

TAKE MY LIFE
Romans 12:1-2

Intro. related to my mission trip...

Turn to Rom. 12... Read 12:1-2 & Pray...

Recall that back in Rom.1, the mark of the unbeliever was an idolatrous heart ("worshipping the creation rather than the Creator") and a corrupt mind ("God gave them over to a debased mind") – At conversion to Christ, God reverses that downward spiral of darkness – Our hearts & minds are reborn and awakened, flooded with light!

****[In this passage I want you to see that] God requires from you two responses in light of His great mercy to you in Christ:***

1. (v.1) You must *surrender your whole self* to God in constant worship.

-v.1a, Why give up our precious 'independence' & 'rights' to serve Him? Just because it 'works for me', or because I'd like to 'give it a try' for a while? – NO, but because of the "mercies of God" which have been *and are being* poured out on us.

-Need some proof? – How about 11 chapters of proof (Rom. 1-11)?!
- E.g.: salvation (1:16-18) instead of damnation; (3:21ff) justification, redemption (i.e., he now owns us!), propitiation, imputation – all by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone; (chps. 5 & 8) the hope of glorification; (chps.6-7) indwelling, empowering Spirit; (chps. 9-11) elect instead of reprobate, loved instead of hardened, vessels of mercy instead of wrath –

11:32, God's whole goal in history! → If we have truly grasped these great truths as our own, we can only say 'Yes, yes, yes, to Rom. 12:1-2'!

~ God's mercy for us "exerts a total and all-encompassing claim upon us: grace now 'reigns' over us (5:21). It is therefore entirely fitting that our response is to be one that is equally total and all-encompassing" (Moo) – presenting our whole self as a sacrifice to God.

Now for the command: v.1b – Not the first time in this epistle: cf. (same Grk. verb being used) Rom. 6:11-14, 16, 19b... As those who are now released from slavery to sin, we now freely, gladly ENLIST our every moment in the King's service! – We must now offer up our whole life & body unreservedly to our new Master!

But did you notice the new image that Paul adds here in 12:1: sacrifice.

-OT saints sought to worship God daily through offering up their bloody, dead sacrifices on the altar – Likewise, many other peoples & religions of the world, up to this very day, offer up animal sacrifices in seeking to worship their god or gods....

-But now, under the New Covenant today, what kind of worship and sacrifices does God require: *Self-sacrifice* – Offering up all we are and all we have on God's altar! – This is why Peter assures us in 1 Pet. 2 that we are all now included in the "holy priesthood" – But Paul goes further and says we're also now included in the offering! (👉 Like the little girl who put the offering plate in the floor and jumped in, since that's what she learned in Sunday School!)

-NB, Paul's three adjectives describing this self-sacrifice: "living" - i.e. continual/constant; "holy" - set apart, totally devoted/dedicated to Him; "acceptable" - well-pleasing, satisfying to God – a fragrant aroma...

→Swindoll: "The problem with living sacrifices is that they have a hard time staying on the altar." – Christian's, *don't squirm or jump off!* And if you have gotten off, *get back on the altar, today!* – Deut. 6:4-5 & Matt. 22:27! 1 Cor. 6:19b-20 – In fact, we are twice-bought, twice-owned – God is Creator & Redeemer!...

→We must do a comprehensive self-evaluation – F.R. Havergal’s hymn is a great place to start:

Take **my life**, and let it be, consecrated, Lord to Thee;
Take **my moments** and my days, let them flow in ceaseless
praise.
Take **my hands** and let them move at the impulse of Thy love;
Take **my feet** and let them be, swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take **my voice** and let me sing, always only for my King;
Take **my lips** and let them be, filled with messages from Thee.
Take **my silver** and my gold, not a mite would I withhold;
Take **my intellect** and use every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take **my will** and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine:
Take **my heart**, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne.
Take **my love**, my Lord, I pour, at Thy feet its treasure store:
Take **myself**, and I will be ever, only, all, for Thee!

→Just imagine how many radical results this attitude could bring in our own flock here? new conversions & societal changes in Pburg; career missionaries; martyrs; changed lifestyles; transformed marriages & families....

-v.1c, Paul has one further description of our new mode of worship: "Reasonable/spiritual" – A Grk. word (*logikos*) which is hard to pin down, but the gist of it seems to be that such true worship is the most "rational & reasonable, appropriate" (cf. NKJV) response, in light of: God as Creator and in light of His great saving mercies toward us in Christ; in light of who we are as rational & spiritual, intelligent creatures, worshipping w/our minds.

-NB, throughout this verse (incl. the word "worship" [*latreuo*], originally a term for only the role of the priests in the temple) – Worship is no longer attached only to a certain place (e.g., church bldg.) or time (e.g., devotions) or day (not only Sun.!) or vocation (NOT limited to pastors & missionaries!)(cf. John.4:22-24)

→ Anywhere our body goes, anywhere a Christian is found, should become a sacred place, “holy ground” where we are constantly worshipping with our lives!

