

Paul's Six Points of Gospel Change for the Whole Church

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[0 : 00] Thank you. Is there another book in the New Testament besides Romans?! Anybody can help me with that?! You've got to take Eucharistic, you take Akkadian, as well as the Hebrew Scriptures itself.

So he's up there working away and Lord willing in the next few months we'll be able to graduate. We're very excited for him and for his family. I'd like to turn your attention to Romans in chapter 12, if you will.

We've been looking at Romans this month and trying to understand how Paul has put this particular book together. And then last time I was here we looked at chapter 8 and I think Prophet Shur also spoke from Romans chapter 8.

And I think as you understand Romans and how these four essays from the Apostle Paul fit together, it becomes a great encouragement to you as you think through what Paul is doing. So remember his first essay, chapter 1 to chapter 4. His second essay was chapter 5 to 8, then 9 to 11. And then chapter 12 to really middle of 15, chapter 15 is his fourth and final essay, as he takes us from the wrath of God, 118, all the way to the worship of God with one voice.

[1 : 39] I said chapter 12, but look at chapter 15 real quickly, how he ends up at least the major section before his epilogue. I love the way that he does this in chapter 15.

He says in verse number 5 or verse 6, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Just think of that. With one accord, with one voice, you glorify God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So he goes from 118, the wrath of God, and for 63 verses, he talks about the wrath of God until the middle of chapter 3, and he takes us from wrath to worship.

The very people who the wrath of God is upon are the very people who once they accept Christ and have the Spirit living within, are formed into a body, and now this one body is to, with one voice, glorify God.

Now just think of the direction of the book of Romans. Wrath to worship. Okay? Wrath to worship. This is the beauty of the book of Romans.

[2 : 53] So when you come to chapter 12, we come to his final essay, and I think there's probably not, maybe, how many people have ever memorized chapter 12, verses 1 and 2?

You've ever done? I won't ask you to do it. Okay, great. But if you think about what these two verses, actually three verses I'm going to read this morning, I hope it becomes a great encouragement to you as you think about what the Lord is doing in your church and in your own personal life.

Okay? Look at the holy text, if you will. Chapter 12, verse 1. Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your, what's the next word?

Your bodies. As a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God, this is your true service of worship.

And, do not be conformed to this age, to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you might approve what the will of God is, that which is good, and pleasing, and perfect.

[4 : 00] Verse 3. For through the grace given to me, I say to each one of you, among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think as to have sound thinking, as God has allotted to each one a measure of faith.

Father, Father, thank you for your scriptures. I pray that you'd give us just a few minutes here of clarity to understand your word, and may you be honored, and may your church here in

Williamsburg grow.

I pray that the hearts of people would be moved by the Spirit of God to accomplish wonderful things for the glory of heaven, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Now, when you take the book of Romans, you have the first 11 chapters, which are usually called the doctrinal section, okay? And then you have chapters 12 to 16, which is often called the practical section.

It scares me a little bit that we use that kind of language, but maybe I could put it this way. In chapters 1 through 11, what Paul is going to answer is this. What is the gospel of God?

[5 : 10] And in chapters 12 to 16, he's going to answer this question. What does it look like when somebody believes the gospel of God? You see that?

So when we talk about the doctrinal section, vis-a-vis the practical section, I want you to understand, brothers and sisters, that we need the foundation to build our moral life before the world.

The foundation must be solid and understood. What is the gospel? And all of those that embrace the gospel, this is what it looks like in your life, or should look like in my own personal life.

And I'm telling you, brothers and sisters, you think after all these years of preaching, I think it's 40-some years of preaching, I would say to you, oh, I can come to you and say, I can do this.

No. No. Not at all. You would think after all of these years, I could handle and take care of pride that creeps up in my life.

[6 : 14] After all these years, I love what Brother Greg said, after all these years, you'd think that I'd take care of little dishonesties, just call it what it is, it's a lie, to say things that are not true, to think things that are not pure.

So, I'm saying to you that the scriptures are just as much for the speaker as they are for the listener. Okay? They're for all of us. We're in this together, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

But I am challenged, because if you say, if I say, that I have placed my faith in Jesus Christ for my salvation, what that means is this, according to chapter 12 to 16, that this Jesus, whom you've placed your faith in, this Jesus is also going to transform your life.

