

## Men's Bible Study – January 3, 2024

Romans 12:1-2 NASB

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

### Context

Paul was coming to the end of his argument for the church in Rome. It appears he had written himself into a rabbit hole. He was in a tough situation. He was dancing between the two major groups in the church, and I don't mean between the pagans and the Christians, but between the Jews and the Gentiles. He was a Jew talking to both Jews and Gentiles. He was trying to be relevant to both. He had to bring understanding to those who were hardened, broken branches, and lumps into God's plan. Further he had to show to the Gentiles that the Jews were not to be isolated because of the seeming complicity with the crucifixion of Jesus.

Yes, the Jews for the most part had rejected the promised Messiah. To sooth his countrymen, Paul had to tell them that this rejection, this disregard to the scriptures and prophecy, was a good thing. Their hardness had opened the gospel to the world.

To the Gentiles it did not seem "fair" that the rejectors would be given a second chance. When Paul wrote, "All Israel would be saved", it was not reasonable to those who had accepted Jesus without breaking any know law.

1. He started this entire letter by pointing out five groups.
  - The saints or redeemed who overcame all prejudice and came together into one body of believers full of acceptance and love.
  - The Roman woke, trying as hard as they can to reconcile Rome and their idiosyncratic and sometime arbitrary laws into a inclusionary belief structure. They tried to go along to get along.
  - The Intellectual Greek, the smart ones who spend all their time artfully discussing the minutia of theology without seeing the big picture.
  - The Alexandrian Jews who came to Rome to find prosperity, and acceptance. They had given up temple worship because of the distance and the teachings of the Pharisees of keeping the Law as being the method of pleasing God. They were skeptical of any new ideas or change.
  - The forced labor Jewish slaves. Brought to Rome in bondage with a dependance upon a covenant given to the Patriarchs. Seeing their distinctiveness in their ethnicity.

2. Paul had slowly and purposefully funneled them into two groups: The Jews and the Gentiles. He pulled them together with logic, hope and promise. But the divide seemed to just lessen somewhat.
3. In conclusion of the division discussion, pinpointed the need for all the church was simply we are all saved by God's mercy.

As he concluded with chapter eleven in an effort to protect the Sovereignty of God, Paul points to this rejection as a part of God's plan. To these two groups he set before them a quandary. How do we reconcile God's sovereignty, God's authority, God's autonomy, and God's control with man's ability to make any decision he may want and, in these decisions, reap a responsibility. How to you put together the idea of a chosen people to become fallen people.

It is a riddle, wrapped in a enigma, and filled with mystery.

To this Paul simply changes the subject.

## Discussion Questions

What is the "therefore" there for? There is little understanding of the scripture before us without a review of what is concluded in Chapter 11 or for that matter the entire book.

### Table Talk:

1. What one important doctrine have you learned from the first 11 chapters of Romans? If you can't remember check out the APPENDIX at the end of this study guide.
2. How can you make an application from this doctrine?

## Romans 12:1,2

### Exposition

There are three sections in our study tonight:

- The encouragement to present.
- Transformation of our minds.
- Understanding and apprehension of God's will for us.

Remember this thought throughout this study:

**BECAUSE HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR YOU IN DEATH, SO GIVE YOUR LIFE FOR HIM IN LIFE.**

1. Encouragement to present.

There are specific phrases or words that must be understood as they are unbreakable from the context.

- **Therefore:** Then, so then, accordingly, these things are being assumed as true. Paul was saying we must move on. Yes it is difficult to understand the mysteries of God but we have to accept them as true. They have not change, they will not change, they are

absolute, they are the picture of perfection that is His nature. The context of this word is the prior 11 chapters.

- **I encourage you:** This phrase reminds a specific group. To the **Brethren**. This admonition is to Christians. Chapters 9, 10, 11 written expressly to the Jews in the Church. Chapter 12 is addressed to all Christians.

