

# Romans 12:1-2

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Preacher: Arthur Jackson

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     message. Father, thank you for the victory that we have in Jesus and the privilege to sing about it, to celebrate it, and to live in it. Our prayer, Lord, is that these things would be foremost in our hearts even as we continue in our worship service on this afternoon.

Thank you for each person that is present here on today and your desire and will that they are here. I pray that you would open the eyes of our hearts that we might see wonderful things from your word on today from your scripture. We commend this time to you and pray all of these things in Christ's name.

Amen. Romans chapter 12 verses 1 and 2. This is how it reads. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, and may I add sisters, 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Amen. I want to engage your sanctified imagination this afternoon.

[ 1 : 5 9 ]     I want you to fast forward with me a couple of years. It's summer. Shin Chicago. 2011.

Two years earlier, you were given one of these 312 cards. You were challenged to pray for three people over two years in hopes that the Lord somehow would use you to lead that individual to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

For the past two years, you've regularly prayed for. And let's call this person Chris. Because Chris can be male or Chris can be female.

It works for either. Your friendship with Chris has taken on new meaning and purpose. And at various junctures along the way, you have had spiritual conversations with Chris.

You have wisely and winsomely helped Chris to understand God's evaluation of the human race. And we've looked at that, haven't we, over the past few weeks.

[ 3 : 1 6 ]     And the God's evaluation of the human race is that the best that we as humans have to offer falls woefully short of God's standard for righteousness.

That male and female, Jew and Gentile, red, brown, yellow, black, or white, that all stand condemned before the judge of all the earth.

You've shared with Chris. You've shared with Chris the bad news. But you've also been able to share with this individual about the great and the grand mercies of God.

And just what are some of those mercies of God? Mercies that even the passage that's before us speak about. One of them is that God has devised a plan.

That he would count unrighteous people, just like you and me, from all races and all backgrounds and cultures as righteous people.

[ 4 : 2 3 ]     And that at the center of this mercy plan of God was his son. Who entered this world on what we could even call a mercy mission.

That the son's death met God's demand for the punishment of unrighteous people. And that all who believe in his son get life instead of death.

So you have been faithful in your interaction with Chris. And the Lord has been at work working what only he can do. Because in this 312 initiative, you and I have a part.

And we must do that. But on the other hand, God has what a role that only he can do. And God has a way of using our efforts and meeting us at the point of our efforts.

And then working on the inside. The things that only he can do. Well anyway, let's think. 2011, Chris has come to Christ.

[ 5 : 27 ] Has accepted him. While this is a hypothetical kind of case. Our prayer is that the Lord would use this initiative mightily in various ways.

And again and again and again people would come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. The story speaks about the content of the gospel message.

And our previous messages have dealt with the content of the message. As well as the fact that the gospel is for all people. Dave did two messages on Acts chapter 17.

Even those, it's for those in the power centers of the world. Like ancient Athens. Now the messages over in the weeks to come.

At least before. Will deal with the issue of the nature of the gospel life. A person having come to Christ. What might they expect?

[ 6 : 29 ] What is the nature of this life that we have as our possession from God? Huh? It's in basic and yet very comprehensive ways.

The passage before us helps us to see the nature of the gospel life. This passage, a familiar passage, it can help us. Look at Romans chapter 12.

What you've got there, you come to a point in the book where there is a major shift in Romans. Huh? Well, we've looked at, we've seen the good news, the bad news and the good news in Romans chapters 1 through 11.

And that is the what of the gospel. But now when we come to chapter 12, we go to the so what or the now what of the gospel.

And we see this in chapters 12 through 15. It's a shift, if you will, from explanation to exhortation. From information to implications of the gospel.

[ 7 : 33 ] And so these two verses that we look at today, they in fact provide an introduction to chapters 12 through 15 of the book. Huh? Introductory in one sense, but very broad in their scope, quite comprehensive in another regard.

And these verses, if you have not committed them to memory, they are worthy of meditation and study and prayer and ultimately living them out.

So what is it that you tell Chris or Kareem or Kara or Carlos about the nature of the gospel?

I'd like to give you three things that I believe that we see in this text on this afternoon as far as the nature of the gospel life. And here's the first one. And we see it in the first part of verse 1.

The gospel life should be a life of reflection. The gospel life is a thoughtful life. It is a life of reflection.

