

- **Opening illustration: GRADUATION-** you've gone through process of learning, essential foundation, and now, you are going out to put this into practice.
- **THIS IS WHERE WE HAVE ARRIVED** in Romans...
- **Even though we are on chapter 12 of 16, this really begins the 2nd half of Romans. Paul begins:**

Romans 12:1-2 *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. ² 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.*

- **THEREFORE- IN VIEW** of God's mercy

† **In view of God's mercy**

- **This may be one of the most significant 'therefore's' in the New Testament. Paul is pointing us back to consider everything he has covered to this point, and he sums it up as the MERCY- the COMPASSIONS of God. BECAUSE OF GOD'S MERCY (most accurate, 'by God's compassion)- the reality of our inescapable need for God, and the FULLNESS OF HIS GRACE to us, that because this is TRUE, then there is an inescapable response on our part.**
- **For the rest of Romans, Paul turns his focus to HOW WE LIVE, as believers, BECAUSE of the truth we have learned in 1-11. If 1-11 is about doctrine- truth of God's Grace, then the rest of Romans is about ethics, or the very practical outworking of what God's GRACE LOOKS LIKE IN OUR LIVES.**
- **RESTATE... BECAUSE OF WHO WE ARE** through faith in Christ, then it is **BY THIS MERCY, COMPASSION, and GRACE OF GOD** that we now LIVE. Practically. Each day, we increasingly experience what it looks like to live **BY** the grace of God. Paul starts with the **fundamentally necessary first step- which is to (NIV) "to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God"**... the call to LIVE as a sacrifice

† **Living as a sacrifice**

- **OFFER YOUR BODIES-** all of who we are, totality of thoughts, emotions, choices. Paul's emphasis here is not just on our internal thoughts, but how they are expressed through our bodies. The emphasis here is intensely practical- the fullness of **LIFE AS WE ACTUALLY LIVE... is to be a sacrifice to God.**
- **IMAGERY** of sacrifice would have been striking to first hearers.. they saw animal sacrifices all the time- temporary offering to God for temporary forgiveness of sin. But where an animal sacrifice was temporary, and resulted in a death, **NOW, OUR SACRIFICE to God is OURSELVES-** ongoing, and fully **ALIVE.**
- **Most direct translation is picture of us offering ourselves (ongoing action) as a sacrifice that is LIVING, HOLY, and PLEASING (acceptable) to God.**
- **NEED TO THINK ABOUT THIS,** because it's easy to turn this into a call to legalism rather than what it is
- **LIVING-** all of who we are- dynamic- us living out of the **NEW LIFE** that is who we now are. **KEY-** what IS the source of our new life? It is **CHRIST IN US.** Our new life is **CHRIST'S LIFE-** not only his nature, but his presence, with us, in us.
- **THEREFORE,** our living sacrifice to God is, simply, our surrender to obey Christ as **HE** lives **HIS LIFE** through **US.** (Focus of chap 5-8)
- **The alternative is to make our sacrifice all about OUR goodness, our effort, what we do FOR God.**

- Sounds right, its subtle, but this is the great trap of religion. I am going to PLEASE God by how much I work, how much I give up, how much I perform, volume of religious activity. Mindset of old cliché “Your life is God’s gift to you, what you do with it is your gift to God”. NO! Our life IS God’s gift to us, and what we do with it, how we live, ALSO is God’s gift to us!
- To be a living sacrifice is to daily choose the mindset that says “God, you are my very life. Today, in this moment, this decision...I surrender... I follow.. my hand are your hands, my words your words, my actions your actions... my life is your life.
- The RESULT is expressed in how we live, but the FOCUS, the SOURCE is Christ himself. This gets practical!
- **HOLY**. Set apart. We are His. As Paul concluded chap 11... for from you, through you, for you- all things!
- THIS THEN, is the sacrifice that is **acceptable, pleasing** to God. It is HIMSELF, living in us, being expressed through us, as we CHOOSE TO live, daily, in relationship with Him.
- THIS, paul Goes on to say, is the essence of worship.

