

Having finished chapter 11 last week, I trust it's obvious—that chapter 12 begins a new section that runs to the end of the letter—after given what may be the greatest exposition of the major themes of the Christian religion, from chapter 1—11:32, the apostle, in 11:33-36 responded with a burst of praise, wherein the knowledge, wisdom, judgments, and ways of God celebrated...

Then beginning with 12:1—he begins, what is commonly described as the PRACTICAL section of the letter—a distinction which is only partially true—[1] chapters 1-11 were intensely practical—as we learned last week, doctrine is practical and should always result in experience, and [2] chapters 12-16 are intensely doctrinal, as the apostle weds throughout this section, instruction on personal as well as communal living (that is, living as a community)...

Nevertheless, having made this qualification, there is a sense in which chapters 1-11 were more directly doctrinal, and chapters 12-16 are more directly practical—thus the evident and important lesson—these two, doctrine and practice, are joined at the hip—and thus, what GOD has brought together—let no MAN tear asunder...

Now—before I come to 12:1—I need to very briefly provide an outline of the chapter—I suggest it can be divided into three major sections—[1] verses 1-2, wherein the apostle transitions from the densely doctrinal section to the more overtly practical, [2] verses 3-8, is a beautiful passage, wherein Paul addresses the subject of spiritual gifts, and [3] verses 9-21, is the largest section within chapter 12, which contains a string of exhortations that concern our relationships to one another, and especially, those who have offended or mistreated us...

Now—before we come to consider v1—let me briefly say something about the relationship that exists between verses 1-2—simply put, in v1 we have consecration to God, and in v2 separation from the world—these are two-sides of the same coin—and can never be separated from one another—thus let's keep in mind—that while we'll be examining v1 this morning and v2 this evening—these two verses are necessarily connected and form a single unit...

- I. Who offers a sacrifice?
- II. What sacrifice do they offer?
- III. Why do they offer this sacrifice?

I. Who offers a sacrifice?

1. Simply put—we, the Christian church, as the NC priesthood of God—are to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God...
2. This imagery, of course, is dependent upon the OC sacrificial system—and the LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD...
3. Under the OC only those from the tribe of Levi were priests—everyone else brought their sacrifice to them...
4. It was strictly forbidden that anyone, not a priest, should offer a sacrifice—it would be an abomination to God...
5. The OT Scriptures foretold that under the NC—every person, Jew or Gentile, would be Levites and priests...
6. Thus we read in 1Pet.2:9—"you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" Rev.1:6—"He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father [Isa.66:21]..."
7. Thus—the words—present, sacrifice, holy, acceptable, and service—ALL have to do with priestly activity...
8. The Greek word rendered "present" or "offer" is a common word used to describe the offering of a sacrifice...

9. It underscores the willingness and readiness of the priest—to give or offer the sacrifice freely and fully to God...
10. The word literally means—"to put before"—and refers to the priest offering or devoting the sacrifice to God...
11. The Gk word rendered "beseech" (KJV), "urge" (NIV), and "appeal" (ESV) means—to ask, urge, or exhort...
12. The word doesn't imply that his exhortation was optional—but that it was mingled with deep love and affection...
13. Perhaps I can put it this way—we not only commanded them—but plead with them most warmly and earnestly...
14. Thus—from the phrase—"I urge you to present"—we learn NC priests offer sacrifices [1] willingly, and [2] constantly...
15. [1] We WILLINGLY offer sacrifices—"I urge you therefore, brethren...that you present your bodies to God..."
16. Again—this is taken from the word "present"—to willingly give the sacrifice as a free-will offering to God...
17. Barnes—"The word used here commonly denotes the action of bringing and presenting an animal or other sacrifice before an altar. It implies that the action was a free and voluntary offering. Religion is free; and the act of devoting ourselves to God is one of the most free that we ever perform..."
18. This can be illustrated by the OC sacrificial system—offerings were basically divided into two categories...
19. There were sacrifices that were OBLIGATED, and there were sacrifices that freely given in addition to those...
20. These latter sacrifices were called—"freewill offerings"—and were given in without any need or obligation...
21. Lev.22:18-19—"Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: 'Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the LORD as a burnt offering – 19 *you shall offer* of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats..."
22. [2] We CONSTANTLY offer sacrifices—under the OC priests stood in the temple and offered sacrifices all day...
23. Heb.10:11—"And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins..."
24. Thus Christians not only offer sacrifices weekly as we assembly on the Lord day—but throughout every day—daily...
25. Now—the Gk verb here used by Paul refers to an act performed definitively—that has ongoing ramifications...
26. This can be illustrated by the OC priests—every sacrifice offered—would be offered once and never taken back...
27. For example—think of an OC priest has he offered a sacrifice—he would place it upon the altar and burn it...
28. So too—we are to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice once for all—never to remove ourselves from the altar...
29. Thus—there is a sense in which—the imagery of this text—isn't so much that we daily offer repeated sacrifices...
30. This, by the way, is a truth, Heb.13:15—"therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God..."
31. But—the point of Rom.12:1 is—we are to offer once for all—a single sacrifice that's never removed from the altar...
32. Perhaps I can put it like this—our entire lives are to consist of one prolonged, uninterrupted, living sacrifice...
33. Every morning we must ensure—that our bodies are on the altar—that we've willingly devoted our lives to God...

