



Transformed to Serve

Romans 12:1-2

Rev. Fred Greco

Now if you have your Bibles with you, I would invite you to turn to the book of Romans, specifically to chapter 12. We are beginning chapter 12 this morning, the first two verses. Chapter 12 is the start of the second half of Romans. For those of you keeping track at home, we have spent about 50 weeks in the first 11 chapters. Be assured that the next grouping of chapters will not be another 50 weeks. It's not an even division Paul presents to us, but it's important to understand this division, as we'll see in just a moment. Please give attention to the reading of God's Holy Word. For the Word of the Lord is completely inerrant, the Word of the Lord is completely sufficient, and the Word of the Lord is completely authoritative. Romans, chapter 12, beginning at verse 1:

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, 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.”

Thus far the reading of God's Holy Word. Let's pray for his blessing upon it. Heavenly Father, we pray now this morning that you would open up your Word to us, that in it we might see the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray, O Lord, that by the power of your Holy Spirit your Word would take deep root in our hearts and that it would change who we are. This we ask in Christ's precious name, amen.

These two beginning verses of Romans, chapter 12, announce the turning of a page, as it were, in the book of Romans. The first 11 chapters of Romans are full of indicatives; that is, statements explaining who we are in Christ. In those first 11 chapters, Paul very rarely told us what we should do. There really are only two extended statements in the first 11 chapters that are imperatives, commands, telling us what to do.

The first is in Romans, chapter 6, when Paul tells us to let not sin reign in our bodies, and then the second is in chapter 11 where he tells us not to be proud because of our relationship to Jesus Christ, because that relationship does not depend on us but on Jesus. We don't have something in us that causes us to differ; it's rather the work of Christ.

Now Paul is going to turn to the practical consequences of salvation, the application of salvation. How do we who are saved live lives in Christ? What these verses begin to do is to set forth a summary of our conduct. Paul is going to get specific about our conduct throughout the rest of the following chapters, but first, he is giving us a framework within which we can see all of his commands for action. So, this morning, I would like us to see three things Paul is telling us about our conduct.

First, Paul tells us the *motives for our conduct*, what drives us, what we look forward to, what is held before us, so that we would strive in our conduct. Secondly, Paul tells us about the *practice of our conduct*. Again, not in specific instances but, rather, in an overarching scheme; that is, the way we should approach our conduct in all we do. Then, finally, Paul gives us the *principles of our conduct*. He points us to two principles that drive us as we live life in Christ. The motives for our conduct, the practice of our conduct, and the principles of our conduct.

The Motives for Our Conduct

We begin, then, with these two packed verses, very well known: Romans 12:1-2. Paul begins, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers..." I want you to stop for a moment and notice his introduction. It's helpful for us, both as we receive what Paul is teaching us and as we think about transmitting this same truth to others. Just look briefly at two things Paul does initially.

First, he addresses those at Rome as brothers. This may not seem like a big deal. It may seem like almost a formal title, but what you have to understand is that the apostle Paul, church planter extraordinaire, writer of half or more of the New Testament, used of God as the apostle to the Gentiles, is writing to a church full of slaves and women and outcasts from society.

Immediately, he addresses them as equals. He doesn't say, "I'm better than you." He doesn't say, "You have to listen to me because I'm in charge." No. He gives them the New Testament principle that we are all equal before Jesus Christ, that we all share in the same great salvation. It is for this reason that Paul begins with the verb *appeal*. He says, "I appeal to you, brothers..."

He could have commanded. He has the Word of God. He has the truth of God. There is no leeway in what he is saying. There is no discussion or dialogue about the Word of God, but still, Paul understands that he is not here to compel and force others to the truth. So he appeals to them as one of them, as a fellow believer. In this appeal, he begins with the motives for their conduct; that is, how we are to live now that we are in Christ.

The first motive Paul discusses is for the *mind*. We see it in this word in verse 1: *therefore*. Many of you have heard this many, many times. So much so that I hope you can complete it in your sleep. Whenever we come to a *therefore* in the text, what do we do? We look back to see what the *therefore* is there for. Paul is drawing on what he has already said. He's doing this intentionally. He doesn't want to repeat everything, but he wants us to have everything in our minds.

