

# Transformed by the Mercy of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, let's pray as we hear from God's Word tonight. Lord, we thank you that you're a God who is living, and we thank you, Lord, that you're a God who wants to speak to us.

Lord, by your Spirit, I pray that you'll be here amongst us, changing us, transforming us, Lord, that we might be people who are living the way that you want us to. We're devoting our whole lives in spiritual worship to you, and we pray this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Well, let me indulge myself for a moment as I tell you a bit of a girly, girly story. Yesterday, I went wedding dress shopping with my sister. There's lots of weddings in the Pike household this year. My eldest is getting married in December. And I'm generally quite a cold person. I feel cold all the time. When it's coming up to winter, I move from having just the stock standard one doona on my bed to having three dooners, a sheet.

I wear three long-sleeve layers on top, my tracksuit pants and Explorer socks. That's the kind of cold that I am. And sometimes I let my dog sleep from my bed, but don't tell anyone that because it's disgusting.

[ 1 : 05 ] But I'm a cold person. But yesterday, something was a little bit different. There was something different in the air. You might have noticed a change over the last few weeks.

The weather is getting warmer. It's becoming spring. Unfortunately, I dressed in the typical winter way. I went out and I had boots on underneath these jeans and I had warm socks underneath. And I'm running around the city with my sister, trying to move my car every hour, find a park, race back to the dress shop where she's trying another dress so I can give her the thumbs up or the thumbs down. And I am boiling.

Underneath my boots, where my socks are, is becoming a little swimming pool. And I'm having a conversation with the shop assistant. And she was saying that the day before, she had decided that winter boots were over for the season.

It's time to move on to a new pair of shoes. And Mike's going to put a bit of an illustration on the board. Okay? Guys, you might not be into this sort of thing. That's fine.

[ 2 : 08 ] Girls, you know, moving in from... This is more of guys' fashion. But you can see the difference from the sort of more chunky closed-toe shoe to moving into something where a bit of air can come through, can breathe.

And if you wear the chunky closed-toe shoe in winter, really big boots, big socks, you feel a little bit too warm. And it kind of just looks wrong. Like, it just... It looks like you dress for the snow and it's like boiling outside.

Well, we will melt if we stay dressed in this way. But as the seasons change, so do our clothes and so do our shoes. Imagine being where the Mitchells are at the moment in Tadistan.

They said it was like minus 30 degrees and then it goes up to 30 degrees. That's the extremity of the season. It seems logical and common sense that as the seasons change, we change our shoes.

Well, from the first part of Romans, in chapter 12, we looked at this sort of concept. Last time when we were looking at this passage, we were studying a series on worship. And we were looking at how, because of God's mercy, there is only one reasonable way to live.

[ 3 : 21 ] There's only one reasonable thing to do. And that is to change from being self-centred to being people who are living sacrifices. Okay, so just like it's sensible to change your shoes when it's winter to summer, now being a Christian, from non-Christian to being in God's mercy, there is only one reasonable way to live.

That's to put on some new shoes and to live in a way that is holy and pleasing to God. Check out verse 1 with me again. I'm just going to read that through. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and

sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

This is your spiritual worship. Well, we've heard through very awesome and meaty sermons over the past few months that God has been showing his mercy all the way through from the beginning. And Paul has been explaining this throughout the book of Romans. And we're coming to a bit of a climax here where now we have to learn what it means to live that out. You might remember from chapter 5, I'm going to read out verse 8 for you, but God proves his love for us in this, that while we're still sinners, Christ died for us.

And that's really at the heart of what God's mercy is. Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. It's completely an undeserved gift. We get given God's mercy purely by grace and all we have to do is have faith in him.

[ 4 : 47 ] It's not because we were born into a specific race or religion. It's just because God has given this to us through faith. So what should our response be?

To keep living like we used to? No, we have to live in a way that is holy and pleasing to God. And this involves every single part of our life. We have to move from living in a self-centred way to in a way that is holy and acceptable to God.

And the next few verses of this chapter is really going to show us how to do that. And it will continue to explain this as we go on through Romans over the next few weeks. But I just want to highlight a few key points from the rest of this passage that shows us how to start doing that.

Well, verse 2, let me read that for you. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Well, this part of the passage challenges us not to get caught up with the ways of this world and just to go along with the flow. It's a challenge to not conform to what everyone else is doing, but be transformed.

[ 6 : 02 ] But I had a question when I was reading this. I was thinking, especially probably when I was in high school, a lot of my friends, they're great people. Like, I didn't have any Christian friends at school, but they were great.

They were loving people. They always looked out for me. You know, if I was short of something, they would always come to my aid. They were lovely people. And they didn't, you know, do anything outrageous, like they didn't drink too much, or I don't think they gossiped too much.

They certainly didn't do anything crazy like murder anyone, or, you know, anything ridiculous like that. They were really, really nice. And so I'm thinking, well, why can't we strive to be like them?

Why can't we model ourselves on people in the world, people who are not Christian, because there are a lot of great, lovely people out there who don't know God. It's true.

Well, the answer is simply, when I thought about it, that they ignore God. They might live in ways that seem like they're just lovely and caring, and that's exactly what they are, but they still don't know their creator.

