rom 1:5, Eph 3:8). But notice that Paul described this grace as “given to him.” He did not earn it. He has no grounds for pride in achieving it (Schreiner, 651). Rather it was simply given to him, which will become important later in Paul’s discussion of gifts.

Before Paul dives into his exhortations, he also makes clear who he was talking to: “to all who are among you.” Paul gives no exemptions for the forthcoming urging. Everybody needs to take note.

Hubris (Romans 12:3a)

In his two imperatives¹⁶ of mental renewal, Paul uses a repeated play on words. Four times in verse 3, Paul uses words related to the Greek verb *to think*. In his first command, Paul uses a form that meant “to think too highly of oneself” (BDAG 1034). This verb is used only here in all the New Testament. A literal translation of the term’s root words is *hyper-think* or

not thinking ... but think” seems self-evident. Therefore I contend that verse 3 begins a specific clarification on the way a renewed mind thinks.

¹⁵ Again, *διά* with a genitival object usually conveys a sense of agency, means, spatiality, or temporality (Wallace, 741), and Moo, Schriener, and Dunn translate *διά* as *through* (Moo, 760; Schreiner, 651; Dunn, 2:720). However, if verse 3 is stylistically parallel to verse 1—and I think it is—then as verse 1’s *διά* clause is the basis for Paul’s exhortation, so too is this verse’s. Hence *by* is preferred (cf. Morris, 437).

¹⁶ Both *ὑπερφρονεῖν* and *φρονεῖν* are infinitives in indirect discourse. As such, they can either be indicative or imperative (cf. Wallace, 603). But because *λέγω* has an imperatival tone (Dunn, 2:720), here they are treated as commands.

think above.¹⁷ In this command, Paul is telling the Romans not to be haughty, clarifying that they should not think beyond what is necessary for them to think. Paul does not insist that they cease to acknowledge gifted, talented, skilled, or extraordinary individuals in their midst. Rather, Paul attacks pride and hubris, which have no place among God’s people. Paul’s concern is for the way in which anyone with a gift, talent, or skill views themselves in relation to everyone else.

Sober Judgment (Romans 12:3b)

Instead of *hyper-thinking* and letting their minds get away from them, Paul tells the Romans to think with the purpose¹⁸ of being prudent, emphasizing that they should exercise self-control over their thinking (BDAG, 986 s.v. 2). Literally, the root words create the term *safe-thinking*.¹⁹ Paul wants the Romans to be of sound mind and sober judgment when they think about their own giftedness and abilities.²⁰ This was not have necessarily been novel to the Romans, as Greek philosophers had heralded this mindset as a cardinal virtue—and often in direct contrast to hubris and arrogance (TDNT, 7:1098-9).

Basis for Sobriety (Romans 12:3c)

Moreover, Paul establishes that such sober thinking was called for because²¹ God had doled out their measure of faith.²² The Roman’s faith was not merited or achieved—it was a gift

¹⁷ Ὑπερφρονέω is made up of the words ὑπερ and φρονέω. Ὑπερ is a preposition often used to communicate a comparison such as *more than* or *beyond* (Wallace, 744). Φρονέω means “to have an opinion with regard to something” (BDAG, 1065, 1).

¹⁸ Εἰς with the infinitive σωφρονεῖν is used here as a purpose clause (*Lexham Clausal Outlines of the Greek New Testament*, Rom 12:3).

¹⁹ Σωφρονέω is made up of the words σῶς and φρονέω (BDAG, 986) . Σῶς means *safe, whole* (LSJ 1750 s.v. 2). Φρονέω means “to have an opinion with regard to something” (BDAG, 1065 s.v. 1).

²⁰ Because of ὡς delineates a new clause, I think ἐκάστῳ belongs to the preceding verbal element, σωφρονεῖν, as a dative of reference or respect and not to ἐμέρισεν (contra NET, NASB, NKJV).

²¹ While NET, NASB, NRSV, and NKJV translate the ὡς as a conjunction of manner to depict how sober-minded thinking is to be done, I think ὡς is used causally in order to focus attention on God as the one who determines a person’s faith (cf. Wallace, 674).

from God—so there would be no basis for pride or arrogance or superiority over fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (Schreiner, 653).