That's why this word *therefore* is very important. We know what we need to do. We need to look back. The question then comes... *What is Paul pointing us back to?* This is where the structure of the book of Romans is helpful. These two verses are a joint that connect chapters 1-11 and chapters 12-16. What Paul is pointing us back to in the *therefore* is the entirety of the first 11 chapters, to all of the doctrines he has taught us and set forth.

Paul wants you to think about all that he has said so far about sin; about our need for Jesus Christ; about our alienation from God; about justification; about how we can be right with God; about the work of Jesus Christ that redeems us and cancels out our sin and does away with our shame and guilt; about our adoption, how we are brought into the family of God; about our union with Christ, how we are now in Christ and we are then powered

to live the Christian life; about the work of the Holy Spirit in our living the Christian life; about our election by the divine decree of God.

All of this Paul wants us to remember. You see, Paul's method here, and elsewhere, has a purpose. What Paul is describing for us is the essential difference between biblical Christianity and all other religions and philosophies. Paul starts with what God has done. The Christian life is not "Do this and live." The Christian life is "God has given you life. Now do." What is important, then, is not as much *what* we do as *why* we do it.

This essential difference deserves our attention, because if we are honest with ourselves, Christianity is not the only religion that teaches moral behavior. Don't be confused in that way. Islam, for example, is full of moral directives, commands to do *this* and not do *that*. So, for that matter, is Buddhism. So, for that matter, is secular humanism. It is full of commands to act *this* way and not act *that* way. The key question we have to ask ourselves is... *Why do we act a certain way?* What makes the difference?

Some people will teach that you should live in a certain way because it's good for you. In other words, it's a philosophy of utilitarianism. You should live in a way that's honest and thrifty and moral because that means you'll have a better life. If you live that way, your retirement portfolio will be full. Your house will be big. Your cars will be nice. Your wife will love you. Your husband will dote on you. Your children will obey you. You need to live in accordance with this because of the good things that will come to you.

We all know that those who live outside of accordance with the moral law have bad things happen to them. They go to jail. They lose money. They have sicknesses and illnesses. So what people will say is, "You need to live a certain way because it's good for you." Others will teach that you need to live a certain way to avoid punishment. They're fearful of judgment. You need to live in accordance with a certain way; otherwise, a whammy is going to come on you. Judgment will come upon you.

Now, this is far more prevalent than I think we're willing to admit. There was a study done a few years back of a cross section of Americans, a cross section of economic strata, of age, of demographics. The question was asked, "Would you consider selling drugs for a living? If not, why?" Some indeed did answer, "No, I would not do that because it's wrong. It hurts people. Drugs are bad. It destroys lives."

The interesting thing is the vast majority of Americans answered, "No, I would not consider selling drugs because I don't want to go to jail. It's not worth it. The money I could make selling drugs is not worth the even small chance that I could end up in prison and lose my family, my home, and be abused. There's no way I would risk that." It's a fear of judgment that drives that action. Still others want to obligate God by their actions. They think God owes them because they please God with their actions.

This is the story of the apostle Paul before he met Jesus Christ. He describes this in Philippians, chapter 3, how he did all he could to obtain a right standing before God, to earn God's blessing. But that's not what Paul is doing here, because that is not biblical Christianity. None of these motives... a motive of good things happening, a motive of fear, a motive of obligating God. No. Paul starts with what God has done, and his call to our action is set against the backdrop of God's work of salvation.

Here Paul is appealing to your mind. Your reason is in control. He wants you to think about how you have been changed by Jesus. He says, "Therefore, think about all that you have received, all that the Lord has done. You are not the same person you were, and because of that, you need to live differently." That's what gives you the motivation to live for Jesus. It's not a mechanical, mindless obedience. It relies on the foundation of redemption, our knowledge of the doctrines of the work of God.

Now, what do I mean that it is not a mechanical, mindless obedience? Anyone who has ever been a parent realizes that when your children are very small and you say, "You must do this. You must clean your room. You must eat your vegetables. You must go to bed," there's a certain age range, from about the understanding of language until maybe 6, when the inevitable, "Why?" comes. Your answer is...what, parents? "Because I said so. End of discussion. We're not having a debate about bedtime. I don't need to prove to you that this is the proper bedtime. Because I said so."