We cannot expect unbelievers to live our way. If you want to live in a Christian culture everyone needs to be saved. I don't think that will happen. We can evangelize as many as possible but ultimately sinners will do what they do best: SIN. We as Christians cannot expect sinners to live like we do. We cannot expect the world to surrender.

Romans 12:1,2 is only for those who profess, and live like Christians.

- Paul makes this appeal based upon specific truths, by the **Mercies of God**. This is the mystery. That God looking onto mankind and knowing they will make bad choices, they would reject his Love, they would walk their own paths. Yet, God is still offering, God is still there knocking upon the door. Contrary to the vile, terrible, rebellion of all men, God is there offering mercy. The unmerited favor of love and compassion. The whole of Chapter 11 spoke of Israel past, present, and future. Romans 11:36 **“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. AMEN.”** It is God's pity, his compassion that motivates grace. Not the terrible and sometime ghastly things Israel had done in the name of God, but God's grace. It is not the good things, the blood of bulls and goats, and acts of distinctive worship, but God's grace. Paul was stating as a fact, that God has leveled the playing field. No more would he talk about division. No longer would he tolerate any discussion of the topic. For eleven chapters he described with God's mercy has done and will do for those who come to faith.

These truths, these Mercies of God is what God has done and expressed in the eleven chapters set before us in 32 lessons. God's mercies is what God has done:

- God has forgiven us
- God has declared us righteous
- God has made us His children
- God has made great and precious promises.
  - **All things work together for good for those who love God and are called to his purpose?**
  - **He did not spare His Son but delivered Him up for us, how much more will He give us all things?**
- Now in chapter 12 Paul begins by saying simply: NOW IT IS YOUR TURN. There are those, more than I want to admit, who are there to get. Parable of the monkey and coconut. So busy living in the moment of grace there is little attention to the responsibility of Christianity. I can almost imagine the little Roman church listening to these words for the first time. Paul starts with **Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God** and both sides simply turn off their ears. They don't want to hear the rest.

To the Gentile's the expectation is that Paul would give a list of things that have to be done, a list of actions, a list of things they must do. A new listing of laws. To become more Jewish in doing for God. But Paul did not say, "give to the poor", or "live with special clothes", or to cross yourself in the prescribed way", or only to "sing spiritual songs." But no. Paul does not give new rituals or expected actions.

To the Jews listening in, their expectation was just the opposite. They thought Paul was going to tell them to give it all up. Become like the Gentiles, rest in skepticism, life live like without tradition or covenant.

Instead the admonition was neither. It was time to graduate from school and was their time to stop being taught and to **become** the thing we already are. It was time to take all that book learning, the theology lessons in the first eleven chapters and become something completely different from their Gentileness or their Jewishness.

- Without the **Presentation of our lives** then we are only getters.
  - If I am saved, it is something I have received.
  - If I am forgiven, it is something I have received.
  - If I am justified, it is something I have received.
  - If I am a child of God, it is something I have received.
  - If I have a new path, it is something I have received.
  - If I have a new inheritance, it is something I have received.
  - If I have Jesus in my heart, it is something I have received.
  - If I am unified with my brethren, it is something I have received.
  - If I now have a destiny, it is something I have received.
  - If I have a call to be more, it is something I have received.
  - If I am more, it is something I have received.
  - If I am a new creature, it is something I have received.

We get it, we got it, now it is done. All this is Chapters 1-11. Paul is telling us to be aware of all that went before. The call is to keep Chapter 1-11 in mind as Paul shows you a more excellent way of being.

- Chapters 1,2,3 – We are under God's wrath, but we were proclaimed righteous.
- Chapter 4 – We are justified freely by faith, just by believing in God like Abraham.
- Chapter 5 – We have access to God at all times, there is a hope in heaven and in our own trials and problems God is still alive and well and is helping.
- Chapter 6,7,8 – We are slaves freed from law, sin and adopted. He is living inside of us.
- Chapter 9,10,11 – Look at all the promises God has given to Israel and know He will always keep is promises.

Eleven chapters are the mercies of God. This is what he reminds the Church of. Take all this and lay in on the scales and see who has done more. Like going into a Lamborghini showroom in my old truck and say to the dealer, "I will trade you straight across."

