

“Thank You”
December 28, 2025
Romans 11:33 - 12:2

I. Introduction

Well, another Christmas has come and gone—for many of us, all that’s left is the cleanup. I hope you all had a good Christmas; a good time with family and friends, eating, celebrating, and exchanging presents. Did you get any surprises? It feels good to get presents but doesn’t it make you feel better to give presents—to see someone else’s eyes light up when they open a present, especially one they weren’t expecting? I suspect that most of us would say that as much as we like receiving, we would rather be able to give presents to others. Isn’t this why we spend so much time and energy in searching for *“just the right gift?”*

What is your response when you do get a present? There are a variety of ways of responding. We may say, “Thank you” and give the person a hug or a kiss. In the Carlson household, since the rest of our family and a lot of our friends are far away, we often call the people we get presents from—so that we can thank them in person. Also, since we are old-school, we take time to send hand-written thank you notes to anyone who gives us a present. If a present is from someone who didn’t see us open it or won’t see us use it, our thanks is usually more descriptive. Just like we all enjoy giving presents, we all enjoy receiving thanks from those to whom we give presents. We like to feel that our efforts and thoughts in coming up with “just the right gift” are appreciated.

On the Sunday after Christmas, it seemed appropriate to talk about God’s gifts to us and saying, “Thank you” to Him. Today’s Scripture is about saying “Thank You” to God for His gifts—not just the gift of Baby Jesus in a manger—but the gifts that come because of that Miraculous Birth. [Rom. 6:23](#) says, **“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** We need to thank God for the gift of eternal life. [Turn to 1 Cor. 3:16-17.](#) Jesus said in [John14:26](#), **“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will**

remind you of everything I have said to you.” We need to thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit who indwells each person who has this eternal life. Then there’s Romans 8:35-39 which finishes by emphasizing that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” These are just a sample of the many gifts God has given us and for which we need to thank Him.

If someone gives you a present—especially a very nice one—don’t you want to do more than just saying, “Thank You”? Don’t you want to return the favor? In today’s Scripture, Paul was saying that the gifts God has given Christians are beyond measure. It’s because of God’s love and God’s mercy for you that Jesus Christ gave His life so that you could have the gift of the forgiveness of sins and have the gift of eternal life. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” And it doesn’t stop there; God watches over you every day; He’s given you the Holy Spirit to help you through the easy days and the difficult days and He has given so many other gifts as well. Eph. 1:3 says, “Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” When you were saved, when you made Jesus your Lord as well as your Savior, you gave your inner self, you gave your soul, to God, but in light of what God has given you, when Paul wrote “therefore,” he was saying that God deserves more.

II. In Gratitude God Deserves

A. Your body Paul began by urging, really he gently commanded, Christians “to offer your bodies as living sacrifices.” That is, in gratitude and in thankfulness for all His gifts beginning with eternal life, God deserves your body. In order to accomplish God’s will on earth, Jesus Christ had to take on Himself a human body. Now we must yield our bodies to Christ so that He might continue to do God’s work but now through us. If God is going to build you and work through you, if you are going to experience the peace that passeth all understanding, if you are going to be content with life, God needs your mouth and head and feet and eyes—He needs all of you! Turn to Romans 6:12-14. In love, we need to give our

bodies to God. God doesn't want to be merely a "part" of our lives; He wants us to be completely committed to Him. In today's Scripture, Paul described how Christians are to offer their bodies:

1. As a living sacrifice First, we are to offer our bodies "**as a living sacrifice.**" A sacrifice is an offering that is given willingly. Paul was urging Christians to give themselves completely and willingly to God. In **Psalm 51:17** David wrote, "**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**" As Christians, we really have no claim on this body. Turn to **1 Corinthians 6:19-20.** Jesus paid the penalty for your sin, now your body really belongs to God. "**Therefore, honor God with your body.**"

Paul added that this sacrifice is a "**living sacrifice.**" As we've discussed before, the problem with being a living sacrifice—compared to the dead sacrifices of the Old Testament—is that living sacrifices tend to crawl off the altar. Because each one of us is a living, breathing being—not a dead sacrifice—we need to continually re-gift—re-give ourselves to God. In **1 Corinthians 15:31** Paul wrote that he died every day; i.e., he gave himself to God daily. Like Paul, we need to continually give ourselves to God. When we offer God the living sacrifices of ourselves, He doesn't destroy what we give Him, but He purifies it and makes it better, not only for His glory but for our present good and our eternal good. **Galatians 5:22-23** says, "**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.**"

2. Holy and pleasing Second, this sacrifice—this living sacrifice—is to be "**holy and pleasing.**" Holy means without blemish or defect—separated from sin. No other sacrifice can be made to God. Just like the Old Testament sacrifices, we are to give God our best—the first fruits. We need to give God our best in terms of talents, abilities, even our time. Bible study and prayer time shouldn't just be when and if we get time but should happen when we are at our best. God deserves nothing 2nd rate—He gave His best for us, He gave His "**one and only Son**" (**John 3:16**). We must do the same. These are the things that are

pleasing (or as the King James Version says “*acceptable*”) to Him. Considering the gifts God has given us, to please Him should be our highest goal; the fact that we do please Him is our highest reward.