[ 8 : 41 ] Look at the text. It says, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers. The appeal is quite clear as you move on there. Those who have received the gospel are urged to dedicate themselves totally to God.

In essence, that is what these two verses are about. So, if you have received the gospel, you need to live out that gospel in the very whole of your being.

Body and soul. But before we get to this, I want to look at the appeal a little bit more. You see, because the recipients of the gospel here are called to be mindful of God's mercies.

The gospel life should be a life of reflection. Huh? While driving, and I'm assuming that many here have driver's license, it's imperative, of course, that you are looking through the front windshield.

But the windshield is not the only glass that is in the car and through which things need to be viewed. There is a rear view mirror.

[ 9 : 57 ] And drivers not only need to see what is before them, they need to be mindful of what's behind them. And just as a car without a rear view mirror is dangerous, so a life without a rear view can be dangerous and very, very incomplete.

You must never forget, friend, where you have come from. And if such is the case with life in general, it is even more imperative for those who have been recipients of God's mercies.

And Paul appeals to us on the basis of God's mercies and extended in and through Christ. He appeals to us, God's people, to be motivated, as one writer put it, should be motivated by the very mercies of God.

And that's what this appeal does. It's to those who have been recipients of God's mercy. His divine pity, His compassion, and His kindnesses are in view. Look at the text. Look at Romans chapter 11.

It's a both Jew and Gentile had been recipients of God's mercies. Look at verse 28. And we see that though a different word is used, it is really synonymous with the word that we find in chapter 12, verse 1.

[ 11 : 26 ] Look at verse 28. As regards the gospel, they, and he's speaking about the Jews, are enemies of God for your sake.

But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. But look here.

Just as you were at time disobedient to God, but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, the disobedience of the Jews, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you, they also may receive mercy.

For God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all. Jew and Gentile alike.

Specifically then, what kind of mercy is the portion of those who have embraced the gospel?

[ 12 : 31 ] What mercies are in view in chapter 12 and verse 1? Well, let's just take a look at what some of those mercies might be. Look at Romans chapter 3, verses 24 and 25.

And I'm not going to read all of these, but a few of them. And we looked at this on last week, I believe it was. Here's the deal.

The provision of God's Son as the punishment for our sins and our justification being declared righteous.

That's God's mercy. If you look in verse 21, the status of being righteous before God apart from the law, that is God's mercy.

If you were to look in chapter 4, verse 7, speaking about 7 and 8, speaking about the forgiveness of our sins, that is God's mercy.

[ 13 : 53 ] In chapter 5, yet another reflection of mercy. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God. That's God's mercy.

The presence of the Spirit, the love of God is spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Chapter 5, verse 5, who has been given to us. That's God's mercy.

The Spirit's power for sanctification. Chapter 8, verses 1 and following. That's God's mercy. The adoption being granted the full status of adult children.

Chapter 8, verse 15. That is God's mercy. Don't you love Charles Wesley's hymns? We have sung one this afternoon.

Depth of mercy. But he really captures the sense of mercy again. And one of the all-time hymn favorites, and can it be.

[ 14 : 54 ] Listen to these words. I believe it is of verse 2 or 3. He, that's Christ, left his Father's throne above, so free, so infinite his grace.

Emptied himself of all but love and bled for Adam's helpless race. Listen to this refrain. Tis mercy all.

Tis mystery all. He talked about that. But tis mercy all. And check this out. Immense and free.

For oh my God, it found out me. Amazing love. How can it be? That thou, my God, shouldst die for me.

The gospel life, friends, should be a life of reflection on the mercies of God in and through his Son. Didn't Jesus help us to do this?

[ 15 : 56 ] Every time that you and I gather around the Lord's table, when we come and we see the elements, the bread that was broken, representing his broken body, the juice, the blood that was representing, the blood that was shed, huh?

It is in remembrance of his mercy. And these should be great times for us looking in the rearview mirror, as it were, and seeing the great and grand mercies of God that have flowed to us in and through the work of Jesus.

The gospel life, friends, is a life of reflection. It's a thoughtful life. But not only should the gospel life be a life of reflection, secondly, the gospel life should be a life of dedication.

It's a worshipful life, huh? Look at the next part of the verse. To present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Doesn't take very much to see that Paul has in mind the language of the Old Testament sacrificial system. And he uses this to emphasize this point.

[ 17 : 17 ] Look at the words. To present, huh? Sacrifice, holy. It's the language, friends, of worship. And under the law, a worshiper presented an offering.