## II. What sacrifice do they offer?

### A. A LIVING sacrifice

1. V1—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a LIVING sacrifice..."
2. The priests in the OC offered sacrifices of dead animals—we are to offer up our bodies—as living sacrifices...
3. Now—I trust it's evident—that when Paul speaks of "bodies" he means—the whole person body and soul...
4. But—let us not overlook the obvious—our bodies, as well as our souls, have been bought by Christ's blood...
5. Rom.6:13—"And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God..."
6. [a] We are to present our bodies—"do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God..."
7. Notice—"your members" and "yourself" are the same things—that is—present the whole you, body and soul...
8. Now—if you remember, by "members" is meant—the various members of our bodies—eyes, ears, hands, etc...
9. [b] We are to present our bodies as those alive from the dead—"present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead..."
10. This is similar to Paul's exhortation in our text—"present your bodies a living sacrifice"—alive from the dead...
11. Thus when the apostle exhorts us to—"present our bodies"—he means—the members of our bodies and souls...
12. Gill—"By their bodies are meant, themselves, their whole souls and bodies, all the powers and faculties of their souls, and members of their bodies; and the presenting of them, designs a devoting of them, with all readiness and willingness, to the service of God for his honour and glory, without putting any confidence in, or placing any dependence upon them..."
13. Lk.9:23-24—"Then He said to *them* all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 'For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it..."
14. I suggest—that we basically find within this passage—similar truth found in Rom.12:1—notice [a] a death, [b] a life...
15. Notice [a] a death—"let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily"—that is—die to the old way of living...
16. Notice [b] a life—"and follow Me"—that is—the Christian life demands that we follow Christ with our life...

### B. A HOLY sacrifice

1. V1—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present you bodies a living sacrifice, HOLY..."
2. This continues the imagery of OC sacrifices—as only those animals—that were without blemish could be offered...
3. Deut.17:1—"You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep which has any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God..."
4. The OC worshiper offered sacrifices free from physical defects—we offer sacrifices free from moral blemishes...
5. Now—it may not seem like it—but actually defining what is meant by this term "holy"—isn't all that easy...

6. [1] Set apart—that is—holy means set apart from all the rest—to be devoted or consecrated for the service of God...
7. This is how the word is used throughout the OT, for example—"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy..."
8. That is—we keep the Sabbath holy as we set it apart from all other days—and devote or consecrate it to God...
9. Thus—to offer up our bodies as living and holy sacrifices entails—devoting our bodies for the service of God...
10. [2] Morally pure—that is—free from impurity and all that defiles—free from moral filth, dirt, and uncleanness...
11. 2Cor.7:1—"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God..."
12. This text is similar to Rom.12:1—[a] what we're to do—"let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness..."
13. By "filthiness of the flesh" is meant—EXTERNAL actions committed in the body such as speech and behavior...
14. By "filthiness of the spirit" is meant—all INWARD activity such as evil thoughts, lust, pride, malice, and envy...
15. To "perfect" holiness means—to continue it unto completion—to daily offer ourselves up as a living and holy sacrifice...
16. [b] Why we're to do it—"therefore, having these promises, beloved"—those described in the previous verses...
17. 2Cor.6:17—"Therefore Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty..."
18. [c] How we're to do it—"in the fear of God"—that is—conscious of who God is—as our holy heavenly Father...