→ Satan must be delighted over the fact that many Christians think “worship” is only a 20-30 min. event on Sun. AM when the singing takes place at church (or just to a 1.5 hr. “worship service”) – Brothers & sisters, let’s *refuse* to let “worship” be *reduced* to that! – Learn to view your everyday existence as a perpetual priesthood, a constant consecration, an ongoing offering unto Him: waking; eating; dressing; washing; driving; working; studying; marriage; parenting; relaxing; exercising; sleeping, etc.

~ “Fill Thou, my life, O Lord my God, in every part with praise.
That my whole being may proclaim Thy being and Thy ways.
... So shall no part of day or night, from sacredness be free.
But all my life, in every step, be fellowship with Thee.”
(H. Bonar)

Now for a prime example of what a living sacrifice, a surrendered life, looks like – Here is a person who shows that they are truly ‘under new ownership’, fully possessed by God: v. 2...

2. (v.2) You must *live a transformed life* in this world by constant mind-renewal.

-NB, real transformation won’t happen through big stadium gatherings, emotional hype, etc. – Real transformation requires the hard work & sweat of personal sanctification, learning the daily process of Rom. 12:2!

a. v. 2a, What to PUT OFF

-v.2a, Negatively: "Do not conform" - I.e. "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mould, Don't copy it's pattern of attitudes & actions." – Cf. 1 Pet. 1:14 (“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance...”)

-NB, "this world" = The Grk. words for "world" are used in various ways in the NT – Obviously here, Paul is not ref. to the physical world (or mere 'material' things) – Actually, a better transl. would be "this age" = this is Satan's kingdom, which is at war with God and God's people.

-This "world" is what Jesus called "the broad road leading to destruction" (Matt.7), what Paul calls elsewhere (Col. 1) the "domain of darkness" (Col.1) and the community of those (Eph. 2) 'dead in sin...controlled by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience...enslaved to their lusts...by nature children of wrath' – This is the ultimate 'worldwide web' which we are all entangled in from birth, and a regime which rules every unbeliever (though most deny it, being deceived) – It is a world-system whose beliefs and values are dominated by sin & death, and Satan & deception (cf. "world" in John 14-17; 1 Cor. 1-3, etc.).

-THIS is the "world" which we have been "transferred/transported" out of the day we were liberated by Christ and immigrated into His kingdom (Col. 1) – And THIS is the "world" which we *must never go back to or be conformed to*, even though it is all around us!

☒ Recall that this was the persistent snare for Israel – wanting to become like her neighbours – borrowing their gods, their wives, their beliefs & values – But time and again, God called them to 'Come out & be separate! Be different, be holy as I am holy!'

-Turn to: Jam. 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17...

→It is shocking to hear surveys & statistics showing that professing Christians today live *no differently* than the world (and to see it so often!): they divorce just as frequently, they cheat, lie, and steal just as much, and they watch just as much TV, buy the same lousy magazines & music, and watch the same filthy movies....

→Frankly, I am shocked at times at what mature Christian parents openly allow in their homes – what their children listen to, watch on

TV, and paste up on their walls – Have we forgotten that ‘beholding leads to becoming’, that what you look at & admire the most will shape who you are?! – I praise God for parents who loved me enough to place strict limits on all media influences in our home, esp. until I had proven that I was discerning enough to start choosing for myself.

→Church family, worldliness is often so subtle – It is in the air we breathe, and we can so easily be polluted – Do we have our gas masks on to avoid the deadly fumes? – Here are some questions to help test your infection level:

- Have we bought into some of society’s favourite mottos? – E.g., “Whatever satisfies me is what’s important in life.” – “I deserve a break, respect, or a new this or that. I’ve gotta look out for number one.” – “If I earn enough money, I’ll be happy, and then my family & I can be secure (shielded from hardship).” – “Anything is acceptable as long as it doesn’t hurt another person.” (“Success = fame, money, comfort, and power/control.”)
- When the world looks at you, how *different & distinct* are you? Or do you fit right in, (🐧) just like another penguin in the flock? – In the way you treat your spouse? In the way you raise & educate your children to fear God? In the way you & your children dress – to attract attention to your figure, or to honor God (modesty a lost art these days!)?
- So much more could be said on this – Today, Christians are being swallowed by secularism on almost every front: views on science & evolution; education; psychology; views on church, worship services & music, commitment to the church; the gospel (pluralism); absolute truth (postmodernism); work; children & the family; gender roles, etc... Oh dear church, v.2a...! Oh for the days when the church was a dominant cultural influence! (Acts 17; Reformation; Great Awakening)

→We must learn to *stop & realize*: The world is constantly bombarding us & recruiting us, usually when you least expect it – *Nothing is neutral!* – Every purchase you make, every thing you watch, every person you are with, every textbook or book you read At each moment, you are either moving toward God or away from Him, you are either serving Christ or serving yourself.