And this offering met certain criteria that were prescribed. It was not the worshiper's choice. The worshiper just could not bring anything.

But one's offering was simplest. And many times, more often than not, a dead kind of animal. Huh? But here, with the mercies in mind, those who have embraced the gospel are to present themselves.

One's offering is not a dead animal. It is one's living self that is in view here. And the criteria also are clear. Holy.

That's dedicated. Set aside for God alone. An offering that is intentional. There's premeditation here.

[ 18 : 23 ] There's cost counting. There's carefulness. Nothing accidental. Nothing incidental. It's on purpose, huh? And this kind of intentional, rational commitment is what the King James Version called reasonable service.

Such commitment. It's logical. It's a course of action that really just, it makes good sense for those who have been recipients of God's mercies, huh?

The giving of oneself in such a manner amounts to, it does amount to, spiritual worship, as our text says. And such dedication is the dedication of one's whole life, one's whole self, its body and mind, soul and spirit, and this has its parallel elsewhere, doesn't it?

Jesus, when he was asked, what's the foremost commandment? And this is what he said, hear, O Israel, Lord, our God is one Lord. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and with all your strength.

The gospel life is a worship life, the gospel life is a worshipful life, a life of dedication, that includes all of us. And true worship, friends, will express itself in every dimension of our lives, every area, huh?

[ 19 : 52 ] we take care, that we do, with our eyes, and ears, and lips, all that we need to be. According to Ephesians chapter 4, verses 25 and following, the liar is to put away falsehood.

The angry person is no longer to be gripped by anger, to the point of disrespecting people or God. The thief is now to use his hands, no longer to steal, but to work, so he can have, to give to those who are in need.

The person who tore down with negative speech, is now to use speech to build up, all of us, dedicated to God. Whole bodies, huh? Worship in scripture, and worship in this regard, in the gospel life, is not to be relegated to Sunday morning, or Sunday afternoon, to a traditional, or liturgical service, its whole life.

It's 24-7. The worship zone, is life. Not just this building, and its beauty, but all of life, all of life is sacred, and all of life, is worship.

So what do you tell, Chris, about the nature of the gospel life, it's a life of reflection. It's a thoughtful life, it's a life of dedication, it's a worshipful life.

[ 21 : 20 ] There's one more thing, at least from this text, that you're telling. The gospel life, should be a life of transformation. It's a careful life. Look at verse 2. It says, 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.

It's a two-pronged verse, isn't it? First of all, what we should not do, and then what we are really, to give ourselves to. The first part of the verse, amounts to a word of caution, for you and me.

Here's one of the passages, in scripture, that call for you and me, to be non-conformist, as it concerns, the spirit of this age. That is, according to the prevailing, sentiments, and desires, the perspectives, and the practices, of our day.

We must, we must allow our lives, to not be, shaped, by this world's values. The system, of this age, that's, that's under the intoxicating, influence, of, Satan, the prince of darkness.

The pattern, of this world, is not to be the pattern, by which you and I, shape our lives. I remember, my wife, in our earlier days, when she used to make, clothes for the family, literally.

[ 22 : 57 ] I even got in on, the act. She made me a sport coat. As a matter of fact, while she was still in high school, she made me a, a shirt, and my son and I, had matching sport coats, and the, and the girls, well they were always looking good, because Shirley was always making, them something nice for them.

But what she would do, she would take, a pattern, and you know how it goes, and you would take, that pattern, and, and cut out the cloth, according to the pattern, and you would get, the shape, and the design, on the basis, of that pattern, huh?

The pattern, for us friends, is not to be, according to this world order. And if your life, is, is looking like, the shape, of this, world order, something wrong, with the pattern, you've conformed, huh?

You've given in, and it shows in your life, huh? What we see in this verse, really contrasts, with what we've seen, in verse one, doesn't it, huh? Where it is, calls for a worshipful life, a life, that acknowledges, the worth of the living God.

Apostle John, speaks to the issue, do not love the world, or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that's in the world, the desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, and the pride in possessions, not of the Father.

[ 24 : 25 ] So the world, the values of the children of this age, are in varying degrees, different, from the values of those, who have been changed, by the gospel.

Like others, you and I, we have homes, don't we, huh? But they must be viewed, as resources, entrusted to us, by God, and used, accordingly.

