

“I Appeal to You Therefore, Brothers”
Romans 12:1-21
(Lesson #20)



12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

First, notice that Paul is dealing with **two aspects of man** what **he does (present you bodies)** and what **he thinks (renewing of your mind)**.

This “therefore” marks the transition out of the last major section of Romans (namely chapters 9-11 about Israel) and into the final major section of Romans (chapters 12-16).

This therefore also ties it all back to what Paul has said thus far about the gracious work of God, in Christ, on behalf of believers, and it turns what he is about to say into an appeal that might come from a father, relative, or close friend. Please keep in mind this **appeal** comes from apostle to the Gentiles (Paul himself).

So within Paul’s appeal you should sense authority and affection. This is the Lord Jesus’s apostle and he is speaking with the Lord’s authority. Yet, this man is our brother, and he is making an appeal to fellow members of our Lord’s family...

Vs 1a - He is beseeching them; he is pleading with them...

Let this be Paul’s appeal to you and I. For the remainder of the book let all that Paul says, every word, every thought, and every command find a lodging place in our hearts.

Vs 1a-b – Paul is making this appeal, based on all that God accomplished for you in the person of Christ. He is making this appeal and asking us to consider God’s kindness, love, and mercy as evidenced in the justification of sinners through the death of Christ.

So now to the appeal, now to the ask, now to the request: *present your bodies as a living sacrifice.*

The word translated **present (offer)** is a term that was commonly used of the **slaughtering of animals** in a religious ritual that was intended to please God.

We get the picture... The **Jews killed their sacrifices and presented them** as an **offering** in accord with the **Mosaic law**.

Paul is saying... I beseech you, my brothers and sisters in Christ to **present (offer)** your **entire body, as a living sacrifice**. To lay your entire body on the altar of God (**metaphorically**), and say God I am yours, use me today, to glorify your son and expand your kingdom!

The one thing that all religions have in common is worship through sacrifice.

Think about Abraham, as he went toward the place where God would reveal, he went believing he was going to be required to sacrifice his son to God:

“He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”” (Ge 22:2 ESV)

When he arrived at the place do you remember what he told the young men who had traveled with him and Isaac his son?

“Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.”” (Ge 22:5 ESV)

He said worship, but what he had in mind was worship through the giving of a sacrifice.

So it is true today, we too are a holy priesthood (**I Pet 2:5**) and we are to offer “**spiritual sacrifices**” that are acceptable to God through Jesus.

We occasionally talk about people who were martyred for their faith. **Dying for Christ is actually very easy, compared to dying to self each day, and living for Christ for months, years, or even decades.**

Paul said it this way to the church in Corinth:

“for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1Co 6:20 ESV)

Steve Gregg: insightfully stated: *“the problem with living sacrifices, is that they have a tendency to crawl off the altar.”*

I suspect Paul also used this term **living** to highlight a point he had taught, namely that at one time we were **dead in trespasses** and sins, yet now we are **alive spiritually**, alive for the first time.

Paul had already said something very similar in chapter 6:

*“**10** For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. **11** So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. **13** Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.” (Ro 6:10-13 ESV)*

Notice next... **The act of presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice to God is both holy and acceptable to God and it is our spiritual act of worship.**

- 1) It is *holy to God*.
- 2) Is it *acceptable by God*. To catch them meaning here you could translate this word as **pleasing** to God. It is not **acceptable** (in the minimum sense) it is **pleasing** to God, in the very powerful sense.
- 3) And it is our *“spiritual act of worship.”*

Now this phrase has been translated two ways and both are in accord with the Greek:

- 1) **This is your reasonable service.**

The word seems to be pointing to that which **aligns with reason**, or **follows reason**, or we might say is **logical**.

- 2) **This is your spiritual act of worship.**

If this is what Paul is getting at, he is saying that presenting you body, is a **“spiritual act of worship.”**

Offering yourself to God in surrender to him is spiritual, yet it is also quite natural, but it is **simultaneously supernatural and spiritual**.

