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Responding to the Mercies of ADONAI

12: 1-8

Responding to the mercies of ADONAI DIG: What does it mean to present your body as a living sacrifice to God? What are the mercies of God? What is the definition of mercy? What tends to hinder believers from thinking and acting like parts of one Body. What advice does Paul offer about getting along with one another in the Body of Messiah? What tends to hinder believers from thinking and acting like various parts of one Body?

REFLECT: How do you renew your mind? Why is it difficult to resist comparing our gifts with other believers in Messiah? Why is it often hard to resist wishing we had their “role” in the Body? What are some areas of your life where you need to be more patient and seek God’s will? What does it mean to be “transformed” and serve God with all your heart? How can you offer yourself and your spiritual gifts as a living sacrifice to ADONAI?

God gave Himself for us in order that we might give ourselves to Him.

Therefore, because of everything ADONAI has done, and is doing, in **Chapters 1-11**, I **encourage you** to do everything **Chapters 12-15**, all of which is epitomized in the instruction, **in view of God’s mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God (12:1a)**. Offering your life to Messiah is not a foolish emotional impulse, but a rational, intelligent act, the most responsible and sensible thing you can do with your life. **So, we make it our goal to please Him (Second Corinthians 5:9a NIV)**. Your wisest moments will be those when you say “yes” to God.³¹¹ **God’s mercies** were spoken of throughout **Chapters 1-11**, especially in **Chapters 9-11**, and explicitly in **11:30-32**. **The mercies of ADONAI** form a pivot of the book of **Romans**, on which **Paul** turns from doctrine, to practical advice. This is where life and the Bible meet.

The basic meaning of redemption, is to be purchased from slavery. When **Yeshua** redeems us, we have been purchased out of the marketplace of sin and set free. But we don’t automatically turn from **slavery** from sin to **slavery** to **Messiah**. Yes, we are justified at the moment of salvation, but to be **conformed to the likeness of His Son (8:29b)** is a choice.

Our sanctification is something that we cooperate in with **God**. **Sha'ul** considered **himself** a bond-slave to **Messiah**, a slave by choice (1:1). So now having been set free from the slavery of our sin nature, we should now be willing to become a bond-slave to **Yeshua Messiah**.³¹²

We are to make this choice based upon **the mercies of God**. This includes our past justification, our present sanctification, and our future glorification. Our identification with **Yeshua Messiah**, the fact that we are co-crucified, co-buried, and co-resurrected with **Messiah**, so we are united with **Him** in such a way that what is true of **Him** is true of us, minus **His** deity. In **Chapter seven**, we are no longer slaves to sin; in **Chapter eight**, the **Ruach Ha'Kodesh** helps us in our weakness and **nothing can separate us from the love of God (8:39)**; in **Chapter Nine**, we can have full confidence in **God's faithfulness** as we see with **His** dealings with **Isra'el**. Because **God** has proved **faithful** to **Isra'el**, **He** will certainly prove **faithful** to us. So, with the one phrase, **the mercies of God**, **Paul** summarizes **his** whole theology, because everything **ADONAI** has done on our behalf in **Chapters 1-11** out of **His** mercy for us.

*Dear Great Heavenly **Father**, **Your mercies** and **love** are so great! The fact of your living within those who **love** and follow **You** is absolutely fantastic! **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23)**. We humbly bow before **You** in worship and **love**.*

*How wonderful that **You** are totally trustworthy for **Your** promises are always one-hundred percent true, giving those who **love** and follow **You** a sure **hope** of heaven! When trials come, we will keep our eye on **Your** eternal love and the heavenly home that **Yeshua** is preparing for **His** children. **Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may also be (John 14:1-3)**. We will remember that this world with its problems will soon pass away and those who **love You** will spend eternity in joy and peace and in worship of **You** our Great **Lord** and **Savior**! Praise **You** Always! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Therefore, on the basis of **the mercies of God**, we are **to offer** (Greek: *paristemi*, is the same word used for the Levitical sacrifices on the Bronze Altar) **ourselves as a living sacrifice**, and such a sacrifice, **set apart for God**, becomes holy (**Exodus 29:37**). The

Greek tense for **offer**, is an aorist tense, and, hence, a once-and-for-all act. In one sense, it is a voluntary act, but on the other hand, we should reach a point in our walk with **the Lord** that when we recognize all that **God** has done for us, and that **He** took our place on the cross so that we could be redeemed, on that basis, we should make a once-and-for-all decision of offering up ourselves as a sacrifice like **Isaac** (see the commentary on **Genesis**, **to see link click [Fm](#) - Take Your Only Son Isaac, and Sacrifice Him as a Burnt Offering**).³¹³

