

Live the Best Life Possible: Living & Walking in Consecration

Romans 12:1-2

As we look at a brand new year right in front of us, what would be the best way to use the most precious commodity: our time we have to live? Perhaps no verse is better situated in the Bible to help us answer that questions that the one we turn to in Romans 12.

GOD SAYS: THE BEST LIFE POSSIBLE IS LIVING IN SPIRIT POWERED CONSECRATION

The New Testament book of Romans contains the most complete description, of the most important event of all human history: Christ's work on the Cross. In Romans 12 we find the response God expects from us as we begin to understand what salvation is all about.

Basically Romans 12:1-2 breaks into four clear elements describing the consecration God is asking for from everyone saved by Christ's gracious sacrifice. If you have been saved by grace, through faith: these two verses are for you.

This is what Paul says:

1. Consecration's Foundation: **God's Mercy to Me** (v. 1a)

Romans 12:1a (NKJV) I beseech you therefore¹, brethren, by the mercies of God,

2. Consecration's Description: **My Body Offered** (v. 1b)

Romans 12:1b (NKJV) that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

3. Consecration's Expectation: **My Mind Transformed** (v. 2a)

Romans 12:2a (NKJV) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

4. Consecration's Reward: **God's Will Is Known** (V. 2B)

Romans 12:2b (NKJV) that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So here we go. Please stand with me and read with me from your copy of God's Word Romans 12:1-2.

Pray

¹ This is the fourth "therefore" of Romans: 3:20 we are all guilty; Rom. 5:1 in Christ alone is justification; Romans 8:1, only in Christ do we escape condemnation; and Rom. 12:1 God expects consecration.

1. CONSECRATION'S FOUNDATION: **GOD'S MERCY TO ME (v. 1A)**

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) **I beseech you therefore², brethren, by the mercies of God**, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Paul is here summarizing the mercy of God in the eleven preceding chapters—God's mercy to the completely fallen human race through the provision of his Son.

Completely sinful man was completely lost.

God provided a complete righteousness through the complete sacrifice of his Son.

A completely new life and purpose is now possible.

In view of His mercy, God calls us to completely commit. Paul is stating our obligation to respond to what God has done. The more we comprehend God's amazing work, the more completely we surrender to Him.

WHEN WE SURVEY THE CROSS

Deeper meditation on Christ's work leads to deeper surrender. As the hymn writer Watts confessed:

Love so amazing, so divine
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Please take your hymnbook and turn to #185 "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross".

1. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died;
my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ, my God;
all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.
3. See, from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown.
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Ponder what Christ sacrificed to purchase our salvation.

Respond in adoring surrender to Him.

Deepening our grasp of His sacrifice leads to a deepening surrender of our lives. That leads us to see:

² This is the fourth "therefore" of Romans: 3:20 we are all guilty; Rom. 5:1 in Christ alone is justification; Romans 8:1, only in Christ do we escape condemnation; and Rom. 12:1 God expects consecration.

2. CONSECRATION'S DESCRIPTION: **MY BODY OFFERED** (V. 1B)

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.** 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The way God describes the consecration He seeks in our life is: complete and worshipful.

This section of Rom. 12:1 overflows with the imagery of the Temple & Tabernacle worship that God designed.

First, "present" is a technical work for placing a sacrifice on the altar.

Second, "bodies" sums up all attached to ongoing life: our hopes, plans, dreams, everything important or precious to us, and anything we find fulfilling must be offered.

Third, "sacrificed" is a consuming fire, a holocaust from which nothing can be recovered. God wants an irrecoverable gifting of anything important to us, into His Hands.

OFFERING MY LIFE AS A SACRIFICE

The prescribed routine for offering Old Testament sacrifices is reflected by Paul's wording. 1). The obedient worshipper **determined** what God requested from his flock or field; 2). They personally **brought** it to the Tabernacle or Temple; 3). They **presented** it as a personal offering; 4). And then **released** this possession from being any longer theirs.

Think of those four steps of offering to God: **determined, brought, presented, and released.** The Old Testament sacrifices a pervaded with the portrait of a total, irrecoverable, giving away.

But now comes the contrast: in the Old Testament the sacrifice was killed and consumed. In the New Testament the sacrifice lives on, but under new ownership. The explanation is that we are to remain in the state we presented ourselves: holy and acceptable or pleasing to God.

The essence of consecrated living is to be pleasing & acceptable to God. We consecrate ourselves to His will, seek His well done, and live as His servants. That is the only pathway God gives to finding, knowing, and doing His will.

