

# A Passionate Plea For Holiness (Part 2)

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[0:00] Romans chapter 12.

And we're looking at verses 1 and 2. I looked at verse 1 last week. I'll do a little review of it. And then verse 2 tonight.

And we're looking at four important truths concerning holiness. Or holy Christian living. Alright, Romans chapter 12.

Let me read verses 1 through 2. 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. 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.

[1:13] Alright? Now, I mentioned last week that really these verses, especially verse 1, really show us the passion of the Apostle Paul.

A very passionate man. And I think Paul was a very intelligent man, too. I think he was a great teacher, obviously. Instructor, preacher. I think he would be among the intellectuals of our day, and yet there wasn't anything cold about him, anything, you know, just kind of academic about him. He was passionate. A great passion. He had a passion for sinners, of course, to come to faith in Christ. But here, in these verses, his passion is not directed towards sinners with a deep desire, the desire of his heart, for sinners to repent and to put their faith in Christ.

The passion here is rather for Christians. Christians to be holy. To live holy lives. In fact, he's going to spend the rest of the chapter, or excuse me, the rest of the book, the letter, dealing with this issue, pretty much, the practical side, the side of holy Christian living.

And Paul was very passionate about that. And remember, last week I said that in these two verses, we would consider four truths about this life of holy, holy Christian living.

[2:49] Four truths. The first two come to us in verse 1. The other two, which we shall see tonight, come to us from verse 2. Now, to review, first of all, there's the call.

It begins with a call. The call of the holy. Again, let me remind you, or point your attention to, Paul's passion.

This is a plea. He had a passionate heart for the spiritual well-being of those he ministered to. And so, here we have his pleading. He's pleading his readers, his original readers, of this great letter. It was likely passed around to a number of churches. But also through them or from them to all the generations that have followed, all the readers that have followed. And that includes you and me. And so, he's pleading with us. Literally. He says, I beseech you. I know beseech is kind of antiquated, archaic kind of language.

[3:55] I don't think I would normally come up and ask you in this way. I beseech you. I wouldn't use that word necessarily, so we might use a different word. And so, that's why I've chosen the word calling.

This is a calling, but that's really not strong enough. This is an urging. This is Paul urging, pleading with them. I think we could even say begging them.

That would be a valid translation. I beg of you. Please. See, this is the call. The call of the holy. It's a call. It's a plea to be holy. And he says, present your bodies a living sacrifice. Holy. So you know the subject is holiness.

Holy Christian living. And the call here is for believers, because of the language that Paul uses, we understand this, the call here is for believers to climb, as it were, climb up on the altar.

[4:57] The altar of sacrifice. And sacrifice themselves as dead sinners, dead to sin, dead to self, but as living saints in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. So Romans 12, 1 and 2 represents, as I mentioned last week, and I think it is valuable to maybe use this imagery that these two verses represent a door, a very huge door in this letter, the letter to the Romans.

A door. And every door has a hinge. And the hinge here is the word therefore. So the door swings into this idea of holy Christian living.

It swings on that word therefore, but that hinge is attached to everything that has come before. In the 11 chapters that have preceded these two verses.

And then he launches us out. It's that doorway. We're moving into then a kind of different theme. And the theme is holiness. Holy Christian living.

[6:04] Very practical teachings that are going to follow chapters 12 on to the end of the letter. But now getting back to what this door is attached to, hinged to, and that is everything that has come before.

And I remind you again that we can sum it up under these three powerhouse theological words.

Justification, sanctification, glorification. And so Paul is saying in view of the fact that we are justified, declared righteous in our standing before God, be holy.

holy. And in view of the fact that the Holy Spirit of God is doing a work of sanctification, making us more and more like Jesus, be holy. And in view of the fact that we are yet to be glorified, that's future, to one day see Jesus and to be forever with Him in the heavenlies, in view of that fact, be holy.

That's what Paul is saying. Alright, the call of the holy. The call or the plea to holiness. And then the second thing we saw, in by way of review, the consecration.

The consecration of the holy. I beseech you, I beg of you, Paul wrote, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

[7:26] That's the New King James Version. And that's a mouthful in whatever version you use. And so I attempted to have us consume it piece by piece like eating that elephant.

