

# Romans – Fall 2023 D-Groups

*For Wednesday, October 25*  
**Romans 12:1-21 with a Focus on 12:1-2**



## The Big Picture - READ Romans 12:1-21

*(Throughout the Fall, we're making our way through the entire book of Romans. Even though our primary focus in D-Groups is on a smaller text, it's good also to read this broader section.)*

When reading through Romans, we experience quite the shift of gears moving into chapter 12. After all of the deep theology of chapters 1-11, we find a very practical section of the letter; it's focused on how we should live in light of the Gospel/Good News that Paul has been explaining. It's common for his letters to make this kind of turn. For example, in Ephesians 4:1, Paul does something similar, moving from the truth of God's salvation by grace to practical instructions. Here in Romans 12:1-2, he provides this transition that becomes a kind of summary umbrella for all that follows. The Good News that saves us from both the eternal consequences of sin *and* its ongoing power has tremendous implications for how we live as those who belong to Christ. True faith in Him will always be displayed through our conduct - a life lived in response to all He has done for us (more on this later). Throughout the rest of Romans, Paul helps us consider some ways that should happen.

Of course, there have already been some practical sections in Romans 1-11. Paul has written about living in freedom from sin (chapter 6) and being controlled by the Holy Spirit, not the flesh (8:1-14). Additionally, other texts don't necessarily offer specific instructions to live out, but they help us appreciate what God has done and what it means for us (think 5:1-11 or much of chapter 8 - deeply relevant and personal sections). Perhaps we could make the distinction between teaching that is focused on providing information (what we are to understand) vs. application (what we are practically to do). Both parts matter in our lives of faith. As Romans has emphasized repeatedly, the Gospel is first and foremost what we embrace by faith, but then, that faith should necessarily lead to a response from us through the way we live. That's what this overall section is about.

**12:1-2** ... this umbrella summary opening this practical instruction

**12:3-8** ... being united to one another as the Body of Christ - our responsibility toward others to use the gifts He has given us as part of His grace (see the language of v. 6)

**12:9-21** ... various practical commands with an emphasis on not taking revenge (vv. 17-21)

We'll get to 12:1-2 more fully, ***what are some specific commands from the rest of the chapter that stand out to you?***

## The Close-Up - READ and reflect on Romans 12:1-2

As we've already mentioned, these two transitional verses provide an umbrella summary. That's true **for this overall section of Romans** as all that follows can fit within these two verses. It's also

true in the way that it provides a basic overview for **the entirety of our lives of faith**. Indeed, as John 3:16-17 captures the basic heartbeat of the Gospel, so Romans 12:1-2 captures the essence of Christian living. Let's highlight a few aspects of this text, then take the time to reflect on its message:

**The Motivation - "Therefore, in view of God's mercies"** ... the fuel for our journey in Christ is not about what we're doing to earn our status; as Romans has emphasized repeatedly, we have this status by God's grace through our faith in Jesus. Indeed, salvation can only be found through what He has done for us, not by what we can attain by our own effort. And yet, this Good News demands a response from us - instead of leading us to a point of inactivity or complacency, this truth should provide motivation of gratitude for a debt freely paid.

**The Response (part 1) - "offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God"** ... notice the sacrifice language in verse 1. Jesus is the only perfect sacrifice for sins so we no longer offer animals as the OT Law required. Instead, motivated by what He has done, we become the sacrifice ourselves as we take all that we are (remember 6:13) and surrender it to Him (think Galatians 2:20). As a song puts it, *"Let my whole life be a blazing offering, a life that shouts and sings the greatness of our King."* Indeed, worship in Christ is not about a certain activity or a small portion of our week; it's to be a lifestyle of praising Him with all that we are. It's how we bring glory to Him.

**The Response (part 2) - "don't be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed"** ... it's two options. First, we are to avoid the path of "going along with the flow" of the world around us. Such a choice may feel comfortable, but it's not what we're called to in Christ. Rather, second, we are to "be transformed *by the renewing of your minds.*" The specific verb tense Paul uses highlights **(1) a process** (as in an ongoing activity), **(2) something that happens to us** (that is, by the Holy Spirit's work) and yet **(3) a command** (what we are actively to participate in). The end result is a kind of *metamorphosis* - Paul uses a form of this actual Greek word - in which we become someone new (as in 2 Corinthians 5:17). As we allow our minds to be re-programmed according to the ways of the Holy Spirit (remember 8:5ff ... how we think matters), he shapes and molds us according to His desire. As a result, we are able to navigate life according to God's will.

**Some reflections leading-up to next week's D-Group (again, especially focusing on 12:1-2):**

- It's easy to confuse the relationship between grace/faith and our activity. ***What is the difference between living to earn something vs. living out of gratitude for what we've already received? What does it look like to live motivated by the Good News (consider how grasping the Good News should produce a right response from us)?***
- ***What does it practically mean to "offer the parts of our bodies as living sacrifices" (i.e. as an act of worship)? Take the time to consider various body parts; what does it mean to worship God with each of these?***
- ***What is the significance of the instruction to "be transformed" being both (a) passive, something that happens to us and (b) a command? What does that suggest about the kind of "partnership" we experience with the Holy Spirit's work as we respond to Him?***
- ***In what areas of your life does verse 2 challenge you both (1) to stop being shaped by the world and (2) to start embracing more fully what the Holy Spirit wants you to become?***