

Date : 24 Nov 2024
Theme : Making our election sure
Topic : Living transformed lives: Conforming to the image of Christ
Passage : Romans 12:1-2
Key Verse : Romans 12:1 – Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

In Romans 1–11, Paul points out man’s sinfulness and God’s righteous response.

- Romans 1–3 : God’s wrath upon Jews and Gentiles due to sin and both are guilty.
- Romans 3–5 : God’s grace upon to all. Justified through Christ’s sacrificial death.
- Romans 6–8 : God’s power to sanctify believers.
- Romans 9–11 : God’s mercy to Jews and Gentiles through faith in Jesus.

With this background, Paul focuses his discussion in Romans 12 to call believers to a transformed life. The question for today: We have been saved by grace; how should we live transformed lives conforming to the image of Christ?

1. What motivates us to live transformed lives?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, (V1 - NIV)

a) The mercies of God as our motivation

(i) ‘Therefore’

- The "therefore" serves as a bridge between theology and practical application.
- Paul has detailed God’s mercies—justification by faith, adoption into God’s family, deliverance from sin, and the promise of eternal life. These are not abstract truths; they demand a personal response.

(ii) ‘urge’

- Paul pleads passionately. He is not commanding but imploring believers to consider God’s mercies and respond with grateful obedience.

(iii) ‘in view of (who) God’s mercy’ – The lens through which we see

- The world’s motivation for a moral life is that it may get us into trouble if we don’t.
- The godly motivation that we want to live a righteous life is because of what Jesus Christ has done for us, we want to express our gratitude for God.

b) The mercies of God transform our lives

- God’s mercy transforms our status: We were once under God’s righteous judgment as sinners. Through Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice, we are declared righteous and are adopted into God’s family as His beloved children.
- God’s mercy saves us from death penalty. His mercy spares us from the punishment we deserve. While our sins warrant eternal separation from God, His mercy provides life through Christ. Jesus bore the penalty for our sins, satisfying God’s justice while extending His mercy.

2. How should we live the transformed lives?

a) Present ourselves to God

present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (V1 – NKJV)

(i) 'present your bodies' – A deliberate act of surrender.

- To "present" means to make a conscious, deliberate offering. It's not passive but an active decision to give ourselves fully to God.
- It involves every aspect of life—our time, talents, and resources—placed at His service.
- It is 'all-in' commitment. Partial surrender, such as giving occasional time or resources, is not enough. True surrender involves our whole selves—body, mind, and spirit—dedicated to God.

(ii) 'living sacrifice' – Ongoing and willing

- Unlike Old Testament sacrifices which were one-time offerings, a living sacrifice is an ongoing, daily commitment to live in obedience and surrender.
- This sacrifice is made freely, out of love and gratitude, not compulsion.
- True sacrifice involves giving something of great value, not our surplus or at our convenience. (2 Samuel 24:24 - *But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."*)
- This stands in contrast to token gestures. Token service is giving minimally, out of convenience or surplus, without cost or sacrifice. Living sacrifice is costly, intentional, and ongoing, reflecting the depth of our love and gratitude for God's mercy.

(iii) 'acceptable'

- It also means to be pleasing. What pleases God? When your life is a living sacrifice.

(iv) 'reasonable service' – A fitting response to God's mercy

- It means logical, acceptable, holy and of high value.
- 'Reasonable' suggests that offering ourselves to God is the most rational response to His mercy.
- Given all that God has done for us, sacrificial living is not extraordinary but the logical outcome of our gratitude.
- The Greek word for "service" can also mean "worship." True worship is not limited to rituals or outward acts but it is costly. It involves a life fully devoted to God, marked by love, generosity, and obedience.

★ Abraham demonstrated a sacrificial faith. (Romans 4)

- Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, his only son whom he had waited for 25 years.
- His obedience illustrated a living sacrifice—putting God above all, even when it costs greatly.
- When Abraham and Isaac reached the place of sacrifice, Abraham told his servant that they would go up to worship. (*Genesis 22:5 – He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."*)
- True worship is costly. Abraham had to be willing to give his son.
- This kind of faith is credited as righteousness, showing that sacrificial living pleases God.

b) To Transform

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, (V2 – NKJV)

(i) 'do not be conformed'

- The term "conformed" conveys the idea of being shaped or moulded. It gives the picture of being squeezed into the world's mould.
- The world applies pressure to fit us into its patterns and values. Worldly values prioritise self-centeredness, materialism, and temporary pleasures. (1 John 2:15 – *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.*)
- Examples of Conformity:
 - Seeking validation through wealth, fame, or social status.
 - Allowing cultural trends to dictate our morals or decisions
 - Adopting attitudes of compromise or indifference toward sin.

(ii) 'be transformed by renewing of your mind'

- Transformation means having a spiritual mind (as opposed to the carnal/fleshly mind), where our mindset and goals reflect the mind of Christ.
- This change comes about as we reflect on the glory of the Lord revealed in the scriptures.
- It's not about relying on your personal experience to get you through the week.
- God redeemed our hearts, but we must renew our minds with God's word. This inward renewal shapes our inner being to mirror Christ.
- How should we do it? Through meditating on God's words daily, we allow the Holy Spirit to reshape our thoughts and perspectives. For example, if you face discouragement, renew your mind with God's word of hope and purpose.
- What kind of change?
 - Change the music we listen to, the shows we watch, and the content we consume. Choose inputs that edify and draw us closer to God.
 - Change the way we spend our time, money and resources for God's purpose. Such as our holiday plan.
 - Align with God's purpose so that others will know Him. Can we make it a goal to talk about Jesus to someone each day?

3. What will we experience when we live transformed lives?

a) Prove that God's plan is 'Good', 'Acceptable', 'Perfect'.

that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (V2 – NKJV)

- To "prove" is to test, discern, and validate something through personal experience.
- Only when we live transformed lives, free from the world's influence and aligned with God's purposes, can we fully experience the reality of His will in our lives.
- Without transformation, our worldly mindset prevents us from fully understanding and embracing God's perfect plan.
- Transformation enables us to align with God's perspective and experience the blessings of obedience.

- God's plan is Good: God's plan will lead to our ultimate benefit and spiritual growth, even when we don't immediately understand them.
- God's plan is Acceptable: It is pleasing—not only to God but also to us as we align with His purposes. When we walk in His will, we find peace and contentment, knowing our lives are aligned with His divine plan.
- God's plan is Perfect: God's plan lacks nothing and is tailored perfectly for each individual, leading us toward His ultimate purpose for our lives.

Living out the image of Christ, as outlined in Romans 12, involves a life of surrender and love that reflects His character. Reflect on the following questions.

Is God asking too much for us to present a 'living sacrifice'?

- Offering ourselves as living sacrifices might feel overwhelming or even unreasonable at times. It involves giving up control, comforts, and personal desires.
- When we consider what God has done for us—His mercy in saving us, sparing us from judgment, and adopting us into His family—it becomes clear that our sacrifice is small compared to His.
- Jesus gave everything, including His life, for us. If He could surrender so fully out of love, can we not give back what He has redeemed?

Application

- Is my sacrifice to God a 'reasonable' act of worship?
 - Am I giving my best to God, or am I offering Him leftovers? (my time, energy, or resources)
- What can I change today to start giving God sacrificially?
 - Time: Dedicate intentional time to prayer, Bible study.
 - Resources: Look at your finances and possessions—are you using them for God's glory, or can you give more generously to His work?
 - Talents: Identify the gifts God has given you and consider how you can use them for His kingdom, serving others through volunteering, mentoring, or evangelism.