



RE-THINK

WHEN LIFE HASN'T GONE
THE WAY YOU PLANNED

WEEK 1 STUDY GUIDE

BY: PASTOR RANDY KIGER

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Monday July 4, 2022

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Scripture Verse: *"I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God." Romans 12:1*

Today's Thought:

On this day in 1776, the founding fathers of what would become the United States of America made a declaration for freedom. It was by all sense in purpose a miraculous event, the founding of our great nation, as Thomas Jefferson and the members of the 2nd Continental Congress eloquently crafted 1,337 words into what would become our Declaration of Independence from the tyranny of Great Britain. It would be a document that would flip the world on its head and forever transform this world's landscape. It would be the only original document of any nation on earth to pledge allegiance to God Almighty. No founding record of any country has given attention to the "Laws of Nature and the Nature of God," or proclaimed all its people "created equal" and "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," which cannot be taken or removed. Further, no other national record appeals to the "Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions," nor does a declaration place the fate of its authors in the hands of God with a prayer: "for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

From this document, we find evidence of our founding father's unmistakably clear understanding of Romans 13 and the Bible. Our forefathers would never entrust civil government, the making, enforcement, and application of laws to Satan and those who serve him. They refused to surrender the government functions to those who lived in rebellion against God. They believed that civil government was not neutral among religions and philosophies of men but instead a ministry of the Sovereign God who created and rules His universe and world. The Founders believed that God is the Lord of history who rules the lives of nations by His divine providence. God works out His eternal plan and holy history, including over the newly formed States of America. These men knew that our government and its laws must be based upon God's Laws and principles of justice if we were to enjoy His blessings on our land and citizenry. They knew that all men are sinners, and their sinful nature could have

destructive consequences if allowed to vent itself through government power. Only through the constant unity of true Christianity, virtue, and liberty could these new States remain united and preserved.

On this Independence Day 2022, I remind us of all the great sacrifices made for that freedom, or at least what's left of it. The only reason this country still exists today is because of this one word: sacrifice. Along with General Washington's brave citizen-soldiers, our Founders risked all they had for freedom. These men endured seven years of starvation, crippling wounds, frostbite, disease, exhaustion, and continual defeats, yet stayed the course to win American Independence! And as we begin our dive into Romans 12, Paul immediately calls on each of us to be living sacrifices for Christ. Over the next few days, we will discover what it means to become such sacrifices.

- Take a few minutes to ponder the words and commitment to sacrifice of our forefathers and their dependence on God for freedom and the pursuit of happiness. Pray.

Further Reading: Deuteronomy 28:1-10

Tuesday July 5, 2022

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Scripture Verse: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”*
Romans 12:1

Today’s Thought:

In the first eleven chapters of Romans, Paul has led an excellent discussion of sin, faith, and God’s grace, which lead to salvation, and has done so masterfully. Paul opens chapter 12 with a transitional word, “therefore,” which typically signals a transition of topics. But in this case, it is placed with great significance. Paul’s great principles thus far can be seen as a sequence of concepts leading to a compelling conclusion. The concepts taught in chapters 1-11 seek to demonstrate the persuasive conclusion in Romans 12:1.

Paul’s “therefore” in verse one affirms that God’s plan of our salvation should lead us to a transformed life. In our previous study of Romans 8, we discovered that through the work of Christ on the cross, we are justified, made as if we never sinned, and are now in right relationship with God by faith in Him alone. Remember, we are no longer under condemnation because of Jesus’ work. Now because of Christ’s work and the fact we are now in right relationship with God, Paul earnestly requests we make ourselves living sacrifices. The word sacrifice carries the connotation of offering an animal in the temple. It was the offering of an animal’s life as payment for human sin. For the first time in Genesis 3:21, we see an animal sacrifice when God killed a lamb to make clothes to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness. Animal sacrifices could only cover their sin, and over time this process became costly, and it was secondhand. However, Romans 12:1 calls us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices because of the mercy we have received from God. As we offer ourselves in sacrifice, it becomes an act of worship, holy and pleasing to God.

Paul’s appeal to us all, including the Roman church of his day, is to become more than we’ve been, to make progress in the view of God’s unmerited favor. As we transition in this new direction, we must understand and grasp God’s mercy as the foundational key and starting point. It’s not about our human effort to “clean up our act;” it’s about

what God did for us through His Son. The declaration is now made that salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone and that grace appeals to us to respond by specific actions. But we must be careful not to misunderstand grace by assuming that God forgives our past sins while we are somehow responsible for our present and future sins and that God's continuing grace depends on our actions. Paul strongly opposed such a thought! Only by God's gracious gift of mercy do we have the ability and strength to respond to His grace. Our response becomes not a saving act but a spiritual act of loving worship to our God.

- How does Paul use the word “therefore” here as more than just a signal for a change in topic?
- What is our basic understanding of a sacrifice?
- Where did the concept of animal sacrifice begin? What makes it so costly?
- What does it mean to make ourselves a sacrifice?
- When we make ourselves living sacrifices what does it become?
- How can God's grace become misunderstood?

Further Reading: Romans 13:13-14

Wednesday July 6, 2022

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Scripture Verse: *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."*
Romans 12:1

Today's Thought:

In Romans 12:1, Paul tells us that our bodies (Greek 'soma'-referring to the good earth from which God created us) are to be an offering to Christ as our act of worship. Remember, our "flesh" or sinful nature was crucified with Christ, which we saw back in Romans 8. Because we have experienced the incredible benefits of justification, we can now respond spiritually. God moves first toward the sinner and offers a grace that comes before, enabling a person to reach out to God in faith. As a believer, that same grace acts in another way, allowing a Christ Follower to do what would otherwise be impossible, to offer themselves as living sacrifices. Only the true believer can present himself or herself to God in such a remarkable act of selfless worship. Paul said this in Romans 6:13-14, "Don't give the parts of your body to serve sin. Don't let them be used to do evil. Instead, give yourselves to God. You have been brought from death to life. Give the parts of your body to him to do what is right. Sin will not be your master. Law does not rule you. God's grace has set you free."

