

Right in God's Sight

Studies from the Book of Romans

Lesson 16

Romans 12:1–21

Romans 12:1–2

Living Sacrifices

In light of all that a loving, merciful, and gracious heavenly Father has done for us, how should we then live? Paul took eleven chapters of Romans to lay out in great detail the condition of man apart from God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that reconciled us to Him. Now Paul will use the remaining five chapters of this life-changing book to explain the practical applications of the truth he has presented.

The believer's reasonable response to God's saving grace is personal sacrifice. In Roman's twelve, Paul talks about personal sacrifice as it pertains to various aspects of daily life: *sacrifice in worship; sacrifice in serving the body of Christ; sacrifice in our relationships*. We will examine each of these close up and in-depth in this lesson.

Read Romans 12:1–21.

Paul, having finished explaining sin, salvation, and sanctification, urges all believers to readily act on the truth they have received. The phrase *I beseech you—or I urge you—* is translated from the word *parakaleo*, meaning to *urge, call, exhort, and encourage*. It comes from the root word *parakletos* (*paraclete*), the term Jesus used to speak of the coming of the Holy Spirit following Jesus' ascension. The different translations of the Bible translate *paraclete* as follows: "Comforter" (KJV), "Helper" (NASB and NKJV), and "Counselor" (NIV). In other words, the Holy Spirit functions as one called alongside to urge, comfort, counsel, and exhort. He is the one who enables the Christian to apply the truth of God to daily life.

1. What does Paul feel would be a reasonable response in light of God's mercy?

2. Paul's main point at the beginning of chapter 12 is that based on God's mercy, believers should expect to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, but he doesn't stop there; what else does Paul say in verse 1?
 - a. Look again at what Paul earlier taught on this subject and summarize it in a sentence or two. See Romans 6:13, 16 and 19.

 - b. Elsewhere in Scripture, Paul says a similar thing. Why would this be a reasonable request according to 1 Corinthians 6:19–20?

In the Old Testament, God was worshipped by offering the sacrifice of dead animals. In the New Testament believers are instructed to “be” *living sacrifices*, to offer their bodies as an act of worship to God, performing what constitutes sacred service in every day life.

3. In verse 2, Paul sets forth the pattern of what it means to be a living sacrifice. Finish the following:
 - a. *And do not be*

 - b. *but be*

 - c. *that you may*

The Holy Spirit works in conjunction with God’s Word to transform and renew our minds, changing our way of thinking and acting. Over time we continue to be *transformed*, *informed*, and *conformed* to the perfect will of God.

For group discussion:

- ❖ What are some ways you can *prevent* becoming conformed to this world?

- ❖ How are you currently working to renew *your mind*?

- ❖ A renewed mind can discover and *act upon* the will of God. Give an example from your own life.

A Christian, the Bible says, has the mind of Christ—the ability to think and act as He did. Therefore, as we take on more of Christ’s likeness, we desire God’s will above our own. Oswald Chambers said, “We have the idea that we can dedicate our gifts to God. However, you cannot dedicate what is not yours. There is actually only one thing you can dedicate to God, and that is your right to yourself. If you will give God your right to yourself, He will make a holy experiment out of you—and His experiments always succeed. The one true mark of a saint of God is the inner creativity that flows from being totally surrendered to Jesus Christ” (Excerpt from *My Utmost*, June 13). Have you given Him your right to yourself?

“The problem with living sacrifices is that they keep crawling off the altar.”

Anonymous

Memory Verse:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” Romans 12:1

Word Wealth:

Using the resources you have on hand (i.e., additional Bible translations, dictionary, Bible dictionary, concordance, etc.), write a definition for the words below.

prophecy (12:6) _____

exhortation (12:8) _____

hypocrisy (12:9) _____

diligence (12:11) _____

Romans 12:3–8

Sacrifice in Service

The believer’s transformed mind and lifestyle is exhibited to others as they exercise their spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. Paul was an example of a living sacrifice, offering himself to God in service. He exhorts his fellow believers to do the same by putting to good use the gifts God has given to each member.

Read Romans 12:3–8.

