

Romans 12:1-2 Answers Conformed or Transformed?

Introduction: Today we launch into a new section of Romans: Service (Ro 12-16). Paul will detail our service in relation to God (12:1-2), other believers (12:3-16), our enemies (12:17-21) and the government (13:1-14). Romans 1 -11 is the “what”. Romans 12-16 is the “so what”. If you really believe Romans 1 – 11, then *this* (Ro 12-16) will be true in your life. Romans 1-11 is the foundation and Romans 12-16 the superstructure.

Transformers: There is/was a kid’s toy called a transformer, wherein a toy car turns into a robot. Today we will study about being Christian transformers. Verses 1-2 is the theme of this whole new section, the key to understanding the parts that follow (Cranfield, p. 595).

******In light of everything we’ve studied in Romans so far, what are we urged to do (12:1-2)?**

We are to **1)** present our bodies as a living sacrifice, **2)** not be conformed to the world and **3)** be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Word Study: “Appeal” (12:1) is from *parakaleo*; *para* means alongside and *kaleo* means to call; it originally was to call someone alongside to help you. Here it means to exhort, to encourage (Thayer #3870). The Greek word has an urgency and earnestness about it; it is an authoritative summons (Cranfield,p. 597).

1. What is the therefore there for? To what does therefore refer (12:1)? The therefore links back to the information in the previous chapters. What we are about to read follows from what has already been written (Cranfield, p. 595). God has been merciful to us; He has shown us grace; He has not treated us as our sins deserve; He has paid for our sins and given us His righteousness; “therefore” do this.

John Calvin pointed out that we will never worship God with a sincere heart until we really understand how much we are indebted to Him for His mercy (Cranfield, p. 596).

2. What are the mercies of God (12:1)? See 11:30-32. Mercy is from *oiktirmos* and means compassion or pity (Thayer #3628). God’s “mercies” effectively sums up Romans 1-11, especially **11:30-32**. Paul is telling us how we should respond to God’s mercy.

“By”: The preposition “by” (*dia* used with genitive) indicates the source of power needed: the mercies of God. God’s mercy motivates and empowers us to present our bodies to God.

How many bodies do you have? Each of us has only one. Yet notice the word bodies is plural in the text and the word sacrifice is singular. Perhaps there is a corporate aspect to this; we are all in it together as God’s people and all together we offer our bodies as a single sacrifice.

Bodies: We are to present our bodies as a sacrifice (12:1). This would include our entire personality. Calvin states, “By bodies he means not only our skin and bones but the totality of

which we are composed. He adopted this word that he might more fully designate all that we are, for the members of the body are the instruments by which we carry out our purposes” (Hendriksen, p. 401).

3. We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (12:1). Living as opposed to _____ (what)? In the Old Testament sacrificial system, sacrifices were killed and blood spilled.

Someone once said it is one thing to die for Christ as a martyr, but a whole lot harder to live for Him every day. Of course every sacrifice was living when it was presented, but we as living sacrifices are to live lives devoted to God.

Nuance: Some feel the point is not a living sacrifice versus a sacrifice that is killed, but rather a sacrifice that is living (*zosa*) in the sense of spiritually alive, living in newness of life:

ESV **John 10:10** I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

ESV **Romans 1:17** . . . "The righteous shall live (*zosa*) by faith."

ESV **Romans 6:11** . . . consider yourselves dead to sin and alive (*zosa*) to God in Christ Jesus.

ESV **Romans 6:13** . . . present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life (*zosa*) . . .

ESV **Romans 8:13** . . . if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Once a sacrifice was presented, it no longer belonged to the giver. It was God's. We are to present our lives to God as His tool. Our bodies keeps on living but we are to die to self. We are to do nothing with our bodies that is displeasing to God.

ESV **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

ESV **Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Structure: The structure of the Greek in 12:1 suggests three things are to be true of when we present our bodies to God. Our sacrifice is to be living (newness of life), holy and acceptable (Coleman & Peace, p. 102).

4. What does holy mean (12:1)? It is from *hagios* and literally means to be set apart or separated (Thayer #40). We are to be set apart from the world to be used by God.

What word in 12:1 describes how God feels about us presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice? It is pleasing or acceptable to God. The Greek is from a compound word

meaning “good” and “to please”; thus, well pleasing (Thayer #2101). This confirms that a sacrifice presented which is living in newness of life and is holy will be acceptable to God. This is what he desires.

Do you want to please God? Give him your life!

ESV **Romans 6:13** . . . present . . . your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

True Worship: Any worship which is not accompanied by obedience in ordinary daily living must be regarded as false worship (Cranfield, p. 601).

ESV **Isaiah 1:11-17** What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams . . . I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats . . . Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations — I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly . . . even though you make many prayers, I will not listen . . . Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

5. Based on 12:1, what constitutes spiritual worship? Living a life pleasing to God is true, spiritual worship. Worship is not just a feeling you get in church (“We really worshiped today”). It has nothing to do with music, candles or a warm feeling. A true worship service is the service of worship. True worship happens all during the week as you live a life pleasing to God.

ESV **Hosea 6:6** . . . I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

ESV **Psalms 51:17** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

6. The footnote (3) for “spiritual worship” says “rational service” (12:1, ESV). How would that change the meaning? The normal Greek word for spiritual is *pneumatikos*, but that word is not used here. Instead, the word *logikos* is found (basis for our word logic), which means agreeable to reason or reasonable (Thayer #3050). Thus the KJV renders this as “reasonable” service. The word can indeed mean spiritual, but it can also mean rational.