There will be personal change. I call it, as you look at the PowerPoint, I call it the gospel change. In Romans 1.16, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation.

And salvation is not just, in the book of Romans, salvation is not just the moment that you're saved. Salvation is going to take you from that moment through your life until chapter 13 says, when the time of the day of the Lord is here.

[7 : 39] So, from all of this time, we call the period of salvation, this period of salvation that we are living in, there will be personal change, gospel change, taking place in my life, in our life.

Now, I want to say two things about transformation to you, okay? Number one, when you get saved, and for me, it was when I was just turning 17 years old, senior in high school, when you get saved and invite Christ into your life, transformation is not immediate.

It is progressive. It's not immediate. You don't get up off your knees and, look, I'm perfect. I can do everything right. No. Transformation is progressive because obedience is not automatic.

That's why in Romans chapter 12 to 16, you're going to have 50 imperatives from the Apostle Paul. An imperative is not a suggestion. An imperative is the Apostle Paul writing under the direction of the Spirit of God, and as he writes under the direction of the Spirit of God, he is telling us, this is what it looks like if you really claim faith in Jesus.

Okay? That's an imperative. So, when I look at this whole idea of transformation, I want to encourage you. And you say, maybe the question is, okay, how come it is so hard to follow Jesus Christ?

[9 : 14] All right? Remember, Romans has a doctrinal section, chapter 11. Let's see what Romans says. Turn back to chapter 8. Real quickly, Romans chapter 8. Here's one passage of Scripture that can help you understand why it's so difficult.

Look, if you will, in verse number 11. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to you...

What kind of body do you have? What does it say? A mortal body. That's a body of death. Mortal... You're either immortal or mortal. Okay? So it's a body of death.

And the body of death is subject to sin. It's subject to deceit. It's subject to all the things that our mortality, who we are, it's subject to.

So here it is. He says now, verse 11, He says that your mortal bodies, He'll give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells in you.

[10:19] Look up to verse 2. For the law, the rule of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the authority of sin and death.

This is what the Spirit does. He releases you from the authority of sin and death, and He puts you in a new sphere, and that sphere is called life, according to verse number 2.

The Spirit of life, which He rehearses down here in verse 11. Because the Spirit is in you, you have life in your mortal, in your dying body. You have life, but it's not yours.

It's divine life. It's the Holy Spirit living within. Alright, now, look if you will, verse number 12. So then, brothers, we are not under obligation to live in this flesh, to live according to the flesh.

For if you are living according to the flesh, you die. But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the practices of your body, you will live.

[11:22] Verse 14. For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God. The greatest test that you can have, am I a Christian, am I not, is this.

You're being led by the Spirit of God. That's the test. Doug Moo in his commentary says this, in verse number 14. This is probably the shortest and concise, but most powerful explanation of what it means to be a Christian.

What it means to be a Christian is, I'm living in this mortal body, I've invited Jesus into my life, the Spirit comes to live within, and the moment that happens, I have life. And this life is from the Spirit. I'm still in this mortal body. This life is from the Spirit, the spiritual life. And so now, the Spirit is going to begin, as it says here in verse number 13, you're going to put to death practices of your body. Those practices that don't want to obey. Those practices of impurity. Those practices that are within this mortal body because of our constitution, who we are.

[12:30] This is very important. This is all chapter 5 of Romans. You have two spheres. The sphere of being in Adam, and the sphere of being in Christ. This sphere here, according to Romans 5, is that when you get saved, the Spirit takes you out of the in Adam sphere, and He puts you into the sphere of in Christ.

And when He takes you out, you have this mortal body, and He takes this mortal body, but when He puts you in, He also puts the Spirit within to give life. He puts righteousness to your account so that God looks at you through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

So all of this is done for you. For me. But we still have this human constitution. This mortal body.

This body of sin. This body of death that the Apostle Paul brings out in chapter 7 and chapter 8.

So, it's difficult because we have this human constitution that has this propensity to always want to go south. Right?

The propensity. I mean, when you get on the interstate. Right? Okay? Or, you're in the office.

Right? Or, you're at home.

[13:46] Right? There's this propensity. My way. My thoughts. You know, that's the way it is. So, the Spirit is within doing a great work.

So, back to chapter 12. When I say to you, very important, that transformation will be progressive because God is going to work in you. Truly, you are a new creature in Christ.

