

Romans 12:1-2 Conformed or Transformed

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Intro: Do you ever feel like you are constantly living under Pressure?

A) Do you ever feel like you are constantly being squeezed on all sides?

B) The reality is you are? – In fact that is exactly the idea that Paul has in mind in V.2 of our text – do not be conformed to this world

C) J.B Phillips accurately translates that verse – Don't let the world try and squeeze you into it's mold.

But that is exactly what the world is seeking to do to us on a daily basis

A) To squeeze us into it's mold – it's mindset

B) Through the media – through its ideologies, through the view of what is considered PC – 1) and through Peer pressure.

C) The Mold of the world is to live free of God – to live for self!

Every day in one way or another the World is try to squeeze us and pressure us into living that way!

A) We have seen already in our Study of Romans 8:29 God has something entirely different in mind for us!

B) He doesn't want us to be conformed to this world – but He is seeking to transform us into the image of his son.

C) Transform= Metamorpho – Jesus on the mount of transfiguration

1) Glory on the inside – reflected on the outside

D) Change on the inside that is reflected on the outside.

1) Picture of the Caterpillar – goes into the cocoon and emerges as a Butterfly

So the question is – How does that transformation happen? – See in our text!

A) 1st The Motive for this transformation: Therefore brethren – by the mercies of God

B) Therefore is looking back to the past 11 chapters – the past 315 verses of the book of Romans

1) Paul has outlined very clearly – the Depravity of man – All lost – all sinners –

2) Moral vs immoral, religious, non -religious – MISSED MARK

C) He also explained how God in his grace and mercy – rescued fallen man

1) Grace = Getting what you don't deserve –

2) Mercy is not getting what you do deserve

D) We deserved Judgment – God Gave us mercy

So in Response to God's incredible mercies – note plural – not just the Cross –

A) But every time – God didn't give you what you deserved

B) IN Response to those mercies – The means of transformation: You present yourselves to God as a living sacrifice

C) The metaphor he uses is that of a worshiper at the temple who comes in with an offering.

D) Now, some offerings in the Old Testament were “sin offerings,” in which the worshiper was shedding blood and asking forgiveness.

1) But Jesus is our sin offering -Gave himself once and for all – no need of another sacrifice.

E) Therefore, the offering Paul points to is not a sin offering.

The second kind of offering was a “whole burnt offering,” which was a valuable animal from your flock.

A) It had to be without defect (holy and without blemish).

B) Why? Such an animal was expensive!

C)It showed that all you had was at God's disposal—you did not give God your leftovers!

1)And The burnt offering was always **burnt totally** and it represented complete consecration and devotion to God.

To present ourselves to God as a “living sacrifice” is to be fully at God's disposal.

A)It means, to actively, and willingly obey God in anything he says in any area of life;

B)Another way Paul communicates the idea of totality or entirety is by urging his readers to offer their “bodies.”

1)This was probably startling to Greco-Roman readers, who were brought up to believe that the body was **negative and bad**,

2)and that spirituality involved cultivating the mind and soul.

C)Paul is saying that God does not want a purely inward and abstract worship, but a practical and total one.

1)He wants us to give him everything we do. We are not to give God the leftovers!

John Stott writes:

“Paul made it plain, in his exposure of human depravity in 3:13ff, that it reveals itself through our bodies, in tongues which practise deceit and lips which spread poison, in mouths which are full of cursing and bitterness, in feet which are swift to shed blood, and in eyes which look away from God. Conversely, Christian sanctity shows itself in the deeds of the body. So we are to offer different parts of our bodies ... to God as ‘instruments of righteousness’ (6:13, 16, 19). Then our feet will walk in his paths, our lips will speak the truth and spread the gospel, our tongues will bring healing, our hands will lift up those who have fallen ... our arms will embrace the lonely and the unloved, our ears will listen to the cries of the distressed, and our eyes will look humbly and patiently towards God.”

(The Message of Romans, page 322)

The word “living” may also mean that the sacrifice is a constant thing. The word “sacrifice” actually means “to kill.”

A)That makes it a “living killing!” It means we must continually renew our position as wholly obedient and at God's disposal.

B)See a living sacrifice as opposed to a dead sacrifice can take himself off the altar –

1)Which is why in order for transformation to take place – this has to be a daily practice – **My life on the altar – My heart on the Altar**

C)It is what Jesus meant when he said that a follower of his “must deny himself and take up his cross daily and ... [lose] his life” (Luke 9:23–24).

D)So The Christian life is to be a daily giving over of our lives and our bodies in obedience to God, motivated by the view of God's tender mercies

Notice that Paul calls this – V1b our reasonable Service or Worship

A)Reasonable = Logical – this makes sense.

B)Makes perfect sense in light of God's mercies –

1)When I fully realize what Jesus did for me – the logical response – to present myself fully to Him

C)And to be truthful – whenever we are reluctant to present ourselves to him as a living sacrifice

1)Or whenever we start to feel like we can't really trust him with our lives –

D)it is because we have lost sight of the magnitude of His Mercy, grace – Sacrifice

Paul declared back in Romans 8 – God already gave you his best Jesus

A)Do you think – he is going to leave you hanging now. Not logical –

I am going to give everything I have to make you mine – Save – you and make sure you are going to heaven.

A)Do you think I am going to not make sure that happens now – since I already sacrificed that which was most precious to me.

B)That would make God foolish!

C)Notice how we are to Present ourselves as this living sacrifice - Holy and acceptable

“Holy ... to God” describes the quality of the life we should pursue. “Acceptable or Pleasing to God” describes its results.

