

Present Your Bodies

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[0 : 01] Romans chapter 12, I'll be reading from the ESV, and we're going to just look at the first two verses.

I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

When is the last time that someone appealed to you?

The last time that somebody really urged you on? The last time that somebody exhorted you? Maybe for some of us, we go back to like high school sports, and we think about our coach exhorting us, urging us, appealing to us, and our team.

[1 : 20] That person drew you in close. That person looked eyes with you. Perhaps they even held your shoulders as they talked to you.

They wanted you to know, I mean business. Not that they're angry and upset, but they're serious about what they're saying. We do this with our kids.

We get down even on their level, and we get right there with them, and we urge them. We have a word with them. We want them to look eyes with us, to not be wandering around with their eyes looking everywhere.

We want them to listen carefully, to listen closely to what we have to say. Paul, in Romans this morning, is putting his hands on our shoulders.

Paul is appealing to us. He means business. Three times in the book of Romans, we read of Paul appealing, where he says, I appeal to you, or I urge you, brothers, or I exhort you, brothers and sisters.

[2 : 24] Here in Romans 12, also in Romans 15, and one more time in Romans chapter 16. So we're going to look at one of these appeals this morning.

One of these exhortations from Romans chapter 12, and just these first two verses here. Now these are just two verses, but if you're familiar at all with the book of Romans, you know these are pivotal, important verses.

Here we have a major transition in the book of Romans. All that Paul has been unpacking in chapters 1 through 11 tells us of what God has done.

What God has done for us in Christ. And now here in Romans 12, and through the rest of the letter, we see, now what is our response? What are we to do?

How are we to live in light of everything that has been said in chapters 1 through 11? Again, rarely will you find, in chapters 1 through 11, a command.

[3 : 25] But here, beginning in 12, we have many commands that are given. And we have some very important, very significant commands given here, just in these first two verses.

Weighty commands. And moving through the rest of the letter, Paul continues with his commands. In light of what God has done for you, this then is how you are to live.

This is the appeal I make to you. So do you see that phrase there in verse 1? By the mercies of God. Or maybe your translation says it a bit more smoothly.

In light of God's mercies. Or in view of God's mercies. That's Paul drawing our attention back to chapters 1 to 11.

That's Paul saying, Keep those mercies of God in mind as I now make this appeal to you. Don't lose sight of what God has done.

[4 : 25] So in one sense, the Christian life is always a life in which we live looking back. We are to keep in view those mercies of God.

Keep the past mercies of God in view. And Paul very much here has in mind those mercies as they relate to our salvation. That's what he spent the first 11 chapters unpacking.

Here's God's mercy to you in Christ. All of your salvation could be summarized by the heading, The Mercies of God. Like when Paul says in Romans 3, beginning in verse 23, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, And are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Or Romans 5.8, But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Or Romans 6.23, For the wages of sin is death, But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Or how about Romans 8, beginning in verse 32, He who did not spare his own son, But gave him up for us all, How will he not graciously with him give us all things?

[5 : 45] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies, Who is to condemn. Christ Jesus is the one who died, And more than that, Who was raised, Who is at the right hand of God, Who indeed is interceding for us.

So all of these verses remind us, We deserved hell. We were enemies of God. We should have been condemned. But time and again, Romans tells us, God intervened.

God didn't give us what we deserved. Instead, in Christ, He gave us the gift of eternal life. Having believed on Him as the one who died in our place upon the cross for our sins, And rose again.

Whoever intercedes for us. So these verses clearly simply explain to us, God's mercy. Shown to us in Christ. Keep all of that in view, Paul says.

Don't forget. Keep coming back to it. That may seem simple enough, But the reality is, We quickly can forget. And we don't keep our eyes on what we need to keep our eyes on.

[6 : 52] We don't keep the mercies of God in view. Even the most fundamental truths about our salvation, We can slowly slip into forgetting.