Let me show you where Paul says something very similar to the church in Philippi:

“I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.” (Php 4:18 ESV)

What they sent was **financial aid**, what Paul called it was an “**acceptable sacrifice.**”

Giving of our **worship, time, talents, money, or righteous behavior**, these are **reasonable** considering what Christ has done for us, but it is more than that, they are all **spiritual acts of worships**.

APPLICATION: What does this look like for you? How do you present your body as a living sacrifice to our God?

Vs 2 - First in the negative, then in the positive...

And, do not be **conformed to this world**. The idea is that the believers in Rome, and you and I by extension are to avoid patterning or having our lives being patterned (pressed into a mold) after this **age (present tense, imperative mood)**, after the model and the thinking of this world.

Now the word translated world is the Greek word **αἰών (aion)** it means **age or time**. Do not be **conformed to this age!**

Instead (positive), you and I are to “**be transformed**” (**present tense, imperative mood**), you and I are to be **transformed** and to keep on **being transformed**. To be, being transformed day-by-day (**by the renewing of our minds**).

Notice where the **transformation occurs**. It is in our.... **MINDS!** The Greek word **νοῦς (nous)** the **mind**, the **thinking**, the **understanding**, our **intellectual faculties**.

Paul is not talking about getting a new brain. But he is saying the world has brainwashed us, and we need to have our thinking “transformed”!

Instead, you and I are to be **μεταμορφόω (metamorphoo) – transformed**, this is where we get the English word **metamorphosis**. We will say more about that in a second.

I want to show you two places where this word is used:

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2Co 3:18 ESV)

“2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.” (Mr 9:2-3 ESV)

There on the Mount, Jesus was “transformed” (**metamorphoo**) and his clothes became radiant, intensely white. Jesus changed, radically changed, right in front of them.

You and I are to be “transformed” (radically) by the renewing of our minds, you are I are to be transformed by the renewing of our thinking, you and I are to be transformed by the renewing of our intellect.

Earlier I told you that **μεταμορφόω (metamorphoo) – transformed**, this is where we get the English word **metamorphosis**.

What do you think of when you think of **metamorphosis? (DISCUSS)**

Paul said it like this to the church in Corinth: “3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to

destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,” (2Co 10:3-5 ESV)

Notice, something nonphysical (mind) is telling your brain (physical) what to think! (thoughts, emotions, and will)

APPLICATION: So how do we do this?

Today in Sunday School and in Church you are actively involved in the **renewing of your minds! The one place where you can be rock solid confident of what you are hearing is when you hear it from the Scriptures.**

It is in this way and through this vehicle that we: **prove (prove by examination and testing) what is God’s acceptable and perfect will!**

It is here that we move from **acknowledging what is good to actually doing it.** This is accomplished through the **renewing of our minds** (scriptures, faith, prayer, etc.) and as Paul has already mentioned a work of God’s Holy Spirit!

The changing of your mind is a process, that should have as the genesis the word of God, it should be empowered by the Spirit, it is accomplished through conditioning and education, and we will spend the rest of our human life, being reeducated by the Holy Spirit!

3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Vs 3 - Here Paul is reminding us that the **transformed minds** of believers should produce **humility** based on the reality that faith and all that comes with it, are gifts of God.

Remember Prov 6:16-19:

“16 There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.” (Pr 6:16-19 ESV)

God has placed us in community, and he has given us the appropriate gifts to serve in the community in which He has placed us.

Believers should assess themselves in the light of the gospel, soberly, reflecting on who we were before God saved us.

Vs 4-5 - Paul’s **“for”** here is about to connect and explain his comment that believers should think soberly and sensibly about themselves.

Here Paul shifts to liken the church to a body. Just as a body has many different parts, and those parts do not have the same functions.

So too, the local body of Christ... It is one body, yet it has many different members who look different, and have different roles or functions.

Here, as in **I Cor 12:12-30**, and in **Eph 4:4-16**, Paul uses the analogy of the body to point to how a church operates, how it has members that although part of the same body have very **different functions**. He discusses how some are **visible** while others are **nearly** or even **fully invisible**, yet all work **together for the common good** and the **common goal**.

