

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #42

Romans 12:1-2

In this text, Paul unlocks a key to fulfilling God's perfect will in life. In these two verses, Paul sets forth that the thing that will motivate the believer to want to fulfill God's perfect will for his or her life is to think about the amazing Grace and Mercy of God.

We may notice that the noun "mercies" (12:1) is plural and it is also very rare. The normal word used for mercy (ελεεω), which is often used in combination with "grace and peace," means to have pity on someone who is undeserving and who is helpless and hopeless (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 145). **The word used here in Romans 12:1 (οικτιρωων) also includes this idea but specifically emphasizes God's compassion.** All the compassionate things God has done for us, which come out of God's heart (*Ibid.*, pp. 313-314).

We cannot even begin to calculate how many compassionate merciful things God has done in our lives. The only possibility we have for even doing the will of God is due to His mercy. When we think about the compassionate mercy of God it motivates us to want to fulfill what is presented in this text. As Luther said, God does not say, "I command you" by the mercies of God, but "I urge you or beseech you" on the basis of the mercy of God (Richard Lenski, *Romans*, p. 746). **Notice the works come after experiencing the mercy of God, not before.**

THE FACT THAT GOD HAS DONE SO MANY COMPASSIONATE THINGS FOR US AND HAS MERCIFULLY SAVED US AND INCLUDED US INTO HIS PROGRAM SHOULD MOTIVATE US TO LIVE OUR LIVES IN A WAY THAT WILL ENABLE US TO DISCOVER GOD'S PERFECT WILL FOR OUR LIVES.

Let us think for a moment of some of the merciful, compassionate things God has revealed in Romans:

Think about the fact that God has grafted us into a program with Israel.

Think about the fact that we are justified from all our sins - declared righteous.

Think about the fact that we are under grace, not law.

Think about the fact that we have the Spirit of the living God.

Think about the fact that we are individually elected just as Israel was nationally elected.

Think about the fact that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God.

All of these things stemmed from the great mercy and compassion of God when we were helpless and hopeless, and thinking about them should cause us all to want to do God's will with our lives.

This kind of thinking can and should affect us so that we have a passion to want to discover and fulfill God's perfect will.

In this text there are two parts of us that God urges us to yield to Him: 1) Our bodies ; 2) Our minds . Both are necessary for developing the kind of character that gets things done for God.

CHARACTER PATTERN #1 – We are to be a continual sacrifice with our bodies. 12:1

Now the idea of presenting our bodies as a sacrifice is very solemn and very sacred. The sacrifice was something that was taken to God's altar and offered as a means of maintaining a proper relationship with God.

In the Roman world, because of the polytheistic religious systems, there were many sacrifices made by people in an attempt to appease their so-called "gods." Both animal and humans sacrifices were common.

What Paul is saying here is that the most sacred thing we can offer God is ourselves . We are the most valuable offering that we can give to God. It is this offering that puts us in a proper relationship with God so that we can be used.

Gerhard Kittel said that really, since God has given us life, we are only offering back to God what is already His (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 3, pp. 184-185). In **verse 1** there are three adjectival descriptions of the kind of sacrifice we should be willing to make of ourselves:

Adjectival Description #1 - Our sacrifice is to be living . 12:1b

The word "living" is a present tense participle which means we are to offer ourselves as a sacrifice to God that is continually alive in our relationship and service for and to Him. We are to be continually alive and moving for God. We are to be continually growing and developing. God does not want us stale, stagnant, or dead in our spiritual life.

No one will ever discover God's perfect will if our lives are spiritually dead and stagnant. A critical key to presenting ourselves as a "living sacrifice" is to continually focus on the mercies of God.

Adjectival Descriptive #2 - Our sacrifice is to be holy . 12:1c

The word "holy" (*αγιαν*) is an interesting word. The word seems to imply that we have such a reverence for God and an appreciation for the compassionate things that He has done that we are willing to emphatically dedicate or set our bodies and minds apart unto God.

Adjectival Descriptive #3 - Our sacrifice is to be acceptable . **12:1d**

The Greek word “acceptable” is one that means our sacrifice is to be well-pleasing to God. Notice this - Paul is saying that in order for our life to fulfill God’s perfect will, we must present ourselves as a sacrifice that is well-pleasing to God. The key to us discovering God’s perfect will is to live our lives in conformity to His Word to such a degree that we are well-pleasing to Him.

Our sacrifice is only valuable if it pleases Him; and in order for it to please Him, it must be consistent with His Word which places a high emphasis on His Church.

CHARACTER PATTERN #2 – We are not to be continually worldly. **2:2a**

The verb “do not be conformed” is present tense, middle voice and imperative mood. What this means is not being conformed to this world is to be - 1) The continual pattern of our life (present tense); 2) It is a choice we need to make in and of ourselves (middle voice); 3) It is a command (imperative mood).

We have been commanded by God to continually make a choice not to be molded or fashioned by this world or the things which are in it.

This world tugs at our minds and our bodies. The world constantly tries to get us molded after its philosophy. It offers power, pleasure, fame, wealth, possessions and lusts. It is enticing to the body, the flesh. It is enticing to the ego and to the eyes. The world will try to consume our minds.

Many a believer has fallen for the world’s trap and taken its bait. In II Timothy 4:10, Demas fell for it. He forsook Paul, having loved this present world.

CHARACTER PATTERN #3 – We are to be continually transformed . **12:2b**

The word “transform” is a Greek word from which we get our English word metamorphosis, which literally means to change from one form to another.

How are we transformed? By the focus of our minds. As we renew our minds and focus on the Scriptures, we will discover that a metamorphosis is taking place which is mental and spiritual and **we are being transformed, not conforming to the world but to the Word.**

If any believer will purpose to present himself as a sacrifice and not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the Word of God, he will “prove what the good, acceptable and perfect will of God is for his life.”