That's what it says in 2 Corinthians 5.17. Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he becomes this new creation. All things begin to pass away. All things begin to become new. It's a fantastic statement.

The reality of it is that transformation will be progressive. There'll be growth. There'll be development that's taking place. The second thing I want to say, which is very, very important, just as much as the first thing.

Transformation will be progressive. The second thing is this. Transformation is without exception for God's people. Every single believer who has faith in Christ, there is no exception.

[14:51] Now, one of the cool things about chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, is that there are nine plurals. You don't necessarily see in your English text, but in the nouns, in the pronouns, and in the verbs, they're plural.

Because what's happening is, if you can imagine this being read to the entire local assemblies, because they're all house churches in Rome, as it's being read, this is what is being said.

I exhort you, brothers, plural, by the mercies of God, present your bodies. See the plural? As a sacrifice.

So, throughout verses 1 and 2, he is speaking to the whole church about transformation. And there's not going to be exceptions. This is very important.

Everyone in this assembly, who is a believer and a part of this assembly, you are exhibit A to a chaotic, ungodly world that the gospel works.

[15:51] That the gospel works. That the gospel can take people who are under the wrath of God, and people who will turn in faith to Jesus, and they will be rescued.

That's what it means to be saved. They will be rescued. And they'll be rescued in a sense that even their person is being changed by the Spirit as they walk through life and seek to honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mean, the moment you say, I'm going to follow the will of God, Romans 12, 1 and 2, I'm going to follow the will of God, the moment you do that, you are going against the current of the world in which we live.

But, there's no exceptions. All of us, every believer within the church is to be exhibit A that the gospel works. Okay? Now, with that said, let's see what the text actually says.

And what I did is, I'm taking the text just so you can see it. Alright? And, you can see exactly what Paul is saying to you. So, there's no exciting alliteration here.

[16:58] There's no, it's just, this is what the text says. I just want you to capture this. So, the Apostle Paul says, I appeal to you, brothers, therefore, by the mercies of God.

This is important. Therefore, he's probably summing up everything in chapters 1 to 11. And he's speaking to the believers, you know, to the brothers, to the sisters. Here we are.

Okay? And as he speaks to us, the whole church, let me ask you, maybe I could ask you this way.

Okay? I don't know how many people are in here, but, let's suppose only 20% of you are going to present your bodies as a sacrifice to God.

How powerful is the testimony of the church? Yeah. How about 30%? do it. 50% do it. 70% do it.

Yeah, better. But, see, there are no exceptions here. He's writing the entire church. He says, brothers, I exhort you. I love the word exhort.

[18:03] I love sports, and I love to watch certain coaches, because a coach is on the side, he's not actually playing the game, but he's on the sideline with a red face, and he's hollering back and forth, you know.

And this is what a quote, this is what Paul is doing under the direction of the Spirit. He stands along the sidelines of the house churches of Rome, and through the Spirit writes to them, and he says, I appeal to you.

I urge you. I charge you, some of your translations may say. So, that's what the Apostle Paul is doing. I charge you. And what is the means by which he charges them?

Does it say in your Bible, therefore, I exhort you, or appeal to you, brothers, by the law of Moses? No. He says, by the mercies of God.

Every now and again, it's good for us to step back and just say, okay, the mercies of God, the appeal to us to live a transformed life is because God has been merciful to us, compassionate to us.

[19:10] Look back at, let's go back to the doctrinal section. Look at chapter 5. Go back to chapter 5. Look at a couple of verses. Look at verse 6. The Apostle Paul gives several words of what our unsaved life was like.

Look at 5.6. For while we were still weak, that word weak is an interesting term in the Greek text, *asaneo*, which means this.

It's used over and over in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of people who were infirmed. Jesus was healing people who were unhealthy. For while we were still unhealthy, still sick, still infirm, still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the, look at this word, ungodly.

In other words, everything that God is, we're not. Okay? It says, Christ died for the ungodly. So, the very people that are nailing Jesus to the cross, He dies for.

By the way, my sin put Him there. Okay? So, the mercies of God. We're still weak at the right time. Christ died for the ungodly.

[20:27] Verse 7, For one would hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for a good man someone might even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more than having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

I mean, if Jesus, for scarcely for a good man or a righteous man, somebody might die. But look, weak, infirmed, unhealthy, ungodly, sinners, and this word, enemies.