THIS IS GOD'S CALL TO TOTAL COMMITMENT

What is amazing is the extent of this call from God. It is not merely to pastors, elders, deacons, and missionaries. This call to consecration is addressed to anyone that has experienced the mercies of God.

God is speaking to everyone in Christ's Church, grade-schoolers, middle-schoolers, high-schoolers, college students, young adults, singles, young marrieds, un-marrieds, single-parents, those at the start of their career, at the height of their career, and after their career. The call is the same for all: **complete consecration.**

The medieval distinction between clergy & laity is wrong. We are all called to complete consecration, the many, not the few. That is God's plan for each of our chosen vocations. God calls for, expects, desires, and blesses consecration.

To just offer 25% surrender is disobedient; to offer 50 or 75% is irrational once confronted with God's mercies.

That means worship from 25% of your heart, is not accepted by God.

Even half hearted or 50% worship is not accepted.

God says the only worship He will take is what David describes as: "with my whole heart" I want to love, worship, and serve You Lord.

We are to give all that we have to all that we know about Christ. The more we know, the more we are to give. Now we get to the details, the instruction manual, and the fine print.

3. CONSECRATION'S EXPECTATION: **MY MIND TRANSFORMED** (v. 2A)

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Here we find the Lord guides Paul to give both a positive and a negative description of God's requirements. Here are God's expectations of anyone who has experienced His gracious mercies.

Interestingly the first is negative, and the second is positive. No to worldly conformity & yes to godly transformation are the two sides of a genuine commitment to God. Genuine surrender has a negative and a positive set of duties.

First, God says we are to make a monumental declaration of NO to the old ways of the lost person we once were. The big resolve is to NO more live like that.

My first duty, expected by God is to declare over and over by my choices: v. 2 I do not want to be conformed any longer by this fallen, sinful, rebellious, proud, lust-filled, and pleasure seeking world.

WHAT DOES 'DO NOT CONFORM', MEAN?

Again the words the Spirit guided Paul to write are so clear. "Conformed" comes from the Greek root "schema" which corresponds to the English word scheme. God is saying, that the world around us is being directed by the god of this world, namely Satan.

So, beware of getting influenced by his scheme. Beware of listening to Satan's advice instead of God's. Beware of getting pulled in by the multitude.

Satan's worldly scheme wants to get us hooked on anything but God.

Satan's cultural scheme wants us to be satisfied by anything but God.

Satan's world system wants us distracted by everything but God.

Avoid those schemes of the Devil, those patterns, and the momentum of culture. All of those are being prompted by the one who God describes like this, in 1 John 5:19:

1 John 5:19 (NKJV) We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

WE ALL STRUGGLE AGAINST CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD

The sad and painful truth is that all of us struggle to some degree with conformity to the world. That is why Paul asked every believer to make that monumentally large roadblock, say **NO MORE**.

Then start the re-orientation of our minds back on downloading more of the transforming truths about Christ each day. We are not to abandon culture; nor move away from being near any lost people and stay in monasteries. We are to be in the world, but not be of the world.

Since Satan is in the saddle of human culture, we should be suspicious of conforming to the current trend just because it is fashionable, popular, or the current rage.

We must seek God's wisdom in what we read, watch and listen to.

We must seek God's strength to not fear challenging others' presuppositions.

Above all, we must seek God's power to be different as in: "holy and acceptable to God".

WE ALL NEED TRANSFORMATION

Paul states the positive command next: **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Here the Greek language shines again. Transformed is the word "morphed" like the frog gradually coming from that tadpole, and the beautiful butterfly waiting to be released from the caterpillar: we are all to seek God morphing us.

When this word is used three other times in the New Testament, it is even more vivid. In Mt. 17:2 and Mk. 9:2 we see glory shining out of Christ on the Mt. of Transfiguration. The essence of the fullness of the Godhead briefly peeked out of Christ. He changes, is morphed into glowing like the Sun shining in its power.

Then Paul takes that same word and places it into 2 Cor. 3:18 and says that is exactly what God wants to do in us, day by day. We are to be experiencing this "change" throughout each day of our lives to look a bit more like Christ. This is God's expectation for us:

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

HOW DOES THIS TRANSFORMATION HAPPEN?

God clearly explains the process of consecration by the Greek word behind the English translation: “be transformed” (it is a passive imperative). God uses that passive form to explain that this consecration must be done by someone else, not us; and that Someone else is the Spirit of God. We can’t consecrate ourselves, we can only surrender & yield to Him.