[ 7 : 15 ] So each person was designed to be in a relationship with God. And through Jesus, we can know him again. We can have that relationship. And if they don't have this relationship with God, then they're actually living in the wrong way.

We're designed to live in one way, and people who are not in Jesus are living in the wrong way. So that's basically why we can't model ourselves on the world around us.

But if we look at things in the media, if we look at what's on television, we can see that, even though some of our friends might be lovely people, there are lots of disturbing things going on in the world. And we can see that there are parts that we just don't want to be the same as. And it's just all around us. This passage is really helpful because it actually shows us how we can be separate and different from the world, how we can be transformed.

And that's in the second part of this verse, by renewing our minds. As I was thinking about this, I was thinking about the thoughts that I think during the day.

[ 8 : 23 ] Because I think my mind is pretty lazy when it comes to thinking in good ways and actually being renewed. So I had a bit of a plan on the computer for you and thought I'd show you what I think about during the day.

Humans, Are they serious? Oh, my God. Yes, No, no, No, No...  
No, No, No, No... No, I get tired easily.

It's a very caring thing happening here or something.

I'm thinking too much. Well, it's really a bit of a boring mind. It's because I left out most of the details.

[10:31] In fact, I left out mostly all the bad parts. See, when I'm driving around in peak hour, you didn't see from the screen what I'm actually really thinking because there are some crazy drivers out there and I'm an impatient person.

That is one of my weaknesses. And you don't see what I'm thinking when I'm watching people walking around or when I'm speaking to people or when I'm listening to the radio or watching the television.

I want to keep a lot of those thoughts hidden because I'm not proud of lots of things I think. And, yeah, I actually want to hide the fact that I get really angry in my car.

And I can hide that from you just by shutting my mouth. I can do that all the time. I can hide my thoughts just by being quiet. But those thoughts eventually are going to escape because the way we think actually transforms our life.

It does come out eventually. So if I keep thinking these things in the car, angry thoughts, I'm going to do something stupid. I'm going to be angry on the roads.

[11:44] And that is not helpful. If you think about the example of an athlete, they didn't just one day roll over out of bed and decide they're going to win a gold medal and then just do it.

They actually, it's a lot of brain work involved in their competition. It's not just about the physical exercise because that's got to be driven by something. They've got to be doing it from some sort of motivator.

And you'll hear the way top athletes, other people who are highly motivated to achieve things, actually speak about their sports or the things they're passionate about.

They obsess over it. They think everything through. They think about winning. They think about what it's going to be like on that Olympic day. They think what it's going to be like to receive that medal. They think it and obsess about it.

And then it actually plays out in reality when they practice and train hard. And that's what sees them through to the end. The way that we think actually changes our lives.

[12:44] It starts in our minds. So let me ask you a question. Are you on about conforming? Or are you on about transformation? Are you happy just to go along with the flow of what's going on in this world?

Or do you really want to be like Jesus? Do you want to be someone who stands before God at the end of time and has him say to you, Well done, good and faithful servant.

Do you want to be someone who actually steps out and lives differently and makes a difference for Christ in their lives? Or do you want to be just someone else walking around with a crowd? Well you can assess that just by sitting down and doing exactly what I did when I was thinking about this sermon and just thinking about what you think about.

Because what's in your head actually will tell you whether you're on about conforming or whether you're on about transformation. Now I'm sure that a lot of you are like me and you don't want anyone else to see the thoughts that are in your mind.

And that's fine. But we can actually start to change them. And the way that we renew our mind is by the word of God. That's the most obvious place to go.

[14:05] The first place to go. Because if you want to know what is opposite to the world, all you've got to do is pick up a Bible. Because the world is increasingly going in a different direction to what God wants us to do.

And as we renew our mind, it says in the second part of this passage that we'll be able to discern what the will of God is and what is good and acceptable and perfect. Because as we read the word and as we let that be the thing that we obsess about, the thing that drives us in the morning, the thing that motivates us all day, as we obsess about that, we can't help but know what God wants us to do because we know what his plan is for us and for humanity.

I'm not talking about what colour clothes you should wear in the morning or whether you should have Vegemite or honey in your toast. I'm talking about getting on board with God's big plan, what his will is for the world.

This is where you find it out. If you want to be on about transformation and not about conforming, you need to read your Bible. It's as simple as that. If you don't, you will conform.

We're going to move on to the next part of the passage, verses 3 to 5. It actually shows us one of the first outworkings of this transformation in our mind.

[15:26] And surprise, surprise, it's actually got to do with the way that you think. It's the way you think about yourself. Let me read verse 5 for you. So don't think like this, but think like this.

It's pretty simple. We need to make sure that we have an accurate view of ourselves, especially when it comes to things in terms of gifts and what God has given us. We can't put ourselves up on some kind of mental pedestal.

Perhaps the people in the Roman church were having issues talking about or boasting about the gifts that they had or bragging or being proud about those things. They knew what they were and they were kind of boasting about that.

Or maybe they were just boasting like they were in chapter 11 about the fact that they were part of the new branch, part of the new vine, and that the Jews weren't. They weren't part of that anymore and they had this kind of boasting arrogance.