We also know, as parents, that there comes a stage in which that is not satisfying to children. You cannot end the conversation with, "Because I said so." There is a challenge to that kind of mechanical obedience. That kind of obedience doesn't last. It doesn't motivate. So Paul is not appealing to that. He's appealing to your senses, to your reason, to your understanding, to your knowledge of the truth. That is all wrapped up in the *therefore*. Paul wants you to remember what Jesus has done.

Our conduct must flow *from* doctrine, and it also *must* flow from doctrine. If it doesn't, then we have not understood the doctrine. If someone tells you they understand the New Testament and the teachings of theology and they've read systematic theologies and understand all there is to know about God and his law and his world, but they don't feel the need to obey God, they don't feel the need to obey Jesus, then what they have just confessed to you is they don't understand the doctrine, because to understand the doctrine is to be motivated to live in accordance with it.

The second motive Paul deals with is the *heart*. This is not fundamentally a different thing, but it is another aspect of our motive, because theology is an intellectual exercise. It involves the mind. When we study and think theologically, we think about God and about his actions, but theology should also move the heart. If we're thinking about God, it should move our hearts to praise, to gratitude.

It is not a coincidence that the greatest philosopher America ever produced, the theologian Jonathan Edwards, who wrote many a treatise dealing with the thorniest problems of Scripture, who when he was but a young man came up with a series of resolutions to live his life by... You can see them in the hall outside and be amazed that a man who was just barely out of his teens would think like this, yet his greatest work was called the *Religious Affections*. It's because his view of God caused his heart to overwhelm with joy and love for the Lord.

What Paul wants us to see here is that although there is a motivation to the mind, it is not intellectually detached. His motivation for our conduct is not something we can merely observe and be passive about. It's not something we could take or leave at a whim. It must grip us. It must cause us to move beyond thinking to singing, to passion. Not in opposition to thinking, but we are driven to it *by* thinking.

So Paul appeals to you, not just by the understanding of all he taught, not just by the *therefore*, but also by the mercies of God. We might even say Paul says, "I appeal to you *because of* the mercies of God." The mercies of God drive us to our action. What God has done is more than an intellectual exercise. It is more than a philosophical treatise. He has shown his mercy in Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds you what he has taught has practical application to *you*. Jesus has not just solved the problem of sin; he has brought forgiveness to *you*. Jesus has not just reconciled the world generically; he has restored *your* relationship with God. So Paul appeals now to our hearts with reference to the mercies of God.

It is interesting that Paul uses the word *mercies* in the plural. We generally think of mercy in the singular...God's mercy to us. In fact, the Bible only uses the word *mercy* in the plural twice...once here and once in 2 Corinthians 1. It uses the word *mercy* in the singular 56 times. So what is Paul doing here? Why is he using the plural? What's he trying to drive us to? What he's doing is reminding us of the greatness and the fullness of God's mercy.

He reminds us of the truth that we should always be aware of that God's mercy is shown to us in many ways. It is shown to us at many times. It is shown over and over again. God's mercy doesn't just come to us at the beginning of the Christian life; it comes to us new each and every day. The mercy of God comes to us. As great as the act of justification is, it is not the only mercy God shows to us. He doesn't forgive us and then just leave us to ourselves. He is constantly giving us mercy, because we need it and because he loves us.

So what *is* mercy? Why does it motivate us? Mercy is compassion or pity. If *grace* is what enables God to show undeserved favor and good to us, *mercy* is God looking at our condition and pitying us. God sees our sin, our failure, our foolishness. He sees what we have done to ourselves. He sees our need, and he has pity on us. That is actually a good short definition of what a Christian is. A Christian is one who has received mercy.

That's what Paul said just recently in chapter 11, verse 30: "For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all." The Christian is one on whom God has shown mercy.

The Practice of Our Conduct

These motives are critical. We do not start by looking at each instance of conduct we are to engage in. Paul is going to move on to that shortly throughout the rest of the book. Where we start is with the overarching principle. *Why* do we do what we do? Well, after telling you about your motives for conduct, Paul then moves on to the general practice of conduct.

He says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Do you see what Paul is doing? He is not starting with a detailed prescription of behavior. It is not a list of dos and don'ts. He starts with a principle of life. This will make it possible for us to understand and to apply all of the specific instructions he gives to us later.