Our bodies are what **Paul** considers to be **the sacrifice**. A striking metaphor when animal sacrifices were still being made twice daily in the Jerusalem **Temple worship**. Back in **Chapter 6**, **he** talked about our bodies as an instrument of righteousness. Before we were saved, our bodies were used as instruments of unrighteousness; but after salvation, we are to use our bodies as instruments of righteousness. When we do that, we make a once-and-for-all offering of our bodies to **the Lord** for all He has done for us. **This will please Him; it is the logical “Temple worship” for you (12:1b).**

Offering ourselves as **living sacrifices** to **God** starts with our minds. **In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the ‘olam hazeh.** We have a different lifestyle to lead than those who are lost and in the world. **Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed** (Greek: *metamorphis*, meaning *to be changed*) **by the renewing of your minds (Romans 12:2a; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10).** How do you **renew your mind**? By filling it with **God’s Word**. To win the battle for your mind, you must **let the shalom which comes from the Messiah be your heart’s decision-maker, and let the Word of Messiah, in all its richness, live in you (Colossians 5:15a and 16a).** As you continue to stockpile your mind with **God’s truth**, you will equip yourself to recognize the lies of Satan and take them captive (see **[Bq](#) - The Background of the Messianic Mikveh: Five ways to win the battle of the mind**).³¹⁴

The reason why we are told to **renew our minds** is **so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what He wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed (12:2b).** Your first step in spiritual growth is to start changing the way you think. Change always starts first in your mind. The way you think determines the way you feel, and the way you feel influences the way you act. You must make a counter-culture decision to focus on becoming more like **Yeshua**. Otherwise, other forces like peers, friends, coworkers, and popular-culture will try to mold you into their image.³¹⁵

For I am telling every single one of you, through the grace that has been given to me, not to have exaggerated ideas about your own importance. Lack of this virtue

causes many believers to stumble. No matter how well grounded we may be in **God's** Word, how theologically sound we may be, or how vigorously we may seek to serve **Him**, our **gifts** will not operate so that our lives can be spiritually productive until self is set aside. From self-denial in the spiritual worship of **God** flows self-surrender to the will of **God**, and from self-surrender flows selfless service in the work of **God**. No believer is exempt from this call to humility, because **Paul** is speaking **to every single one of you** - a universal command to all believers.³¹⁶

Instead, develop a sober estimate of yourself based on the standard which God has given to each of you, namely, trust in Yeshua (12:3). Take a long, honest look at what you are good at and what you're not good at. Make a list. Ask other people for their candid opinion. Tell them you're searching for the truth, not fishing for a compliment. Spiritual gifts and natural abilities are always confirmed by others. If you think you are gifted to be a teacher or a singer and no one else agrees, guess what? If you want to know if you have a gift of leadership, just look over your shoulder! If no one is following you, you're not a leader.³¹⁷

Unity, diversity, harmony: Even though we are all members of the **Body of Messiah**, no one gift is given to all believers, and no one believer is given all **the gifts**. This creates a sense of interdependence. If you had all **the gifts** and I had all **the gifts**, we wouldn't need each other. **For just as there are many parts that compose one Body, but the parts don't all have the same function; so, there are many of us, and in union with the Messiah we comprise one Body, with each of us belonging to the others (12:4-5).** As believers share one **Lord**, one **Body**, one purpose, one **Father**, one **Spirit**, one hope, one **faith**, one **baptism**, and one **love**, we also share the same salvation, the same life, and the same future - factors far more important than any differences we could list.

We must remember that it was **YHVH** who chose to give us different personalities, backgrounds, races, and preferences, so we should value and enjoy those differences, not merely tolerate them. **God** wants unity, not uniformity. But for unity's sake we must never let our differences divide us. We must major in the majors, and not major in the minors. That means we should stay focused on what matters most - learning to love each other as Messiah has loved us. Conflict is usually a sign that the focus has shifted to less important issues. When we focus on personalities, preferences, interpretations, styles, or methods, division always surfaces. But if we concentrate on loving each other, harmony results.³¹⁸



Spiritual gifts: God gave every believer spiritual **gifts** to be used to minister. This is usually in the form of one dominant spiritual **gift**, and a lesser, secondary, spiritual **gift**. These are special God-empowered abilities for serving **Him** that are only given to believers. The Bible says: **Whoever does not have the Spirit cannot receive the gifts that come from God's Spirit (First Corinthians 2:14 GNT)**. You can't earn your spiritual **gifts** or deserve **them** – that's why **they** are called **gifts**! They are an expression of **God's** grace to you. Neither do you get to choose which **gifts** you'd like to have . . . **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** determines that. **The Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to each person as He chooses (First Corinthians 12:11)**.