So are you keeping the central truths of the gospel in view? October 31st, Reformation Day. The day that we remember when 500 plus years ago, Martin Luther nailed those 95 theses to the Wittenberg church door, And it began a return to biblical truth, Concerning these very fundamentals of our faith, The mercies of God that Paul is speaking of here.

That is at the heart of the Reformation. One of those verses in Romans, Had a profound impact on Martin Luther. Romans 1.

Beginning in verse 16, but especially verse 17. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For in it, that is the gospel, For so long, Martin Luther did not understand what these verses were saying.

[8 : 13] He thought that somehow he had to earn his way to heaven. He thought that this righteousness from Romans 1.17 Was a righteousness that needed to originate with him.

From him. Within him. And that he needed to work hard to muster up this righteousness. So he would do things like this. Spend long periods of time exposed to the elements in a cold, dark cell.

To the point of nearly freezing to death. That he would go without food to the point of nearly starving. His friends would say they could actually count his bones. He would flog his own body.

He would have fainting spells from exhaustion. All of this was this distorted attempt to please God through self-denial. It was Luther trying to earn his way to heaven.

Trying to be righteous in himself. Luther wasn't alone in this. This was how the church viewed salvation at that time. This mixture of Christ's work.

[9 : 15] But also our work. In making ourselves right with God. Then one day. Luther came to a right understanding. Of Romans 16 and 17.

That he couldn't earn his way to God. That this righteousness was not from within him. But from outside of him. You could say it was an alien righteousness.

A righteousness that's foreign to us. That must be given to us. And do you know who Luther gave credit to. For this now right understanding of Romans 1.16 and 17.

He said. By the mercy of God. I understood. He had God's mercy. In view. His salvation was rooted. In the mercy.

In the grace of God. He couldn't earn his own righteousness. He needed it to be given to him. He needed. What he called. The passive righteousness. With which.

[10 : 13] Merciful God. Justifies by faith. There it is again. The mercy of God. In view. For Luther. A righteousness that's not earned.

But it was a righteousness that is received. A righteousness that's received. With the empty hands of faith. Nothing do I bring. But I come to you believing. That you have the righteousness I need.

Lord. Lord. Not a righteousness of our own. It's not a righteousness that comes from our own. Dutiful keeping of the commandments of God.

To paraphrase. Philippians 3.9. But a righteousness that comes through faith in Christ Jesus. The righteousness from God that depends on faith. It's a righteousness given to us by God.

Who is both merciful and gracious. He's merciful in not giving us condemnation which we deserved. And he's gracious in giving us the righteousness of which we did not deserve.

[11 : 11] Luther saw the mercy of God in salvation. And for the rest of his life. He was keeping the mercies of God in view.

Are you keeping the mercies of God in view in your life? Paul says to do this. Keep his mercy before your eyes. Because it is these past mercies of God that we now come to this present appeal in Romans chapter 12.

Because of them, here then is how we need to live. Because of what God has done. Here's Paul. Grabbing our shoulders.

Commanding our attention. And saying live in a certain way. And this is what he says in verse 1. I appeal to you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Holy and acceptable to God.

Which is your spiritual worship. This is a call to complete devotion. This is a call to wholehearted devotion.

[12 : 18] And to drive home the point here. Paul uses the language of sacrifice. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was vitally important to the Israelites' relationship with God in the Old Testament.

Only through sacrifice could the Israelites maintain this relationship with God. Because God is holy. Because he is set apart. Because he is righteous.

Good. Morally perfect. Without sin. Sin then is an offense against him. An offense warranting death. And so we know in the Old Testament.

Israelites had to offer sacrifices. Animals put to death in the place of sinners. Their blood shed to atone for sin. Over and over again.

Hebrews 10.11 says this. And every priest stands daily at his service. Offering repeatedly the same sacrifices. Which can never take away sins.

[13 : 19] But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins. He sat down at the right hand of God. Waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. The writer of Hebrews is teaching us.

Jesus was the perfect sinless sacrifice for the sins of his people. No more need for that Old Testament sacrificial system with its animal sacrifices.

