

In View of God's Mercy: Do Not Conform

02.27.2022

Buying a shirt at the mall...

Now that I have that important theological discussion out of the way

I have some really important things to discuss with you

So we're starting a new series today

We've called "In view of God's mercy"

It was taken from the last part of the book of Romans

It starts in chapter 12 verses 1-2, where it says:

Romans 12:1 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy...

Let me give you a little context for that verse

The Book of Romans, in the Bible

Is divided into two sections:

Chapters 1-11

And chapters 12-16

So this verse

12:1

Is kind of a hinge point

In the entire book

Chapters 1-11 tell the Romans

And by extension, us

What to believe

And then chapters 12-16 describe

What we do about it

What to do

So this therefore

At the beginning of the verse

Is really big

Therefore

In view of 11 chapters worth of things to believe

Therefore, here's what you do

So if you want a fuller picture of what chapters 1-11 teach

You should go back on our website

Or on the app

And watch last summer's teaching

We called "In the fullness of time"

It covers that section

That was a great series

But I felt like we kind of left some things on the table

If you will

This series

Is designed to help with that

So you should go back and watch that

If you weren't with us last summer

Or even if you were

For a refresher

But because I know

Lots of us aren't going to do that

I wondered

How can I give a quick update on those sections

Without spending too much time

And derailing today's message

So I decided just to do a rapid fire presentation

Of some of the best "That'll preach" moments

From Romans 1-11

I narrowed it down to 8

That was tough

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. – Romans 3:23-24

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ – Romans 5:1

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. – Romans 6:3-4

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. – Romans 10:9

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus – Romans 8:1

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. – Romans 8:5-6

If God is for us, who can be against us? – Romans 8:31b

We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor

the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:35-39

So therefore

Based on all of that

In view of God's mercy

What?!?

What are we going to do, in view of God's mercy?

Well, that's what this series is all about

I believe God's mercy

That He sent His Son Jesus

Into the world

To rescue us from our sin & selfishness

I believe God's mercy

Is among the most important things in life

In fact, God's mercy

Seen that way

Maybe *THE* most important thing in this life

So let me ask you again:

What are you going to do, in view of God's mercy?

What are you willing to do?

How far are you willing to take this?

Well, Paul answers that question

Romans 12:1 - 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.

Let me just lay this out here

Because sometimes churches play cat & mouse with this thing

God wants everything

Everything

Paul is writing to an audience in Rome

That would have been familiar with animal sacrifices

So when they heard to offer your body as a living sacrifice

They would have pictured a priest taking the body of an animal

A bird or a goat or a cow

And placing it on the altar

Killing it

And then placing it on the altar as a sacrifice

So Paul makes a clever turn of phrase

God is not calling for a dead sacrifice

But a living one

How's that different?

Well, first of all, a living sacrifice

Continues to sacrifice

This is not a one-time gift of a dead animal

But an ongoing gift of a living servant

Who will continue to offer up the sacrifice of their life

Again and again

Day after day after day

So that's the first part

But there's something else going on here

Picture the normal sacrifice that they would have been used to

If you've ever worked with farm animals

I grew up on a farm

If you've ever worked with farm animals

They don't like to be handled

Puppies like to be handled

Bunnies like to be handled

Kitties like to be...

Actually, that's not true

Cats hate everybody

But some pets – most pets

Like to be handled

But not livestock

There's a reason manufacturers make cattle prods

There's a reason farmers use fencing and gates and chutes

Livestock don't like to be handled

So an animal

Being brought in by a family

To a strange environment

In the middle of a crowded, chaotic temple

That animal would be freaked out

And would not go easily up on to an altar

So it would first be killed

So that it couldn't fight

Couldn't resist

Couldn't scratch and claw and crawl back down off the altar

And Paul says that's where the follower of Jesus is different

You & I are to willingly sacrifice our lives for Jesus

We are to willingly give and yield and submit and sacrifice

For Him

Our very life as an offering

This is weird

Most people don't live like this

That's why Paul tells us **not to conform**

To the pattern of this world

The pattern of the world

Is to crawl off the altar

Or not climb on the altar in the first place

The pattern of this world

Puts me first

My wants

My money

My time

So Paul says

Don't conform to that

Put God's wants first

Use your money and your time and your energy

To promote His dreams and His plans

And then he goes a step

He says don't just *DO* different

THINK different

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind

The Bible says it this way in Romans 8:

Romans 8:5-6 (NLT) - Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

Be transformed

By letting the Spirit control your mind

That transformation

Will lead you to life & peace

In this passage, it says:

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

“Then”

After your mind begins to get transformed

Then you'll be able to see it

That means we probably can't see it before

Listen to me:

If you're thinking to yourself

I'd love my life to be good, pleasing and perfect

That sounds pretty great

My life doesn't feel good and pleasing and perfect now

My life doesn't feel like life & peace now

If that's you

You have to be transformed by the renewing of your mind

If that's you

This series is for you

Let me ask you a very important question

If we could move your life

From where it is now

The way your relationships are working now

The way your career is working now

The direction things are going now

And we could move it

From there

To "good, pleasing, and perfect"

Would you do it?

Let's just say I put a big button down here

Along the front of the stage
And you could come up after service
And hit that button
And if you did
Your life would transform
From where it is now
The way your relationships are working
The way your career is working
The direction things are going
It would transform to
Good, pleasing, perfect
But you wouldn't know what was going to change
You'd just know it was going to be good
Pleasing
And perfect
Would you do it?

This series is going to give you
Concrete steps to make that happen
Specific actions
That are counterintuitive
To how you normally live

An authentic life with God

Will be good and pleasing

It will be full of life and peace

But a life with God

Will not be easy

A life with God requires

Getting up on the altar

And resisting every desire

To back crawl off

Romans 12:1-2 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters...

Paul is urging the Roman congregation

I am urging you

This life is better

Than the alternative

Pursuing more and more things doesn't satisfy

Pursuing more and more activities doesn't satisfy

Offering your body as a living sacrifice to God

Satisfies

Offering your body as a living sacrifice to God

Leads to life and peace

Offering your body as a living sacrifice to God

Is God's will for you

And His will is good, pleasing and perfect.

So what does that mean for you today?

What does that look like tomorrow morning when you start your week?

Offer your life to God

As a living sacrifice

Climb up on the metaphorical altar

Submit yourself to God

Submit yourself to loving people

Submit yourself to sacrifice and service

Offer your life to God

Do not waver

James tells us that

In our pursuit of God

We will have trials and struggles

But that those trials and struggles

Will lead us to wisdom

If we stick with God through them

So do not waver

Stay up on the altar

Understand that you are going to be tempted to crawl off

Tempted to put yourself first

Tempted to pull back from helping others

Tempted to pull back from trusting God

Do not waver

Never give up

Know that this counterintuitive life

A life of service to God

And service to others

Is not the pattern of this world

But it is the pattern that will lead to life & peace

It's the pattern that is good, pleasing, and perfect

So never give up

You may have noticed that my takeaways

Spell the word OWN

That's because this life of discipleship

Is something that you have to O.W.N.

No one can do it for you

No one is going to force you onto the altar

God's not going to force you

But if you offer your life freely

And I urge you to do that

It will lead you to life

And it will lead you to peace.