

Romans 12:1-2
Have You Presented Yourself to God?

Romans 12-16 is the final major unit in the book of Romans

- Condemnation (1:18-3:20)
- Justification (3:21-5:21)
- Sanctification (6:1-8:39)
- Restoration (9:1-11:36)
- Application (12:1-15:13)

It is typical practice for Paul's writing to establish a foundation of theological truth before giving practical exhortations¹

- We have this exemplified in most of his epistles
- And Romans is no exception

This isn't to say that there haven't been exhortations in the first half of Romans

- Neither are we insinuating that there won't be theological truth in the last half

All doctrine is ethical

- All ethics is doctrinal²

If you want to know what you believe, observe your actions

- What we do springs from what we believe

Now that we know [what to believe](#), we are prepared to address [how to live](#)

In this closing section, we will examine some very practical issues³

- General relationships with other believers
- Relationships with non-Christian society, including the government
- Dealing with differences among believers

There is a definite switch from the indicative (statement of fact) to the imperative (strong exhortation)

- In the first 11 chapters, there were only 13 commands (imperatives)
- In the last 5 chapters, there are 49 commands

This reminds us that Romans 12-16 is not optional, secondary reading⁴

- The multitude of commands that are used in these chapters remind us of the binding nature of truth upon our lives

Every time a command is given in Scripture, we are to obey

- To ignore a command is to disobey

Romans 12:1-2 is very transitional in nature

- It looks back over the material already discussed in Romans 1-11
- But it also looks ahead to the material in Romans 12-16

¹ Alan F. Johnson, *Everyman's Bible Commentary, Romans*, 213.

² *Ibid.*, 214.

³ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *NICNT, Romans*, 745.

We will take a more detailed look at the significance of these two verses in this morning's message

Let's read Romans 12:1-2

In these two transitional verses, the apostle Paul gives two (2) key responses on the part of the believer to what God has done in his/her life

- The believer's presentation (12:1)
- The believer's transformation (12:2)

I. The believer's presentation (12:1)

I urge you therefore.

The manner in which verse 1 begins is very significant

Let's first consider the word "therefore"

- It is a hinge word
- It transitions between two sections of Scripture

In this usage in Romans 12, we ask, "What does the therefore look back to?"

- Could be the doxology at the end of Romans 11
- Could be Romans 9-11
- Could be the entire book of Romans thus far

It is impossible to be definitive

- But my recommendation is that this word does look back over the entire book of Romans⁵

In light of all that we have studied thus far, Paul urges believers to conduct themselves as living sacrifices

The verb that the apostle uses in verse 1 is also very significant

- He writes, "I urge you"

The verb is παρακαλέω

- It literally means to call alongside

Its semantic range includes several English words

- Comfort
- Urge
- Exhort
- Plead

The word was used of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John

- "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." (14:26)

⁵ Ibid., 748.

I think Romans 12:1 is such a wonderful, pastoral verse

- He is an apostle
- As such, he has tremendous power and authority

In the tiny book of Philemon, Paul writes, “**Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do that which is proper, yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you**” (8-9a)

But Paul doesn’t command these believers to do something

- He urges them
- He exhorts them
- He comes alongside them

Remember, Paul had never met these believers at Rome

- He was familiar with some of them, but not all of them
- He didn’t found this church

I believe this is such a model for how we ought to treat one another

- When we interact with one another, we should do so with an attitude of love and concern

Even as a pastor, I don’t have the right to tell you what to do

- I can present Scripture and exhort you toward obedience
- But I can’t command you to obey

Humans have a will

- And we must appeal that the will would be influenced by Scripture, thus bringing about change

So the picture here of Paul is a fitting one for us to embrace

- We need to come alongside one another
 - o Not as a boss to an employee
 - o Not as a master to a servant
- But as one Christian to another
 - o As one equal to another

brethren.

Paul reminds us of his target audience, “**brethren**”

- Fellow Christians

This is very important, as we will see this morning

- What he has to say can only be said to other believers

by the mercies of God.

What is the driving motivation behind Paul’s exhortation?

- What is the incentive?
- Paul grounds his exhortation by appealing to “**the mercies of God**”

This isn't the normal Greek word for mercy

- This word has more of an overtone of compassion or pity

God is the source of all such mercy, compassion, and pity

- “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort**” (2 Cor 1:3, emphasis mine)

Even though this word hasn't been used previously in Romans, the thought or concept is certainly repeated

- How has God shown mercy to sinners?
- How has God shown concern and pity to sinners?

