

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-6-11 PM NOTES  
"A REASONABLE RESPONSE"  
ROMANS 12:1  
#59 in Series, "Verse by Verse through Romans"

What is covered in Romans 12-16?

- Chapter 12:3-21—The Christian and other people. This section deals with spiritual gifts, responding to others in the body of Christ, and responding to those who wrong you.
- Chapter 13:1-7—The church and the government. We will examine how Christians relate to government, even evil and unrighteous governments.
- Chapter 13:8-14—The law of love. We are told how God's love works its way out in daily relationships and daily behavior before the world.
- Chapter 14:1-15:13—Christian liberty. This section examines how we decide on questionable matters and relate to weaker, spiritually immature brothers and sisters.
- Chapter 15:14-33—We get insight into Paul's personal ministry and plans and see what drove this greatest theologian of the church.
- Chapter 16:1-27—Final greetings and counsel about dealing with troublemakers in the church.

I. The Appeal—"I beseech you" (v. 1a)

"*Parakaleo*" —To come alongside someone and call or beckon them.

**Romans 8:32 (NKJV)** "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

"God saves His best for those who leave the choice with Him."

Surrender—"the reckless abandonment of oneself to God."

—Hannah Whitehall Smith

**Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV)** "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ."

**Colossians 2:10 (NASB)** "and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority."

II. The Motive—"therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (v. 1b)

**Romans 3:10 (NKJV)** "*There is none righteous, no, not one*".

**Romans 11:36 (NKJV)** "For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen."

"We may say, 'Lord, condemnation was Yours, that justification might be mine; agony was Yours and victory mine; pain was Yours and ease is mine; stripes were Yours and healing mine; vinegar and gall were Yours, that honey and sweet might be mine; the curse was Yours and the blessing mine; a crown of thorns was Yours, that the crown of glory might be mine; death was Yours, and eternal life mine!' If Jesus wholly set Himself apart for believers, how reasonable is it for believers to set themselves apart for Christ...Blessed exchange! Christ says; 'All I have is yours,' and we say: 'though my person is vile and not worthy of being accepted, but such as it is, it is Yours. My soul with all and every faculty; my body, and every member of it; my gifts, time, and all my talents are yours.'"

—John Flavel

*Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

—Isaac Watts

III. The Presentation— “that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” (v. 1c)

A. “Present”

B. “Bodies”

**2 Peter 1:4a (NKJV)** “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature...”

**Romans 6:13 (NASB)** “and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

**1 Peter 2:5 (NKJV)** “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.**”

**Romans 10:15b (NKJV)** “*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!*”

C. “Living Sacrifice”

**2 Corinthians 5:15 (NKJV)** “and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

D. “Holy”

**Philippians 1:20 (NKJV)** “according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”

E. “Acceptable to God”

IV. The Worship— “which is your reasonable service” (v. 1d)

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What we believe – really believe – determines our behavior. When it comes to the Christian life, learning should result in living, and our doctrine should determine our deeds. Chapter 12 of Romans marks the end of the doctrine focused section and begins what many call the practical part of the book. I don't particularly like that wording. It makes it sound as if doctrine is not practical. It is the doctrine that tells us the why and how of the “practical stuff”. The  **motive** for what we do is just as important as the doing. A better designation for chapter 12-16 than “the practical section” is “the application section”. Since what we have studied in chapters 1-11 is true, in chapters 12-16 we see the application of that truth to everyday life. Beware, the devil is always seeking to push us to extremes. One extreme (the common one today) is to ignore doctrine and focus completely on behavior or experience. The other extreme, which is just as damaging, is to focus on doctrine and disregard the application of that doctrine to our daily lives – our behavior. Doctrine is important; the life you live is important. To ask which is more important is comparable to flying in an airplane at 35,000 feet and asking which wing of the airplane is most important! When it comes to doctrine and behavior, do not let the enemy push you to either extreme of totally emphasizing the one and ignoring the other. That is why the common pattern in the epistles that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write is to begin with doctrine and then give the application of that doctrine to our everyday behavior.