Paul now begins to talk about how God has uniquely gifted each believer with a spiritual gift:
Vs 6-8 - First, the **gifts differ** (believer to believer) according to the **grace that is given to each of us**.

When we talk about spiritual gifts, we are talking about **grace gifts**.

God has assigned these **gifts**, they **originate and flow from Him**. They are not based on our natural ability or talents, although our natural talents and abilities can help subsidize the unique gift that we have been given.

I do not think God's gives us one gift, instead He provides us with a **unique blend** of gifts where one gift is the primary gift.

This means that one person who has the gift of teaching will not exercise that gift exactly the same as another, for each has a "unique blend" of gifts, where teaching is the primary or the lead gift.

These are not only a spiritual gift, but they are also how **operate spiritually**. But it is not just that, they are how we **see the world spiritually**, how we **approach spiritual problems**.

Your spiritual gift, is a unique grace gift, given to you, for ministry. It is special and unique, no one has one exactly like yours. When you operate in yours, you glorify God, for it is his gift, given to you, to minister to His body.

For the moment understand that you and I see things, **spiritual things**, through the lens of the gift (**unique gift**) that God has given us. **We will talk more about that in a moment as well**.

Paul now provides a list of seven spiritual gifts; lets' walk through them:

So that I do not bury the lede, I do not believe these are the only spiritual gifts, we will talk more about that in a second. But these are the **representative gifts** that Paul brings up here.

1) Prophecy, in proportion to our faith

First, the prophet should prophesy in proportion to their faith. Stated differently, **they should not go beyond the insight God has given and should modestly stay within those bounds**.

When we think of prophecy, we tend to think of foretelling the future.

That is of course prophecy, but prophecy has much broader definition. It is to proclaim God's word with great **clarity** and **boldness**, especially as it relates to declaring who God is to unbelievers:

"24 But if all prophecy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you." (1Co 14:24-25 ESV)

But there is an important function to the church as well. Paul tells us in I Cor 14:3-4 that:

“On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.” (1Co 14:3 ESV)

Prophecy - The gift of prophecy is proclaiming the Word of God with clarity and boldness. The prophet builds up the body through clear declarations that lead to the conviction of sin. Prophecy manifests itself in preaching and teaching (Rom 12:6, ICor 12:10, ICor 12:28; Eph 4:11).

2) *Service, in our serving*

If you have the spiritual gift of service, do so satisfied with the gifts that God has provided you with. The Greek word means to serve or to minister to, it means to act as a go-between.

Typically, ministry is this work of preparation and bringing everything together.

It has with it the idea of humbly serving God and fellow man.

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mr 10:45 ESV)

Service – The gift of service is that gift that is used to recognize and organize practical issues around meeting the physical needs in the body, often to facilitate preaching and teaching. It is this idea of joyfully giving assistance in serving the needs of others. Christians with this gift do not mind, and often work very hard, behind the scenes (Rom 12:7).

3) *Teaches, in his teaching*

Like serving, if teaching, if you have the spiritual gift of teaching, do so, satisfied with the gifts that God has provided you with.

Teaching is a gift that is similar, but different than prophecy. A teacher has as his chief aim the transference of knowledge so that those who he/she is teaching understand the content.

The content of teaching, as far as Paul is concerned is scriptural and biblical. It is biblical principles, biblical understanding, the gospel, what is necessary for Christian maturity, etc.

Teaching - Teaching is instructing others in the truths, principles, and doctrines of God’s Word for the purposes of building up, unifying, and maturing the body (Rom 12:7, ICor 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

4) *Exhorts, in his exhortation*

Exhorts is the Greek word **παρακαλέω (parakaleo)**. It means to **come to one’s side to come to one’s aid, to exhort, to entreat, to comfort, to come to the aid of another.**

Exhortation – Believers who have this gift are those who encourage, motivate, and even inspire others. Believers with this gift often make good counselors, teachers, and preachers. Exhortation often exhibits itself in preaching, teaching, and ministry (Rom. 12:8).

5) *Contributes, in generosity*

The gift of giving or imparting. This is a spiritual gift, and the ones who have been given this gift should exercise it with generosity!

The Greek word really means to have an open heart, to not be looking for anything in return.