✠ The essence of worship

“offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship”

- Interesting phrase, translated various ways...
 - NASB- “Spiritual service of worship”
 - ESV- “Spiritual worship”
 - KJV- “Reasonable service”
- WHAT IS ESSENCE OF WORSHIP? Big question, but with an ultimately simple answer. In this phrase the NIV renders ‘True and proper worship’, if you get down to the original language and look at the different ways it is translated, THREE THINGS are present, and they are NOT music, performance, and emotion!
- In our modern and postmodern Christian culture, we have come to equate WORSHIP with the emotional response from participation musical performance. IF essence of worship is emotion, with our readily available tools of video, amplification, catchy tunes, hyper-emotive musicians... an emotional response can be manufactured pretty easy- absent of God.
- HEAR ME! Scripture gifts us with musical worship!... When we focus our thoughts upon God and his goodness, sing, led by gifted musicians... it will be EMOTIONAL! This is a gift God has given us! BUT it is NOT the essence of worship. Then what is?
- The three things we see in this phrase- worship is...
 - SPIRITUAL. It flows from our union with Christ.
 - REASONABLE. Not ‘appropriate’, but ‘thoughtful’. Intelligent. Flows from what we THINK. Some songs that very emotionally engaging, but if we really stop and THINK about their lyrics, are a poor reflection of scripture. Worship engages our MIND before it does our emotions.
 - SERVICE. Service to God. And service to GOD will look like what? Service to PEOPLE.
- HEAR! When we are walking/living by the Spirit, and we respond in obedience to the shaping of God’s spirit in the content of our minds, and how we interact with and respond to people around us, THAT is the essence of worship.
- CONSIDER- far more than a church ‘sanctuary’, your setting or worship will be your marriage. Your work. Conversations with friends. Your resources. When you are alone with your thoughts and computer. Your response in midst of challenges. That is where worship happens.
- Paul continues...

2- Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

† The pattern of this world

- What is the “pattern of this world”?
- Likely first thing of morally negative things we see all around us. **Selfishness. Anger. Pride. Lust. Jealousy. Emotional immaturity. Not thinking. Demeaning the value of life, of people.**
- These are PATTERNS... symptoms, but on a **DEEPER LEVEL... pattern of this world is SELF DEPENDENCE. I am in control. I am my own moral arbiter. I live in my wisdom, my strength. THE FLESH**
- Two important words- **CONFORM, TRANSFORMED.**

† Conformed or Transformed?

- Do not **CONFORM** to this pattern. **Emphasis here is on our choice of focus- ‘setting of our mind’, which leads to our choices of behavior and thoughts. (my life- I conformed to pressure on me in college).**
- We all have external influence around us demanding that we conform to them- not just negative, but positive. Often said that you will be average of 5 people you spend most time with. **Importance of positive influences...**
- **BUT PAUL IS POINTING TO SOMETHING MUCH DEEPER than just negative or positive influences that we ‘conform’ to.**
- **BE TRANSFORMED... to be transformed is a matter of WHO WE ARE. It is a change of thoughts, of actions, that flows from our deepest IDENTITY. To be transformed is for me to experience change in WHO I AM, not just behaving from day to day.**
- **A BLESSING of this Transformation God will work in us is as we begin to see the ‘pattern of this world’ for what it is, and it will steadily lose its appeal, because we have come to KNOW, to EXPERIENCE, to FALL IN LOVE with something greater... the very life of GOD.**
- **One commentator put it this way “what madness it is to join in this puppet show which is displayed on a tottering stage.. for as followers of Christ- those who have been brought from DEATH to LIFE- we have been introduced into the world to come- what a tragedy then, to conform to the perishing world we have left.**

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

- **BE TRANSFORMED- this is something that GOD DOES IN US as we make the daily choice to RENEW OUR MINDS.**
- **To change the way we think, change the way we see. How does this happen?**
- **GOD’S WORD. Really engaging! This is not easy, more than just listening to a sermon. EXAMPLE- some of you exercise seriously. What would you say to me if I said “I don’t need to work out, I watched a marathon on TV”.**
- **But renewing our mind isn’t just about biblical understanding. It is about a heart that is YIELDED to God, work He is doing in us. Desire to know him.**
- **WILLINGNESS to be challenged in what we think- be set free from false beliefs that hold us captive.**
- **PRAYER yielded to him. Worship!**

- **PROMISE... WHEN we begin to live as a sacrifice, worship in how we live, turn from conformation to influences around us TO transformation of Christ within us... THEN..**

“Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- **HUGE TOPIC.. where we will go next week**