

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon: Our Response to God's Mercy, Romans 12:1-2

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INTRODUCTION: Throughout the book of Romans we have been studying God's mercy and the honest truth is that we can never fully understand it. We can study it, we can ponder it, we can discuss it with other people, and we can teach about it, preach about it, we can just sit still and soak in God's mercy. But, ultimately we will never understand all of God's mercy because it is such a mystery. And, even our partial knowledge is just partial it's quite limited because God's mercy is so broad and vast it's beyond human comprehension. In Chapter 12, Paul told the church at Rome what their response to his mercy should be—and his message is just as relevant to us today.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:1-2 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* [Your translation might say "service" or even [service of worship].

Points:

- 1.) Our response to God's mercy should be sacrificial living
- 2.) Our response to God's mercy should be transformative thinking
- 3.) Our response to God's mercy should be a powerful church

First, OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S MERCY SHOULD BE SACRIFICIAL LIVING

EXPLANATION: As a response to God's mercy, we should be living sacrifices. A living sacrifice is the sacrifice that keeps giving. As you know, the people of the Old Testament gained forgiveness through the sacrificial system – animals were offered to God in what we call the substitutionary atonement. The animals for people's sins instead of people having to die for their sins. It sounds cruel and unusual to us today, doesn't it, but in reality it was quite merciful. God provided a

way for people to be forgiven for their sins. And as we know from the book of Hebrews, their sins were actually rolled forward until Christ, the ultimate sacrifice.

I believe the sacrificial system was originally designed by God to be an actual deterrent of sin as well. It goes to reason that knowing that an innocent animal would be killed as a result of one's sin would deter a person from sinning. And, maybe it did in some cases, but as we read through the Old Testament we realize that sin was rampant. And, eventually the sacrificial system was just taken for granted and not even practiced many times. Jump ahead to today— it would reason that if our sins put Jesus on the cross that alone would be a deterrent.

ILLUSTRATION: A man once said to me, he watched the movie *The Passion of the Christ* one time and he put the DVD right beside the player in his living room. And, he decided that if he's ever tempted to sin he'll make himself watch that video. Jesus on the cross thoughts about Jesus on the cross knowing what he did to pay the price for our sin should be a deterrent to sin but I'm afraid many times— it is not.

APPLACATION: I've preached from Romans 12, so some things you may have heard me say before today. What does Paul mean by a living sacrifice...because a sacrifice, at least in terms of animals would be something dead. How can a dead thing be living?

EXPLANATION: The best way I know how to explain it is that a living sacrifice is a living dead thing. How can that be? What Paul meant is that as believers in Jesus we must be totally surrendered, we must be purged, of our will and completely surrendered to God's will. And as living sacrifices, we should continue to do it over and over. We sacrifice all we know to sacrifice and then the Lord shows us another thing we must sacrifice.

You know, this Christian life is all about stewardship, isn't it? What's ours is really his...as people say our treasures, our time, our talents. How are we doing on the stewardship meter?

APPLACATION: A few weeks ago, I mentioned Jesus being Savior and Lord – it's one and the same. When trusting him as Savior—we spend the rest of our lives

growing into a deeper understanding of what that means. We'll never fully understand how Jesus saves us, because it is truly such a mystery. And when we trust him as Savior, we also trust him as Lord, which means boss, and we spend the rest of our lives learning new areas of our lives where he must be boss. If you're honest you'll agree with me, it's a struggle letting Jesus be Lord of everything, isn't it?

ILLUSTRATION: It is a tug of war; I am just being honest with you this morning. Picture me on the side of a tug of war rope with a mud pit right in the middle and Jesus on the other end of that rope—I like to tug don't I? You like to tug don't you? You don't want Jesus to be boss of every area of your life. We may say it, we may do it and just when we think we're fully surrendered to God there's another new area of our lives. You we get new areas of our lives as we age. It's just part of aging—I have area in my life that I didn't have in my life 10 years ago or 15 years ago. When I was 10 years old I knew life as it was to be at the age of 10. But, as I grew older I had more responsibilities I had new areas in my life. And, at my age now, at 53, I have a lot areas in my life and as I have gotten to know you it never slows down as you get older you have more areas in your life that you have to constantly surrender to God so that he is totally Lord of your life.

ILLUSTRATION: In Psalm 51, King David realized that obedience is what God really wanted, not just sacrifices. David realized that going through the perfunctory motions of repentance was not what God wanted. What he wanted was obedience so that repentance was not necessary. You don't have to repent if you obey.

David said, “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.” Then he goes on to say that the sacrifices of the righteous is what really pleases God...in other words, sacrifices out of obedience rather than sacrifices out of repentance.

APPLCATION: Our response to mercy—is offering our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and pleasing to God.

Our response to God's mercy should be sacrificial living

Second, OUR RESPONSE TO GOD’S MERCY SHOULD BE TRANSFORMATIVE THINKING

SCRIPTUER: Look at Romans 12 Verses 2 “*Do not conform 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.*”

EXPLANATION: The phrase “pattern of this world” means the current age or times. Do not be conformed to the current times, but be transformed.

We have the English word “transformed” and the Greek word that Paul used sound like the English word for metamorphosis. We could accurately translated this as “but be metamorphosized by the renewing of your mind”

ILLUSTRATION: When a creature undergoes metamorphosis it’s body structure is completely changed. For instance, a tadpole becomes a frog, and a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. The metamorphosis completely changes the body structure of the creature. Paul uses this image to describe the change that happens in a person’s mind who is completely surrendered to his will.