When we present our body to God, we imply that we will avoid any sin committed with or against our body but will use our body as a servant of our soul in service to Him. It is our calling to glorify God with our bodies. Within that calling, we find the duty of worship, the responsibility of using our specific gifts, while being willing to suffer for Him with our bodies if so-called. Our bodily exercise becomes proof of the dedication of our souls to God as living sacrifices, not dead burnt flesh. God is not asking us to die for Him but to live daily devoted to Him. Paul conveys our need to make our sacrifice direct, personal, and living. When we offer ourselves this way, we now have some skin in the game, our own. God is pleased when we offer ourselves this way which becomes true worship.

- Explain the difference between “flesh” and “body.” What has become of the ‘flesh’?
- What is the outcome of offering our body as sacrifice to God?
- Why is God’s grace such an amazing gift?
- What does God’s grace enable someone who is not yet a believer to do?
- How does what Paul wrote back in Romans 6 apply to offering ourselves as living sacrifices in Romans 12?
- What happens when we voluntarily offer our whole selves to God?

Further Reading: Ephesians 4:20-24

Thursday July 7, 2022

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Scripture Verse: *"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."* Romans 12:2

Today's Thought:

When we present ourselves as living sacrifices, a RADICAL CHANGE takes place in each of us. For that change to occur, we must believe in the promise of change. We can all change. It's not always easy, and for sure not complicated. Let's look at the first half of Romans 12:2, which says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." J.B. Phillips paraphrases it this way, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." I love the power of Phillip's interpretation. We know that the world will try and exert its pressure on us at every turn seeking to get us to adopt its way of thinking. Fortunately, we are not made of play-doh; we don't have to conform!

Paul's word for conform is the Greek word, "schEE-matiz-O," where we get our English word schematic which means to assume a particular form or conform behaviorally or socially like the world. It doesn't matter how dark you think your life may be; God can give you and wants to provide you with a new lease on life! The good news is that God offers the promise of change through the words of the prophet Ezekiel: "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God." This prophetic promise foreshadows Jesus - it is His sacrifice that frees us so his Spirit can deploy us. 1 John 1:9 says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 2 Corinthians 5:17 states, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All of this happens because of God's mercy toward us!

- What constitutes the Radical Change that happens in the believer?
- Why is it hard for some to believe in the power of change?
- How does the world exert its pressure on us to conform?
- What are some ways to keep us from conforming?
- What according to Ezekiel is God's promise to provide the change we need?
- What is it that makes all this happen?
- What radical changes has God made in your life?

Further Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:11-19

Friday July 8, 2022

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Scripture Verse: *“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.” Romans 12:2*

Today’s Thought:

Yesterday we discussed the power to change and that all of us can change with the help of God. Paul states that once Christ has enabled us to no longer want to conform to this world, a radical transformation takes place. The transformation occurs through renewing our minds daily in the Word of God, which Paul says happens as a result of God’s change made in us.

The word transformation derives its meaning from the Greek word 'metamorphoo,' where we get the word metamorphosis. We know this word from our elementary science class when we learned that a caterpillar, through the process of metamorphosis, transforms itself into a beautiful butterfly. It provides us a picture of what happens to us as we renew ourselves in God’s Word. Our inner transformation now becomes an outward witness to others and sets us apart from the world’s way of thinking and behavior. As believers, it is natural for us to not want to conform. Now, however, our conformity is shaped by God’s pleasing and perfect will and not by the pattern of this world.

The world provides tons of obstacles to block our transformation. How do we overcome them?

1. Know that God’s love overcomes our internal impulses to conform.

–When we experience God’s transforming acceptance, our interests change.

2. Know that being part of a Christian community overcomes our culture.

–Being a regular worship attendee reinforces the values we hold dear.

–Being in a small group fast-tracks your spiritual transformation.

–We are always better when we are together.

3. Know God’s Spirit in us will overcome the demons against us.

–Satan, our enemy, is powerful in this world.

- Demonic forces are most likely assigned to exploit you.
- God has sent angels to protect you, and you have the Holy Spirit inside as a coach.
- 1 John 4:4, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

Our job as believers is to accept the challenge to change and be transformed. Transformational change is hard, but we have all the tools necessary to conquer as followers of Christ. Mark Moore from his book Core 52 puts it this way; there are areas in our lives we have yet to submit to Christ. Those areas, through pride, seek to take the place of God in our lives. Unless we purposely seek to counter their attack, there will always be a pull from culture to adopt its values. We can counterbalance culture in several ways:

- Reading God's Word.
- Listening to worship music.
- Serving others.
- Having fellowship with like-minded believers.

You can be a different person. Do not conform but be transformed by being willing to change your friends, the places you hang out, and your life priorities. Then replace those things with acts of kindness by being the hands and feet of Christ; be humble in placing others before yourself, and always display forgiveness because this is the heart of Christ.

- What helps us to no longer want to conform to this world?
- Who or what is behind this power to change?
- How does transformation happen to in the believer?
- What are the obstacles that can block that transformation?
- How can we counter-attack the pull of culture on our values?

Further Reading: Ephesians 5:17-20

NOTES



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