

# **Romans – Gospel of God Exalted**

*Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

**Thursday March 6, 2025**

## **Memory Verse**

**Romans 12:1 (NASB2020)** Therefore I urge you brothers and sisters by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

## **Romans 12**

### **The Believer's Supreme Act of Spiritual Worship**

#### **Romans 12:1-2 NLT**

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup>Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

#### **Romans 12:1–2 NASB**

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

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## Introduction

Having concluded eleven chapters of profound and stirring teaching about what God has given believers, Paul now charges those believers with what they need to give God.

Some years ago, a tearful and distraught young woman approached a Pastor at a conference where he was speaking. She told him “I just can’t seem to live the Christian life the way I should,” she said. “I’m frustrated. I don’t have spiritual victory or a sense of accomplishment. I struggle with the simplest forms of obedience, and I’m constantly defeated. Can you help me?”

The Pastor said “What has been your approach to solving the problems yourself?” She replied, “I’ve tried everything. I’ve attended churches where they speak in tongues, have healings, and have all kinds of extraordinary spiritual experiences. I’ve spoken in tongues myself, had ecstatic experiences, been prophesied over, and experienced several supposed miracles. I’ve been ‘slain in the spirit.’ But despite all of that, I’m not pleased with my life and I know God isn’t pleased. *I’ve tried to get everything from Him that I can*, but I’m not satisfied. I’m still miserable and want more.” The Pastor responded; you have just put your finger on the problem. “The key to spiritual victory and true happiness is not in trying to get all we can from God but in giving all that we are and have to Him.”

Countless thousands of people today, including many genuine Christians, flock to various churches, seminars, and conferences in search of personal benefits—practical, emotional, and spiritual—that they hope to receive. They do just the opposite of what Paul so plainly emphasizes in **Romans 12:1–2**.

In this forceful and compassionate exhortation, the apostle does not focus on what more we need to receive from God but on what we are to give Him. The key to a productive and satisfying Christian life is not in getting more but in giving all.

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God gave Himself for us in order that we might give ourselves to Him. Paul defines Christians as those “who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (**Phil. 3:3**). The church is “a holy priesthood,” whose calling is “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.... [It is] a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (**1 Pet. 2:5, 9**).

Our supreme calling is to serve God with all our being, first and foremost in worship. Through Christ, the writer of Hebrews tells us, we are to “continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (**Heb. 13:15**). True worship includes many things besides the obvious ones of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. It includes *serving* God by serving others in His name, especially fellow believers. Sacrificial worship includes “doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (**Heb. 13:15–16**); But above all else, our supreme act of worship is to offer ourselves wholly and continually to the Lord as living sacrifices.

Tragically, that is far from the approach that is so common today by which believers seek the key to the abundant life. We are told that victory in the Christian life is to have more of God and to have more *from* God—although “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [already] has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing* in the heavenly places in Christ” (**Eph. 1:3**). And in Christ, we already have “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” so that in Him we “have been made complete” (**Col. 2:3, 10**). Peter said that in the true and saving knowledge of Christ, we have “everything pertaining to life and godliness” (**2 Pet. 1:3**). And we have the

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resident truth teacher, the Holy Spirit, whose anointing, John says, “teaches [us] about all things” (1 John 2:27).

In the deepest, eternal sense, therefore, we cannot have more of God or from God than we now possess. It is more than obvious, however, that most of us do not have the fulness of joy that this fulness of blessing should bring. The joy and satisfaction for which so many Christians are vainly striving can be had only by surrendering back to the Lord what He already has given to us, including our inmost being. The first and greatest commandment is what Jesus said it has always been: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37; cf. Deut. 6:5).

In the present text we discover four elements of presenting ourselves to God as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice—**essentially** the same four elements found in the first and greatest commandment. They are: offering God our souls, our bodies, our minds, and our wills. **While recognizing** that these four overlaps, we still can see how they provide a useful outline for grasping this text.

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. What stood out to you in the introduction?

## POINT 1 - THE SOUL HAS BEEN GIVEN TO GOD

**I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, (12:1a)**

**Urge** has the basic meaning of calling alongside in order to help or give aid. It involves exhorting, admonishing, or encouraging. In His Upper Room discourse,

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shortly before His betrayal and arrest, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as our divine Helper (also translated Comforter, Counselor, Advocate). He would be “another Helper,” who in this present life takes the place of the incarnate Lord (John 14:16; cf. v. 26; 15:26; 16:7).