So we have no altar here in the building. If you didn't notice. We don't have sheep and goats back behind stage ready to pull out. You won't hear any bleeding of lambs as we're in our service.

Because we're not offering up those sacrifices anymore are we? But there is a sacrifice. There's a sacrifice of a different kind that we do make. Romans 12.1 says it's a living sacrifice.

[14 : 26] That's a strange thought. In the Old Testament death surrounded the animal sacrifices. Animals were put to death. Their blood was shed on the altar.

Occasionally even blood was sprinkled upon the people themselves. A living sacrifice. That's almost something of an oxymoron. Can those two words go together?

Living and sacrifice? God's word says yes. They do go together. Because we're not talking about the Old Testament animal sacrifices anymore.

But the sacrifice of ourselves. Not dead animals. But living people. We are to offer ourselves up.

We are to present ourselves. Our bodies to God. And by bodies Paul doesn't just have in mind our physical bodies. He's talking about our entire selves.

[15 : 20] Our bodies, soul, mind, will. All that we are. We are to give to God. And the fact that it's ourselves that we are offering up.

That helps us to see just how wholehearted. That helps us to see just how devoted and complete our devotion to God should be. Think about a faithful Jew in the Old Testament.

They could bring their sacrifices to the temple. They could follow God's laws to a T. But they would leave that sacrifice with the priest there on the altar.

And they would go home. It left open the possibility that they would actually perhaps forget about that sacrifice. I did my duty. I made my offering. I went home and I got back to living my life.

We offered. We did our act of worship. Now we're moving on. Not so with us. Not possible with us. In offering ourselves, there is obviously no leaving the sacrifice at the altar and getting back with life.

[16 : 26] We are a living, breathing sacrifice. There's no end point to this sacrifice. So wherever we are, with whomever we find ourselves, doing whatever we find ourselves doing, this act of spiritual worship is to be ongoing.

There's no place for compartmentalizing between what you do in your spiritual life and what you do with the rest of your life. Every part of our lives, every single day should be lived in this way.

Presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. Holy and acceptable to God. Those two qualifiers at the end there are important.

Holy and acceptable to God. We're not presenting ourselves to God however we would like. We don't present ourselves to God on our terms.

No, we present ourselves to God in a way that is holy and acceptable to Him. We are to worship Him with our lives in a way that is set apart.

[17 : 30] We're going to see something of this in verse 2. Not conformed to the world. As a living sacrifice, you and I are to be distinct from the world. Holy and very closely related then, acceptable to God.

Let's think about those Old Testament animal sacrifices again. Those animals had to be in a certain state of health.

And those animals had to be offered in certain ways. And the animals offered had to be certain kinds of animals. Everything had to be done in a way that was acceptable to God.

As God had clearly, meticulously laid out for the people. So perhaps for you and I, Leviticus is not necessarily a regular reading each day to keep up with all of the regulations surrounding sacrifice.

But for Old Testament Israelites, the book of Leviticus said a lot about how they were to live day-to-day life. How is it then that we rightly offer our sacrifices to God?

[18 : 40] You couldn't just bring any animal. There were only certain ones that were acceptable. So kids, if your sibling has a pet hamster that you don't like because it stinks up your room, you're not bringing that sacrifice.

That's not acceptable. Hamsters aren't allowed. You couldn't bring your weak, sickly sheep that keeps falling into ditches and you're trying to get rid of. You couldn't just waltz up to the altar and actually kill the animal yourself.

No, there were acceptable ways spelled out for the Israelites. And the same is true for us. We don't offer ourselves to God on our terms.

We offer ourselves in a way that is acceptable to Him. In a way that is pleasing to Him, not pleasing to ourselves. So everything in this verse demands complete devotion to God.

It's costly for us. That's the idea behind sacrifice, isn't it? It's not some kind of casual thing like, well, I serve God with my life sometimes, but then other times I'll indulge myself.

[19 : 43] That's not the kind of living sacrifice that God is looking for. You know what that kind of half-hearted living sacrifice sounds like? Sounds like the kind of person that has failed to keep in view the mercies of God.