Because of all that God has done, will do, and is doing: LIVE LIKE THIS. Live like you are saved, justified, declared righteous, going to heaven, have victory in turmoil, freed from

sin, freed from the law, freed to be adopted, and knowing God will do what He said he will do.

Chapter 12 is the graduation ceremony. It is the transition from getting to giving. You are done with education and now it is time to go to work. Chapters 1-11 are your lessons, Chapter 12 is your diploma. Go and do something with it. Don't sit in church and watch video games but make a difference.

**Present to God.** Here God take. I offer it up, not because of all you have done in expectations of more and better but simply I can do no other.

## 2. Transformation of our minds.

- So what are we to do with mercy? **Sacrifice.** To become a giver of grace. To become what God wants. To give up something because of the act of Grace already given to us. Notice here there are four descriptors of this sacrifice:
  - **Living sacrifice:** There is a contrast here between the dead sacrifices of the Jewish law and life lived in consecration. The lamb was slain on a Jewish altar, it was done again and again and again. It was never enough. Jesus was slain on a Roman cross, dead, and alive again.
  - **Holy sacrifice:** What strikes me here is that we seldom call ourselves holy. Holy describes the type of sacrifice we are to make in response to God's mercy. At times in our lives, we don't feel very holy. Nevertheless, not only is holiness possible it is mandatory. **"Without holiness, no man shall see God."** Without holiness there is no sacrifice. Without holiness all that we do is without worth. It avails us nothing. All the singing in church, all the attention we give the Pastor when he preaches are for nothing unless you are holy. So how do we get there?
  - This sacrifice is now described in the context of your life. **Spiritual Worship.** This is a spiritual offering. It is not the body but the **spirit.** It is not what you do but how you view it. Can I drive my old truck as an act of Spiritual Worship? You know I can. I can look out for the other guy; I can set an example to others. I can be tolerant of other drivers' attitudes and habits. "We all have some place to go." Spiritual worship is living, holy, and acceptable. I can do spiritual worship when I stop and listen to someone who irritates me. I can do spiritual worship when I take out the garbage. No longer are we to think and act as pagans, Jews, Gentiles, Romans or any other group. Spiritual worship means everything you do is worship.
- So how do we get there? There is a contrast between conformity and **transformation.** You can't know what is reasonable, or what is spiritual, or holy without transformation. What is stark here in this comparison is as long as you are **conformed to this world,** you can not be transformed. Conformance is a matter of the mind. It is a decision made based upon the input from your body and spirit. To conflicting parts.
  - The body would have you protect yourself from harm. To keep warm, to eat, to prevent injury.
  - The spirit would you **seek first the kingdom of God.**

Transformation comes a change of the decision-making process. Our minds must be changed from conformity to a standard set by the world to one set by God.

3. Understanding and apprehension of God's will for us.
  - It is only in sacrifice is there understanding of God's will. Because when our minds have been transformed to the image of God by a complete remake, then and only then will you know, discern, examine, for genuine, for the proof of and deem worthy, worthy interpreted as **living, holy, spiritual, and reasonable will of God**. You will be able to figure it all out. To be able to test all things. To prove to yourself and to others what God wants for you. We will be able to walk every moment in the worship of God in all things.
  - To ultimately keep the Will of God because it is **Good, Acceptable, and perfect**.
    - Good** that it is God's nature in you filling you with joy, happiness, excellent, upright, not evil, and honorable.
    - Acceptable** that is seen by God as exactly what he wants from you. It is well pleasing.
    - Perfect** in that is well made, mature and finished.

## Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the mercies of God that Paul spoke about throughout Roman's 1-11?
  2. In your current season of life, how are you living in response to God's mercies? (Rejecting them, Ignoring them, devoted to them)
  3. In verse 1, what does Paul urge his fellow Christians to do? Discuss why it can be difficult to be fully devoted to God.
  4. What are differences in living a conformed life vs a transformed life?
  5. In V2 Paul says to be transformed by the renewal of your mind. What are practical ways that you fill your mind with Jesus?
  6. As a believer, how are you able to discern what the will of God is?
  7. Are you willing to be a living sacrifice? Is there something that you are unwilling to give up?
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## Commentary and research

We all seem to be created to conform. To fit in. To be a part of a group. To be a part of a distinctive social structure. Nevertheless, I often find myself saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. The old ONE TWO. One open mouth, Two place foot in mouth.

I see myself mostly as being outside of the norm. I often push into conversations when I should simply be quiet. There have also been times when I have somewhat conformed to an image, an expectation, set by others. Several times I have conformed in the hope of being seen as normal. I have used that new aftershave for men called, "acquiescence". There have been times that I simply resign myself to the norm. Standing out seems a little risky. We all have tried to fit in somewhere. We stand in church because we are asked, and we do so because we don't want others to think we are not a part of the worship experience. We do not like the judgement we see in other eyes when we simply don't get up on que.

The television and social media seem to set a high bar if you want to be a part:

Clothes we should not wear after 50.  
Ten cool things we should watch on Prime Video.  
We all need to sleep better so buy this new product.  
Buy this newest gadget to make your life easier.  
The Green generation will save the world from global warming.  
Vote for Biden because Trump is a criminal.  
Vote for Trump because Biden is senile.

These are real headlines, telling us what we should be reading, watching, wearing and thinking. Magazines and newspapers are filled with shoulds and should nots, musts and must nots. We read these articles to find out how much time our children should be spending on the internet, or even what we should be wearing in any given situation. We listen to the latest podcast to make sure we're doing the same as everyone else. We read to make sure we fit in.

As an example, when we were children on the playground, we first notice the differences between ourselves and other children, and we start to mirror the behavior of a dominant group in order to be accepted by them. This conformity continues into adulthood, and we often unintentionally alter our speech patterns, our expressions and even the tone of our voice, depending on who we're talking to. Familiarity is the social glue that bonds people together, and we deliberately seek out the similar and the recognizable in order to feel secure. If we're doing the same as everyone else, we must be doing it right, and finding a reflection of ourselves in those around us is a form of validation.

The need for acceptance is a basic human instinct – although some value it more than others. We all want to fit in, to belong. To achieve conformance, we often present slightly different versions of who we are, depending on the environment and whose company we are in. We might have numerous 'editions' of ourselves – for work, or at home, or even online. All tweaked and modified to be accepted in that situation.

There are exceptions to the rule of conformity. Next time you get into an elevator, don't turn around and face the door. Instead look intently into the eyes of all the other passengers. Look how uncomfortable they become. It is not normal.

I believe conformity is caused not by our internal fallen nature. Conformity is always caused by our actions and reactions to other people. It is learned behavior. It is a mindset that has been nurtured from the very beginning of life. The first time we cry it is a natural reaction to being born. But we also learn if we cry enough, it will motivate someone to fill our perceived need. In a nursery in a large hospital when one baby cries it prompts all the other babies to cry.

Not wanting to go too deep there are two reasons for conformity:

1. **Informational influence** happens when people change their behavior in order to be correct. In situations where we are unsure of the correct response, we often look to others who are more knowledgeable and use their lead as a guide for our own behaviors.
2. **Normative influence** stems from a desire to avoid punishments and gain rewards. For example, an individual might behave in a certain way in order to get people to like them.

Paul probably had a hint of the tenants of practical Psychology. But our scripture seems to say there is a conflict in how we should live our lives. This conflict is simply conflict between CONFORMITY and TRANSFORMATION.

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Why do we conform? I believe and there is much scripture to back me up, that God cares more about your mind than your lifestyle. More about your attitudes than your actions. More about your spiritual worship than your works. More about your understanding than your utterances. More about the object of your worship than the objects you may own. More about what is inside of us than what is happening to us.

Things have an impact on our lives only when our minds allow it. There is a war going on out there. A war for your minds. The war is between the world and God and the battlefield is in the minds of men.