We need only look back to the early chapters of Romans to see what we deserved

- As sinners, we deserve God's judgment, wrath, and condemnation

Consider these verses

- “**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**” (3:23)
- “**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**” (5:8)

Again, Paul could have commanded these believers to obey

- Paul could have threatened them
- Paul could have manipulated them

But Paul uses the incentive and reminder of God's mercies to motivate them toward obedience

- This way, their obedience would be heartfelt and genuine
- It would not be temporary or hypocritical

So the apostle reminds us that Christians are those who have experienced the mercy of God⁶

- “**Until men really apprehend how much they owe to the mercy of God, they will never with a right feeling worship him, nor be effectually stimulated to fear and obey him.**”⁷

Isn't it a sad commentary on our lives that even after we have been shown so much mercy, we are still slow to obey?⁸

- We have to be told in Romans 12-16 how to respond, with heartfelt obedience, to what God has done for us

to present your bodies

We finally arrive at what Paul wanted these believers to do

- “**present your bodies**”
- The verb “**present**” is a term associated with Old Testament sacrifices⁹

⁶ Johnson, 215.

⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans*, 450.

⁸ Moo, 749-750.

⁹ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, Romans 9-16*, 142.

When an Israelite wanted to express his devotion to the Lord, he would present an animal sacrifice to the Lord¹⁰

- He laid his hands on the animal, a symbol of substitutionary identification
- He then killed the animal

How different this is from New Covenant sacrifice

- We don't offer something in our place
- We offer ourselves as a sacrifice

In the Old Testament, the priest was to take great pains to ensure that he was fully consecrated before offering any sacrifice to the Lord¹¹

- So it is with the New Covenant believer
- We must ensure that we have committed ourselves entirely

Is Paul only concerned with us giving God our physical “bodies”?

- I don't think so

I think that Paul has more in mind than just our physical body¹²

- But I do think that Paul was highlighting the importance of our physical body

Think about how much you use your body

- Walking – you use your legs
- Lifting – you use your arms
- Writing – you use your hands and fingers
- Looking – you use your eyes
- Listening – you use your ears
- Smelling – you use your nose
- Thinking – you use your brain

Our physical bodies are an integral part of our existence here on Earth

- But our bodies are fallen
- We suffer the marks of the Fall

But as feeble and frail as our human bodies are, they can still be used to worship and serve the Lord

- In writing of the Macedonian churches, the apostle Paul wrote, “**they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God**” (2 Cor 8:5, emphasis mine)

“**Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?**” (1 Cor 6:19)

a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God,

Again, Paul continues to speak using the language of Old Testament sacrifice

- As a matter of fact, the apostle uses the word “**sacrifice**” here in verse 1

¹⁰ Johnson, 215.

¹¹ Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Romans*, 127.

¹² C.E.B. Cranfield, *ICC, Romans 9-16*, 599.

I don't know if you think of your worship as a sacrifice

- We don't use that language very frequently, do we?

But for the first century believers, they would have been very familiar with the thought of sacrifice

- They had most likely seen animal sacrifices

In the Old Testament, not just any animal could be offered as a sacrifice to the Lord

- The animal needed to be blameless, without defect

In other words, the very best had to be offered

- God refused to accept a second-rate sacrifice

Neither did God accept the sacrifice without the heartfelt obedience of the worshipper

- There were times in the Old Testament when God said, in essence, "I would rather you not go through the motions of sacrificing an animal if your heart isn't right."

Samuel told King Saul, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams." (1 Sam 15:22)

- "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps 51:17)

Again, this is a tremendous heart examination for us today

- Do we make the connection of obedience with worship?
- Do we make the connection between inward and outward?

We refer to this corporate gathering at 10:45 as our "worship service"

- Some churches refer to the building where they meet as the "worship center"

These are misleading uses of the term worship

- Is worship limited to 10:45 to 12:00?
- Is worship limited to this one building?

To take this matter one step further, we oftentimes define worship by external means

- Music – the external singing together as a congregation
- Preaching – the external hearing together as a congregation

But it is entirely possible to do the external without the internal

- Greet others with a smile and kind words
- Sing the songs
- Contribute financially
- Listen to the preaching

However worship is not merely external

- It is primarily an internal, heartfelt issue

Viewed in this light, only God knows who is really worshipping!