The death of Christ removes the enmity so that there can be reconciliation between God and the sinner. So, look back at chapter 12.

Remember what He is saying here. Therefore, I appeal to you, brothers, by the very mercies of God. the reason we want our own way is we have forgotten where we were.

[21 : 38] We have forgotten, as it says in Ephesians chapter 3, that we were formerly this way, under the control and dominion of the prince and the power of the air. We walked according to the course of this age.

Our thoughts were impure. Our lives were a mess. And through the mercies of God, see, we are saved. Not because we've earned it or that we deserve it.

So, here we have a wonderful statement. Therefore, I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God. Okay? Ready for the second one?

To present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Now, this is really important because He is asking us to think in our minds as a reader, to think in our minds what it was like with our body before the mercies of God.

Turn back to chapter 1 of Romans. Very quickly, remember, Paul is building this entire essay on the first 11 chapters. So, look back at chapter 1, verse number 24.

[22 : 51] Therefore, God gave them over to the lust of their heart to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among themselves.

Verse 26. For this reason, God gave them over to dishonorable passions. The body has passions. They're dishonorable. Verse 28.

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to an unfit mind. your body, your passions, your mind.

Where was all that before the mercies of God intervened? It tells you right here. Impurity, our body, our passions, dishonorable, and our mind unfit.

And so, turn to chapter 12. He says, I want you to present what you at one time followed and worshipped.

[23 : 53] I want you now to take this body that Christ has redeemed and I want you to use this body as he says in the holy text here, present it as a living sacrifice.

Holy and acceptable God. It's interesting he uses the word sacrifice because it's deeply rooted in Old Testament theology because a sacrifice is totally dedicated to what's going to take place.

a dying, a death. But notice what he says here. You're a sacrifice but you're living. In other words, Paul is saying to the Roman church and to us today that I'm not asking you to die for me, I'm asking you to live for me.

You see the difference? Not die for me, live for me. Living. Notice, holy, dedicated, completely, set apart, purity.

And that which is pleasing to God. So brothers and sisters, when I look at this text here, my heart is just thrilled because as I unpack this in my own mind, the very thing that I followed without Christ, I did everything my body, my passions, and my mind wanted to do.

[25 : 11] Now because of the Spirit who lives within, there's a change within me and this mortal body now has the life of the Spirit and the Spirit according to chapter 8 verse 13 is cutting away the practices of my body.

And as this is taking place, it's hard, it's difficult, it's challenging, and I make mistakes. But the beauty is this, we come before the Lord and say, Lord, this body you created and you gave me, I've done nothing but go my own way, now I give it to you and so I present it to you today.

I present my body to you today as a sacrifice. You do with me whatever you want to do. I'm totally consecrated to you, whatever you want. Whatever you want. So that changes our thought processes, that changes our words, that changes our actions.

So it becomes a very powerful statement, I think, brothers and sisters, to us when we consider what is being stated here from the Apostle Paul.

See, the gospel is a wonderful thing. It rescues us from hell and the wrath of God. But the gospel also has a transforming power to it.

[26 : 28] There's change that's taking place and the change is visible. because we're no longer walking this way, we are now walking this way.

And here's the current of the world and here's you going against the current of the world and it's just a battle everywhere you turn. But the Apostle Paul is making it clear to us, I exhort you, I appeal to you, brothers, I urge you, I want to push you forward like a coach on the sideline.

Go hard after Jesus. That's what he said. Go hard after Christ. In fact, look at chapter 13 at the very end. The last verse of chapter 13, verse 14, says this.

One of the most powerful statements in all of the New Testament of what it means to be a Christian. 13, 14. But put on what? The Lord Jesus Christ.

And make no provision for the flesh in regard to its passions, its lusts. Same word, passion, in chapter 1, verse 24.

[27 : 38] You see, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, he's saying to us, listen, you are believers in Christ, then be clothed like it. Be clothed like it.

I love the phrase, chapter 13, verse 14. All right, back to chapter 12. Very quickly. We will make it through this, okay? Brother Jesus.

And you still have lunch. All right? Look at the next thing that I think is so important in the Holy Text. He says, that I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.