We must apply them in a way that is consistent with these general principles. If we find ourselves interpreting Paul's commands about theft or about our tongues or about our eyes in such a way that they are not consistent with presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, then we have not interpreted those instances properly. It gives us a framework within which to look at the specifics.

So, Paul begins with the context for our conduct. He makes it clear that Jesus does not want a bunch of stuff from us. Jesus doesn't want just actions from us. Our conduct is not a to-do list that can be accomplished and be rewarded. What Jesus wants from you is not your things. What Jesus wants is *you*. That's what Paul is saying. The way he describes it is as sacrificial, literally. He uses the example in the analogy of the Old Testament sacrifices. He tells you you must be sacrificial in your conduct. You must be willing to serve Jesus.

He urges you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God. That means you are to put yourself at God's disposal unreservedly. You don't say, "I'm willing to serve God all the time except for when I'm at work. I'll follow and do everything Jesus wants me to do except when I'm on vacation." No. God says through the apostle Paul that we are to serve him willingly and unreservedly. You give up all of your rights and you live for the Lord.

This is not an easy thing to do, is it? I think, again, the illustration helps us to understand this. It has been quipped, "Do you know what the problem is with a living sacrifice? It keeps trying to crawl off the altar." I think sometimes that's how we view the Christian life. We *want* to be committed to God, we *want* to serve the Lord, but we're not always willing when push comes to shove.

You see, Paul tells us we are not our own. We are bought with a price. This is actually the way the New Testament refers to Christians. We are slaves of God, the Bible tells us. We belong to him. Now we might miss this, because most translations translate that word *servant*. That's a perfectly good word. It's a perfectly good translation. The problem is what we bring to the word, because we tend to bring to the word *servant* something like a voluntary paid employee. That's our context.

We think if I'm a servant to someone and he does something I don't like or doesn't treat me properly, I can tell him, "You know what? I quit. I'm done with this. You can have it. I'll go find somebody else to serve." That's our idea of servant, but really, the idea of servant in the Bible is much more of a bondsman, one who is owned by another person, one who is obligated to another. Now this isn't bad. It's not shameful. After all, that's how Paul refers to himself at the beginning of this letter in chapter 1, verse 1. He says he is a servant, a bondsman, a slave to the Lord.

There's also one important difference. This kind of service is voluntary. It is something we rejoice in. It is not forced upon us. We are redeemed; therefore we serve. That's why Paul begins this chapter with an appeal rather than a command. But don't mistake the Christian life as something we can pick and choose from. The life you live is not like dining at a restaurant where you get to pick one item from column *A* and two items from column *B* and one item from column *C* and mix and match them. That's not the Christian life. We are voluntary servants. We are voluntary sacrifices because we belong to Jesus.

We don't *have* to belong to Jesus. We can continue in our rebellion and sin. We don't have to have redemption, but once we belong to Jesus, once we profess him by faith, once we claim the salvation he has given to us, once we claim the name of Christ, then we are called...obligated even...to present our bodies. That's what Paul is calling us to here: to give everything to Jesus. There is a totality to the practice of our conduct when Paul tells us, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice."

When Paul uses the word *bodies* here, there is indeed a physical aspect to it. We'll get to that in a moment. There is also an aspect in which it encompasses all of our beings. Verse 2 makes that clear. There is no exception that is in view. There is no loophole. There is no out clause we can find. This call to holiness involves all of our being all of the time. For 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, we serve Jesus.

But do not discount the physical body either. Some people have taught that the physical body means nothing and that so long as my mind is committed to Jesus I can do whatever I want, that God doesn't care what I do with my body. I intellectually understand who Jesus is and what he taught, and I'm committed to that, but God doesn't really care what I do with my body.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. This is a lie from the pit of hell. It's a lie that is spoken over and over and over again in our day and age. It goes something like this: "Really, all roads lead to God. Everyone is on the same road trying to find heaven, and it doesn't matter. You live one way. I live another way. It doesn't really matter. God is not concerned with that. He's just concerned with the sincerity of our thoughts."

