

**Practical Instructions for the Church in Rome:**  
***“Life in the Body”***  
**Romans 12:1-13**

One of the most common traits in Paul’s letters is to address theological issues with the church on the front end of his letter and then in the second half of the letter to offer exhortations to live the Christian life as a response to the theology he has written about. That is not say that the front end of Paul’s letters do not contain exhortations to live the Christian life because they do, nor is it to say that the back end of his letters do not contain theology, because they do. Theology (what ones believes) and exhortations to live the Christian life are inextricably bound together; they can’t be separated. James said in his letter that even the demons believe (so theology is not enough) and that faith without works is dead; therefore theology and living the Christian life are married to one another. None the less, the point stands. Theology comes mainly on the front end of the letter and the exhortation to live the Christian life comes on the back end.

On the front end of Romans Paul has given us the gospel in its fullest form. He made the case in chapters 1-11 that all have sinned and are without excuse before a holy God, and that God’s solution to the sin problem is the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, in the place of sinners. His death satisfies God’s judgment on our sin within himself, and the way we receive God’s solution is through faith, and that faith gives birth to God doing a work of renewal in our lives, which we call sanctification, which is the natural fruit of a life that has been redeemed by Jesus Christ.

So now (Paul is saying in Romans 12:1) in view of God’s mercy being offered in Romans 1-11 the church in Rome is to live the Christian life. I have entitled this message life in the body. Paul’s use of the word body in this text is to be understood in two ways. First, in v. 1-2, Paul talks about our physical bodies. Meaning we are to live the Christian life with our own physical bodies in ways that bring honor to the Lord. The second way Paul uses the word body is in reference to the church, meaning that the church is the body of Christ. We are her hands and feet and we are to live the Christian life within her communion in ways that honor the Lord. So one way Paul uses the word is in reference to our own bodies and the second way he uses it is in reference to the church, the body of Christ.

Let’s look at the first way Paul uses the word, our physical body.

In the text Paul tells the church that they are to offer their physical bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing unto God, and then he says that when they do that it is their spiritual act of worship.

When we think of worship we tend to think of prayer and singing, and worship is that, but that is not all it is. When we honor the Lord with our bodies it becomes a spiritual act of worship and when we don’t we don’t honor the Lord with our bodies we fail to worship the Lord. Our chief goal in life is to worship the Lord. As the catechism says, “The chief end of man is to glory God and enjoy him forever.” Worship is not something that just happens here at 11 am but it is something that is to happen all throughout each day of the week and the chief way that is going to happen is by honoring God with our bodies.

Paul had a lot to say about the body in his letters. Let’s look at a few of those places. First, let’s turn back and look at something he said earlier in his letter to the Romans. (Rom. 6:11-14)

**In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself**

**to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.**

Next let us look at I Corinthians 9:24-27.

**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.**

Now we are going to look at another passage from I Corinthians 6:13b.-20 that explains to us why worshipping God with our bodies is so important to the Christian faith.

**The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.**

**Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.**

What Paul does in the I Corinthians 6 text is he grounds his case for fleeing sexual immorality in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. It is as if he said, "Do you not know that God raised Jesus' body from the dead and that in the new heavens and new earth he will raise your body from the dead as well? God loves your body and God is going to redeem your body so why are you doing destructive things with your body?"

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and you should treat your body in this life on earth in the same way that God is going to treat it in the new heavens and new earth. Don't destroy your body with sexual immorality in this life on earth. To do so would be to treat your body as if it were going to go to hell. Instead honor God with your body by fleeing sexual immorality so that you may treat it the same way God is going to treat it in the end. God is going to redeem your body in the end so use your bodies in ways that are redemptive in this life on earth."

Jesus Christ didn't just die for your soul, if he did then only his soul would have been resurrected. He died for your body as well and that is why God raised his body from the dead. This is the reason Paul tells in our text from Romans to offer our bodies as living sacrifices unto God, holy and pleasing unto him.

Let's spend a few moments thinking about the implications of this text for our lives today.

First of all, let us be honest and acknowledge that every one of us here has something to repent of as it concerns our bodies.

Some of us here today may hate our bodies. Why do you hate what God has called good in creation? How can you offer your body as a living sacrifice unto God when you hate your body? How you feel about your body should be rooted in what God says about your body, not what your classmates say or what Hollywood says. And while we are at it, why would we try to make our body into something that it was not created by God to be? (Think the next frontier of the sexual revolution- transgenderism). I also think a lot of people get cosmetic surgery in many circumstances simply because they are not satisfied with the way God made them or because they hate what the aging process does to their body. We can be very hard on our bodies.

All I am saying here is don't loath what God has called good. Whatever imperfections you have, or perceive to have in your body, God is going to make it right in the new heavens and new earth, so look in the mirror each morning and say, "Behold I am a child of God! The Lord knows the numbers of the hairs on my head. God said I am very good, wrinkles and all, and Jesus loves me so much that he died for my body in order to redeem it!

Some of us here today may be abusing our bodies. We may be doing this in sexual immorality or a destructive habit or addiction, such as smoking, or drinking too much, recreational drug use, pain pill addictions, overeating, not eating enough, eating poorly, or purging. Some of us may not be getting enough sleep. Some of us may be getting too much sleep. Some of us may not be getting enough exercise. Some of us may be getting too much. As I said, all of us struggle with our bodies in some way and all of us have need for repentance.

God does not want us to use and abuse our bodies in ways that are destructive and do not give life. He calls us to repent and honor Him with our bodies as our spiritual act of worship.

You may be in a situation where you need some help with something in your life. It's ok. All humans need help because all humans are sinners. I encourage you to seek the help of the Lord through Scripture, prayer, worship, and fellowship with the people of God in the church. Seek help through a friend who can listen and empathize with you and encourage you and help to lovingly hold you accountable. If you need deeper help through a doctor, counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist then don't be afraid to pursue that help, just be wise in who you seek the help from. I would encourage you to find someone in those professions who is also a follower of Jesus Christ.

Finally, remember the gospel Paul preached in Romans 1-11. If you are in Christ you are loved by God and your salvation is not dependent upon your success in presenting your body as a living sacrifice. This is not about works righteousness. You are saved by the grace of Jesus and the call to honor God with your body flows from that salvation, not the other way around.

Truly I believe the key for us is not so much to try harder in trying to offer our bodies as living sacrifices unto God but rather it is to fall deeper in love with Jesus and the good news of his gospel. The things I struggle with in my own life is a struggle typically because, if the truth be known, I love those things more than I love my Lord. But I know that if I will pursue that love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ the struggles of the body, whatever they may be, will stand a much greater chance of being mortified in my body. Our growing in our love for Christ and the good news of the gospel is the key to making headway in offering our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God as our spiritual act of worship.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.