We have cards, and other possessions, but such things, should be held loosely, very loosely. Not worship, huh? You may have a little money, in your bank account, huh?

Is it viewed, as the means, by which to accumulate, many of this world's, goods, as you can, rather than invest, in kingdom projects, and people, and God's programs, in the world?

How do you view, your sexuality, huh? Rather than exploiting, or viewing sex, and sexuality, recreationally, and casually, we are to view, sex as sacred, to be shared, in the context, of the married life, and marriage commitment, pattern of this world, is not our pattern.

[ 25 : 46 ] One's profession, can be viewed, merely as a prize, to be won, or cast in on, or as a legitimate, means of making a living, personal fulfillment, the benefit of others, and the service of God.

Is that the way, that you view, what God has entrusted, into you, as far as, how you're making, your living? Similar things, can be said, of other gifts, and resources, that have been entrusted, to us by God, don't allow yourself, to be pressed, into the mold, of the values, of this world.

That's what the text, is saying, to you and me. But notice too, the positive side, of this verse. While you and I, are to be, to resist being shaped, by the values, of this age, our lives, are being transformed, from, the inside out, aren't they?

Huh? Now, you say, well, how does this, transformation, happen? Well, this happens, when our new minds, that's the mindset, that we get, when we respond, to the gospel, it's the work, of regeneration, through the power, of the Holy Spirit.

But, that new mind, must be, constantly, nourished, and being shaped, and molded, through the influence, of God's word, and God's spirit, as well as, relationships, with God's people.

[ 27 : 14 ] We see the role, of the spirit of God, in this transformation, in 2nd, Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 18, where the same word, for transformed, is used, and listen to what it says, and we all, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 18, and we all, with unveiled face, not like Moses, who had a, veiled face, when Paul, is speaking about, new covenant, ministry, ministry of the spirit, through the spirit, by the spirit, beholding the glory, of the Lord, are being, and here's the word, are being, transformed, into the same image, from one degree, of glory, to another, how's this come about, for this comes, from the Lord, who is the spirit, huh, our perspectives, are to be shaped, by things, from, above, not from below, and every day, from many sources, we're being, bombarded, and things, are trying to, mold us, and to shape us, and to push us, and to stuff us, into, the ways, of this world, but you've got, to have something, to counter that, and to build up, and to nourish, the new man, the new heart, the new mind, the new person, and God provides, these very, very resources, now here's the deal, if you, here this afternoon, have been seeking, to live the gospel life, and you know, very little, about this kind, of transformation, this kind, of life change, might it be, because we know, too little, of the renewal, of our minds, through the influence, of God's word, or prayer, and meditation, or fellowship, with God's people, because if those, are the resources, and they are, that God has provided, and we are availing, ourselves of them, guess what, transformation, friends, will happen, when our minds, are renewed, it is then, that our moral, and our spiritual, vision, is sharpened, and it gets, in sync, with the very, mind of God, huh, then, you and I, can make the right, kind of choices, we can be, as discerning, as we need to be, it is then, that we can understand, what it is, what it means, to please God, and what's pleasing, and acceptable, our lives, and offering, with a sweet aroma, going up, before him, it is then, that you and I, can meet God's approval, what's the nature, of the gospel life,

Romans 12, 1 and 2, helps us to see that, it's a life of reflection, it's a thoughtful life, it's a life of dedication, it's a, worshipful life, it's a life of transformation, it's a, careful life, that's what the gospel life is, and I would trust, well maybe, let's not just tell, Chris or Karim, or Kara or Carlos, about it, let's make sure, that we're embracing it ourselves, and honoring God, and living lives, that are, consistent, with the gospel message, that you and I have received, all for the glory of God, and for our good, and our prayer, will be also consistent, with the song, that we're going to sing, take my life, and let it be, let us pray, dear Lord, thank you for, the gospel message, that, most of us, have embraced, and thank you for, the gospel life, that we're seeking, to live, thank you for, the instruction, that we have, from this passage, as to, the nature, of the gospel life, but our call, to be engaged, totally, in it,

Lord, be glorified, in each one here, be blessed, through the lives, and may our lives, be, as the life, of Jesus himself, who gave himself, a sacrifice, unto you, as a sweet, aroma, and fragrance, to you, may our lives, likewise, as we follow, in his steps, similarly, be a worshipful, and fragrant, offering, to your name, we pray these things, all in Christ's name, amen, let's stand together, through the■,