The Bible doesn't teach that. The Bible actually teaches that the body is very important, that the body is the instrument through which we express our thoughts and our will. Sin, make no mistake, wants to reign through your body. It wants to have control through your body. It wants your body to serve sin rather than God. Paul has told us this in Romans, chapter 6. But your redemption undoes the reign of sin. It undoes the reign of sin in your body. It is why we fight against sin.

It's also why the resurrection is so important. Our bodies are to be redeemed along with our souls. We are a body-soul union. Ideas of eternity in which you will float without a body on a cloud with a harp are found nowhere in the Bible. They might be in a Hallmark card somewhere, but they're not in the Bible. We are redeemed to be resurrected and to have glorified bodies and to live on a new earth that has been purified by Jesus. Your body is important. That means we must think about our bodies and how we can present them to God.

So let me ask you *this*. What are you looking at day by day? How are you using your eyes for God? Are you dishonoring your Lord and your profession of faith by what you watch? Do you think it's okay simply because other people don't know about it? What are you using your mouth and your tongue for? How do you speak of others?

Do you gossip? Do you run others down? Are you presenting your tongue as a sacrifice for God? You see, how we use our bodies is very practical. It is an application of the truth Paul is giving to us. You are meant to glorify God with the whole of your being all of the time. That must be the overriding principle in your mind as you think about each of these individual instances of conduct.

Thirdly, Paul describes our conduct in an interesting phrase: *your spiritual worship*. He says that presenting our bodies as living sacrifices is our spiritual worship. This phrase is interesting because the words are difficult to translate. Let's start with the word *worship*. This word *worship* can also be translated *service*. It's translated in some instances *worship*, in some instances *service*, and you can see that there is a relationship here, because we worship God through serving God. It is our service of the Lord that provides our worship for him. That's why the word *service* is often translated in the Bible *worship* directly. It depends on its context.

The other word that causes difficulties is *spiritual*. This word can also be translated *reasonable*. It's a word, to make it more complicated, that is only used twice in all of the New Testament. It's used *here* and in 1 Peter 2:2 in the phrase *spiritual milk*, that we, as Christians, feed upon the Word as spiritual milk. A more literal translation of this word might be *reasonable* or even *logical*. It is an adjective that comes from the word that means word: *logos*. It's the word we get *logic* from. It causes us to think about reasonability and logic. It is a word-based word, if you will.

Why, then, is it translated both here and in 1 Peter 2 as *spiritual*? I think it's because it has the meaning of being genuine, sensible, understandable, pertaining to the mind and the heart. It is something that goes beyond the formality. It is not external. It is not ordinary worship. This is, of course, the problem with man's worship. The problem with the Judaizers was that they thought if they provided the form of worship for God it was all that mattered. They just went through the motions as if that were sufficient.

If we're honest with ourselves, that can be a problem for us even in Christian circles. We simply do what we think we're supposed to do. We do what we think others will think is the right choice. What Paul is saying here is your service has to go beyond that. Your service has to be justified by Scripture. It must be rational in that sense. Sinclair Ferguson describes this word well. He says it describes something that flows from the logic of the gospel; that is, our service is in accordance with the biblical understanding of what Christ has done for us. It is not pro forma. It is not formulaic. It is rather spiritual from the inner person.

The Principles of Our Conduct

Now Paul ends these important verses with a description of the principles of our conduct in verse 2. "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." So as Paul often does, he gives us both a negative and a positive. He is warning us against the dangers before us, and then he's also encouraging us to follow Jesus Christ.

We start with the negative. "Do not be conformed..." This word is also an interesting word. It is used here and in 1 Peter 1. Now let me give you a brief aside. Do you find it interesting...? This is now the second time I've said this. There's an unusual word that's used only by Peter and Paul. Stop for a moment and think. Could you imagine any two people who are more different than Peter and Paul?

Peter is a fisherman, a rough man. He's used to dirty hands and cuts and nicks and sweating. My guess is Paul spends all of his time in a library. He tries to hire someone to do his outside work, like I do. Paul was learned; Peter can probably barely read and write, yet they both use the same language in a unique way. How can that happen? Well, it can only happen if the Bible is not just the product of the man Peter and the man Paul but if it is inspired

by the Holy Spirit. That's the only way this could happen. This is yet another example of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Well, what does this word *conformed* mean? It means to be fashioned or to be shaped in a certain way. This is actually one of the instances where Bible paraphrases are helpful to give us some color around this word. The Living Bible translates verse 2, "Don't copy the behavior and the customs of the world." I actually like the Phillips translation even better: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." That's what *conforming* means: to be squeezed into the mold of the world.