Paul is speaking as a human helper or counselor to his Christian brethren in Rome. His admonition is a command that carries the full weight of his apostleship. It is not optional. Yet he also wanted to come alongside those **brethren** as a fellow believer, to lovingly encourage them to fulfill what already was the true inner desire and bent of their new hearts—to dedicate themselves without reservation to the Lord who had redeemed them.

The gentle command [**urge**] that Paul proceeds to give can only be obeyed by **brethren**, by those who already belong to God’s family. No other offering is acceptable to God unless we have first offered Him our souls. For Christians, that first element of “a living and holy sacrifice” has already been presented to God.

The unregenerate person cannot give God his body, his mind, or his will, because He has not given God *himself*. Because he has no saving relationship to God, “a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (**1 Cor. 2:14**). Only the redeemed can present a *living* sacrifice to God, because only the redeemed have spiritual *life*. And only believers are priests who can come before God with an offering.

“For what will a man be profited,” Jesus said, “if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26).

The soul is the inner, invisible part of man that is the very essence of his being.

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Therefore, until a man's soul belongs to God, nothing else matters or has any spiritual significance.

The loving generosity of the Macedonian churches was made possible and was acceptable to God and praised by Paul because the believers in those churches “first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” (**2 Cor. 8:5**). Before anything else worthwhile and acceptable can be given to God, the self must be given to Him in saving faith toward Jesus Christ for regeneration.

Earlier in the epistle Paul has made clear that “those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (**Rom. 8:8**). No matter what his personal feelings might be, the unredeemed person cannot worship God, cannot make an acceptable offering to God, cannot please God in any way with any offering. That is what Paul meant when he said, “And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing” (**1 Cor. 13:3**). If a person does not possess the love of God, all of his offerings, no matter how costly, are worthless to Him.

Because an unbeliever's soul has not been offered to God, he cannot make any other sacrifice that is acceptable to Him. The unredeemed cannot present their bodies to God as living sacrifices because they have not presented themselves to God to receive spiritual life.

**Therefore**, refers back to the glorious doxology just given in the previous four verses (**11:33–36**). It is because “from Him and through Him and to Him are all things,” that to Him belongs “the glory forever.” We can only glorify the Lord—we can only *want* to glorify the Lord—if we have been saved **by the mercies of God**.

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**The mercies of God** of which Paul speaks here include the many gracious blessings, or grace gifts that he has discussed in the first eleven chapters of Romans. Perhaps the two most precious **mercies of God** are His *love* and His *grace*. In Christ, we are the “beloved of God” (**Rom. 1:7**), and, like the apostle, we all “have received grace” through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:6–7; Rom. 3:24; Rom. 5:2, Rom. 5:20–21; Rom. 6:15). **The mercies of God** are reflected in His *power* of salvation (Rom. 1:16) and in His great *kindness* toward those He saves (2:4; 11:22). His **mercies** in Christ bring us the *forgiveness* and *propitiation* of our sins (3:25; 4:7–8) and also *freedom* from them (6:18; 7:6). We have received *reconciliation* with Him (5:10), *justification* (2:13; 3:4;) before Him, *conformation* to His Son (8:29), *glorification* (8:30) in His very likeness, *eternal life* (5:21; 6:22–23) in His very presence, and the *resurrection* of our bodies (8:11) to serve Him in His everlasting kingdom. We have received the **mercies** of *divine sonship* (8:14–17) and of the *Holy Spirit*—who personally indwells us (Rom. 8:9, 11), who intercedes for us (8:26), and through whom “the love of God has been poured out within our hearts” (**5:5**). In Christ we also have received the **mercies** of *faith* (mentioned thirty times in Romans 1–11), *peace* (1:7; 2:10; 5:1; 8:6), *hope* (5:2; 20 21). God’s **mercies** include His shared *righteousness* (3:21–22; 4:6, 11, 13; 5:17, 19, 21; etc.) and even His shared *glory* (Rom. 2:10; 5:2; 8:18; 9:23) and *honor* (2:10; cf. 9:21). And, of course, **the mercies of God** include His sovereign *mercy* (9:15–16, 18; 11:30–32).

Such soul-saving **mercies** should motivate believers to complete dedication. The New Testament gives many warnings about God’s chastisement of unfaithful and disobedient believers. “The one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption” (**Gal. 6:8**), and “Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (**Heb. 12:6**). One day “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive compensation for

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his deeds done through the body, in accordance with what he has done, whether good or bad” **(2 Cor. 5:10)**. But the most compelling motivation for faithful, obedient living should not be the threat of discipline or loss of reward but overflowing and unceasing gratitude for the marvelous **mercies of God**.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTION**

- 1. What stood out to you in this lesson?**
- 2. What’s in the lesson that you can apply in your life?**

## **Closing Prayer**