1. Paul is speaking here with the authority of an apostle, exhorting believers about how they should esteem themselves. How should they think? v. 3
 - a. What does Paul say that God gives to every believer?

The *measure of faith* God gives to each of His children means that we are all on equal status in His eyes—no one member is better or more necessary than another.

2. How does Paul depict the family of God in verses 4–5?

3. In verses 6–8, Paul presents a random sampling of the gifts. Take a look at the ones mentioned, making note of the main point Paul is making.

The list in Romans is worded to make the gifts self-explanatory. Paul is emphasizing the basics of serving: consider what God has equipped you with and get going—step out and serve wherever God has placed you! If He has called you to lead, then exert yourself to lead; if it is to show mercy to those in need, then do it cheerfully! If it “feels” uncomfortable at first, be patient and depend on the Lord to enable you. The gift is yours to use in building up the body of Christ!

Look closer:

There are four places in the New Testament where the spiritual gifts are listed; three are written by Paul. Look up the references below to form your answers.

- a. Who decides which gift is bestowed? 1 Corinthians 12:1–11.

- b. As stated in Romans 12:4, does each member of the body of Christ have the same purpose? See 1 Corinthians 12:12–27.

Selah . . .

Paul’s use of the phrase “living sacrifice” in verse 1 does not speak of a sacrifice for sin, but rather a sacrifice for service. The Old Testament function of a priest was to offer sacrifices, and Peter refers to believers as a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 5:2, 9), meaning that every Christian should offer themselves up in service to God.

- ❖ Take a moment to look up Ephesians 5:2 and Philippians 2:7–8 that tell you of Christ’s sacrifice. In what way can you follow after His example as you step out to serve Him?

- ❖ Personal: Do you know what spiritual gift God has given to you? If not, prayerfully ask Him to reveal it to you.

Romans 12:9–21

Sacrifice in Relationships

The Christian who becomes a living sacrifice will not only express sacrificial love in terms of service, but also in terms of daily relationships, whether that includes believers or nonbelievers.

In the final verses of this chapter, Paul narrows his focus to the topic of *love*—the greatest virtue in the Christian life. The reading closely parallels the apostle’s words in his letter to the Corinthians.

Read Romans 12:9–21 for review along with 1 Corinthians 13:1–13.

Look closer:

As you compare and contrast these two passages of Scripture, what initially strikes you from your reading? Please share your thoughts.

- ❖ If you were to place the *love of Christ* at the center of your relationships, what difference would you notice in how you treated others?

Here Paul gets down to the “nitty-gritty” in a very practical way by adding feet to our faith! Take your time as you progress through the list below pertaining to relationship dynamics. Paul clearly lays out the pattern to follow if you want to behave like a Christian. Make notes in the margin of your lesson regarding any points you can apply that will help you in your relationships with others. Don’t attempt to pull a literal answer from the verses in the text; try thinking outside the box to formulate your answers.

1. What can you do for your love to be genuine? v. 9 (Put this in your own words.)

2. How can you begin today to put the needs of others first? vv. 10–13

3. What will help you to love your enemies? v. 14

4. In what way are you to share the joys and sorrows of others (be specific)? v. 15

5. How would sacrificial serving help you to achieve the mindset of verse 16?

6. When someone harms you, what must you remember? Why? vv. 17, 19–20.

7. According to verse 18, what is your life-long responsibility? What practical step can you take today to get on the right road?

8. In verse 21, Paul lays out the “Golden Rule” of Romans; what is it?

9. Personal: Corinthians 13:13 sums up the importance of love: “*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*” How would *love* help you to live by this “Golden Rule” in your current situation?

My Romans Road

Listen . . . Learn . . . Live . . . God's Truth!

Take a look back at this week's lesson. Briefly recap what you learned this week and how you intend to live it out.

1. What lesson in your study became real to you this week?

2. How do you intend to apply this lesson to your daily life?

Memory Verse:

Write down what you learned about God from this week's memory verse.

Write out the verse from memory.

Prayer Request:

Write out your most earnest prayer request and lift it to the Lord.