This is your spiritual worship. The word spiritual is a hard term to really understand. Whenever Paul uses the word spiritual in Romans, he always uses the word pneumaticon, which is a term of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

This word is a different term, and yet it's translated spiritual, but it's a term that relates to the mind. That the most reasonable thing that a mind can do whose body has been given to the Lord is to worship.

[28 : 50] To worship the Lord. And so, when I look at this text, my heart is thrilled. What is true worship? Listen carefully. If you present your bodies to the Lord, the most reasonable thing that you can do now is worship this Lord.

Listen very carefully, brothers and sisters, because this kind of lifestyle means that worship is not a one-day event that we do on Sunday morning.

It is a daily commitment of concentration to the Lord. Lord, this is your body now.

My life is because of your Spirit. So, I dedicate this body to you today. So, as I walk through, if you go to school, you're in school, if you walk at work, if you're at home, wherever you might be, you're saying that every event of my life is covered by this idea.

I am dedicated to the Lord. And so, if I'm walking in the mall, I'm walking in a store, it is, I'm worshipping. Remember the Apostle Paul said, pray without ceasing.

[30 : 03] See, that's what we're doing. We're praying without ceasing. We are worshipping with our thoughts and activities. So, all of a sudden, Satan puts a dart in your mind to say something evil about some other brother or sister.

He throws a dart of impurity. He throws a dart of unkindness. Whatever the dart is, it comes because you're going upstream, if you can.

You're going upstream to this huge current going this direction. The prince and the power of this air, according to Ephesians 3. So, the prince and power of the air, excuse me, Ephesians 2.

You're going upstream and all of the corruption is just the eye gate, the ear gate. You hear things that you've never, you can't believe.

You see things you can't believe. But remember, this body is belonging to the Lord. I remember the great pastor at Moody Church, Moody Memorial Church was H.A. Ironside, reading his life stories, an amazing story.

[31 : 05] The only pastor, he didn't start pastoring until he was 56 years old. And he was with the Salvation Army for years and years and years. And he pastored only this one church, Moody Church. But what an amazing Bible teacher.

He gives the story of what this means. He said that one day there was a young man who came to Christ and he was sitting on a train, tells you when this took place. He sat on a train with people around and he said some young men were sitting around him and they wanted to do something that

was improper and they asked him to join.

He said, I don't have any hands. They looked, you have hands. He said, yeah, but I've given these hands to the Lord. They're not mine.

You see, that's the idea, that's the concept from somebody from 60, 70 years ago gives the illustration that these eyes are not my eyes. These ears are not my ears.

This body is not my body. This mind is no longer mine. It is all given over to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. So, when I look at this, this becomes your most reasonable form of worship.

[32 : 13] So, worship, when we come together to corporately sing, which is very important to corporately understand the Scriptures as part of what the Scriptures have said, we're not to forsake the assembly of ourselves together as the manner of some people are, but we're to meet together on a consistent basis.

But this should be a reflection of all that has taken place the other six days in our life. So, we come together and have we sinned this week?

Answer is, please, yes. Have we done wrong with it? Yes. Have we confessed it? Yes. And so, we come together as brothers and sisters after going through this process of transformation and when we walk into this place here, I mean, these are just walls and this is just wood, but when we come in here, it's almost like, ah, for just a moment, I'm not going against the current of everybody being this way, but I'm among people who are in the process of transformation.

temptation. And so, all of us understand that. So, all of us come in here, there's no such thing as pride because all of us have sinned. See, all of us, all of us have done things that are improper, but hopefully, all of us have fallen to our knees and said, I am so wrong.

Please forgive me. Psalm 51. Create in me a clean heart, oh God. Renew a right spirit within me. God, do in me what only you can do.

[33 : 50] Get up off my knees. The process of transformation continues on. So, that's the beauty of what we're doing in this event. So, the whole event together is a special worship event of brothers and sisters who are in the process of transformation, struggling, battling their own flesh, the world, Satan, we come together and it's like, ah, yes, yes, let's sing, let's sing, let's give glory to God.

Let's talk about the goodness of the Lord. This is our, what they translate here, our spiritual worship. Okay? Next one. Are you ready? You still with me?

Verse 2a. And, now this is important. Notice I put and, capitalized, I put it in brackets. This is important because in the Greek text, there's no two sentences.