Today's text (Romans 12:1) and the text in the next message (Romans 12:2) are like the door from the doctrine section of Romans (chapter 1-11) into the application of that doctrine in chapters 12-16. In chapters 12-16 we are going to examine the following:

- Chapter 12:3-21 – The Christian and other people. This section will deal with spiritual gifts, responding to others in the body of Christ, and responding to those who wrong you.
- Chapter 13:1-7 – The church and the government. We will examine how Christians relate to government, even evil and unrighteous governments.
- Chapter 13:8-14 – The law of love. We are told how God's love works its way out in daily relationships and daily behavior before the world.
- Chapter 14:1-15:13 – Christian liberty. This section examines how we decide on questionable matters and relate to weaker, spiritually immature brothers and sisters.
- Chapter 15:14-33 – We get insight into Paul's personal ministry and plans and see what drove this greatest theologian of the church.
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Remember that all we will learn in this section (Chapters 12-16) stands on the foundation of chapters 1-11.

I. The Appeal – “I beseech you” (V1a)

The word “beseech” is an interesting word. It is translated “I appeal to you” in the ESV and “I urge you” in the NASB. The Greek word is “parakaleo”. It literally means to come alongside someone and call or beckon them. It was used of every kind of calling that was intended to produce a particular effect. The noun form of this word was used by Jesus in John 14:16 to refer to the Holy Spirit that He would send when He went to the Father. Paul is saying to these believers in Rome and to us, “I am coming alongside you to urge you, to appeal to you, to beseech you to present your body a living sacrifice.” Paul chooses this strong word “beseech” to exhort them to take this action because he knows that the world, the flesh, and the devil will all be screaming in their ear “do not make this presentation of your bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice”. This act of presenting our bodies a living sacrifice is often called a total

commitment or a surrender to the Lord. I personally like surrender more than commitment. Commitment implies that we maintain some control in what is given to the Lord, but a surrender leaves nothing under our control. Why are so few Christians surrendered to the Lord? Why are most church members (many of whom are probably not genuine Christians at all) still controlling their own life, captaining their own ship, and throwing a few crumbs to the Lord every now and then? Why do we need to be “beseeched”? There are several reasons, but we can narrow them down to two. The first reason is **fear**. There is the unknown element in surrender. What will God tell you to do when you surrender? Will He call you to be a missionary, to witness openly to others, or worst of all call you to be a preacher? Will He tell you to remain single and serve Him without the time consuming responsibilities of a Biblical marriage? Will He call you to get up in front of people and talk (the number one ranked fear people have according to surveys)? There is the fear of the unknown. The answer to this first reason for refusing surrender is one word – “trust”. The root of that fear is unbelief; it is a refusal to believe that God really loves you and desires the ultimate best for you. It is a lack of trust that God will equip for what He calls you to. It is a denial of **Romans 8:32 (NKJV)** “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Notice the logic. If God did not spare His own Son, but allowed Him to suffer the wrath that we deserved, do you think that He is going to ruin your life or abandon you if you come in surrender to Him as His bond slave? That’s ridiculous. My wife used to have a quote on the refrigerator that said, “God always saves the best for those who leave the choice with Him”.

The second reason so few make this presentation of their bodies as a living sacrifice is related to the first. We lust after comfort and control. We long to control our own life. The reason we want to control our life is that we want to be comfortable. We prefer to go only to places and do things that we feel comfortable with. We tend to run from risk and situations that make us uncomfortable. If we make a surrender of our lives, we are no longer in control and God will lead us into areas that are out of our comfort zone. Hannah Whitehall Smith, the great devotional writer defines **surrender** as, “**The reckless abandonment of oneself to God**”. I like that definition. That reckless abandonment makes us real uncomfortable. Yet, it is in the reckless abandonment that the Lord makes Himself known and shows Himself powerful in our lives. It is in that reckless abandonment that He matures us and uses us to make an eternal difference in the lives of people. I am praying that before you walk out these doors that you make that reckless abandonment of yourself to God. Our quest is not to get more out of God. Our quest is to give all that we are to Him. God has already given us all that we need. **Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV)** “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ”. **Colossians 2:10a (NASB)** “and in Him you have been made complete...” I would say that “every spiritual blessing” and being made “complete” in Him tells us that the problem is not on God’s side. The problem is on our side in that we have not truly presented our bodies a living sacrifice to Him.