His mercies to us in salvation should compel us in love and joy to gladly offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him. That is our spiritual act of worship.

This wholehearted devotion. This complete devotion. All that we are, all that we have, we give to God. That's verse 1.

But what does that look like in more practical, concrete terms? To present our bodies as a living sacrifice. What does that wholehearted devotion look like?

How are we to live that out? Well, now God gives us verse 2. And He gives us two ways this morning that we then demonstrate our devotion to the Lord. Two ways that we live it out.

[20 : 49] By not being conformed and by being transformed. So one is in the negative and one is in the positive. Let's consider the negative first.

Paul says at the beginning of verse 2, Do not be conformed any longer to this world. So Paul gives us here the first very concrete way to live out our devotion to the Lord.

And it's a command to abstain. Do not be conformed. Now the problem is not with the idea of conforming itself.

To be shaped. To look like something. To align with a certain standard or with certain expectations. In fact, Paul has already been talking about conforming earlier in the letter to the Romans.

Chapter 8, verse 29. And this is a conformity that we should gladly welcome. Paul says, Those whom God foreknew, He also predestined. To be conformed to the image of His Son.

[21 : 56] Conformed to look like Christ. That is a wonderfully good conforming. So conformity isn't the problem. The question really is, who or what are we being conformed to?

Paul says here, not the world. We should not be looking like, we should not be behaving like the world. It's unbecoming of what a living sacrifice to God looks like.

Kids, do you like Play-Doh? Maybe you've got some Play-Doh at home. Maybe it's all molded together into a weird color because you couldn't possibly keep it separate.

I grew up playing with Play-Doh. Maybe they had this around, but I just didn't have it. But I never had any kind of molds. I never had any toys that Play-Doh made. I just had the Play-Doh.

So I got really good at making balls of Play-Doh. And I got really good at making pancakes with Play-Doh. But now Play-Doh, I think, has advanced. And our kids have some Play-Doh molds.

[22 : 55] We've got a garbage truck. You put that ball of Play-Doh into the garbage truck. You pull a lever. And magically, out the back of the garbage truck comes a Play-Doh-shaped bag of garbage.

It really does kind of feel like magic. You don't see the inner workings of it. How did that happen? Well, kids, maybe you could guess. There's a mold inside of that Play-Doh truck and that garbage truck.

And that mold is in the shape of a garbage bag. So when you put that ball in, it doesn't come out as a ball any longer, but it comes out as a very detailed, well-defined bag of garbage.

Because it has been molded. Any Play-Doh you mold in, it's squeezed out. It comes out looking like the shape of that mold.

That Play-Doh is conformed into whatever mold you put it in. We, too, are conformed into whatever mold we are put in. Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold.

[24 : 00] There is so much pressure to take on the mindset of the world. Don't be squeezed into that mold. Don't be shaped by that pattern of this world.

And Paul is not so much talking about the physical world here. He's talking about this age. It's like when he says in Galatians 1.4, this present evil age.

It's the mindset. It's the value system that is all around us. And it's not neutral. As one commentator said, It is the sin-dominated, death-producing realm in which all people included in Adam's fall naturally belong.

And it is this world that is seeking to squeeze us into its mold. And I tell you, it is a pretty accurate garbage bag shaped mold.

A mold that is hostile and in opposition to God and his ways. Rather than presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to God, rather than giving yourself in the mold of the world, you make demands for yourself.

[25 : 07] You don't bow to God. God and everyone else bows to you. You don't give yourself to God. God must give to you.

You are owed what you deserve. And guess what? You decide what you deserve. The mold of the world is self-serving. The mold of the world is self-glorifying.

In the mold of the world, devotion to self reigns supreme. We are not to be conformed to that mold. You cannot be wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord as a living sacrifice while still living for yourself and looking like the world.

The Christian follows a different pattern. So if not conforming to the world is the first way we're to live out our wholehearted devotion to the Lord, let's look at the second.