Unity and Interdependence amidst Diversity (Romans 12:4-6a)

To further explain²³ the renewed mindset believers are to have towards one another, Paul uses the human body as an analogy²⁴. “For just as in one body,” Paul begins, emphasizing the unity, the oneness, of the body. “We have many members,” he continues. Bodies have arms and legs, eyes and ears, fingers and toes. So a plurality exists in the oneness. Then Paul says that the many members do not have the same function²⁵. The big toe does not do the same thing as a thumb, much less the mouth or eyes. Moreover in the oneness, the plurality depends on each other. The big toe cannot replace an ear or a nose. In fact, the members serve the whole and depend on one another in order for the whole to function properly.

²² The meaning of ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως (“to each as God apportioned a measure of faith”) is strongly contested with two primary views. The first view is that μέτρον means *standard* or *measuring instrument*. Πίστεως then functions as a genitive of apposition to μέτρον, equating standard to faith. Moo asserts that the faith in view, then, is the “basic Christian faith as given equally by God to all” (Moo, 761). The μέτρον πίστεως (“standard of faith”) would then refer to Christ (Moo, 761; Cranfield, 1961-2) or the gospel (Stuhlmacher, 192). In agreement with this view, Stott treated Christ and gospel as synonymous, asserting their uniqueness a standard, one shared by all who believe, for sober assessment and evaluation (Stott, 326).

In contrast, the other view holds that Paul’s usage of μερίζω and μέτρον together points to μέτρον meaning *measure* or *quantity*, not *standard*. BDAG’s definition of μερίζω is to “deal out, assign, or apportion” something to someone (632, 2b), which is echoed in several first century AD papyri (MM, 397), as well as its translation of μέτρον: figuratively “the result of measuring (BDAG, 642 s.v. 2b). This view infers then that God varies the measures of faith he gives to differ people (Dunn, 2:721; Schreiner, 653; Mounce, 233; Bruce, 226)—too difficult assertion for Moo embrace (Moo, 761). While the absence of an article does not exclude a definite reference with regards to *measure*, the presence of a definite article would have helped advocates for a view for an equal allotment of faith among believers. Yet looking at Romans 14:1, such equality seems unnecessary. There Paul seems to hold to some inequality. In addition, the analogy following in verses 4-5 helps the readers frame their appreciation for differences between believers. Hence, the latter view is preferred, as echoed by NET, NASB95, and NKJV.

²³ Again, the transition γάρ is “used to express cause, clarification, or inference” (BDAG, 189).

²⁴ Καθάρπερ functions as a comparative conjunction (Wallace, 675).

²⁵ Πρᾶξις carries a breadth of meaning. While often found in papyri to speak of the “right of execution” (MM, 533), here BDAG defines it as “a function implying sustained activity” (BDAG, 859 s.v. 1). This understanding better fits the context here and strongly preferred.

With the image of the human body—its unity and interdependence amidst diversity of function—in the readers’ minds, Paul moves to apply²⁶ the analogy to his readers. By saying “we—the many²⁷—are one body in Christ.” Paul parallels the many limbs and organs of the human body to a group of believers that includes himself and his audience. Paul is depicting neither of the universal church nor the local church.²⁸ Instead, he is simply connecting the dots of the analogy. The body from the analogy equates to a metaphorical body consisting of those who are in relationship with Christ.

Not only is there unity between those who are in relationship with Christ, there is interdependence. Paul writes, “And individually,²⁹ [we are]³⁰ members of one another.” It is not just Christ to whom believers are joined, but to one another as well. Carrying forward the analogy of the body, believers depend upon one another. They serve one another. They nourish,

²⁶ When οὕτως is paired with a correlative word such as καθάπερ, οὕτως means “in this manner, thus, so,” with what follows being the result of the comparison introduced by καθάπερ (BDAG, 741 s.v. 1a).

²⁷ Dunn argues that οἱ πολλοὶ is a Semitism meaning *all* (Dunn, 2:724); however, the literary parallel between the πολλὰ μέλη (“many members”) and οἱ πολλοὶ (“the many”) seems inescapable. Hence “the many” is preferred as an apposition to the subject of the verb ἔσμεν (Moo, 762-3; Morris, 439; Schreiner, 654; cf. NET, NRSV, NASB95, NKJV).