The opposite of rational is irrational. The point is the most logical form of true worship is living a holy and pure life. It just makes sense!

“The use of our bodies [as sacrifices] is characterized by conscious, intelligent, consecrated devotion to the service of God” (John Murray, quoted by Rienecker, p. 375).

Francis Scott Key: The author of the Star Spangled Banner, also wrote hymns. A line in one of his hymns reads, “And since words can never measure let my life show forth Thy praise”.

Worship Services: The NASV translates this as “spiritual service of worship.” This is as close as you will get to finding reference to a worship service in the New Testament. The New Testament

never calls a church gathering a worship service. The stated purpose of a church meeting is for the edification/encouragement/building up of the saints (1Co 14:26). Corporate worship is one way to accomplish this, but to label it meeting as a worship service is to give it an emphasis the apostles never did.

7. The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. Letting 12:2 interpret (explain) 12:1, what does it mean to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice? In practical terms it means we purpose to not be conformed to the world but instead to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Verse one is the goal and verse two is the means.

8. What would it mean to be conformed to the world (12:2)? Conformed is from *suschématizo*; *sun* means with and *schématizo* (basis for schematic) means figure, shape, appearance for form (Thayer #4964). It means you take on the form of the world in the worst sense.

Verb Tense: Conformed is a present tense imperative verb in the negative. It means “stop being conformed to the world”. It means the discontinuation of an action already in progress (Rienecker, p. 375). Furthermore it is passive voice, meaning the conforming is being done to us (example: Cutting my own hair is active, getting a hair cut is passive). All of us are to some degree conformed to the world (how could we not be?). Paul is telling us to wake up, be aware of it, and stop it! We are to wake up and not go with the flow.

ESV 1 Peter 1:14-16 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

9. What does world mean here (12:2)? A commonly Greek word for world is *kosmos*, but the Greek word here is *aion* (basis for eon) and on one hand means a long time, but here means this present non-Christian age (BAGD, p. 27). We are not to be controlled by the thoughts and pursuits of this present age. We are in the world but we are not to be of the world.

ESV 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world.

10. What are some example of areas in which we are tempted to be conformed to the world (12:2)? Example include the areas of: Alcohol ~ drunkenness; Speech ~ cursing or gossip or critical words that tear down; Dress ~ immodest or way over the top in extravagant fashion; Material Things ~ materialism, indebtedness, not giving generously to the Lord's work, chasing big bucks at expense of family, ethics, service in kingdom; Drugs ~ addicted to tobacco, nicotine or worse.

11. Instead of being conformed we are to be transformed. What is a synonym for transformed (12:2)? Synonyms include changed, altered, converted and mutated. In electronics a transformer changes one voltage into another voltage. The Greek is *metamorphoō* (basis for metamorphosis); *meta* means change and *morphé* means form. Thus it is a change of form. When a caterpillar undergoes metamorphosis, there is no doubt about it; the change is obvious. It is impossible not to notice it. The same word *metamorphoō* was used of Jesus:

ESV **Matthew 17:2** . . . he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

Verb Tense: The verb transformed (*metamorphoō*) is

- 1) in the present tense. The default Greek tense is aorist, which conveys no sense of action at all. When an author departs from the aorist, it becomes exegetically significant. The present tense denotes continuous action. It is on-going. Our transformation is not to be a matter of on again off again impulse. It must be continuous. It is life-long. It does not happen in an instant.
- 2) It is in the passive voice, meaning you let it be done to you. It is not something you do, but something that is done to you by the Holy Spirit.
- 3) It is an imperative, a command. We are not to resist it. The idea is “continue to let yourselves be transformed” (Cranfield, p. 607).

12. According to 12:2, by what method are we to be transformed? We are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Renewing is a combination of the Greek words again and new (Thayer #342). Make it new again!

13. How does one renew his mind (12:2)? (The answer must be obvious since we are not told how in the text.) It is a matter of reprogramming. We are to learn to think God’s thoughts after Him. It is to look at life on the basis of God’s view of reality (Coleman & Peace, p. 102). The Greek word for repent (*metanoia*) is literally a change of thinking. One way to start and maintain the process is by meditating on Scripture.

Example: Imagine a bucket filled with dirty water. If you pour a steady stream of pure water into the bucket, all the dirty water will eventually be displaced.

“The mind is renewed when, under the influence of the Spirit, the truth is understood and believed to as to displace the ignorance and error that previously prevailed” (Brown, p. 437).

According to 12:2b, what is the result of renewing your mind? A renewed mind will be able to test and discern God’s will (which is good, acceptable and perfect).

Word Study: “Testing” (12:2) is from *dokimazo*, originally a metallurgy term meaning to test for purity or genuineness. It thus means to put something to the test, to examine for the purpose of recognizing its genuineness (Thayer #1381a). It is to approve by testing or to accept as approved after testing (Rienecker, p. 375). A renewed mind enables you to test and discern God’s will (there are many impostors).

14. Based on 12:2, what is true of God’s will? God’s will is good, acceptable and perfect.

So What?

15. What is the basis for Paul’s appeal for obedience? Though it is a sinful age, thanks to God’s mercies as detailed in Romans 1-11, we are no longer the helpless victims of tyrannizing forces. We can resist the world’s pressure to conform (Cranfield, p. 608).

16. What are the two options for living one's life? The two options are conformed to the world or transformed by Christ.

17. How is transformation from the pattern of the world brought about? It comes by the renewing of our minds.

Note: The last three questions were taken from Coleman & Peace. p. 100

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF.

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