EXPLANATION: Folks, if there is no difference in the thinking between a person who claims to be a Christian and the rest of the world— then we a problem. A big one. If there is no difference between how a church is operated and a secular business—then we have a problem. If there is no difference between a group of believers who come together and any other group who gets together for any reason— then we have a problem.

APPLCATION: The believer’s mind should undergo a metamorphosis when surrendered to God. Believers should see things differently than the rest of the world...how? With a Christ-perspective.

EXPLANATION: What is the result of a being a living sacrifice? What is the result of having your mind being transformed? It is knowing God’s will, which is good, pleasing, and acceptable. Again, the Greek gives us deeper meaning “intrinsically good” (meaning naturally good), “well-pleasing” (not just pleasing but well-pleasing), and “perfect” means “fully developed.”

APPLICATION: God's will for you if you are a living sacrifice, is that you're letting him be boss of your life. And, you are allowing him to become boss of these new areas in your life as they develop. And, the result of having your mind transformed knows God's intrinsically good will, his will pleasing will and his fully developed will for your life.

APPLICATION: So if knowledge of God's will for our lives is directly related to being a living sacrifice, being holy and pleasing to him, avoiding being sucked into the secular thinking of the day, and having our minds restructured to see everything in a renewed way, then why are we wasting time doing just the opposite.

If you don't want to know God's will for your life, no problem. Many believe if they are totally surrendered to God that his will for them will be anything but naturally good, anything but well-pleasing, and anything but fully developed.

But if you do want to know God's will for your life, you can know it and Romans Chapter 12, Verses 1 and 2 tells you what you must do in order to know it.

You may think my words are rough, but listen, I am preaching to the preacher! The Bible is clear! I believe when God gets ahold of a person and a person gets ahold of God, everything changes.

Jesus confronted a wealthy man who'd kept all the rules. The man said he wanted eternal life and Jesus told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor. That man walked away from Jesus. You see, Jesus knew what he was hanging on to.

Another man said he had to go bury his father before he could follow Jesus. Jesus said "Let the dead bury their dead." Was Jesus being disrespectful of the man's father? No. He just knew that man's heart.

ILLUSTRATION: God knows your heart today as well. Numerous times in my ministry people have shared their true selves with me. One man told me he'd volunteer all day long for the church but he'd never give a dime. That sounds like the wealthy man Jesus confronted, doesn't it? How about if the man who said that to me saw Jesus and said, "Jesus I've volunteered countless hours to your church.

What else must I do to have eternal life?” Jesus response might very well be like it was in the scripture: go sell all you have and give to the poor.

EXPLANATION: You see—the man who told me he’d volunteer all day long for the church but never give a dime – that attitude is not of God. It was clear that that man’s god was his money. Was he obeying God, even though he was volunteering his time? No. Was he being a living sacrifice? No, because he was self-admittedly holding something for himself. I could go through the rest of verses 1 and 2, but I don’t need to. You get the point. Ultimately, he didn’t know God’s will for his life because he was selfish.

Our response to God’s mercy should be sacrificial living

Our response to God’s mercy should be transformative thinking

Third, OUR RESPONSE TO GOD’S MERCY SHOULD BE A POWERFUL CHURCH

EXPLANATION: Now I want to change gears here – Paul wrote a letter not to an individual but to a group of believers. Obviously, Romans has significant value for the individual and Chapter 12, Verses 1 and 2 are clear examples. But we must keep in mind the intended audience: Christians in Rome; Christians who came from different walks of life and were prior enemies; Christians who were persecuted for their belief in Jesus Christ. *Paul wrote to them collectively.* If we reread Verses 1 and 2 yet once again with the idea that he wrote to this to a group of people we might see it differently.

ILLUSTRATION: The Christian experience is supposed to be lived out in community. Now picture Paul’s letter being read to a group of Christians in Rome. Now you can see the individual application and the group application. Let’s consider these verses as a group – our church – you and me, the members of Tusculum Hills Baptist Church.

No doubt the church has had significant challenges over the years. Over the years people have left for various reasons. We still have about 3,000 on roll and many we know nothing about. Many are shut-in and therefore unable to attend and we are glad they can watch our telecast.

In light of Romans 12:1-2 I think we need to rethink what church is all about.

I saw a chart that will be published soon for all of you to see. It listed the consumer church versus the missional church. In the consumer church, the church is seen as the dispenser of religious goods and services. People come to church to be “fed,” to have their needs met through quality programs, and to have the professionals teach their children about God. Their perspective is “I go to church.”

ILLUSTRATION: Next to the consumer church is the missional church: A body of people sent on missions who gather in community for worship, community encouragement, and teaching from the Word in addition to what they are self-feeding themselves throughout the week. Their perspective is “I am the church.”

APPLICATION: As I think about that, I think about our collective group here, this church as we know it, we are a living sacrifice...I mean we give and give and give. At our Fourth of July meal, Bro. Bill asked people to give so we could continue taking meals to the shut-ins. Enough money came in for the rest of the year. We are a giving church.

CONCULATION: I challenge all of you; let your life be a living sacrifice, both in the way you give and the way you live. And I challenge you to take a hard look at Romans 12:1-2 from the perspective of the church, this particular church.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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