²⁸ Dunn holds that Paul has just a local collection of believers in view (Dunn, 2:724). Moo notes that the forthcoming gift list excludes apostles and apostleship (Moo, 763), which may support Dunn’s local view. But in his uncertainty, Moo issues the caveat that a local view must be broad enough to incorporate the collection of house churches meeting in Rome, all of which Paul intended to address with this letter according to chapter 16. My concern is that ἔσμεν is a first-person plural verb, thereby making “we” the implied subject of the verb. *We*, by its vary nature, would then include both the speaker and his audience. In this case, that would be Paul, who has not been to Rome, and the Christians in Rome. Certainly they are not part of the same local body. Therefore, the local view is rejected.

Against viewing this as a universal church reference, Morris goes further, rejecting this as a reference to “the body of Christ” of Ephesians and Colossians (Morris, 439). Rather he sees ἐν σῶμά ... ἐν Χριστῷ (“one body ... in Christ”) emphasizing the unity found in Christ. I affirm Morris’ view. The prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ (“in Christ”) is not same as the genitive Χριστοῦ (“of Christ”) used in “the body of Christ.” Ἐν describes the sphere where the unity is found: among those in fellowship with Christ.

²⁹ The expression καθ’ εἷς is interesting. First κατά in this case is a “marker of division of a greater whole into individual parts” (BDAG, 512 s.v. 3a). So a literal translation would be “by one.” Whether the *one* is a member (μέλος) or a part of “we”, the subject, is insignificant. Paul is referring to individual people either using a literal or a metaphorical reference. Hence here, as in NET, NASB95, NRSV, and NKJV, the phrase is translated *individually*.

³⁰ The subject and verb of this clause are carried over from ἔχομεν in the previous clause.

protect, provide for, and complement each other. Collectively they succeed and fail with the successes and failures of one another. Moreover, “we should also bear in mind that ‘members’ has no meaning apart from the body; one cannot be a ‘member’ of nothing” (Morris, 439). In other words, believers do not exist in isolation, in a vacuum.

But Paul’s analogy is not yet complete. First, he described the one body as having many members, many body parts. Then the second facet of his analogy was the differential functions between those body parts. So Paul completes the analogy with the collection of believers in Christ: “having³¹ at the same time³² gifts that differ.” The different functions of the

³¹ How to translate ἔχοντες is a major grammatical challenge for this passage. Ἐχοντες is a nominative, masculine, plural, present, active participle of ἔχω, which generally means *to have*. The majority view is that ἔχοντες marks the beginning of a new sentence. Hence UBS4 and NA27 punctuate verse 5 as a complete sentence. If ἔχοντες does initiate a new sentence, then there are two primary ways the participle can function. First, NET and NRSV treat ἔχοντες as an independent participle functioning as an indicative verb—“We have...” This way, “Paul is describing the way in which God, in his grace, has distributed different gifts to his people as a means of building the unity of the body” (Moo, 763).

Alternatively, most commentators believe that the hortatory nature of verse 6-8 requires assuming an intentional ellipsis in Paul’s work and then providing an imperatival verbal element to complete the thought (Moo, 764; Schreiner, 654-5; Morris, 439). Often the addition is something akin to “let us use.” For example, “Since we have gifts that differ ... each of us is to use them accordingly” (NASB95). Or the verbal element is repeatedly added through the list. For example, “Having different gifts ... let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy...” (NKJV, cf. NET).

However, what if the assumption that verse 6 begins a new sentence is mistaken? What if verse 6 is actually a continuation of verse 5? Wallace strongly affirmed that “no participle should be explained as an independent participle if there is any other way to explain it” (Brooks and Winbery, 138, as quoted by Wallace, 653), and I think there is a way to explain ἔχοντες without adding verbiage. Dunn handles ἔχοντες like the participle it is, but rather than have it modify an arbitrary verb inserted into an ellipsis, Dunn attaches it to ἔσμεν in verse 5 (Dunn, 2:725). Doing so allows for a clear completion of Paul’s comparison: the one physical body of verse 4 with the one metaphorical body in Christ of verse 5. Paul has already connected the *many members* of verse 4 to the *we, the many*, of verse 5. But the endpoint in verse 4 is the diversity of function among the body’s members, not interdependence found at the end of verse 5. Consequently, it would seem more natural for Paul to finish the analogy he started before launching into a series of imperatives. Ἐχοντες ... χαρίσματα ... διάφορα (“having ... gifts ... that differ”) is that completion—differing gifts correlating to the differing functions. “That Paul’s description of his vision or ‘in principle’ ideal of the body of Christ as charismatic community has prescriptive force is no doubt the case. But as Paul actually sets it out[,] it is simply a description of what being one body in Christ involves so far as Paul is concerned” (Dunn, 2:725). Thus, treating ἔχοντες as a modifier of ἔσμεν is preferred here, even though translating it as an independent participle could communicate a very similar message.