The next phrase is in the present tense to convey an ongoing, continuous process of “the renewing of your mind”. The transforming metamorphosis (summorphos) of a believer culminates in Heaven when we are at last fully in the image of Christ for eternity. Romans 8:29 is that future event, but the process takes place because of the choices to surrender to the daily consecrating work of the Spirit.

Kent Hughes³ ably states: “As we answer the call to commitment, we are called to voice a monumental “no” to the schemes of this fleeting evil age and a determined “yes” to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in renewing our minds.

The “no” without the “yes” will lead to a life of futile negation.

The “yes” without the “no” will lead to frustration because Christ will not dwell in Satan’s house. These are not suggestions, but are rather imperial commands to be obeyed by all.”

4. CONSECRATION’S REWARD: **GOD’S WILL IS KNOWN** (V. 2B)

The ending of this message from God, on the work of the Spirit and our responsibility to respond, ends with one of the greatest promises in the entire Bible.

Listen to the offer God is making to every one of us who will stop to listen and respond:

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

Consecration pays well. God has promised something that most earnest & sincere believers long for.

Here Paul was given the inspired duty to lay down God’s pathway to the longing of our hearts: How to Know God’s Will.

A life of consecration has the power from God to understand His will.

Knowing the will of God is a byproduct of willing surrender.

We are to consciously surrender to as much as we know about Christ’s work for us on the Cross. We grow in knowing Him through His Word.

The more we surrender, the more He reveals of His will.

³ This quote and other ideas are drawn from Preaching the Word: Romans—Righteousness from Heaven, in loc.

CONSECRATED LIVING MEANS CONFIDANT LIVING

As we live the consecrated life, Paul says we will see life more and more clearly. Those who will not surrender are the double-minded James warned about. They are tossed, confused, empty, dissatisfied, and restless.

But when we surrender we find life as God designed it not easy but as the good, acceptable & perfect will or plan of God.

Nothing short of complete surrender makes any sense when you really think about it.

God said it is the logical thing to do: consecration is the right response, and it pays very well.

MAKING SACRED VOWS OF SURRENDER TO HIS WILL

Most of the greatest parts of my life are connected to promises that I have made, like making and keeping my marriage vows, the sacred duties of the call to ministry, and the promises to protect and care for my family.

Often we are challenged by the renewal of our sacred vows of surrender to the Lord's call to consecration.

So I invite you today to do something with me:

1. If you are part of the cover2cover partnership this year, and would like to declare that it is your intention to get into the Word each day and go all the way through the Bible this year: **please stand with me.**
2. As you remain standing, if any of the rest of you are on a different pathway, but with the same goal of being in fellowship with God each day through His Word: **please stand with us.**
3. Will all of you standing seek to meet with the Lord each day of this New Year? If so please answer aloud: **I Will.**
4. **You may be seated.**

Communion is a time of renewing our consecration.

SURRENDER TO CHRIST AGAIN TODAY

Deeper meditation on Christ's work leads to deeper surrender. Deepening our grasp of His sacrifice leads to a deepening surrender of our lives. Ponder what Christ sacrificed to purchase our salvation. Respond in adoring surrender to Him.

To declare again your surrender to Christ today, hold your cup and stand with me and say these words to the Lord:

Were the whole realm of nature mine/ That were an offering far too small/ Love so amazing, so divine/ Demands my soul / Demands my life/ Demands my all.

Now, for personal application as yourself:

WHEN WE ARE NOT CONSECRATED: WHAT HAPPENS?

When we are not consecrated, we are also not staying “filled” by the Holy Spirit. When we get out of step with the Spirit, there are over a dozen symptoms that begin to show up in our lives.

Take some time to prayerfully examine each of these passages. If any of them are present, then cry out to the Lord, repent of any straying away from His plan, and seek the immediate re-filling of His Spirit:

1. John 7:38-39 says we dry up inside;
2. Rom 8:1-13 says we get bound again by sin;
3. Rom. 8:14-17 says we get distant from God;
4. 1 Cor. 6:19-20 says the fire goes out on the altar of our heart;
5. 2 Cor. 1:20-22 says we begin to feel lost;
6. 2 Cor. 3:5-6 says our words begin to kill;
7. Gal. 5:18 says we start to wander;
8. Gal. 5:22 says we get fruitless;
9. Eph. 6:17 says we get fearful & defeated;
10. 1 Jn. 2:27 says the Word makes no sense.
11. Gal. 5:22 says we get fruitless;
12. Eph. 6:17 says we get fearful & defeated;
13. 1 Jn. 2:27 says the Word makes no sense.