- God can see the heart

The apostle Paul uses three qualifiers to define what kind of a “sacrifice” God is looking for

- Living
- Holy
- Acceptable

A. Living sacrifice

The very term “living sacrifice” may seem like an oxymoron

- It seems backward to us

When we think of an Old Testament sacrifice, we think of all those animals that were killed

- They were alive, then were killed in order to be a sacrifice

But New Testament believers are not told to be killed in order to be a sacrifice

- We are told to be a living sacrifice

Christ’s atoning sacrifice has rendered all animal sacrifices null and void¹³

- Every animal sacrifice pointed to His once-for-all sacrifice on the cross

We offer ourselves as a “living” sacrifice because of the new life that God has given to us

- We have died to sin, but are alive in Christ

B. Holy sacrifice

Believers are also told to be a “holy” sacrifice

The term “holy” means something that is consecrated to God

- Something that is set apart for God’s use and purposes

The pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle were holy

- Because they were not for common use
- They were set apart exclusively for worship

Many times in the New Testament, believers are called “holy”

- We, too, are set apart from the world for the purposes of God
- We are consecrated to the Lord for His glory

Yet, how often do you think of yourself as “holy”?

- When you are at work, does this thought control the way you work?
- When you are performing manual labor, is this the thought that goes through your mind?

Granted, there is an element where “holy” means pure, righteous, and hallowed

- We are to strive to be less sinful and more righteous

We can attain progressive holiness only by the power of the Holy Spirit¹⁴

- Not in the power of self or the flesh

¹³ F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale NT Commentaries, Romans*, 212.

¹⁴ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Romans*, 402.

C. Acceptable sacrifice

Thirdly, we are called to be an “acceptable” sacrifice

- This reminds us that our goal and focus should be God
- Not ourselves or others

Last week, we examined the doxology that closes Romans 11

- It stressed, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be the glory forever. Amen.*”

All of life, for the believer, is to be lived in light of God’s glory

- His glory, sovereignty, and supremacy should control the way we think, live, work, eat – everything!

Offering ourselves as an “acceptable” sacrifice reminds us again that our focus needs to be on God

- We should be pleasing to Him, first and foremost

If our minds shift and our focus becomes something other than God, then we are not seeking God first

- Being acceptable to our spouse first
- Being acceptable to our employer first
- Being acceptable to our teachers first

We are to present ourselves as a sacrifice

- Living sacrifice
- Holy sacrifice
- Acceptable sacrifice

which is your spiritual service of worship.

Being motivated by the mercies of God, we should offer ourselves entirely to God as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice

- Doing so, the apostle Paul reminds us, “*is your spiritual service of worship*”

Different translations render this phrase differently

- “spiritual service of worship” (NASB)
- “spiritual worship” (ESV)
- “reasonable service” (KJV; NKJV)
- “spiritual act of worship” (NIV)

These translations differ because of the Greek word λογικός

- It is the basis for our English word logic and logical

Sometimes I hear the expression, “That doesn’t seem logical.”

- This simply means, “This doesn’t make rational sense; it doesn’t sound reasonable.”

We tend to exalt our logic and reason

- Each of us tends to evaluate others on the basis of our own understanding

But we need to align our view of logic and reason to God

- He is the true basis of Logic

It may not make sense to us to offer ourselves to God as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice

- But we need to align our view of “logic” with God’s

It is only fitting and right for us to offer ourselves to God¹⁵

- Especially as we meditate upon what He has done for us, as outlined in the first eleven chapters of Romans

The word “**service**” is yet another overtone of Old Testament sacrificial language

- The language of worship!

The Christian life is not about getting more of Christ¹⁶

- It is about Him getting more of us

Have you presented yourself entirely to the Lord?

- Is there some part of you that you are withholding from Him?
- **The believer’s presentation (12:1)**

II. The believer’s transformation (12:2)

2 And do not be conformed to this world.

Verse 2 helps to answer the question of why we need to offer our bodies to the Lord

- We will either be influenced by the world around us or by the Word within us

These are the two options that are before us

- Being conformed to this world
- Or being transformed by the renewing of our minds

One of these influences is always shaping us

- Which one is influencing you?