It's just a single sentence. It's a balanced verse 1, verse 2. So, if you can imagine that Paul is not quite finished when he gives this spiritual worship idea, he says, and, I've got something else to tell you.

Okay? And what is that something else to tell you? Tell you. Do not be conformed to this world, this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

[35 : 12] Your mind is still going through this process of transformation which is going to control your body. So, here's what he's saying. People have, looked at the word conformed and transformed.

These are two different Greek words and they kind of scratch their head, but Paul does this stylistically. They're the same idea. They're the same concept. It would be like this. The Apostle Paul is saying to us, don't be shaped by this world, this age.

Don't be shaped by the culture that's around you. Don't be shaped by the things that are around you, but be reshaped by what the Spirit is doing in your mind.

So, don't be shaped this way, but be reshaped or continue the process of the reshaping with your renewed mind.

That's what, that's what the Apostle Paul is saying to us here. And I'm saying to you brothers and sisters that there's no greater joy than to be able to pick up this text and say, I want, I want to experience this.

[36 : 26] The word transform is, is actually an imperative. Be transformed. But it's, it's used several times in the New Testament.

Twice it's used of Jesus, Matthew 17, Mark 9. And Jesus is on the mount of, we call it the mount of transfiguration. That's what we call it. And let me just read you one verse.

This is, I'll use the Matthew 17 when I was reading this this morning. It's very sweet to me. Matthew 17, it says this, that he's with Peter, James, and John on a high mountain by themselves and he

was transformed before them.

His face shone like the sun and his clothes were white as light. I thought, isn't that interesting? The transformation is so great with Jesus that even his clothes were affected.

I'm thinking, what if we get that? What if we get that? But think of this, that Jesus was transformed and his face was like the sun.

[37 : 32] And the brightness was affecting the garments that he was wearing. One of my favorite preachers, his name is John Piper. Maybe you've heard some messages of him.

But he has a favorite verse. I remember listening to him preach one time and he has a favorite verse. It's found in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. This is where another usage of the word transformed is found.

It's 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse number 18. It says this, For we all with unveiled face behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. We are being transformed into the same image.

Think of that. The glory of the Lord, we're being transformed into that image. And then he adds this, from glory to glory. And I love what Piper said on this.

He said, what this means is this. Paul is saying we are being transformed into the glory of the Lord, but our transformation is incremental. There's a glory in our salvation.

[38 : 34] We came to Christ. This is wonderful. All right? But this incremental growth, it's from glory to glory. We're going from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory to the next degree of glory.

This is our life. You don't often think about the process of transformation as being, I'm going from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. I think I'm going from one degree of glory that direction.

But the very fact that you want to dedicate your body to the Lord and that there is a battle is the beauty of what God is doing in your life.

before you were saved, you did what your body said. There's no second thoughts. Now, all of a sudden, the Spirit living within and we're going from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory, to the next degree of glory, to the next degree of glory in our personal lives.

And as we are going from one degree to the Lord, this is all because of the Spirit. Chapter 3, verse 18 says, So the Spirit is at work doing this. So those are the, when you look at Matthew and Mark and you look at this in 2 Corinthians, this one here in Romans 12, if you want to look back there, Romans 12, this is the usage of transformation.

[39 : 52] There's only four times in the New Testament that word is even used. But it's significant because he's using it in connection in your process and my process of going from incremental steps as I am being molded into the image of Jesus Christ.

Okay? So it's a wonderful thing. It's a powerful thing. It's a blessed thing. And I think it's important for us to keep in mind. So, number five, the fifth one, I want to show you.

There's six of these statements. Number five. And, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed. Okay? So don't be shaped by this world, but be reshaped by what's taking place in your mind so that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

One of my enjoyable writers that I enjoy reading died not too long ago. His name is John Stott. And John Stott has a wonderful commentary on Romans. And on Romans 12, in this passage, he makes a wonderful statement.

He says this, that when you come to Romans 12, 2, you have two values that are very clear. Value one is this world.

[41 : 13] Value two is the will of God. You got it? So, value one, don't be conformed to this age.

Value two, I want you to test and discern what the will of God is. And the will of God is not going to be the same as this age.

They're two different value systems. Okay? Totally different. So, people will say, you know, why don't you cheat on your taxes?