We see first the appeal.

## II. The Motive – “therefore brethren by the mercies of God” (V1b)

Once again, we see that word “therefore”. Remember that one of the important rules of interpretation is, “When you see a ‘therefore’, find out what it is there for”. The word “therefore” ties together what has been written with what is about to be written. In other words, the motive for presenting your body a living sacrifice, for making a reckless abandonment of yourself to God is what he spoken about earlier that he calls, “the mercies of God”. In man made, human, false religion, there is a call to surrender (remember the 9-11 hijackers for evidence), but here is the difference between false human religion and Biblical Christianity. In false religion, surrender is the root, the beginning. In biblical Christianity, surrender is the fruit, the result, the outworking of the in-working of God’s mercies. This verse is saying “based on the mercies of God”, “because of the mercies of God”, or “motivated by the mercies of God” we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. What are the mercies of God? I think it is the 315 verses in Romans 1:1- 11:36. Let me take just a few moments to summarize the mercies of God that we have been taught in

Romans 1:1-11:36. After an introduction in Romans 1:1-17, from Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul sets up the truth of the mercies of God by showing logically that there is no one deserving of God's acceptance because there is no one that is righteous. Everyone on the planet stands guilty and without excuse before a holy and righteous God. This section is summarized in **Romans 3:10 (NKJV)** "*There is none righteous, no, not one*". From chapter 3:21-5:21, God lays out the wonderful truth of justification by faith. Oh, what a glorious doctrine this is! While we were condemned and without hope, God the Son came to earth, lived a perfect life, was nailed to a cross, and having taken our sins upon Himself, He was "bruised for our iniquities", He made atonement for our sin. To all who will repent of their sin and believe on Christ alone for salvation, God declares them to be righteous (accepted by God) because of faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Christ's righteousness (acceptance with the father) is imputed to our account and we who were under condemnation are now justified – declared righteous! When we come to Romans 6, we see that when we repented of sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, more than being declared righteous happened to us. We were also identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. The old us in Adam was crucified with Christ and we were made partakers of His eternal life. We who were slaves of sin are now made slaves of righteousness. In chapter 7, we see the struggles we face because we are God's children living in an unredeemed body that has a power called sin in its members that Satan uses to continually pull us toward sin. In chapter 8, in my opinion, the greatest chapter in the Bible, we see the victory that is ours in Christ and the assurance we have that nothing can separate us from His love. In chapters 9-11, we see the faithfulness of God to always keep His promises. He uses the Jews as the primary example. Even though the majority of the Jews rejected their Messiah and God temporarily set them aside, He is not through with the Jews and will fulfill all of His promises to them at the return of Christ. This doctrinal section ends with a great doxology that is concluded in **Romans 11:36 (NKJV)** "For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen." Over this whole section you could write, "The mercies of God"! Our motive in presenting our bodies as living sacrifices is not to gain acceptance from God. We already have that through the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to us. Our motive is not to keep what we have received from him because He told us in chapter 8 that nothing could separate us from His love. Our motive is to express our adoration, our gratitude for this one who has showered us with such mercy. The Puritan preacher of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, John Flavel said, "We may say, 'Lord, condemnation was Yours, that justification might be mine; agony was Yours and victory mine; pain was Yours and ease is mine; stripes were Yours and healing mine; vinegar and gall were Yours, that honey and sweet might be mine; the curse was Yours and the blessing mine; a crown of thorns was Yours, that the crown of glory might be mine; death was Yours, and eternal life mine!' If Jesus wholly set Himself apart for believers, how reasonable is it for believers to set themselves apart for Christ... Blessed exchange! Christ says; 'All I have is yours', and we say: 'though my person is vile and not worthy of being accepted, but such as it is, it is Yours. My soul with all and every faculty; my body, and every member of it; my gifts, time, and all my talents are yours'" [John Flavel, *Voices from the Past*", Page 62]. The song writer Isaac Watts said it well:

*Love so amazing so divine,*

*Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

- Isaac Watts

III. The Presentation – "that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (V1c)

The Old Testament sacrificial system is over. When that which the sacrifices pointed to happened in history (Christ's death on the cross), that was the end of the sacrificial system. No longer do we express our worship and our trust in God by bringing a lamb, an ox, or a dove to sacrifice before the Lord. But we are still required to bring to Him a sacrifice. Our sacrifice is an act of worshipful gratitude, not for atonement. Our sacrifice is given because He in His mercy has already made the atonement. There are some key words and phrases here in this part of Romans 12:1 that we need to understand.