And that is by being transformed. Verse 2 begins, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[26 : 14] That word transformation. Transformation is no small thing. Paul doesn't just say here, try not to look like the world. Try to be a little bit different if you can.

He says be transformed. The same word that's used to describe Jesus when he was transfigured on the mountaintop. Changed. Not in any small way, but in a glorious way.

And it was with pure light radiating from within him. It left the disciples speechless. We who are in Christ are to be changed in undeniable ways.

We are to look different from the world in a similarly obvious way. Not simply outwardly, but first and foremost, inwardly changed.

So how do we have, or so how do we who have been transformed from death to life now live a transformed life? Well, Romans 12 shows us.

[27 : 17] It begins with the mind. How we think matters. And how we think is very much tied to how we live. So don't hear mind and just think, well, information intake.

A cold academic exercise. No, there's much more that's going on here in Romans 12. The head, the heart, the hands, they're all tied together. How we think impacts how we feel.

It impacts how we live. And Paul helps us to see that it begins with the mind. And there is a great problem with our minds in ourselves.

We see this throughout God's Word. Because of sin, in their natural state, our minds are fallen. There is a lack of spiritual understanding.

There is a spiritual darkness in the minds of unbelievers. And so Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4.4, The God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

[28 : 26] Similar words found in Ephesians 4.17, describing the unbelievers' walk as being in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding.

Or even in the book of Romans itself. Chapter 1. Back in verse 28, we read of God giving unbelievers up to a debased mind.

Which means it's corrupted. It's not thinking rightly. And what's the end result of this debased mind? It leads to debased living.

Verse 28 reads, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. So if your mind is not thinking rightly, you will not live rightly before God.

Your mind matters. It needs renewal. It needs total reprogramming. The problem of the mind is not just that it is lacking in information. It's not just that if only people knew more, they would live better.

[29 : 30] They would live more rightly. That's not true at all. The problem of the mind is not a matter of information. The problem of the mind is a matter of opposition.

It is fallen. It is naturally opposed to God and to His ways. It doesn't need to be re-educated. It needs to be renewed. And at conversion, when you become a Christian, God brings light where there was once only darkness.

You no longer have a mind that is set against God, but one that is for God, with God, agreement with God. 1 Corinthians 2.16 says, We have the mind of Christ.

If you are in Christ this morning, you have a new mind. But that new mind needs to constantly be renewed. We read of this in Ephesians 4.23.

We need to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Or Colossians 3.10, Your new self is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

[30 : 39] So it's not just a one-time renewal. It's ongoing. And it takes place every time we take in the word. As we meditate on it.

As we grow in our understanding of all that God says to us in His word. So there's really a double benefit here. The mind that is in the word of God is indeed continually being renewed.

And at the very same time, the mind that is in the word of God is continually resisting conformity to this world. So there's this wonderful simplicity to what God is teaching us here.

Renew your mind that you might resist this world. Renew your mind that you might resist this world. So we are transformed by the renewing of our minds.

And now we see here at the end of verse 2, what the end result of that renewal is. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is.

[31 : 48] His good, pleasing, and perfect will. So to understand what this verse is saying, we need to focus our attention first on God's will.

Because there are a couple of different ways to understand this phrase. Sometimes the Bible is talking about God's unrevealed specific plans for our lives.

That's the meaning James has in mind. When he says in James 4 beginning in verse 13, Come now, you who say, So God has not told us his specific plans for our earthly lives.

God has not told us what his will is for our future in this life. We can't even say with certainty if we will have tomorrow. So James cautions us against planning with no thought of God.

We ought to say, If the Lord wills. Because he may will that we don't wake up tomorrow. Notice here, James doesn't exhort us to try to figure out God's will in this way.

[33 : 16] No, we are to simply submit in humility. We are to submit and trust in God. We're to acknowledge that God has a sovereign will, and yet we don't know it.

That's one way that Scripture talks about God's will. We call that God's sovereign will, or his will of decree. And by decree, we mean what God has purposed to take place in this earthly life for us.