Giving – Believers with the gift of giving are able to give freely and joyfully to the work and mission of the body. Being cheerful and liberal in giving is a characteristic of individuals who have this gift (Rom 12:8). All believers are to be giving, but all believers do not have the spiritual gift of generosity.

6) Lead, with zeal

The one who has been given the spiritual gift of leading should do so with zeal. Lead with **earnestness**, lead with **diligence**, lead with **enthusiasm**!

Leadership – Leaders are critical to the body of Christ for they help set vision and goals of each local body or organization. Leaders are able to direct an organization and its members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the organization. Leaders motivate people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8). Humanly speaking, it is nice when the teaching pastor also has as strong dose of leadership, but many churches have thrived when that was not the case. The leadership came through other pastors or committees in the church.

7) Acts of mercy, with cheerfulness

Showing mercy. Showing compassion, showing empathy that should be done with joy, with cheerfulness.

Mercy – Happy cheerful acts of compassion, even in the spite of difficult situations characterizes believers with the gift of mercy. People with this gift are extremely important to the body for they help sympathize and empathize with hurting members. (Rom. 12:8).

You and I see the world through our spiritual gift and we respond based on our spiritual gift. **We are all indeed different members, with different functions of the same body!**

Now at this point, maybe you are thinking I am not sure any of those are my main, my big spiritual gift. Could be, I do not believe this list is complete.

Let's step out of Romans, but not out of our lesson. Flip over you handout to look at the back page.

In fact, as best I can tell Paul provides us **around 20 different spiritual gifts that he lists here in the New Testament (please do not hold me to the number)**, but you have that list in front of you. Now consider that we each have a unique **blend** of these gifts, then consider that I have observed that as we mature the blend of your gifts actually matures. Then consider mixed into this, is your God given abilities and talents and well as talents that you have honed in your maturation.

Lastly, consider there are possibly other gifts that Paul does not list and I hope you start to sense just how amazingly unique you are in the Kingdom.

No one is just like you (spiritual giftedness) and through the work of the Spirit your gifts are morphing into the ultimate **best spiritual version of you**. You are uniquely gifted for Kingdom work!

9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Paul is now going to begin a string of **compressed statements, imperatives, maxims, or kingdom principles** outlining how believers should behave.

The start of this list is abrupt, there is no **conjunction** or **participle** that transfers the thoughts, but, in the Greek an abrupt:

ἀγάπη (agape), **ἀνυπόκριτος** (anupokritos)

This starts a string, a list of things that on the face appear to be commands, but most are not in the imperative mood. Although most scholars believe, if indeed these are maxims of the Christina faith, then they should be understood as imperatives.

But he strings together in verse 9-16, depending on how you count them, 20 of these maxims of principles, so let's walk through them.

One more point, I recognize that we could dedicate an entire lesson to many of these items. So, I do not miss just how profound this listing really is!

Vs 9 – 16

- 1) Let your love be genuine without hypocrisy
- 2) Hate what is evil.
- 3) Be joined, or even be glued, hold fast to that which is good.
- 4) Love one another with a brotherly, a familial love. Love each other the way you love members of your family.

One of the goals of our small groups is that we get to know one another and truly love and serve each other.

- 5) Be in competition to outdo honoring one another.
- 6) Do not be lazy in your zeal for what is good
- 7) Be fervent (red hot or boiling) in your spirit
- 8) Serve as a slave, willing submitting and following the Lord!
- 9) Even when the outlook looks bleak, rejoice in your ultimate hope, which is in Christ and in the final resurrection and the reception of your glorified body.
- 10) Be patient (endure, bear under the load bravely and calmly) when you find yourself enduring tribulation.

Just a note, He does not say, be patient if tribulation comes. It is a maxim, be patient in tribulation.

- 11) Be constant (**be steadfast, persevere, continue on**) **in prayer**. Regardless of what happens, good or bad, fun or hard, continue steadfast in prayer!
- 12) Contribute to the needs of the saints. The word translated “**contribute**” means to be a partaker, to become a partner, to become an associate in the needs of fellow believers.