But we have gifts, our God-given ability for service, **that differ and which are meant to be used according to the grace that has been given to us** (also see **First Corinthians Chapters 12-14; Ephesians 4:11; First Peter 4:10** for some other lists of spiritual **gifts**). Because God loves variety and He wants us to be special, no single **gift** is given to everyone. Also, no individual receives all **the gifts**. If you had them all, you'd have no need for anyone else, and that would defeat one of God's purposes – to teach us to love and depend on each other. **Your spiritual gifts are not given for your own benefit, but for the benefit of others, just as other people were given spiritual gifts for your benefit.** God planned it this way so we would need each other. When we use our **gifts** together, we all benefit.

Whenever we forget these basic truths about **spiritual gifts**, it always causes trouble in **the Body**. Two common problems are "**gift-envy**," and "**gift-projection**." The first occurs when we compare our **gifts** with others', feel dissatisfied with what **God** has given us, and become resentful or jealous of how **ADONAI** uses others. The second problem happens when we expect everyone else to have our **gifts**, do what we are called to do, and feel as passionate about it as we do. There are different kinds of **gifts**, but it the same **Lord** we are serving.³¹⁹

If your gift is prophecy, use it to the extent of your [the] faith (12:6a). The word **prophecy** in this context does not necessarily refer to future predictions or new revelation.

The word simply means *to speak forth*, and applies to any authoritative proclamation of **God's Word** where the person who is **gifted** to declare **God's truth is speaking, edifying, encouraging and comforting God's people (First Corinthians 14:3)**. So, a fitting paraphrase of **Romans 12:6** would be: *If your **gift** is proclaiming **God's Word**, do it according to **the faith**, being consistent with previous biblical revelation.*

Charismatics use this verse to argue that this verse teaches the accuracy of **prophecy** is dependent on the measure of a person's **faith**. However, that is not even close to **Paul's** true meaning here. The word translated **your**, in the Complete Jewish Study Bible is actually the definite article in Greek. It is most accurately translated simply as **[the]**. Therefore, **Paul** is instructing **his** readers that those **with the gift of prophecy** must **prophecy** in accordance with **[the] faith** - the body of previously revealed biblical truth. As **Jude** wrote: **Contend for the faith which was once and for all passed on to God's people (Jude 3b)**.³²⁰

In the early church, before the B'rit Chadashah was complete, certain prophets were used by **God** on occasion to encourage believers with messages inspired as the prophet spoke. That was necessary to instruct the churches in matters that were not yet covered by Scripture. This aspect of **prophecy** was unique to the apostolic era and ended with the book of **Revelation**.³²¹ Once the last book in the Bible was written, the canon of Scripture was closed and there was no need for any further revelation. **God the Holy Spirit** had equipped believers with everything they would need to live a victorious life, and **prophecy** passed away. There is no continuous revelation.

If it is serving, use it to serve (12:6b). The second spiritual **gift** is that of **service**, which translates *diakonia*, from which we also get *deacon* and *deaconess*, meaning *those who serve*. **Service** is a simple, straightforward **gift** that is broad in its application. It seems to carry a meaning similar to that of the **gift** of helps mentioned **First Corinthians 12:28**. This **gift** certainly applies beyond the offices of deacon and deaconess and is the idea in **Paul's** charge to the **Ephesian** elders to **help the weak (Acts 20:35)**. **The gift** of service is manifested in every sort of practical help that believers can give one another in **Yeshua's** name.

If you are a teacher, use your gift in teaching (12:7a). The third spiritual **gift** is that of teaching. Again, the meaning is simple and straightforward. *Didaskon* (**teaches**) refers to the act of teaching, and *didaskalia* (**teaching**) can refer to what is taught as well as to the act of teaching it. Both of those meanings are appropriate to this **gift**. The believer, **if you are a teacher**, is divinely **gifted** with special ability to interpret and present **God's** truth

understandably. The primary difference between **teaching** and **prophesying** is not in content but in the distinction between the ability to proclaim and the ability to give systematic and regular instruction in **God's** Word. **The gift of teaching** could apply wherever **God's** truth is taught. The early Messianic community was characterized by regular **teaching (Acts 2:42)**. The Great Commission includes the command: **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations - teaching them to observe all that I commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20 NASB)**. Paul's spiritual **gift** included features of both preaching and **teaching**.