But there's also another way that the Bible talks about God's will. We call that God's will of desire. God's will of decree, God's will of desire. And God's will of desire is this, not what God has purposed to take place, but what God has commanded of us.

For example, we see this will of desire very clearly in 1 Thessalonians 4.3. There Paul writes this, For this is the will of God.

We always love it when something is spelled out so very clearly to us. This is the will of God. Okay, Lord, tell me what that will is. That you abstain your sanctification.

[34 : 23] That you abstain from sexual immorality. That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor. So there we see it. This is what God desires for us.

Our sanctification. That is applicable to every single one of us. This is what he commands of us. As it relates especially to sexual purity here in this verse.

Or how about 1 Thessalonians 5:18? We're commanded to give thanks in all circumstances. It's a clear command concerning how we are to live.

No mystery behind those words. And Paul immediately follows that command with these words. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

So two different wills that the scriptures speak of. We can't get them confused. We've got to keep those straight. So which is Paul talking about here in Romans chapter 12? Is it God's will of decree?

[35 : 23] Or is it God's will of desire? How do we know? Well it's God's will of decree. Or desire. God's will of desire. Let me say that clearly. Because Paul expects us to know what it is.

And to apply it to our lives. He expects us with renewed minds to know God's will. Not his will for the future that he has planned. But his will for how we're to live our lives pleasing to him today.

God does not give us his word to treat as a magic eight ball. God gives us his word to transform us by the renewing of our minds.

He wants to tell you all about his will for your life. He wants to tell you all that his good and acceptable and perfect commandments and laws and precepts and instructions have to say.

God is not holding out on you. Expecting you to jump through some kind of mysterious, unidentified hoops to get to his will.

[36 : 33] And when you've met the right criteria then and only then will he reveal it to you. We don't serve a sneaky God like that who's halfway toying with us.

Like how we might toy with a cat using a laser on the wall. God's not messing with us. God's not stringing us along. The will that he intends for you to know and to obey.

He's made it known. You have it. It's here in his word. No mystery about it given to you. Now you might be ignorant of God's will in this way.

But it is not because God is keeping it from you. The key to knowing the will of God. His desire is to be in his word. And you know what happens when we're in God's word?

Romans 12 tells us. Our mind is renewed. No longer conformed to this world but renewed in this very word. And minds that are renewed in God's word are then able to, by testing, discern God's will.

[37 : 41] Meaning, you put all things in life to the test. Does this align with God's will or not?

A thought crosses your mind. You can immediately put it to the test. Does that thought line up with God's will as it's revealed in his word? Does that thought line up with what is good and acceptable and perfect?

Or is that thought in conformity with the world? So you can rightly evaluate your thoughts. You can rightly evaluate your words, your actions, your attitudes as well.

All of this is not just about memorizing God's ways. Just having basic knowledge of them. No, this is highly practical for how we are to then live.

The mind drives the actions. The problem of sin, remaining sin, doesn't just impact what we do. It impacts even how we think.

[38 : 41] So we need our minds continually realigned with God's thinking. God, I need your thoughts. Otherwise, my thoughts are going to lead me into places that are outside of your will.

So as our minds are continually renewed, the more deeply that they soak in God's word, the better equipped we will be to know right from wrong. The more quickly that we will agree with God.

Yes, Lord, your will is good and acceptable and perfect. Your ways are good and acceptable and perfect. I want to know what your ways are, and I want my ways to align with your ways.

I don't want to just know. I want to live according to them. Isn't that the end goal? His ways to be our ways? We want our thoughts to be as his thoughts.

We want to live in a manner that is pleasing to him. We want to agree with God, and we want to live out that agreement.

[39 : 43] Not just giving mental assent. Yes, Lord, I know that your ways are good and acceptable and perfect, but I want to go my own way. No, we agree with God, and we live out that agreement. You put into practice what God says.

So when Paul says, by testing you may discern what the will of God is, he isn't saying that we put God's will to the test.

He's not saying that. He's saying we put all other things, all other thoughts and attitudes and actions and words to the test. We see whether they align with God's word or not.