Because, certainly, the government is ripping you off, right? I mean, we all know that, right? Listen, I have a higher law than what the law says in the United States of America.

My higher law is my conscience is tied to Jesus Christ. It's tied to Jesus Christ. What I am in private has got to be what I am in public.

[42 : 14] If the glory of the Lord is to be seen in my life. You see? So, I'm saying to you, brothers and sisters, that I'm not saying to you, Paul is saying to you, that, notice the two words, testing and discern.

Both of these terms, it's one term in the Greek, dakimazo, it's one term in the Greek, but the Greek has like a coin with two sides. Same term. But it's a coin with two sides.

On the one side, there is testing. On the other side, there is discerning. Which I think is really important because, listen very carefully, he is not saying that you do verse 1 and 2a right, you'll know God's will right, go to it.

He is saying no because God's will is not anything like our human will. I mean, I know when I pray, God wants me to have that new car. I know that.

Right? No. Maybe. Maybe. Okay. But, I mean, this is the point. This is the point, brothers and sisters, is that we can be convinced in our mind that this is God's will.

[43 : 26] But notice what is happening in the text. You present your bodies, as you present your bodies as a sacrifice, you're going to be living for Him, holy, and pleasing Him.

That's how verse 1 ends. This is true, reasonable worship. And, don't allow the system of this age to control you.

You need to be reshaped. And in the reshaping, you're going to deal with the will of God that you don't know. The will of God, you'll test and discern, test and discern, test and discern.

I think one of the most interesting passages, and I won't be able to go through it because my time's almost gone, but I would just say this sometime. Look up, on your own study, the will of God in the book of Romans.

When you look at the will of God in the book of Romans, I think one of the most interesting things is the Apostle Paul says that, in chapter 1 and chapter 15, he says, I really wanted to come to you as a church in Rome.

[44 : 30] I've already come, but I've been prevented so far. The will of God has not allowed me at that point. I wanted to come, but I've been prevented. And at the end of chapter 15, as he writes these house churches after he completes his letter, at the end of chapter 15, he says this.

He says, I want you to pray earnestly for me because I'm leaving to take this offering, and this offering is from Gentile churches. I'm taking it to Jerusalem, and to do that, I've got to go through Judea.

Pray that I will not be overcome in Judea. People just don't like me. Don't like the Lord. And then when I get to Jerusalem, pray that God's will will be accomplished, and they'll receive this Gentile offering because he really wanted to bind the Jew and the Gentile together.

He said, pray this, pray this, pray this. He wrote this in AD 57, and you read Acts 20 through 28. What happened? He goes through Judea, and he finds himself in a temple, being pulled out of the temple, and they're trying to kill him.

And the Roman soldiers can't figure out what's going on, so they put him in jail, and for the next four years, he's going to spend two years in Caesarea prison and two years in the Roman prison. In other words, he prayed and said, please strive with me about the will of God, that these offerings, I've been doing this for years, collecting this money, I want to get this money down, and it would be received.

[45 : 54] I don't want to go to prison. I want to be able to proclaim the gospel. And the will of God was that Paul, through chapters 21 through 28 of Acts, is going to be in prison.

Then, stop and read his prison letters. Philippians 1, everything that has happened to me has caused the furtherance of the gospel.

Philippians 4, I have learned in whatever state I am to be what? Content. Whoa! Whoa! So, when you read the prison letters, in light of this prayer at the end of Romans 15, in light of all the events that took place for the next four years, and the apostle, I mean, why wouldn't God want the apostle Paul preaching the gospel to somebody outside prison?

Oh, did I tell you about Philippians 1? He says, all those in Caesar's household that have received Christ, they say hi to you as well. Wherever you went, people are coming to Christ.

So, brothers and sisters, this is very important. As you test and discern the will of God, your testing and discerning is not so you can decide if you're going to do the will of God.

[47 : 15] Your testing and discerning is so that you know what to do. This is the will of God. It's not our decision. I don't know. That's not very comfortable.

I don't know. I mean, no. You're testing and discerning what is the will of God. And by the way, here are these ideas.

Here's the will of God. It's good. It's pleasing, acceptable, same as verse 1, pleasing. And it's, what's the last word? So, Paul is sitting in prison. Perfect.

Right? Right? Alright, brothers and sisters, let me just take you to the last one here. Verse 3. It disturbs me that verse 3 is not attached to verse 2 in most messages.

