

A Transformed Life!
Romans 12:1-21
March 1st 2026
PREACHER: Pastor Roy Summers

Introduction

Our sermon today is based on just two verses from Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 12, where Paul urges every follower of Jesus to live a transformed life:

“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. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

How shall we get into these wonderful verses? Suppose one day you made a new acquaintance—someone moved into an empty house in your street, a new student in your class, a new work colleague, whatever. And in the course of your conversation with them, they were keen to tell you that they were a footballer, that was their chosen sport.

Quite naturally we ask them questions:

- Do they play for a team? “No” they reply!
- Do they practice the game? “Yes!, they have painted goal posts on the brick wall of their home and they kick a ball into that “goal!”
- When? Just for an hour a week!
- With anyone else? No, just on their own?
- Did they watch football? No!
- Support a national or local team? Again no!

Over time, we would come to the conclusion that our new acquaintance, now a friend, is mistaken at best, deluded at worst! Their claim to be a footballer can't be true because football is 1) a team game, 2) involves more than aiming a ball at a wall, and so on.

In a similar way, there are tests of true living Christian faith, and one of those, is a transformed life, we shall see this morning. It doesn't happen all at once, but over time the Lord Jesus changes our thinking, our speaking, our spending, our relationships, our everything!

For those of you who are new to us, we're making our way through Paul's letter to Christians living in Rome in the first century, but intended, by the Spirit of God, for all Christians in all of time. .

In chapters 1-8 Paul explained the Good News or Gospel, which teaches that though we are sinners, who deserve the righteous judgement of God, in his mercy, God sent the Son he loved to

pay for our sins through his suffering on the cross, and then to rise from the dead to give us new life in this world and hope in the world to come. And the way to enjoy these salvation blessings is simply to believe the message!

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (that’s 10:9)

We don’t have to work for our salvation, earn it, labour for it, we receive it as a free gift merely by faith, alone.

In chapters 9-11 Paul dealt with the thorny problem of how come so few of the (religious!) Jews were responding to the Good News, while lots of non-religious non-Jews (Gentiles) were streaming into the church. Paul’s Answer? God’s sovereign choice. Those who are saved, whether Jews are Gentiles, are saved because God chose them.

And now, chapters 12 to the end of his letter, Paul gets practical, and shows us how we should respond to the amazing free gift of salvation, in the church and in the world, so you could say,

- Chapters 1-11—doctrine, truth
- Chapters 12-16—practice

I went to my shed this morning and found this door hinge. Small thing. What does a hinge do? It connects the door frame—and hence the whole of the house—with a door. And that’s what the two verses before us do: they look back to the 11 doctrine chapters, “Therefore in view of God’s amazing mercy on you” and the following 5 chapters of Christian living in the church and world.

The What - offer your body as a living sacrifice

“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.”

When Paul says “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice” he’s saying offer the whole of your embodied life to God. Human life is lived in and through our bodies, whether we are sleeping, waking, talking, running, walking, spending, eating, drinking—all human living is done through our bodies!

“Offer the whole of your lives” is what Paul is saying when he writes “offer your bodies.”

When he adds the words, “as a living sacrifice” he is using the language of the Old Testament sacrificial system. A worshipper wanting to please God, perhaps wanting to say sorry for their sins, or to give thanks, would take an animal to the temple, it would be killed and laid upon the altar.

That whole Old Testament sacrificial system is gone forever, because Jesus has fulfilled those sacrifices when he became the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,” praise God!

But that raises the question—how do we New Testament believers show our thanks to God? We can't bring a sacrifice to the temple! Well, says Paul, we can show our thanks by offering the whole of our embodied lives as living sacrifice to God.

A song verse we could not sing!

Last Sunday Yvonne and I worshipped at a Bible believing church in the Algarve. The preacher was from Texas, there were people from Ukraine there, Christians from Wales and from Pakistan. It was wonderful to sing God's praises in such an international setting. But a verse came up on the screen which we could not sing, we even took a photo of it: Here goes;

So I throw up my hands and praise you again and again, cause all that I have is a Hallelujah, Hallelujah, and I know its not much but I've nothing else fit for a king except for a heart singing hallelujah, hallelujah."

I am not being critical of my brothers and sisters, no church gets everything right, but this verse was saying that all we have to offer God is a heart singing hallelujah, but that's not true!

Sung worship is one way, a wonderful way, to respond to God's kindness, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me" (Psalm 13:6), but we can worship God in more than words: we can offer our waking and sleeping, our walking and talking, our thinking and speaking, our spending and planning, our relationships, our working and resting— every aspect of our lives to God!

"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."

This is the way NT believers worship God! Not by taking a sheep or doves or a calf to a temple, but by offering the whole of our lives to God!

*Fill Thou my life, O Lord my God,
In every part with praise,
That my whole being may proclaim
Thy being and Thy ways.*

*Not for the lip of praise alone,
Nor e'en the praising heart,
I ask, but for a life made up
Of praise in every part:*

*Praise in the common things of life,
Its goings out and in;
Praise in each duty and each deed,
However small and mean.*

*So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free,
But all my life, in every step,
Be fellowship with Thee.*

That's what Paul is saying here!

What part of your life and my life needs to be transformed by the Gospel? That's the challenge each one of us must prayerfully work out for ourselves. The trouble with living sacrifices, said someone, is that they tend to keep wiggling off the altar! What part of your life and my life, needs a hallelujah reformation? The Lord will show us and the Lord will help us too.

The How—by the renewing of our minds

How can we do this? By the renewing of our minds, our thinking, our worldview, our philosophy, our values.

First the negative, "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world." Or as the JB Philips translation paraphrased Paul, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mould." Don't allow the world to shape your thinking, your worldview, your priorities. Paul surely has Psalm 1 in mind here:

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers." (Psalm 1:1)

With the advent of the smartphone, there has surely never been an age where Paul's injunction needs attention. The average adult UK spends about 3.5 hours a day on their phone, the average 15-24 year old, around 5 hours. The potential for a believer's thinking to be shaped by worldly thinking is immense. How careful we must all be!

Then the positive "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." How do you and I renew our minds? By thinking Bible thoughts:

Psalm 1 again, "his delight in in the law of the Lord (the Bible) and on his law he meditates day and night..."

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:2)

Christian thinking is made new when we allow the Scriptures, rather than the world, shape our desires, our philosophy, our worldview, our lifestyle.

Listen to the Bible preached—this is why at MPC/ MHC, the sermon is the main thing on Sunday mornings, bible study the chief activity in our home groups? Read—or listen - to the Bible in your home. Read it to your children. The living word of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, transforms

our thinking. Look at the added blessing of a transformed mind:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

You will be able to discern “this is a good thing for me, for us to do.” “that is an unhelpful decision.” Discernment comes through this double transformation—not being shaped by the world’s thinking, but by the Word of God!

The WHY?
Thanksgiving for salvation!

“Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy...”

In view of all that God has done for you, chapters 1-11, he chose you, then one day he called you, he has forgiven you all your sins, he has filled you with his Spirit, he promises you eternal life in the world to come! “In view of God’s mercy”

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore his praises sing.

2 Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress.
Praise him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.

3 Fatherlike he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.