But Paul very clearly highlights three reasons why you just can't. You can't be arrogant and you can't be puffed up and think of yourself more highly than you ought to when it comes to these matters of spiritual gifts and your place in relation to people and your place in relation to God.

[16:49] And the first one is because you have been given gifts. The rest of the passage keeps talking about gifts, but I'm going to read from verse 6 for you. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given us.

We can't boast about gifts because they're a gift. It's pretty simple. Someone has given to us a gift and that is God. We haven't done anything to earn these gifts.

We don't deserve them and we have been given these gifts for a purpose. So there's no room here for boasting. There's no room to get arrogant because it's a gift.

Simple as that. You did nothing to deserve it. The next reason, or the next two reasons kind of go together. You have been given different gifts for the purpose of one another, for one another.

So you've been given different gifts for one another. I'm going to read verses 5 for you, verse 5 for you. So we who are many are one in Christ and individually we are members one for another.

[17:53] We've been given different gifts, not ones that are placed in some sort of ranking order of superiority or some kind of spiritual highness versus people who aren't that great.

We've been given gifts that are completely intertwined and dependent upon each other. That's the whole analogy of a body. A body can't work without its arm properly. It can't work properly without its eyes.

Corinthians goes on and explains this more, but this is the same image that's picked up here in Romans. The body is dependent upon one another. And so the gifts that we've been given from God, we need all of them to function properly as a body.

Well, we shouldn't be cocky about our gifts and arrogant about them because we've been given them by God for a purpose. But I actually think we've probably got a bit of an opposite problem when it comes to thinking about our gifts in a healthy way.

If this passage is not about changing the way we think, I think some of us need to be a little bit more proud in our gifts. I think there's lots of people who actually don't know what their role is in the body and how they can exercise their gifts in a way that can build others up.

[19:14] And that might be because you just think, well, maybe I haven't got something that's as good as someone else or maybe I just don't have something that's as valuable. Maybe I'll just take a bit of a back seat and not participate and not play a big role.

But you are essential in the health of the body because God has given you gifts to use. So you need, if this is you who takes a bit of a back seat and doesn't think you have a role to play in the church or in serving one another or in speaking to their friends about Jesus or whatever, you need to be a bit more confident and proud because God has bestowed upon you something that you can give to others.

And what a great blessing that is. What a great privilege it is to be able to receive gifts from God and then use them so that other people may be encouraged in their faith.

Such an exciting thing to discover and then to give out to people. So I want to encourage you so that you can have a healthy mindset when it comes to your place in the body and towards God and others to think, what could my gifts be?

Do I have something, a talent or a passion or something that God has given me, blessed me with that I'm currently just holding onto myself or just kind of hiding away in the corner when perhaps I could use that to be a blessing to other people.

[ 20 : 41 ] And I want to encourage you, if you're unsure about what your gifts might be or how you could use them in a practical sense, talk to your peers. See what they notice in your life because they're often a good mirror when it comes to thinking through some of these things.

Talk to the leaders around you, small group leaders, people on staff, about how you might be able to exercise your gifts in a way that is building up of the body and encouraging for people. Because we need to have, the first thing in terms of changing our mindset is thinking about ourselves in a healthy way and how we can exercise our gifts in the church in a healthy way.

Well, tonight, after the service, there's going to be some discussion questions that you can actually think through some of these issues about gifts but also about the way that we think, the way we might be able to encourage one another and be accountable with one another in terms of being transformed.

Because I want to see Doncaster as a church and particularly the youth, because I just love you guys, to be absolutely different.

That people will not be able to look at this church without just going, whoa, there is something going on here. You guys are unlike anything else I've seen. And really, that's what should be happening in our lives because I think we soften the whole Christian message so down in our lives that our non-Christian friends just think we're one of them.

[ 22 : 10 ] And we're different. We are living under the mercy of God by His Spirit, being transformed people. So let me urge you after the service to keep thinking through some of these things, pray with one another, and chat.

But I'll pray for us now as we close. Heavenly Father, we want to thank You for Your mercy towards us, that even when we were Your enemies that You would die for us.

Lord, we thank You for the forgiven state that we stand before You, completely cleansed of our sin.

Lord, I pray that by Your Spirit, by Your Word, that You would begin each day a process in us of transformation.

God, give us a desire to stand out from the crowd. Give us a desire not to give in when temptation is strong. But Lord, help us to be sharp with the way that we think and help us to be proactive in changing our mind so that we can live in ways that are holy and pleasing to You.

And we can live according to Your will. And Lord, also, as we think about our place in the body and how we can serve and love one another, Lord, I ask that You'll help us to see the way that You've wired us, the way that we can use our gifts to encourage one another.

[ 23 : 32 ] And please give us wisdom to know how to use them in a practical sense. And I thank You, Lord, for this congregation. And I thank You, Lord, for the work that You continue to do in us as a body each week, each day.

Thank You for brothers and sisters in Christ. They're such a blessing when it comes to walking the walk and not just talking the talk. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Pastor Dave links Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. She do muscle. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.