\* Present – In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) this was a technical term for the priest placing the sacrifice on the altar. It carried the idea of surrendering or yielding up. We are

members of God's New Testament priesthood (1 Peter 2:5), and we have a sacrifice to yield up, to surrender on the altar before the Lord. The tense of this word "present" indicates that it is not a process that takes place over time. It is a point in time event.

\* **Bodies** – Why does he not say spirit or soul? Our spirit has already been presented to Him at salvation and has been transformed from a nature like Adams to a nature that Peter calls the divine nature in **2 Peter 1:4b (NKJV)** "...that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature..." When he speaks of presenting our bodies, he is including all that we are. Our souls (mind, will, and emotion) are housed in our bodies. The body as it is used here speaks of our whole selves; it is the body and all that is housed in the body. The body is very important in the Christian understanding of things. Our bodies may be instruments of righteousness when presented to God. We read in **Romans 6:13 (NASB)** "and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God." He is not speaking of the body instead of the soul and spirit; he is speaking of the body which contains our soul and spirit. Someone may say, "Why would He want my body? It is fat, skinny, old, wrinkled, diseased, unattractive, hard of hearing or seeing, stiff, etc.?" According to the Old Testament isn't the sacrifice to be without spot or blemish? Yes, but the offering of our body is not for atonement for sin. That has already been done by Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:5 is a verse that says much the same thing as Romans 12:1. **1 Peter 2:5 (NKJV)** "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." It is because of Jesus Christ that our sacrifices are acceptable. When he speaks of our body, he is speaking of our eyes, ears, brain, legs, hands, feet, our personalities (souls)etc. We surrender our eyes to look on that which pleases Him; we surrender our mouths to speak only that which glorifies Him; we surrender our ears to listen to what pleases Him; we surrender our feet to go with the gospel (**Romans 10:15b (NKJV)** "*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!*"); we surrender our minds to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5); we surrender our emotions to the truth of God's Word; we surrender our wills to God's will.

\* **Living Sacrifice** – The idea of a living sacrifice was unheard of in Paul's day. Sacrifices were always killed. The sacrifice we are to offer is our living bodies. **2 Corinthians 5:15 (NKJV)** "and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." The sacrifice that we offer is living, but it is still a sacrifice. A sacrifice has no rights no control, no turning back; it is totally given over to the Lord.

\* **Holy** – The word "holy" means to be set apart to God for His special purposes. The sacrifice is not only living, it is also holy – that is, it is set apart to God to use for His purposes. The attitude of a holy living sacrifice is exemplified in **Philippians 1:20b (NKJV)** "... as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

\* **Acceptable to God** – God accepts this offering of a living, holy sacrifice. As we saw earlier, it has been made acceptable through Christ Jesus.

#### IV. The Worship – "Which is your reasonable service" (V1d)

This passage literally says, "your reasonable service of worship". We dealt with the concept of "reasonable" back in point II. In light of His mercies poured out on you that have taken you from death to life, from darkness to light, and from condemnation to justification, the only reasonable response is to pour out your life as a living sacrifice and give Him control and live totally for His glory. Let me tell you what that will look like. It means that in every activity of your body, you are illustrating that Christ is your treasure. In other words, we show the worth of Christ by the way we use our body as a living sacrifice. Genuine worship is not limited to a church building. Worship takes place in the everyday activities of life when I live in my body in a way that shows Christ is to me the preeminent one, the treasure that makes all other treasure pale in significance.

#### CONCLUSION

Have you made that presentation? Why haven't you? It is time you make a reckless abandonment of yourself to God, and stop wasting your life. (3281)