First, let’s examine the negative concept, “**do not be conformed to this world**”

We need to understand something about these two verbs “**be conformed**” and “**be transformed**”

- First, they are in the present tense
 - o Signifying constant, ongoing action
- Second, they are in the passive voice
 - o Signifying an action performed to us
 - o Not an action that we perform ourselves
- Third, they are in the imperative mood
 - o Signifying a command, not an option

This word “**be conformed**” is a very picturesque term

- It implies being shaped or molded according to a form or pattern

¹⁵ Robert H. Mounce, *NAC, Romans*, 232.

¹⁶ MacArthur, 138.

But Christians are not to allow the world to shape them

- We live in the world, but we are not to be of the world

Listen to the Phillips' translation, "[Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.](#)"¹⁷

Children enjoy playing with Play-Doh

- It is a substance that is easily shaped and conformed
- It can be manipulated rather easily

Paul's exhortation is that it is very easy for Christians to be conformed and manipulated by the world around us

- We can be like Play-Doh in the hands of the world

Of course, the "**world**" of which Paul speaks is this present, evil age in which we live

- It is contrasted with the world to come (Eph 1:21)

This world is called "**the present evil age**" (Gal 1:4)

- "**the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God**" (2 Cor 4:4)

This world is temporary

- It will pass away (1 Cor 7:31)

If we are honest, we will have to admit that we are often conformed by the world¹⁸

- Whether we know it or not

but be transformed

Instead of allowing ourselves to be conformed to this world, we are to "**be transformed**"

- It is from this word that we obtain our English word metamorphosis

This same Greek word is used twice in the Gospels to refer to Jesus' physical Transfiguration

- Remember when Jesus invited Peter, James, and John on the mountain?
- "**He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.**" (Mt 17:2)

Jesus' Transfiguration was a glimpse into the true inner glory of Jesus

- His outward appearance reflected His inner glory

Paul uses this word in 2 Corinthians to refer to the believer, "**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 from the Lord, the Spirit**" (3:18)

- The apostle reminds born-again Christians that we "**are being transformed**" into the same image and likeness of Jesus Christ
- This is the essence of sanctification!

¹⁷ Johnson, 217.

¹⁸ Cranfield, 668.

Our goal as Christians is not merely to gain knowledge

- Our goal is to be conformed to the likeness of Christ
- To see our lives changed into Christlikeness

How different are these terms!

- “do not be conformed to this world”
- “but be transformed”

Again, which one is true of you?

- Are you allowing the world to shape and mold you?
- Or are you allowing God to transform you?

by the renewing of your mind,

You may be asking, “Kevin, how do I become transformed?”

- The answer is really rather simple

Paul says that we are transformed “by the renewing of your mind”

- Our minds have to be renewed

When an unbeliever is drawn to Christ, everything is new

- New habits
- New ways of thinking
- New vocabulary
- New friends
- New priorities

This ongoing process doesn’t stop this side of glory

- We are always in need of renewing our minds

This re-programming of our minds doesn’t take place overnight

- It is a lifelong process¹⁹

The way in which we renew our minds is not by listening to the world

- The world will not renew your mind
- It will corrupt your mind

The Scriptures are the means by which our minds are renewed

- “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Thy word. With all my heart I have sought Thee; do not let me wander from Thy commandments. Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.” (Ps 119:9-11)

A very practical question is, “How often are you washing your mind with the Word?”

- Do you read the Bible every day?

It’s been said quite often, but it bears repeating

- The Word will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the Word
- Which is true in your life?

¹⁹ Moo, 756-757.

Satan will do everything possible to keep you from the Word

- What did Christ pray in John 17:17?
- “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth”

Again, you are not going to be sanctified by listening to the world, looking like the world, and acting like the world

- You are going to be sanctified when your mind is renewed by the Word of God

that you may prove what the will of God is,

When our minds are being renewed, what happens?

- We begin to see things from God’s perspective
- We begin to think God’s thoughts after Him

At some point in our lives, all of us have asked the question, “What is God’s will for my life?”