³² Δὲ is among the most common of Greek conjunctions. As such, it has a wide array of meanings and translations, if it is even translated at all. NET renders it *and*, and NASB95 as *since*, while NRSV and NKJV leave it untranslated. Because Paul is completing his comparison with this clause, I chose to translate it as “at the same time” to help highlight the diversity existing in the unity (cf. BDAG, 213 s.v. 3).

body's limbs and organs are likened to the different gifts found in Christ followers. Thus what can be said of the body parts' functions can be said of the gifts: they serve, nourish, protect, provide for, and complement each other.

Moreover, there is no ground for pride in these different gifts and functions. They were not awarded according to merit or "moral nobility" (Schreiner, 655). Paul says the differential of the gifts correlates directly to the grace that was given to that person. In other words, God assigns and empowers gifts and functions to all believers, each solely according to His divine prerogative. His grace is the "resource which comes to particular expression in" the gift (Dunn, 2:725). For Paul, the grace given to him made him an authority as an apostle (cf. Rom 1:5; 12:3).

Examples (Romans 12:6b-8)

Having established that the unity in Christ comes with a diversity of God-given functions or gifts, Paul gives voice to seven examples. With each example, he also adds a description of how that gift should function.³³ In light of additional gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4, this list is by no means exhaustive of all gifts (Schreiner, 655). Nor should much significance be conferred because precisely *seven* gifts are discussed (Schreiner, 650). Nevertheless, that Paul can speak of believers having gifts to a church he has never visited strongly implies that giftedness was a universal expectation for all believers (Dunn, 2:726).

Paul chooses the gift of prophecy³⁴ as his first example, and this gift is supposed to function "according to the proportion of the faith." The faith Paul speaks of here is the personal

³³ Because I connected ἔχοντες to ἐσμεν as a continuation of the body imagery instead of connecting it to a new imperative, the function of the clauses following each gift breaks from the customary imperatival rendering. They become descriptions, not prescriptions, of how each gift ought to function in service to whole (Dunn, 728).

³⁴ BDAG defines προφητεία in this instance as "the gift of interpreting the divine will or purpose" (BDAG, 889 s.v. 2). LSJ defines it as "the gift of expounding scripture, or of speaking and preaching, under the influence of the Holy Spirit (LSJ, 1539 s.v. III). While slightly later than the NT, the term was used in the second century AD in a discussion about the sale of the office or position of prophet in the temple of Soknebtunis (MM, 555). EDNT adds that the term could also refer to prophetic activity in general (EDNT, 3:182). Paul uses the term

faith of the one exercising the gift (Moo, 656; Morris 440). Recognizing that everyone does not necessarily receive the same measure of faith (Rom 12:3), the person with the gift of interpreting the will of God should be limited by the magnitude of that person's faith. Said another way, a person of little faith ought not be making big claims to speak on behalf of God.

The second gift listed is the administrative function of service (BDAG, 230 s.v. 5). This gift is not a reference to the office of deacon, but to a general disposition where a person is inclined to assist (Schreiner, 657; Dunn, 2:728; Morris, 441; contra Moo, 766). Those with this disposition Paul wants to serve, to assist, to not hold back from performing lowly tasks (Morris, 441). After all, this humble service was divinely enabled.

The third gift is the person who teaches. Paul says this gift should be done in "the act of teaching" (BDAG, 240 s.v. 1). While that sounds redundant, it is comparable to Paul's instruction about the gift of service. In other words, "the teacher is to be about his work" (Morris, 441). This was especially important at a time with low literacy rates and heavy dependence on oral communication to impart and pass along the teachings and tradition of the faith (Morris, 441; Schreiner, 658).

