

Subject: *The Believer's Gifts to God*

Scripture: *Romans 12:1-2*

In the first eleven chapters Paul describes what God has given to believers, and now he tells us what we need to give to God. Many people mistakenly think that the Christian life is all about receiving more and more from God, when in fact it all about giving to God. It's not about getting more. It's about giving all. God doesn't need anything we give to Him, but He desires and deserves our gifts. Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive," but do we really believe that? Our text mentions four gifts we give to God:

1. We give our soul to God

The whole theme of Romans 12:1-2 is about sacrifice and worship. Christ gave Himself as the perfect sacrifice to make atonement for our soul, now in return we give our soul to Him in repentance and faith. The giving of our soul is not actually stated here, but it is implied ("brethren"). We are in God's family by salvation, and that takes place when we give our soul to God. This is the ultimate commitment, and it is an ongoing commitment.

2 Timothy 1:12 *For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

The unsaved person can't give anything else to God because he has not given his soul to God. He must first give himself in faith and repentance. We speak of rededication, but first there must be dedication of the soul in salvation.

When we give our souls to God we receive His mercies (His love, grace, forgiveness, salvation from the penalty and power of sin, reconciliation, justification, eternal life, faith, peace, hope, and future resurrection and glory). Whether we say it or not, our attitude in giving our soul to God is "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

2. We give our body to God

Paul says "I beseech (urge) you." It is the word used of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the one who comes alongside us. Paul is writing as a human helper or counselor to his fellow believers at Rome. Because of all God has given to us, we should present our bodies as living sacrifices to Him. We're motivated to do this because of His mercies.

The language used here ("present your bodies a living sacrifice") picture the placing of a sacrifice on the altar as an act of worship. Because our soul belongs to God, He already has the inner man. But He also wants the outer man in which the inner man lives, that is the body.

When we are saved our redeemed soul lives inside an unredeemed body, and there is an ongoing conflict. The body is capable of doing sinful things or godly things. God created our body to glorify Him, and that should be our desire when we are saved. That takes discipline and desire.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ¹⁹ *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23 *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 9:27 *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

Romans 6:12-13¹² *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*¹³ *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

God no longer wants us to offer sacrifices of dead animals, but He wants us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. This is how God works in and through us. He uses our mouths to speak for Him. He uses our eyes to see for Him. He uses our feet and hands to minister for Him. We use our bodies to live for Him. Paul calls this a living sacrifice, but it's nothing compared to what Christ gave for us. David Livingstone, the famous missionary, wrote this in journal: "People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owed to God, which we can never repay? I never made a sacrifice. We remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us." This is our "reasonable" (logical) service.

"Does God ask us to do what is beneath us? This question will never trouble us again if we consider the Lord of heaven taking a towel and washing feet." - Elisabeth Elliot

3. We give our mind to God

A. Prevent worldly conformation

One modern translation says, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." Conformation is something we allow to be done to us. We are commanded not to allow it to happen. We must not let our minds think like the world thinks. The world is the present age or world system with all its ways and values.

God warns us about two things. First, He warns us about unbelievers pretending to act like Christians. And second, He warns us about Christians living like the world. Some want to enjoy the world's entertainment, the world's clothing, the world's talking, the world's music, and the world's attitudes, when all of those things violate God's Word and His standard and are clearly unacceptable to God.

1 John 2:15-16¹⁵ *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*¹⁶ *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

1 John 5:19 *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

B. Pursue godly transformation

The word "transformed" is where we get our word "metamorphosis," which means a total change. Matthew used this word to describing the transfiguration of Christ (Mt. 17:2). Our inner redeemed nature is to be seen outwardly in our daily lives. This takes place as we spend time in God's Word and little by little God changes us into the image of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

The renewed mind is saturated and controlled by the Word of God. Too many people are influenced by what they see on Facebook than by what they read in God's Book. Being transformed by the renewing of our mind is a lifelong process (sanctification). God's thoughts become our thoughts. His ways become our ways.

4. We give our will to God

A transformed mind produces a transformed will. This is something else to give God that is implied in the text. To "prove" means to test or approve something by doing it. We learn by experience that God's will is always good and acceptable and perfect. We learn that by submitting to God and His will.

Adam disobeyed God's will in the Garden of Eden ("not thy will, but mine be done.")
Christ obeyed God's will in the Garden of Gethsemane ("not my will, but thine be done.")
Christians pray for God's will to be done in earth. *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*
If we pray like that then we need to live like it. If we're going to pray for God's will to be done, then we must be willing to be a part of the answer.

Christians do God's will on earth. His will is not something we have to do; it's something we want to do and get to do.

Philippians 2:12-13 ¹² *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* ¹³ *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

1 John 2:17 *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

God's will is always good and acceptable and perfect. His will is good, that is, by His definition of good. Someone said: "God's will is what you would always choose if you knew all the facts." His will is "acceptable," a word used in connection with a sacrifice that pleases God. His will is perfect, which means complete or something as it should be. Our imperfect will should submit to His perfect will. All of these gifts are continuing gifts. We keep giving our soul, our body, our mind, and our will to God.

John MacArthur told about a time when he was preaching in a conference about the different between true and false converts. He said a man came to him after the message with tears running down his cheeks and said, "I afraid that I am a false convert." Dr. MacArthur asked him, "What is the deepest desire of your heart? What weighs heaviest on your heart? What occupies your mind and thoughts more than anything else?" The man answered, "My greatest desire is to give all I am and have to Jesus Christ." MacArthur then said, "That is not the desire of a fake Christian. That is the God-given desire of a redeemed soul to become a living sacrifice."