And then Wes graced us with a story about eating an elephant or an elephant ear or whatever it was at the end of the service. You don't need to tell that story right now. But it was funny. But we're going to eat this like you'd eat an elephant rather, one bite at a time.

This is what we saw last week. The consecration or holiness is, first of all, a decisive act on the part of the believer. It is an act.

Paul gave a command here. Present your bodies a living sacrifice. This suggests clearly a decisive act.

It is to say, Lord, I place myself on the altar. All that I am, all that I can do, all that I have, all of me. I place it all on that altar.

[8:29] I relinquish all rights. to it. Here I am, Lord. I'm yours. Present your bodies a living sacrifice. This is a decisive act. Consecration is also a deliberate activity.

There is a deliberate activity, an ongoing activity, an ongoing deliberate activity of holiness. He said, present your bodies a living sacrifice.

Holy. holy. And by definition, the word holy means to, the act of this means to deliberately, to be deliberately separated unto God for whatever he wants.

For his service. His service. His devotion. Devotion to him. Worship to him. Complete surrender to him. And so we are yielding ourselves to God.

Daily. We are surrendering our lives to him and to his control for whatever he wants to do in us and and to us and with us and through us in every way.

[9:46] So the decisive act of it, the deliberate activity of it, and then we saw last week the divine acceptability of this. The divine acceptability of consecration.

Being wholly consecrated unto him. Paul said, present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God. Acceptable. There's no such thing as a partial consecration.

there is progressive in the sense that it is God doing this work and we are becoming more and more his.

But when it comes to our side and our part, there is no partial commitment. No partial consecration. You can't have one foot on the altar and the other foot on the ground.

It's all or nothing. Partial consecration is no consecration. As the old adage goes, if he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all.

[10:43] And there's truth in that. So, the divine acceptability. And then lastly, and we'll move on to the next two truths that we'll see in verse 2.

The devoted attitude of it. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And again, resist the notion that that means the very least you can do. That's not the idea. It means that, but it means much more than that. It means that the believer's total life offering, and that's what God expects and demands, the believer's total life offering is our true spiritual worship, which goes way beyond the parameters of what we do here on Sunday morning and Sunday night.

It encompasses the whole of life. That's our true spiritual worship. All right. Now, we're ready to consider two more truths revealed in verse 2.

We've had the call of the consecrated, the consecration of the holy, rather the call of the holy, the consecration of the holy. And then third, the character. The character of the holy.

[11:58] You know, some people are just simply characters, and then there are people who have character. I won't name any names things here, but we're talking about what is to be true, what characterizes all believers, should characterize all believers, the character of the holy.

And this is how Paul put it. He said, be not, or do not, be conformed to this world. That's the first thing he says about the character of the holy.

He presents it in the negative. Do not be conformed to this world. Now, the word translated conformed here is, trust me, a mile-long word in the Greek language.

I'm not going to try to pronounce it, and it doesn't really help anyway, does it? And I would muff it, I guarantee you. But I can tell you a few things about this word that are very important.

First place, it's a very rare word. I think you would agree when you understand that it appears only one time in all the Bible and right here in this verse. Very rare word.

[13:10] That doesn't really help us so much with the meaning, so let me go to a second thing that we ought to know about this word. It is a verb, of course, and it's imperative.

Greeks would write words in such a way, certain form, to let us know something about the import of the word, and here it is written in an imperative form.

And what does that mean? It's a command. This is a command. And it is a strong command because Paul placed a word, a little bitty two-letter word right on the front of it, not as a part of it, but a word right in front of it that precedes it, that is a very strong negative in the Greek language.

It's the word may, that's how you would pronounce it. And any time that word may is placed before a verb, a word, it adds to it an even stronger negative.

And so, it's a strong command. And so, what is Paul saying? He's saying, we could translate it this way. He would be saying, stop it!

[14:25] Stop it! Stop doing it right now! That sounds like what I'd say to my kids, you know, over the years. Stop it! You know. But this is what Paul's saying.

Stop it! Stop it! Stop it right now! Stop what? Conforming to this world. Just stop that foolishness. Stop conforming to this world.

Let me give you a third thing about this word, or important feature of this word, and that's its meaning. I think that would be the most significant feature of the word.