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It was once said, "if a man eating lion was running rampant in America, he would eventually die of starvation."

This scripture tonight is about you and me. Being the men we should be. This new year we should covenant together to be the men God wants. Men that are not willing to conform to an image of unisex, green climate change, politically correctness, mamby pamby wimps, politically correct stuffed suits all just getting along making no waves.

God needs men willing to be compassionate in strength, to love without sentimentality. God and our country need men to be men of the Bible. Men who will stand up for the right things and not winking at evil.

I have in my time on this earth some men who are men not because they are old. Men become men when they stand up for more than just themselves but the weak and the helpless. Men become men when they see wrong and call it out. I have seen men at the age of sixteen. I have met men who are men and have never shaved. Age has nothing to do with being a man. But conversely I have met 35 year old boys.

We need men who are dependent upon God. We need men who are called to be heads of households with Jesus as the leader if all. We need me to seek to become the very image of Jesus in our world.

First Corinthians 16:13,14 **"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."**

Men seem to have vacated our place. Men have become like Sasquatch, lots of footprints but never to be found.

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## APPENDIX

The first 11 chapters of Romans cover many important doctrines, such as:

1. The universal sinfulness and condemnation of all people, both Jews and Gentiles, and their need for God's righteousness (Romans 1:18-3:20).



2. The justification by faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose again, and the imputation of His righteousness to us (Romans 3:21-5:21).
3. The sanctification by the Holy Spirit, who sets us free from the power of sin and enables us to live a holy life (Romans 6:1-8:17).
4. The glorification of the children of God, who have a sure hope of eternal life and share in the inheritance of Christ (Romans 8:18-39).
5. The sovereignty of God over the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, and His faithfulness to His promises and His elect (Romans 9:1-11:36).

## Words: it is all Greek to me!

Key words in our scripture as translated from the original language of Greek.

**Urge**                    **parakalēō**

to ask, beg, plead; to comfort, encourage, exhort, urge; to call, invite

**Brethren**            **adelphós**

brother, fellow countryman, neighbor (often inclusive in gender); by extension a fellow believer in the family of faith; in the plural brothers regularly refers to men and women

**Mercies**              **oiktirmós**

compassion, pity, mercy as in bowels in which compassion resides, a heart of compassion. emotions, longings, manifestations of pity

**Present**              **parístēmi**

to place beside, put at disposal; to present, make an offering; to stand before, provide, come to aid.

**Sacrifice**            **thysía**

a sacrifice, victim, offering

**Holy**                    **hágios**

sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated): - (most) holy (one, thing), saint.

**Acceptable**        **logikós**

Divinely reasonable; pertaining to the reason or logic, spiritual, pertaining to the soul agreeable to reason, following reason, reasonable, logical

**Service**              **latreía**

ministration of God, that is, worship; service rendered for hire, any service or ministration: the service of God, the service and worship of God according to the requirements of the Levitical law, to perform sacred services

**Conformed**        **syschēmatízō**

to conform to a pattern or mold; (pass.) to be conformed to a pattern or mold; to conform one's self (i.e. one's mind and character) to another's pattern, (fashion one's self according to)

**Transformed**      **metamorphóō**

to be transformed, transfigured, changed in form; to change into another form, to transform, to transfigure as an example of Christ appearance was changed and was resplendent with divine brightness on the mount of transfiguration.

**Renewing**          **anakainōsis**

a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better

**Prove**                **dokimázō**

to test, examine, prove, scrutinise (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals;

to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy

**Good**            **agathós**

one who does good or good as a positive quality (vs. bad), good as a moral quality (vs. evil)

**Acceptable**    **euárestos**

pleasing, acceptable

**Perfect**        **téleios**

brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect

that which is perfect; consummate human integrity and virtue of men; full grown, adult, of full age, mature.

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Next week:

Read Romans 12:3-8

Make notes as to any words or ideas that are not immediately clear to you.

Pray for the Men in your church to take leadership in their homes.