Is that thought of God? Is that word? Is that of God? Our hearts have been radically reoriented, and they are ever becoming more and more aligned with God and his ways.

Do you remember last Sunday morning? I know I'm asking you to go back seven days. We were in Numbers 25, and there we saw something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

[40 : 52] We saw how seriously we must take a sin. And we met a man named Phineas, the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron.

You want to see Romans 12 in the life of a person? Look at Phineas. Here is a living, breathing example of what it looks like to be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Phineas had a whole different set of values than anyone else. Israel, in Numbers 25, had conformed to this world. Israel had adopted the values that the world holds to.

Israel's conformity to the world was all around Phineas. It was on full display. Sexual immorality. Idolatry. All throughout the camp.

And Phineas, with his renewed mind, could discern God's will. In the chaos that was all around him, Phineas could make the proper judgment call.

[41 : 57] He could distinguish between good and evil. He could tell the difference between acceptable and unacceptable. He could tell the difference between perfect and imperfect.

So he was not enticed by sin. He was not enslaved to sin. He wasn't deceived by sin. He was not conformed to this world. His mind was renewed.

He knew God's will and he agreed with it. He lived it out. For us who are in Christ, now that our minds are transformed, we have discovered God's will.

And we see just how good and acceptable and perfect it is. We come to see God's laws. We come to see God's commandments, His ways for what they really are.

We've been given eyes to see and to understand and to agree with God. We humbly submit ourselves to Him. We say, yes, God, now I agree.

[42 : 58] Because you've worked in my heart that agreement. You've brought me to this place of agreement. And so now there's an obedience that arises out of our hearts.

An obedience to God's Word. And it is a joyful, glad obedience because now we have the Spirit of God living in us. And we are being transformed.

We are being changed to look more and more like Jesus. 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Same idea found there. Paul is talking about us seeing God in a spiritual sense, with the eyes of our hearts.

And as we see God, as we behold Him and His glory, this is what happens. Verse 17. We are all being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

We are being changed to look more and more like God. More and more godly. And where does this change come from?

[44 : 04] Paul says, For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. So the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is at work in us who are Christians. We are in fact being transformed by Him.

The reality is, if we're not being transformed by the Word, we are being conformed to the world. So are you taking this mind-transforming, life-transforming Word, and are you soaking it in?

If you got out of the habit of it, get back in. If you are in the habit of it, continue in it. Those early mornings are worth it.

The sacrifice of sleep is worth it. Reading the Word isn't just a matter of information intake. Transformation by the Spirit of God is taking place.

So with that renewed mind, we now live greater and greater in obedience to God. We live in greater and greater conformity to Christ, thinking more and more like our Savior, and living more and more like our Savior.

[45 : 20] So present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Offer yourself in wholehearted devotion to God. And if you are not in Christ this morning, come to Christ today.

You will find a Savior who graciously welcomes and receives all who come to Him. Find a Savior who will warmly embrace you as you turn from your sin and you put your trust in Him.

You put your trust in Him as the one who died on the cross for your sins and rose again, and you will find eternal life in Him. And then you will get to enjoy, with all of the rest of us here who are in Christ, you will get to enjoy presenting your body as a living sacrifice to God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, what an appeal that has been given to us in Your Word this morning.

It is a high calling, indeed, to give wholehearted devotion to You. And so, Father, we cry out to You, coming in prayer to You, asking that by Your Spirit, You would work that devotion in us.

[46 : 34] That by Your grace, we would not lose sight of Your mercies that You have shown towards us in Christ. That we would live as those who remember what You have done in giving us of Your Son, of transforming us and making us into new creations.

And then, Father, we pray that by Your Spirit, You would give us the grace to continue to live that out, to continue in transformation by renewed minds. We're so prone to still go astray.

Sin is still such a temptation, and we pray, Father, that You would keep us from that temptation and that You would give us the grace to pursue righteousness. We pray You would save sinners this morning even, and that You would sanctify Your church as we go from here this afternoon, we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.