3. As your spiritual act of worship Third, this sacrifice “*is your spiritual act of worship.*” I like using the NIV translation, but here in verse 1 is one place where they could have done better. The word “*spiritual*” (or “*reasonable*” in the KJV) comes from the Greek word *λόγος* from which we get the words *logic* and *logical*. In other words, Paul was saying that considering all that God has done for us, the only logical or reasonable action and, therefore, spiritual action is to give our bodies to God. When we recognize God for who He is, when we give our bodies to Him, it honors and pleases God—we are worshipping Him as we serve Him. As a temple of the Holy Spirit, we are to be ready to be used for God’s purpose—to bring honor and glory to His Name and to tell others of His gift for mankind.

B. Your mind Paul went on to say that God deserves more than just your body, He also deserves your mind. It’s in the mind that a person makes choices--choices whether to allow one’s body to act in sin or to allow the new nature to control one in holiness.

The world is constantly trying to get us to conform, to be like everyone else. It wants to control us. It is trying to squeeze us or pressure us into being just like them in our attitudes and behaviors. Look at what it is trying to do to bakers and florists and photographers and others who don’t want to take part in a homosexual wedding. The world tries to force each one of us to conform and adopt the world’s entertainment and music, the world’s fashions, the world’s vocabulary, the world’s attitudes, priorities, and morals—even—perhaps the word should be “*especially*”—when those things clearly do not conform to the standards of God’s Word. As Christians, we must not become victims or puppets of the world.

When Paul wrote, “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed,*” he was saying that rather than letting the world mold us or squeeze us from the outside, we are to be transformed from the inside. Paul used the Greek word *metamorfo,w* (metamorphoo) which is our word “*metamorphosis.*” Paul was saying that Christians are to undergo a metamorphosis. Just as a caterpillar

gradually changes into a beautiful butterfly from the inside out—it undergoes metamorphosis, we are to be transformed from the inside out, too.

This transformation can only occur “[by the “renewing of your mind.”](#)” This change is brought about by the Holy Spirit. [Turn to 2 Corinthians 3:18.](#) Paul wrote in [Philippians 3:12](#), “[Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”](#) This transformation is a continuing process—we are never going to be “[done](#)” until we get to heaven. But we must allow the Holy Spirit to change us. This is why [Eph. 5:18](#) says to “[be filled with the Spirit.”](#)

In [Psalm 119:11](#) David wrote, “[I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”](#) Using God’s Word, the Holy Spirit is able to renew our minds, which will then transform our whole being. Then, as [Colossians 3:2](#) says, our renewed mind will be “[set on things above and not earthly things.”](#) Just like Jesus was able to answer Satan in the Wilderness with words from God, we will be able to resist falling to temptation as we respond with God’s words.

C. Your will In thankfulness and gratitude, God deserves your body, your mind, and, finally, God deserves your will. Your mind controls your body, and your will controls your mind. No matter how hard one tries, “*will power*” is not enough to overcome temptation. In [Romans 7:15](#) the Apostle Paul cried, “[I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”](#) It is only when we surrender our will to God that we will have the Power—God’s power—to be victorious Christians. [Philippians 4:13](#) says, “[I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”](#) We need to surrender our will to God and pray as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane in [Luke 22:42](#), “[Not my will, but yours be done.”](#)

This is the only way we can test and approve God’s will—this is the only way to know what God wants and then to be able to do it. With the Spirit’s help, we will be able to put aside our plans and, in faith, accept God’s good and pleasing plans, no matter the cost. We know that God’s plans are good and

pleasing and perfect, but we need to do more than just “*know it*,” we must act on it and yield to Him. God will not force us into anything; He does not dominate our wills but allows us to choose to obey His will.

III. Conclusion

This morning as we remember Christmas and God’s gifts to us, I would challenge you to do more than that. Don’t just **remember** those gifts; daily, willingly give God your body, your mind, and your will as well as your soul to be used for His honor and His glory. “**This is your spiritual act of worship.**”

If you haven’t ever accepted God’s gift of eternal life, today’s sermon hasn’t really been for you. You have nothing to thank God for. You can choose to accept Jesus’ sacrifice for your sins, and have eternal life in heaven, or you can refuse God’s gift and spend eternity in hell. It was Jesus—not Pastor Steve or TBC—it was Jesus who said, in **John 14:6, “I am the Way, the Truth, the Light, no man comes to the Father except through me.”** He is the only way you can have eternal life.

God in His wisdom created each one of us with free will. For that reason, you have a choice whether or not to give God your body, mind, and soul—but remember in **Matthew 12:30** Jesus said, “**He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.**” And in **Matthew 6:24** Jesus said, “**No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.**” So, who is your master? Who controls your body, your mind, your will? Have you given yourself to God in complete surrender? When you consider what God has given you as a gift—He gave the best and all He had—shouldn’t you do the same in return?

Let me close by rereading **Romans 12:1-2**; this time I’m reading from the “*New Living Translation*: “**And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-- the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.**”