Saints is not a word for super-believers, but for all believers.

Paul's letters are written to the saints (ICor 14:33, Eph 1:1, Php1:1, Col 1:2, Heb 13:24, etc).

13) Pursue hospitality. Run after, chase down and love strangers.

14) Bless those who persecute you, bless them and do not curse them.

This is sermon on the Mount stuff.

God has called us into his upside down kingdom, where we love and care for those around us, we behave and act and emulate God in the flesh.

15) Regardless of your own personal situation, rejoice with those who are rejoicing.

Let's be honest, this is tough stuff, when I am hurting, when I am crying out to God because of something that is going on in my life, in can be hard to rejoice with and for others.

Hear the words of Paul: OHHHH but rejoice with those who are rejoicing!

16) Regardless of your own personal situation, weep with those who weep.

Show empathy, enter into the hardships of others.

This is what it looks like and this is what it means to be a citizen of the Kingdom!

17) Live in harmony with one another. Get along together, do not be sandpaper, but salve.

Live in harmony, as much as is possible, with those around you.

18) Do not be haughty... Do not be a snob, do not be prideful with your mind set on high things!

19) Instead of being high-minded, associate with, hang out with, develop relationships and friendships with the lowly.

Those who for whatever reason find themselves on a lower social, economic, or educational rung than you are.

20) NEVER... **NO NEVER be wise in your own sight.** Paul has dwelt with pride, it seems now what he is dealing with is a know it all, someone who refuses to learn, someone who is "set in their ways"

Twenty, practical, for the most part relational things that we should and/or should not do.

We have gone from the deepest theology in the entire Bible, to some fast-paced points of application for those who are "justified by faith."

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Paul is not quite done. Twenty points (I could be off in how we slice those), but twenty is not enough, Paul has more to say in his high-speed list of points of applications based on all that Christ has done for us!

Here we will find another list of 6 more points on how we should live now that Christ has saved us. Again, please do not get hung up on the number.

21) Do not repay evil for evil. Put simply when people treat us with evil, we are not to pay them back with evil.

By the way that is how the world does it, that is not how you and I are to do it!

22) Give thought, to how you behave in public, how you act. I want you to know I thought about this verse, as Tuesday is approaching.

Give thought, to act above reproach, even when responding to evil.

23) As far as possible, live peaceably with all.

Again, this means people we do not agree with, people who may not like us. Seek to live peaceably with all!

24) Never avenge yourself, vengeance does not belong to us.

Then Paul quotes part of Deut 32:35, or Ps 94:1, or Na 1:2:

"Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly." (De 32:35 ESV)

"O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth!" (Ps 94:1 ESV)

"The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies." (Na 1:2 ESV)

I suspect Paul had in mind, Deut 32:35a, but he could have been pulling from a few different places. **The point, for you and I, we do not avenge ourselves!**

25) Rather than vengeance, and then Paul quotes the Old Testament and to what we should do and the outcome:

"21 ¶ If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, 22 for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you." (Pr 25:21-22 ESV)

26) Paul's last point, for the moment. Do not be overpowered

27) by evil. It will try, greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

Do not be overcome, overpowered, conquered by evil.... **Instead conquer evil with good!**



Spiritual Gifts as Described by Paul

	Romans 12:6–8	1 Corinthians 12:7–10	1 Corinthians 12:28	Ephesians 4:11
Gift #	<i>Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...</i>	<i>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...</i>	<i>God has appointed in the church...</i>	<i>And he gave...</i>
1			Apostles	Apostles
2	Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophets	Prophets
3				Evangelists
4				Shepherds
5	Teaching		Teachers	and Teachers
6	Service or Ministry			
7	Exhorting			
8	Giving, Contributing,			
9	Leading			
10	Showing Mercy			
11		Utterance of Wisdom		
12		Utterance of Knowledge		
13		Faith		
14		Gifts of Healing	Gifts of Healing	
15		Working of Miracles	Miracles	
16		Distinguishing Between Spirits, Discernment		
17		Various Kinds of Tongues	Various Kinds of Tongues	
18		Interpretation of Tongues		
19			Helping	
20			Administering	