

Gospel-Driven Worship
Romans 12:1
January 5, 2022

Review and Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

- 1:18-3:20 The universality of sin and condemnation (the universal need for the gospel)
- 3:21-4:25 The gospel as the righteousness of God by faith
- Chs 5-8 The gospel and the sure hope it gives
- Chs 9-11 The gospel and Israel
- 12:1-15:13 The gospel and the transformation of life (12:1-15:13)
- 15:14-16:27 Conclusion, final greetings, and benediction (15:14-16:27)¹

Romans 12:1 is an appeal for us as believers to present our bodies to the Lord as a sacrifice

1. The motive to present your body as a sacrifice

This motive is “the mercies of God.”

Question: When Paul speaks of “the mercies of God,” what does he have in mind?

Using the word, ‘**therefore,**’ the apostle shifts from the indicatives of chapters 1-11 to the imperatives of chapters 12-16.

1. Shifts from what God has freely given us in Christ, to what we who are now in Christ are to give to God in response
2. The order is essential. Only when the power of sin is broken in one’s life by the gospel, can imperatives be effective and not increase sin.

The apostle Paul equally stresses the indicatives and the imperatives, and protects us from two errors

1. Legalism
2. Antinomianism

¹ Outline largely based on Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed, 391-393.

“I appeal to you”

1. NET “I exhort you”
2. The apostle has authority to command Christ’s followers, but instead exhorts them

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, **by the mercies of God**”

1. We as believers need to be moved to obey the instructions that follow, not by sheer authority, but by the mercies God has given us
2. Our hearts have been made tender to God by His mercies
3. Now the apostle appeals to us on the basis of God’s mercies

‘Mercy’ and its synonym ‘compassion’ have been important terms (**9:15; 11:30-36**)

Here, “the mercies of God” speak of everything Romans has taught that God has done, is doing, and will do in our great salvation.

John Calvin: “Paul’s entreaty teaches us that men will never worship God with a sincere heart, or be roused to fear and obey Him with sufficient zeal, until they properly understand how much they are indebted to His mercy.... Paul...in order to bind us to God not by servile fear but by a voluntary and cheerful love of righteousness, attracts us by the sweetness of that grace in which our salvation consists. At the same time he reproaches us with ingratitude if, having had experience of so kind and liberal a father, we do not in return strive to dedicate ourselves wholly to Him.”²

2. The presentation of your body as the sacrifice

Question: What does it mean to present your body as a living sacrifice?

“present”

1. This word was sometimes used of offering a sacrifice
2. **Luke 2:22–23** And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to **present** him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called **holy** to the Lord”)

The body is the instrument of the soul. Formerly, our body was sin’s instrument.

- **6:6** “the body of sin”
- **6:12-13**

Now we are to present our bodies to God for His service

² John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, 263.

The Mosaic law prescribed four kinds of sacrifices, which fall into two groups.

1. The sacrifices offered before reconciliation to obtain it
 - The sin offering and the guilt offering
2. The sacrifices offered after the obtaining of reconciliation and serving to celebrate it
 - The burnt offering and the peace offering
 - Symbols of consecration to God and fellowship with Him³

The atoning sacrifice offered by God in the person of His Son (Rom 3:24-25; 8:32) should now find its response in the believer in the sacrifice of complete consecration.

As the burnt offerings were wholly devoted to God, so the believer is to live a new life in which his body is wholly consecrated to God.

- All the parts of our body which once were instruments of sin—tongue (3:13-14), feet (3:15-17), eyes (3:18), etc.—are now to be devoted to God for His service

This involves repeated conscious consecration of ourselves to God in prayer

3. The nature of the sacrifice

“living”

1. By God’s mercy, believers “have been brought from death to life” (6:13)
2. In contrast to the OT sacrifices that all died, the believer presents his body to God in order to live for Him

“holy”

1. The OT sacrifices had to be without spot or blemish
2. We formerly used our body in an impure way
 - **1:24** Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,
3. But now we are to use our bodies in a way that is holy
4. We are to be growing in conformity to Christ’s holiness
 - **8:29** ...predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...

³ Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 425.

“acceptable to God”

1. OT sacrifices were burned and ascended to the Lord as a pleasing aroma to Him
 - **Lev. 1:9** And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a **pleasing aroma to the LORD**.
2. CSB, NET, NIV “pleasing to God”
3. We are to increasingly use our bodies in a way that is pleasing to God
4. **2 Cor. 5:9** So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him [Christ].
5. **Col. 1:9–10** we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, **fully pleasing to him**, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

“which is your spiritual worship”

1. The fundamental meaning of this word for “worship” is service. This word was used especially of the worship at the tabernacle/temple (Heb 9:1).
2. **NKJV** “reasonable”
3. The Greek word translated “spiritual” or “reasonable” is hard to translate. It is only used in one other place in the New Testament. It is not the normal Greek word translated “spiritual.”
4. The Greek word is *logikos*, from which our English word, “logic,” is derived. The Greek word literally means “reasonable” or “rational,” and seems to me to be the correct translation here.
5. The idea seems to be that the offering of your body as a sacrifice to God is the worship that is truly rational, as opposed to our foolish worship of created things prior to salvation (1:21-25). It is truly rational, especially in light of the mercy God has given us. Offering our bodies to God is the worship that is consistent with the gospel.

All of our worship is to involve the presenting of our bodies to God as a living, holy, acceptable sacrifice.

Are you continuously offering Gospel-driven worship to God?

Conclusion

1:5–6 through whom [Jesus Christ our Lord] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about **the obedience of faith** for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

1. Obedience that originates from faith in Christ
2. Obedience to the Lordship of Christ (cf. 1:4 “Jesus Christ our Lord”)
3. **6:17–18** But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

The mercies of God...

1. call the believer to a new life of worshiping God—a life of consecration, holiness, and obedience
2. give us responsibility in the Christian life

If your life is devoid of these things, it cannot truly be said that you know the gospel.

The rest of the chapter will get more specific. The main ideas of chapter 12 are:

1. Consecration (vv 1-2)
2. Humility (vv 3-8)
3. Love (vv 9-21)