### C. An ACCEPTED sacrifice

1. This again continues the imagery of the OT sacrificial system—as sacrifices gave an aroma that was pleasing to God...
2. Thus by acceptable to God is meant—something that pleases God—that's satisfactory and pleasant to God...
3. In fact—the Gk word rendered "acceptable" literally means—"well-pleasing"—that is—it's pleasing to God...
4. Phil.4:18—"Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God [same Gk word in Rom.12:1]..."
5. Paul here is actually referring to the monetary gift given to him by the Philippians—sent via Epaphroditus...
6. This is one of a few texts from which we derive warrant—to refer to our monetary gifts as offerings to God...
7. But—what I want to point out to you is this—such sacrifices—are a sweet-smelling aroma, well pleasing to God...
8. Now—here I have to make a necessary distinction—between an atoning sacrifice, and a sacrifice offered out of gratitude...
9. [1] An atoning sacrifice—is a sacrifice offered up for the purpose to pay for our sins and appease God's wrath...
10. Eph.5:1-2—"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma..."
11. Here we find the ONLY sacrifice that atones for sin—appeases God—and turns away His wrath due our sin...

12. [2] A sacrifice offered out of gratitude—that is a sacrifice offered by a Christian—that is a sweet-smelling aroma...
13. Now—let me make something very clear—our sacrifices are ONLY acceptable—because of His sacrifice...
14. But—let me make equally clear—our sacrifices offered up because of Christ—are ACCEPTABLE to God...
15. 1Pet.2:4-5—"Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ..."

### III. Why do they offer this sacrifice?

1. Notice two statements—[a] "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God" and [b] "which is your reasonable service..."
2. [a] The mercies of God—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God"—that is—that which he's mentioned for the previous 11 chapters...
3. Now, having said that, I admit that Paul likely specifically has in mind, the verses in the immediate context...
4. Rom.11:30—"For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy"—we needn't go any further...
5. I suggest that within this single statement—we find the first 11 chapters of Paul's letter to the church at Rome...
6. [i] You were once disobedient—this is a summary of the first 3 1/2 chapters—where man's depravity is described...
7. [ii] You have now obtained mercy—this is a summary of 3:21—ch.11—wherein God's mercy in Christ is described...
8. [b] Your reasonable service—I suggest the last phrase within v1—serves as a second motive to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice...
9. This first word rendered "reasonable" (KJV), "spiritual" (NIV, ESV)—literally means—"that which logical..."
10. In fact the Gk word is *logikos* from which we get our English word logic—it refers to that which is reasonable...
11. Here—I believe Paul simply describes our presenting our bodies as living sacrifices—as the only logical response...
12. The second word rendered "service" is a technical word referring to religious service performed by a priest...
13. Thus it's often translated "worship"—in fact we often use it in this manner—speaking about a worship service...
14. Now—here we come to a very important principle—and in fact—the primary burden of this particular verse...
15. Christian obedience is based on our knowledge of God's mercies—given freely and fully—in Jesus Christ...
16. That is—our ability to function as NC priests—will be in direct proportion to our understanding of God's mercies toward us...
17. Ps.116:12—"What shall I render to the LORD *for* all His benefits toward me...16 O LORD, truly I am your servant...you have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD..."
18. Thus—we learn what makes Christian morality distinctly Christian—we obey out of gratitude for mercies received...
19. Heidelberg Catechism—"Q.1. What is your only comfort in life and death? A. That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful savior Jesus Christ.."
20. Heidelberg Catechism—"Q.2. How many things are necessary for you to know, that you, enjoying this comfort, may live and die happily? A. Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second,

how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance..."

21. [1] Past mercies—that is—the mercies of God—that we have experienced in our justification by faith alone...
22. That is—the fact that the Father gave His Son as our sacrifice—is reason for us to offer ourselves as sacrifices...
23. [2] Present mercies—that is—the mercies of God given to us DAILY—as oft erring and needy Christians...
24. [3] Promised mercies—that is—the mercies of God promised to us as we anticipate our future glorification...