The fourth gift is the person who exhorts. Like Paul calling the Romans to offer themselves as living, holy, and acceptable sacrifices, this person is to exercise their gift with "encouragement" (BDAG, 766 s.v. 1). Exhortation was not meant to be destructive for the fellow believers. It was to embolden them to pursue the will of God (cf. Schreiner, 658).

The fifth gift is the person who gives, who shares (BDAG, 638). This person is to act ingenuously³⁵. People can have with ulterior motives when they give, like expecting something in

nine of the 19 occurrences in the NT, and only Paul uses it in reference a gift (NIDNTT, 3:81). In the context of χάρισμα, the notion of gift is preferred over activity or office. Because teaching is isolated later in the list, LSJ's definition is not preferred (cf. Schreiner, 655). While the BDAG's explanation is helpful in further explaining prophecy, here προφητεία will be translated as "the gift of prophecy" (cf. NET).

³⁵ BDAG lists two possible definitions for ἀπλότης: 1) "simplicity, sincerity, uprightness, frankness," or 2) "generosity, liberality" (BDAG, 104). LSJ has two examples of people being described with "simplicity, frankness, sincerity" in first century BC manuscripts (LSJ, 191 s.v. II.2). MM has record of the term in an inscription from the second century, but the context is absent (MM, 58). EDNT defines the usage in Romans 12:8 as "simple, gracious objectivity" (EDNT, 1:123 s.v. 2.a). NIDNTT spins the term as "personal wholeness,

return. People can be tight-fisted when they give. Paul wants neither of these. If God has given the grace to be a giver, the giving is to be done wholeheartedly and without pretext.

The sixth gift is the one who leads (BDAG, 870 s.v. 1). Paul expects this leadership to exhibit an earnest, eager zeal (BDAG, 939 s.v. 2). The cause is too great for lackadaisical leadership; the challenges, too demanding; the persecution, too oppressive. The person who stands before others and says, “Follow me,” should have a passion and determination that feeds those who follow.

The final gift is the one who has mercy on people (BDAG, 314). Paul desires to see that mercy carried out with cheerfulness, not under duress (BDAG, 473). “Mercy is not a grim duty but a joy and a delight” (Morris, 443).

Conclusion

In summary, salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. That is the gospel of Romans 1-11. In light of that good news, Paul calls the Romans to offer themselves to God as their true response of worship. That worship begins with realignment, not to the corrupted ways of thinking found in their age, but in ways of the good age that is breaking in. Only with a mental makeover will the Romans find, understand, and walk in the will of God.

The first pattern of thinking that needs an overhaul is their self-perception. Hubris, haughtiness, pride all have no place in the renewed mind of a believer. Rather, Paul calls the Romans to sound judgment because God has given them whatever makes them special. Paul uses the human body as image to portray the unity expected among those affiliated by their relationship with Christ. But more than unity, Paul sees fellow believers as interdependent, with each person uniquely fulfilling a function for the whole that God specially enabled that person to

undividedness, and hence uncomplicated simplicity” (NIDNTT, 3:572). It seems that while *generosity* and *liberality* are attractive because their natural association with giving, the preponderance of evidence points to a single-mindedness that is true and upright. Therefore, *simplicity* is preferred (cf. ZIBBC NT, 74-75).

accomplish. Then to flush out how gifts are to function, Paul goes into detail with seven examples: prophesying, serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, and showing mercy.

Today, Paul's exhortations are words the church needs to hear. First, we need to audit how we think of ourselves and our functions in the body. In the era of mega-churches and superstar pastors, outward success tempts pastors to forget that their accomplishments stemmed not from their own merits, but from a gracious gift given by God. Pastors can readily develop an overinflated view of themselves, and look down on other pastors who do not have as many seats filled or as many dollars in the offering.

Second, the surge of interest in the gift of leadership found among many of today's churches risks eclipsing the value of other gifts in the church. While I do think that the leadership gift went unexplored and underdeveloped for too long, the pendulum swing to leadership obsession is dangerous. To those infatuated with leadership development, Paul's words should serve as a haunting reminder that being better leaders is not the goal—such idolatry of leadership is the mindset of 21st century western culture. The gift of leadership exists to serve the other members, not itself. It raises up and mobilizes the other gifts so that those other gifts may function in the fullness God intended.