

Romans 12:1-21  
NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

<sup>1</sup> I [the apostle Paul] appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God’s mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship.

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect.

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

<sup>6</sup> We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup> ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup> love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, so far as it

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

**Luke** is one of the four gospels. According to tradition it’s written by Luke, a disciple-intern of the apostle Paul.

Do not be conformed to this age:: Philosophy in general invites us to think about life through reason, to “think through” our values, ethics, choices and commitments. Here Paul seems to be articulating that we should be making such choices and commitments from an age different than the one we’re in – the future.

*according to the measure of faith...::* this phrase must be compared to the similar idea in verse 6 “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us”. What’s Paul stressing here? Is it about the quantity or quality of faith that one has,...or is it that God gives differently to each of us?

one body we have many members :: We’re invited to see ourselves as part of the body of Christ, not an isolated or individual entities. This metaphor comes from Plato’s *The Republic* and Plutarch’s *Aratus* – where the body politic (larger society) is understood as a body, or as the body of the Roman Emperor.

This metaphor of the church as a body – as the body of Christ is also extensively developed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.

“<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> To one is given...<sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If

depends on you, live peaceably with all.<sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord."<sup>20</sup> Instead, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads."<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged, enraged, or surprised you in the text?
- This is the concluding part of Paul's letter in which he is explaining the way that Jesus changes the world by fulfilling the Torah Law and given us freedom from sin. What is Paul saying as he hits this "epistle" home-run?
- Is Paul focused more on the individual or the community? What makes you think so?
- What does it mean to be not be focused on this age, but on the age to come (the future)?
- What practical advice does Paul give here?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, – to act, speak, be, or change, through this scripture?

#### LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

... the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?<sup>18</sup> But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.<sup>19</sup> If all were a single member, where would the body be?<sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many members yet one body.<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,<sup>23</sup> and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect,<sup>24</sup> whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member,<sup>25</sup> that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.<sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

The list in verses 9-21:: This is far from random ethical notes. It's an unifying rhetoric, mean to help the community establish *koinonia* and to help them survive in a difficult environment.