If you are a counselor, use your gift to comfort and exhort (12:7b). The fourth spiritual **gift** is **counseling**. This **gift** involves the idea of advising, pleading, encouraging, warning, strengthening and comforting. At one time **the gift** may be used to persuade a believer to turn from a sin or bad habit and at a later time to encourage the same person to maintain his correction behavior. The **gift** may be used to admonish the church as a whole to obedience to the Word. Like the **gift** of showing **mercy** (below), **counseling** may be exercised in comforting a brother or sister in **the Lord** who is facing a different trial or persistent temptation. Sometimes he may use his **gift** simply to walk beside a friend who is grieving, discouraged, frustrated, or depressed, to give help in whatever way is needed. This **gift** may be exercised in helping someone carry a burden that is too heavy to bear alone.

If you are someone who gives, do it simply and generously (12:7c). The fifth category of giftedness is that of **giving**. The usual Greek verb for giving is *didomi*, but the word here is the intensified *metadidomi*, which carries the additional meanings of sharing and imparting that which is one's own. The one who exercises this **gift** gives sacrificially of himself. **Generously** translates *haplotes*, which has the root meaning of single mindedness, open heartedness, and then **generosity**. It carries the idea of sincere, heartfelt giving that is untainted by affection or ulterior motive. The believer who **gives** with **generosity** gives for others, not for himself. He does not give for thanks or recognition, but for the sake of the ones who receive his help and for the glory of **ADONAI**.

If you are in a position of leadership, lead with diligence and zeal (12:7d). The sixth category is that of **leadership**. **Leads** is from *proistemi*, which has the basic meaning of *standing before* others and, hence, the idea of **leadership**. In the B'rit Chadashah it is never used of governmental rulers but of headship in the family (**First Timothy 3:4-5 and 12**), and in the church (**First Timothy 5:17**). In **First Corinthians 12:28**, Paul refers to the same **gift** by a different name, **administration** (Greek: *kubernesis*), which means *to guide*. In **Acts 27:11** and **Revelation 18:17**, it is used of a pilot or helmsman, the person who steers, or **leads**, a ship.

Effective leadership must be done **with diligence**, with earnestness **and zeal**. *Spoude* (**diligence**) can also carry the idea of haste (**Mark 6:25; Luke 1:39**). Proper leadership therefore precludes procrastination and idleness. Whether it is possessed by church officers, or by members who direct such things as Sunday school or Club Maccabee in Messianic congregations, the youth group, the nursery, or a building program, **the gift** of leadership is to be exercised with carefulness, constancy and consistency.

If you are one who does acts of mercy, do them cheerfully (12:8). In the seventh and last spiritual category mentioned here is that of showing mercy. *Eleeo* (Greek: *shows mercy*) carries the joint idea of actively demonstrating sympathy for someone else having the necessary resources to successfully comfort and strengthen that person. The **gifted** believer **who does acts of mercy** is divinely given with special sensitivity to suffering and sorrow, with the ability to notice misery and distress that may go unnoticed by others, and with the desire and means to help alleviate such afflictions. This **gift** involves much more than sympathetic feeling. It is feeling put into action. The believer with this **gift** always finds a way to express his feelings of concern with practical help. He **does acts of mercy** by what he says to and what he does for the one in need.

The believer who does acts of mercy may exercise his **gift** in hospital visitation, jail ministry, or in service to the homeless, the poor, the handicapped, the suffering, the sorrowing. This **gift** is closely related to that of encouragement, and it is not uncommon for believers to have a measure of both. This **gift** is not to be ministered grudgingly or merely out of a sense of duty, but **do them cheerfully**. As everyone knows who has had a time of suffering or special need, the attitude of a fellow believer can make the difference between his being a help or a hindrance. **He who despises his neighbor sins**, the writer of **Proverbs** tells us: **but happy is he who is gracious to the poor (Proverbs 14:21); and He who opposes the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him (Proverbs 14:31).** The keyword in those verses is **gracious**. The genuine helper always serves with **gracious cheerfulness**, and is never condescending or patronizing.³²²

Life lessons: The challenge for a follower of **Yeshua** is never as much what to do as where to start. We lack obedience more than guidance. There are always enough general commands from **God** to keep us busy for a lifetime. Obeying what we know usually leads to clarity about what we don't know. Most of what **God** instructs us to put into action doesn't require that we go somewhere else to practice. We can start practicing love, peacemaking, and patience right where we are. These often help us identify our **gifts** and roles in **the Body of Messiah**.³²³