The meaning of the word. I mean, the original word. We think we all know what the word conform means, but what's the meaning of this word here?

It means to conform one's self, mind, character, everything. to conform oneself to another's pattern.

[15:26] Now, this is very important. We get this. To conform oneself to not your own pattern, but another's pattern. Pattern of living, one that is not yours.

That's what the word conform means. Let me put it another way. to fashion oneself according to another's way of thinking, to another's way of living.

Is it important to understand that meaning? If you have an NIV, I think the NIV, though it is more of a paraphrase, not a literal translation here, but they got it right.

This is how it is rendered in the NIV. do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world. Just stop doing that.

Stop it. Conforming your life to the pattern of someone else's or some other. That's what the word conform means.

[16:27] So, here's what Paul is saying, or actually commanding. Stop assuming. Now, this is going to be a long sentence. Maybe I'll repeat it.

Stop assuming an outward expression which is patterned after this world. An expression which does not come from, nor is it representative of, what you really are in your inner being as a regenerate child of God.

God. That bears repeating. Stop assuming an outward expression which is patterned after this world.

An expression which does not come from, nor is it representative of, what you really are in your inner being as a regenerate child of God. Let me put it another way.

Stop masquerading as the heathen you once were. And you are no longer. Stop acting that way. Because it's not who you are.

[17:42] That's what it means to conform. See, it's not natural for a child of God to conform to this world. Not natural. That may be easy to. And we're constantly tempted to.

that no matter how easy it is and no matter how tempted we are, it's not natural for us. It's not. It's not natural. And yet though it is not natural, it is certainly common. I mean everywhere you look these days, Christians are trying to conform to the world.

are attempting to conform to the world. Going that way. Whether it's music or fashion or entertainment or values in general.

Believers, regenerate children of God, who have been radically transformed on the inside by the Holy Spirit and yet are living in a way that is a total contradiction to who they are inside, really, in Christ.

[19:00] We see it every day. In fact, in the context of church ministry, I think even, and church growth. I mean, Madison Avenue could not devise a better approach or plan of promotion and program for many churches today, larger churches today.

So, you know, I think we ought to consider in this day where we're pressured to grow the church, you know, we ought to consider that, you know, where did we get the idea that churches need to be more like the world in order to win people to Christ?

Where did we get that idea? And yet that is the, quote, conventional wisdom of our day in church growth. Jesus never intended for us to be more like the world so that we would win them to Christ. Never intended for us to do that. Jesus did not lower his standards of separate living and holiness so as to somehow entice more people into his kingdom.

Yet, we almost can't help ourselves to submit to that philosophy, that notion, to be more like the world so that we would be more attractive to the world.

[20:22] It makes no sense whatsoever. Rather, through Paul, God says emphatically, do not, do not be conformed to this world, the pattern of this world, this world's thinking and way of living.

Do not conform to it. This world's standards, all of these things are diametrically opposed to the word and will of God. Paul says something else here.

He says, do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So, here's another word, transformed, conformed, transformed, formed.

It sounds similar, don't it? Well, they're somewhat similar. I can't tell you the Greek word here, and I would pronounce it for you so that you can see, hey, that sounds like something I've heard before.

The word in the Greek is metamorfeo, metamorfeo, metamorfeo. That sounds like metamorphosis, doesn't it? That's where the word comes from, metamorphosis.

[21:33] And so, it means to change into another form. That's what the word metamorphosis is. And that form comes from within.

It's like the caterpillar, of course, that, you know, goes through the metamorphosis and comes out as a butterfly. The caterpillar is not conforming to something it is not.

It is being transformed into what it really is, a butterfly. And that's the idea here in this word metamorfeo.

Second, I would say this about the word, this, and this is significant in our understanding of Paul's meaning, the Greek verb here is in the passive voice.

All verbs have voice. Passive. It's passive. As, as opposed to active. What does that mean? It means, the passive voice means that the action is done to the subject.

[22:48] The action is coming this way. Passive. Rather than the subject doing the action. The action going out.

I mean, you see the difference between the two. And this verb here, metamorfeo, is passive. passive. So, it's not transform yourself.

This is not a self-determinant thing in the sense that everything you need to do it, you have of yourself. It's not active.

