

Study 12

SACRIFICES, STEWARDS, & SERVANTS

Romans 12

In The Group

- ◆ What is one thing that everybody should have on their 'Bucket List'?
- ◆ What's the first thing you would buy if you were given a million US dollars?
- ◆ If you were to write a book, what would it be called?

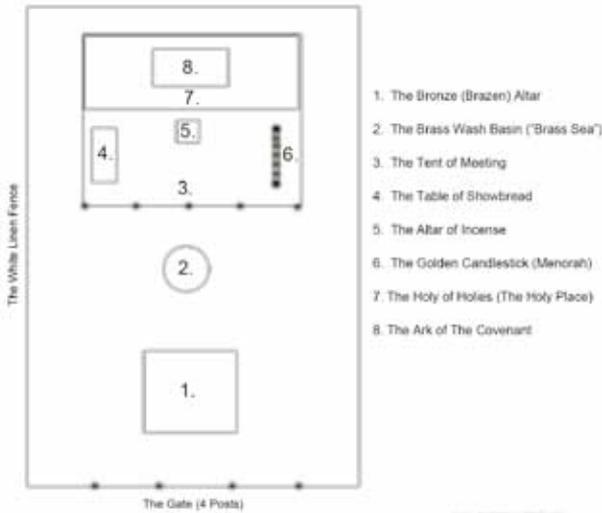
The closing five chapters of Paul's great epistle to the Romans are the practical implications of the theology of salvation which he has just spent the previous eleven chapters expounding. These five chapters might be viewed as book-ended with the believer's obligations to their local church, while the three sandwiched chapters either side of these book-ends can be seen as the implications of this understanding for how the follower of Christ will conduct themselves in the world. Romans 12 falls into three very neat sections: Living Sacrifices (vss. 1-2), Lively Stewards (vss. 3-8), and Loving Servants (vss. 9-21).

SACRIFICES

In some church circles it is common to hear the desperate evangelist appeal for people who have "*made* Christ their Saviour" to also "*make* Him your *Lord!*" The problem with this appeal is that it is grounded in a faulty theology.

1. Based on Romans 12:1, is this the ultimate goal of following Christ, or is it the starting point? How does this understanding affect the desperate evangelist's appeal?
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The Floorplan of the Tabernacle of Moses



Romans 12:1 conjures up a picture of the Tabernacle of Moses. This obscure tent, and its furniture, forms around 40% of the Biblical language from the point it is introduced in Exodus. After entering its fabric gate, the entrant is immediately confronted with the Bronze Altar. An altar was the place where animal sacrifices were burnt as an offering to God. With this in mind, the Apostle says that upon receiving the Gospel (note the ‘four’ posts of the Tabernacle Gate speak of the Gospel going to the ‘four winds of the earth’ [Mark 13:27]) that the now regenerated follower of

Christ must *immediately* lay their life upon the Altar of sacrifice.

2. Why do you think the exhortation in Romans 12:1 calls for the believer to be a “living” sacrifice? Select your answer from the options below -
 - a) Unlike the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant which were killed before being placed on the Altar, and therefore didn’t have a choice, we are called to willingly lay ourselves down on the Altar which involves exercising our freedom to choose to surrender to Christ.
 - b) Under the New Covenant all animal sacrifices by Christians were to be living.
 - c) This foreshadows the rapture of the believer when they will be levitated *alive* up to heaven.

Worship is an act of surrender. Romans 12:1 teaches us that worship is not merely what we do on a Sunday morning or Wednesday night, but what we *do*.

3. If Romans 12:1 primarily involves what we do with our *bodies*, what does Romans 12:2 primarily involve?
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Many Christians are fearful to make decisions in life because they are *unsure* of what the will of God is. Rather than employ the Biblical principles of decision-making (discussed in our Proverbial Wisdom set of Bible studies) they hope that God will just make the decision for them and let them know what that decision is.

4. Based on Romans 12:2, how does the follower of Christ discover ('discern' ESV) what the will of God for their life is?

Following Christ involves thinking differently. Our mind is the pianist while our brain is the piano, wrote the seventeenth century philosopher, Leibniz. Scripture doesn't generally regard the *heart* as independent of the *mind*. In fact, it often uses the terms interchangeably (notice the emphasis on Matthew 22:37; Psalm 26:2). This is why it is incorrect to speak of "head-knowledge" or "heart-knowledge". Scriptures knows nothing of this distinction. What you choose to think about determines how you feel.

STEWARDS

A steward is a manager of someone else's things. God *gifts* His children not so much with the *ability* but with the use of the ability He enables. In other words, the gifts He gives are His, but graced to us for *using* on His behalf.

5. What difference do you think it would make to a local church if it appreciated Romans 12:3-5 better?

Verse 5 introduces the concept of not only differing *gifts* from God but also differing *faith* to utilize these gifts. For some their gifts will be utilized in their small group, for others their gifts may be designed to be utilized in the larger congregation, and still others may be called by God to utilize their gifts beyond their church on a much larger stage. *Faith* in this sense requires *faithfulness* to the call of God to utilize the gifts that in the arena that God has allotted.

6. Some refer to the gifts mentioned in Romans 12:6-8 as *motivational* gifts. Note what these gifts are and share what you consider to be your gift.

The believer's use of spiritual gifts often involves what, where, when. *What* gift has God given me? *Where* am I to use my *gift(s)*? *When* do I need to exercise my gift?

SERVANTS

The opening verses of Romans 12 lay the foundation for following Christ. It's where the Christian walk *begins*. The next few verses is where following Christ becomes a little more difficult because it involves stewarding your time/talent/treasure within the local church. As difficult as it may be, connection with, and involvement in, a local church is one of the most delightful blessings a person can experience. But it is this last section of this chapter that is where Christ-like maturity awaits. Every *imperative* in verses 9-21 was demonstrated by Christ. Consider these imperatives. There are twenty-seven of them. Each of them build on the first two sections of Romans 12 - that is, they can only *begin* to be implemented if a person has surrendered to God and developed a sacrificial lifestyle of worship, *then* they have been planted in a local church whereby they contribute their God-given gifts. Because this last section builds on the foundation Paul has laid, you'll notice that none of them can be practiced in isolation - they demand commitment not only to being a *part* of a local church, but *servicing* within their local church.

7. Noting the imperatives within Romans 12:9-21, which one do you feel God has enabled you to do most often? Can you give a recent example?

8. Conversely, which of these imperatives would you like God to help with most?

9. Which of these gifts do you see evident among those in your small group? Why?

How to be a
Covenant
Community
of Believers
A Study of Romans 12:9-21

* I have also prepared a separate 27 Part Study Series on these 27 imperatives contained within Romans 12:9-21 available in the online Bible Studies section of the website.