A)The gospel radically reorients our aim in life, so that we are no longer hoping and seeking to please others, or even ourselves, but our Father.

B) We are living now for an audience of ONE – GOD!

1) As Paul put it to the Thessalonian church: **“We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts”**

(1 Thessalonians 2:4).

C) The gospel both motivates and frees us to live lives that please our Creator.

1) In the gospel, we find that trusting in Christ brings God’s full and complete favor and approval.

D) The Spirit changes us from those whose minds were “hostile to God” (Romans 8:7)

1) to those whose real natures desire to love and serve God (7:22).

God sees the believer, IN CHRIST

A) **Therefore he says of us what He said of Jesus – I am well pleased with you!**

B) **Knowing that is how God sees us – His heart toward us – we can live in a way that pleases God – knowing He is pleased with us**

1) I don’t have to live in order to earn God’s favor – but I live as one who knows – I have it – I am accepted in the beloved

C) **That is the Motivation for Giving myself – to God as a living Sacrifice**

1) **My motivation for seeking to live a Holy Life**

D) Bible Commentator Timothy Keller – gives this analogy – Romans study

“God’s approval liberates us to live in a way which God approves of. We are his children, by his grace—in view of this, we long to please the God who is pleased with us.

Imagine a father watching his young son play baseball for his team, having spent hours in the yard teaching him batting technique. This father already loves his son fully and completely. If his son forgets his father’s instructions and strikes out, it will in no way lessen his father’s love for him or approval of him. The son is assured of his father’s love, regardless of his performance.

But the son will still long to hit that home run. Not for himself to gain his father’s love—but for his father, because he is already loved. If he doesn’t know his father loves him, his efforts will be for himself—to win that love.

But because he knows his father already loves him, his efforts are for his father—to please him.”

“So Having a good view of God’s mercy provides us with both a powerful assurance, and the possibility of and motivation to live a sacrificially obedient life, pleasing to God.”

So Transformation happens as we present ourselves daily to the Lord as a living sacrifice.

A) **V.2 Paul tells us it also happens as our mind is being renewed**

B) **How is our mind renewed?**

C) **Transformation is not switching from the to-do list of the flesh to the to-do list of the law.**

D) **I point this out for this reason: to make the point that the nonconformity to the world does not primarily mean the external avoidance of worldly behaviors.**

E) **That’s included. But you can avoid all kinds of worldly behaviors and *not* be transformed.**

The problem with the mind:

A) **In Ephesians 4:23 Paul uses a striking phrase to parallel Romans 12:2 He says, “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds.”**

B) **“The spirit of your mind.” what is that?**

1) It means at least this: the human mind is not a sophisticated computer managing data, which it then faithfully presents to the heart for appropriate emotional responses.

B) **The mind has a “spirit.” In other words, our mind has what we call a “mindset.”**

1) It doesn’t just have a view, it has a viewpoint. It doesn’t just have the power to perceive and detect;

2) It also has a posture, a demeanor, a bearing, an attitude, a bent. “Be renewed in the *spirit* of your mind.”

C) The problem with our minds is not merely that we are finite, and don’t have all the information.

1) The problem is that our minds are fallen.

D) **They have a spirit, a bent, a mindset that is hostile to the absolute supremacy of God.**

1) Our minds are bent on not seeing God as infinitely more worthy of praise than we are, or the things *we* make or achieve.

E) Describing our former condition apart from Christ – Paul refers to the mind as debased – Roman 1:28 – Willfully ignorant – Romans 1:18

1) We were walking in the futility of our minds and had our understanding darkened – Ephesians 4:17-18

That was the condition of our Minds prior to coming to Christ

A) We need our minds renewed – a spiritual and moral realignment! = Transformation

B) The Primary means of renewal is the Holy Spirit of God working through the word of God – 1) renews the Mind!

C) But the Renewing and transforming of the mind doesn't simply occur through Bible study or Bible memorization

1) A person can know 100's of Bible verses and Bible truths

D) The Key to transformation is to see Jesus in the Scriptures

when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:16-18

Transformation happens when we see Jesus

A) He is the goal of all Bible Study

B) **“Lo, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of me!”** Hebrews 10:7

C) The Key to Bible study is to see Jesus – to catch his heart!

“In the beginning,” John wrote, “was the Word... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14).

A) It's the Incarnation—the Word becoming flesh, becoming personable, touchable, and relatable—that will transform you. – Jon Courson

B) If you approach the Word strictly from an intellectual, academic, theological perspective, 1) you might gain a point or two, but you'll not be changed.

C) It is when we see Jesus – His person captures our hearts that transformation happens

The final phrase of verse 2 reveals another effect of pursuing God in this way

that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

A) The *New English Bible* says it best: “Then you will be able to *discern* the will of God, and to *know* what is good, acceptable, and perfect” (italics added).

B) Life on the Altar allows us to perceive what God's will is.

Alexander Maclaren expressed it like this:

“To know beyond doubt what I ought to do, and knowing to do it, seems to me to be heaven on earth, and the man that has it needs but little more.”

Alexander Maclaren

“The one who is committed to God sees life with a sure eye. He knows God's will. And he finds God's will to be “good, pleasing and perfect.” While the careless and uncommitted are in confusion.” R Kent Hughes

So Transformation happens as we

#1 Live in view the mercies of God.

Overwhelmed by what Jesus has done for us – Mercies new every morning –

God is for us – Forever – faithful to complete the work He has begun

#2 Remind ourselves that the only rational response to God's mercy is to give ourselves completely to Him!

#3 To Remember that our minds need continual renewing by God's Spirit through God's word as we seek to see Jesus and meet with Jesus in the Scriptures