I like what Doug Moose says in his commentary when he says this. The most concrete way you can know that if you're fulfilling verses 1 and 2 is how well are you doing verse 3. Okay?

[48 : 16] Here it is. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think with sober thinking each according to the measure of faith that God has given sign.

Now just think. He's reasonable 12.1 Renewed mind 12.2 So that now when you're among people you never think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.

But now there is a sober thinking and this is according to the measure of faith. It's not that God looks at this person and says I'm going to give you a lot of faith quantity wise and this person I'm going to just give you a little faith.

Oh no. Oh no. It's the same faith. What it is though is a faith that is growing and developing. That's why it says in Romans chapter 4 Abraham grew verse 17 he grew strong in faith giving glory to God.

There's a growing faith that's strengthened. Five times in the gospel of Matthew Jesus says oh you have little faith. What he means by that is you have a defective faith. And it's always to the disciples.

[49 : 33] Oh you little faith. Oh you little faith. Oh you little faith. So brothers and sisters as we conclude this message I thought well what could I do to highlight I mean can you this I thought well okay one of my favorite stories is about one of my favorite writers his name is John Bunyan who wrote Pilgrim's Progress.

Alright very good Pilgrim's Progress. Alright. He lived 1628 1688 he wrote 60 books in a while one of the most prolific English writers well known 10 years before he died he wrote Pilgrim's Progress but there's another book that's really influenced me and maybe you've gotten this book and you I would encourage you you get it for a couple of dollars on Amazon used okay the title of his volume is this Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners or a Brief Relation of the Exceeding Mercy of God in Christ to this poor servant John Bunyan now all of that when you go on Amazon it'll just say Grace Abounding okay from Romans 5:20 now in the preface he issues his rationale for writing about his conversion to Jesus Christ he says even if it means exposing my ungodly pre-salvation lifestyle it is profitable for Christians to often be calling to mind the very beginnings of grace in their soul I have much to say quote of the grace of God towards me so let me read you a paragraph are you ready Bunyan's redemption story began while selling his wares in the city of Bedford where he happened to hear a conversation between three or four women as they were in the street relating to one another their personal experience of being born again Bunyan had never heard such words and he wrote of his terror quote at this I felt my heart begin to shake end quote as Bunyan fell under the conviction of the Holy Spirit his conscience struggled with a dreadful thought I'm too great a sinner to be saved in fact he wondered what if the day of grace has passed me I've come too late about this time God providentially directed his steps to a Bedford pastor by the name of John Gifford where Bunyan began to sit under the ministry of the word and from that time he writes quote my soul was led from truth to truth by God preaching opened his eyes to Jesus grace became sweet to his soul upon his conversion okay this is where we want to go two notable things happened number one salvation brought what he called a sensitivity to the very act of sinning got it this is John

Bunyan or is it am I alright sometimes I wish I was more sensitive and second I felt a love to Christ as hot as fire so I want to ask you this morning as I conclude are you transformed am I transformed and here are the two questions number one do I have a new sensitivity toward the very act of sinning the whole thought of sin is it repulsive to me and number two how is my love for Christ am I hot today or hotter today than I was five years ago or is it sort of waning so what Romans 12 does for me anyway is it brings me face to face with this reality that transformation is a process but transformation is to take place in our life okay by the spirit and he's transforming me not into a better person he's transforming me into the image of

Jesus Christ that's the difference that's the difference would you pray with me please father thank you for these minutes together and they're very brief and yet very important and profound for all of us and I pray that you would help us as we would leave to do a proper evaluation maybe the evaluation is that we just take the book of Romans and we just read it through and study it through and think it through maybe the evaluation is another passage of Scripture maybe meditating on Psalm 51 that we read this morning that we would just really think this through that God actually creates something new in us when we confess our sin thank you that you forgive thank you that you're merciful you're merciful you're merciful so I pray Lord that we would not have elevated views of ourself but I pray that we would have an elevated view of you and that you would work within us to conform us to the image of

[54 : 40] Jesus and that our Christian life would not be something other than that which is genuine and true so Lord forgive us for our hypocrisy and create in each of us a clean heart that we might really do what the will of God is in our life we thank you today thank you for these brothers and sisters encouraging we pray in your name that who that who