→Summarize: Every Christian (esp. parents) should at least become a sort of ‘Jr. cultural analyst/social critic’ (reading & staying informed) – But maybe you (and esp. your kids) say, ‘Hey, relax. We can’t police everything!’ – Key: See 1 Thess. 5:21-22...

→Notice: many of the things we’ve mentioned (clothes, media, friends) are not sinful in themselves, but created by God – BUT, before we reach for them, we must first learn to *think carefully & to think biblically!* – Is this item helping me to love God more, or myself more? – Christianity is not anti-cultural, but it IS *counter-cultural!*

→Remember: v.2 is a test of how seriously we take v.1, “holiness” & “living sacrifice”....

~ *The moral credibility of the gospel depends on those who’ve been transformed by the grace & mercy of God, demonstrating that transformation in every dimension of life.* – Al Mohler

Though the complex forces of secularism seem overwhelming, I take great comfort in this – There is a proven strategy – There is a time-tested battle plan for victory: keeping your mind armed & saturated with God’s truth: v.2b...

b. What to ‘put on’...

-“Be transformed” - ‘metamorphosized into God’s new pattern’

☞ R.Holland’s compliment of his wife, ‘she’s a different woman every year’ – always changing & growing!

→ Could that be said of you, Christian, or are you 'coasting'? – Are you visibly 'under construction', scaffolding up, hammers banging away, even if a bit messy at times (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16)? (🔨 This is what I love most about our Iron Men!)

🔨 At salvation, we should become like wet concrete, ready to be poured into a whole new mould, eager to reshape our whole lives in a biblical mould (and to never totally harden; always being transformed)....

HOW? v.2c, "by the renewing of your mind" – I.e., We will never live differently until we start thinking differently – We will never live 'Christianly' until we learn to think 'Christianly' (as I've already been emphasizing in the above questions)!

→ But again, beware: We live an increasingly *mindless*, unthinking age, largely due to TV (which is usually becomes a mind-numbing diversion)

~ "We live in mindless times... This is because of the fast pace of modern life, which does not give people sufficient time to think; our materialism, which binds us to things rather than freeing our minds for ideas; skepticism in philosophy, which tells us that there is nothing to be gained by thinking anyway; and above all the pervasiveness of television, which is destructive to rational thought processes. But we need to think! And we need to think biblically!" (Boice, xi)

-Paul's point: The best anti-virus program to prevent being infected by the world is to be constantly 're-programming, retraining' our thought-patterns according to Scripture....

→ NB, this is an active effort – It will not happen passively, by accident, or overnight (nor just by hearing good sermons)! This is why we must seize every possible opportunity (Sun. AM & PM; home Bib. studies; good books & tapes; conferences, etc.!)

☞ Resolve today to be a Psalm 1 kind of person! – vv.1-2... We cannot “meditate” on the Word without some serious reflection & heavy thinking & chewing (cf. Josh. 1:8)....

→ Sadly, many believers can list every player on the Springbok rugby or cricket side, or on Bafana-Bafana, but could not even list the 10 commandments, or the 12 apostles! – Many who know countless song lyrics from the latest CDs can hardly recite any Scripture by memory! – God help us to become far *more acquainted* with Scripture than with the world!

[~ **“It suddenly became more important than ever to read your Bible.** ...[She then goes on to describe the largest media merger in history, indicative of a trend toward fewer and fewer big-shots monopolizing culture (through owning TV stations, news & entertainment powerhouses, radio, film producers, fashion industry, publishers, video stores, major websites, etc.)...I'm tempted to soften this, to say, "Just keep your eye on it." But the fact is, in the nature of the case, your eye will not likely catch it, no more than it catches every Coke ad subliminally slipped into the movies, no more than the unsuspecting frog perceives the water temperature rising. **There's nothing for it but to stay in the Word. For brothers, now more than ever, "They are not just idle words for you-they are your life"** (Deuteronomy 32:47). (Andree Seu, WORLD magazine, 2001)]

→ Contrary to popular opinion, Christianity IS a religion for thinkers (It is not an ‘anti-intellectual’, ‘leave your mind at the door’ kind of faith) – In fact, if you’re NOT willing to think hard and to think biblically, you will never grow or overcome sin – The battle is won or lost in the mind! – This is what “loving God w/our mind” is all about – Cf. Php. 4:8; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:7 (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2-3; many ref. to “knowing” as key to joyful Christian living, Jm. 1; Rom.5-6, etc.)...

WHY is a renewed mind so important? v.2b...

-I.e., so that we can “test/understand and approve” (cf. NIV) God’s will for us in every area of life – So that we can discover His will AND delight in it!

-NB, God’s will is always "good, acceptable, and perfect" (to God; thus, should be to us too) – Contra. self-will & the world’s will & Satan’s will – which is an offense to God and deadly for you, and ultimately unsatisfying too!...

Summ of vv.1-2: Worship better & think better so you can live better! – Because of God’s vast mercies to you in Christ, *engage* in constant self-surrender and constant mind-renewal, so that you will live a transformed life, to the glory of God!