The idea here is we are not to be driven by what the world thinks. We are not to live in such a way that we want the world's respect or the world's admiration for following them. It is living vertically for the praise of God rather than horizontally for the praise of men. It is living eternally rather than temporally. Now, Paul is not just telling you to be a nonconformist.

He's not saying, "Christian, if everybody is buying an SUV, buy a sedan." He's not saying, "If everybody is eating organic food, you don't do it. Be a nonconformist." That's not what Paul is saying. The idea here is not to be different just for difference's sake. It's more than that. It's not to be dominated by the morals and the customs of society around you.

The word we get *morals* from is the Latin word *mores*, which means customs or habits. The morals of a people are their customs or their habits. So what Paul is saying here is you don't fall into the customs and habits of the world around you, of this present age. Paul is saying we must not live like the world has all of the answers.

This is an incredible challenge for the church today, because so much of the church wants to avoid the criticism of the world. It wants to fit in. It's changing to fit in. It's changing what it teaches about God, about sin, about salvation, and it is doing it all to fit in with the world. All around us, we see the church being squeezed into the world's mold.

Now where do we see it? Here are a few examples. We see it in churches being unwilling to stand for life in a society that is increasingly hostile to children in the womb. Have you noticed that in our culture today the days of abortion being safe, rare, and legal are gone? Now people shout their abortion, and they say that it's good. They describe children in the womb as parasites who don't have rights. Are we willing to fight, not to be conformed to this world?

Another example is the matter of sexuality and gender. The world continues to praise homosexual behavior. It continues to deny the reality that God has created male and female, and it continues to punish those who will not conform. Just this week, there was a story about a soccer player who is amongst the best at her positions who was denied a spot on the US women's team. Not because she wasn't good. It was acknowledged by virtually everyone that she's the best at her position.

You would think if the United States is trying to win a World Cup they'd get all of the best people. Do you know why she was denied a spot on the team? Because she would not wear a gay pride shirt at a public event. She wasn't

trying to be critical of homosexuality. She wasn't trying to give a Bible lesson. She just didn't want someone else to make her speak in a way she didn't want to. That's what the world does.

How can we resist this, then? We don't want to be obnoxious on purpose, but we have to stand with the Lord and with his Word. We have to not copy the world's behavior. How can we do this? How can we, as Christians, resist the pull of the world, the threats of the world? It's becoming increasingly harder to live a life informed by the Bible in America.

We have been safe for decades from the type of persecution our brothers and sisters around the world have routinely experienced, but more and more now this is coming to home. Even more than that, our young people are growing up in a society in which the Bible's view of these issues is never talked about in public. It is mocked as evil, hurtful, mean.

How do our young people avoid falling into the world's opinions and ways? Paul gives us the answer in the second part of verse 2. We must be transformed by the renewing of our mind. To be transformed is to experience a metamorphosis. This is the same word that's used to describe Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, how he was transformed from his earthly body to a glorified body. So we are to be transformed.

Now this is a remarkable way of speaking. Do you see what Paul is doing here? He's giving you a command, but what kind of a command is it? It's a passive command. Paul is commanding us to have something done *to* us. He's not telling you to *do* something. He's saying you are to have something done *to* you. It's not that we must change because we're told we must change. No. There is a permanent change that comes to us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

We have patterns or a mold that will abide eternally. We must not be conformed to the changeable, temporal ways of the age. Instead, we must look to the age to come, to the age of the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. In conclusion, are you ready to have your life be a sacrifice for the Lord? Do you hear Paul's call to live a life that reflects who you are in Christ? In the weeks to come, Paul will show us what that looks like in some detail.

The very first thing we must understand is that it is not *what* we do but rather *why* we do it that is important. We live because Jesus has redeemed us from sin. We live because of the mercy of God, and having been redeemed, having received that mercy, we show a watching world what a difference Jesus makes. We give Jesus not just some things, but we give him all of ourselves.