- Marriage
- Career
- Children
- Large purchase

God’s Word doesn’t give us every single answer to every single question we have

- You can’t find a verse that tells you, “Buy the two-story house.”
- You can’t find a verse that tells you the name of the company for which you should work

Many of the specifics are not outlined in Scripture

- But the major issues are given in God’s Word

When we are faithful and obedient to the big issues, God will give you wisdom and direction in the specific issues

- Let me give you an overview of what God’s will is²⁰

First, God wills that sinners enter into a relationship with Him

- This is salvation

If you are not a believer, then God will not lead you other than into a relationship with Him

- Everything else is useless without a relationship with Him

Second, God wills that believers be Spirit-filled

- Being controlled by the Holy Spirit
- Being led by the Holy Spirit

How are we Spirit filled?

- By being filled with the Scriptures!

As we read God’s Word – the Spirit-breathed Word – we are allowing His Word to fill our minds

- Our minds are renewed

²⁰ John MacArthur, Jr., *Found: God’s Will*, 17-56.

Third, God wills that believers be sanctified

- Set apart for God
- Living holy, pure lives for His glory
- Seeking His glory above our own

Fourth, God wills that believers be submissive

- This doesn't apply just to women, but also to men and children

Being submissive is crucial

- We must align ourselves under the authority of Jesus Christ and other levels of leadership

God will not honor an attitude of dominance, dictatorship, and despotism

- He honors the heart of submission

Fifth, God wills that believers suffer

- Or be willing to suffer

We must love God and His Word enough that if it comes to it, we are willing to be suffer

- Loss of job
- Loss of promotion
- Loss of friendship
- Loss of life

This is the portrait of God's will for every believer

- Salvation
- Spirit-filled
- Sanctification
- Submission
- Suffering

Does that cover everything?

- Certainly not
- But it covers the broad categories of life

For example, let's say that I am praying about God's will for a specific situation

- Let's say that I am not reading the Bible
- Let's say that I am not growing in sanctification

Do you think that God will lead me into specifics if I am not faithful to what He has already revealed in the Word?

- Certainly not

If we are obedient with what God has revealed in His Word, He will guide us about the specifics

- But if we aren't obedient with what God has revealed, He will not guide us about the specifics

that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul highlights three descriptions of God's will that we discover when we are being transformed by the renewing of our mind

- His will is "good and acceptable and perfect"

Again, these are defined by God

- Not by us

God's will is "good" in that it brings about moral and spiritual growth²¹

- God's will is "acceptable" because it is an expression of His very nature
- God's will is "perfect" because no one can improve on God and His revealed will

You may have noticed that these two responses can only be made by a believer

- Only a believer can present himself to the Lord as a living sacrifice
- Only a believer can be transformed into the very image of Christ

Perhaps you find yourself here this morning as an unbeliever

- Someone who may be religious, but not having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- Someone who has yet to make that commitment to follow the Lord

If this describes you, then I would urge you to consider the consequences of your actions

- If you continue in your sin, rejecting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then you will spend eternity in a literal lake of fire
- You will be eternally separated from God Himself in hell

This morning we have spoken of the believer being a sacrifice

- Offering up ourselves fully for God's service and purposes

Jesus Christ did that

- He was the ultimate Sacrifice
- He was the Sacrifice that fully satisfied God's demands upon sinners

Because of Christ, the sins of those who would believe in Him are forgiven

- We are declared righteous in God's eyes
- Because God punished His Son, He can accept us

This may sound too good to be true

- But this is the Gospel message
- This is the Good News

For those of us who are followers of Christ, this passage is very convicting

- God demands that we present ourselves as living sacrifices
- Entirely giving of ourselves for Him

No one of us is always a living sacrifice

- There are times when we live for our own glory and purposes
- But we must strive to live more and more for Him

What area of your life has yet to be offered up to God?

- What part of your life are you still holding on to, wanting to maintain control?

How liberating it is to come clean with God this morning

- To lay it all on the altar
- To present ourselves fully for the worship of our King

²¹ Mounce, 233.

Have you offered yourself entirely to the Lord for His glory and purposes?

- Are you living for Him or for self?

I remember in Bible college getting alone by myself

- I verbally told God that I wanted my life to be used by Him
- I offered my body – every part of it – to be used for His glory

Have I been a perfect example?

- Certainly not

But I continue to renew that commitment to Him

- I place myself and my life back at His disposal

It might be easy for you to give sacrificially of your time, money, and other resources

- But before you do that, make sure that you have given first of yourself