It's passive. So, it means to be transformed. Be transformed. It's passive. Let me add to that another feature of the form of the word.

And it is what's called present tense. And that just simply means it's continuous. It's ongoing. Not a one-time deal.

[23:49] It's an ongoing, continuous thing. Continuous action. Literally, we could translate this this way.

be being transformed. Very important that we see this. Otherwise, we'd be tempted into thinking that we have all the resources we need to live holy.

We don't. That somehow we have all of the power and strength and ingenuity and so forth to bring the life of Christ out and express it all by ourselves.

No, it's be being transformed. By the way, we have the very same thing in that famous passage in Ephesians 5.18. You know that famous passage?

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the last half of the passage. Do not be drunk with wine where it is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. The exact same construction there as we have here when Paul says be conformed.

[25:03] In Ephesians 5.18 it's be filled by the Holy Spirit. And it could read, should read, be being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Not filled in the sense of getting something you don't have, but in the sense of you giving all to God. When the Bible says be filled with the Holy Spirit, it's talking about be constantly yielding to the absolute mastery of God in your life.

Very much the same idea here, of course. And the verb is the same. Be being. Be being, continually being, transformed, changed from the inside out is how we could understand this.

Let me give you a verse of Scripture where this word is used. And it might surprise you. In Matthew 17, verse 2, the Bible says, Now after six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John, his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves, and he was metamorphosed.

Only what's the word in the English, you think? Do you remember? transfigured. Remember? It's a mount of transfiguration. It's the same word.

[26:27] Only here it's applied to Jesus. And Jesus was metamorphosed. He was transformed. Transfigured.

He wasn't transformed into something he wasn't before. what was revealed there on the mount of transfiguration was who he really is.

I mean, that's what happened. Peter, James, and John were privileged to see Jesus for who and what he really was, is. On the mount of transfiguration, the inward came outward.

That was always there. As Jesus walked this earth, his glory was veiled. But on the mount of transfiguration, it was drawn back a bit.

And Peter, James, and John were allowed to see. And they were very impressed. You know, the Bible says there that his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light.

[27:33] As white as white could be. And so, the inward came outward. Jesus was transfigured. He was transformed instantly, right there, on top of the mountain.

Incredible experience. But it's the same word here as applied not to Jesus, but to us, God's people. And for us, it is gradual.

It's a gradual thing. It's an ongoing process of transformation. 2 Corinthians 3.18, But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being metamorphosed, being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

And Paul is saying nearly the same thing here in Romans 12. 2. Be being transformed by the renewing of your mind. The renewing of your mind.

And the clear implication here is that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Of God. That's why the verb is passive. The action is being done to us.

[28:50] And so here's what Paul is saying. Change your outward expression from what you once were and now no longer are to who and what you now are in Christ.

And this change comes through a constant yieldedness to the Holy Spirit of God. To the absolute Lordship and mastery of God in your life.

So, let's put all that together. The change of outward expression, that's what he's talking about, being transformed, is dependent upon the ongoing renovation of your life, the renewing of your mind.

And this ongoing renovation of your life is dependent upon you and I habitually, continually yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit of God over every aspect of your life.

And the result being the Holy Spirit will put thin out and fruit in. and he does this primarily through changing our mental processes, the way we think, the renewing of the mind.

[30:09] And so this is real transformation. The old you is continually starved out and the new you, the real you, the new you, the redeemed you, the regenerate you, is allowed to flourish and allowed full expression.

And that's what Paul's getting at. Full expression of Christ in your life. Full expression of total consecration to Him.

That we express to the world and to all those around us and everywhere we go and in every context. That's the kind of Christians we should be, should want to be.

Be continually transformed by the renewing of your minds. The character of the Holy. One more thing. The confirmation of the Holy.

The confirmation. Paul said that you may prove. We could insert the word confirm. Or better, the word approve.

[31:17] Prove, approve, confirm. What is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God? That's a mouthful too, isn't it?

I mean, these two verses are just packed. It's difficult to just take it all in. Paul is laying out before us two options.

Really, he's not giving us options. He's telling us which one to do. But either you can conform or transform. conform to another's standard, conform to something you really are not any longer, because you're saved, you're redeemed.

Or transform, express who you really are in Christ. Those are the two options. Hide your candle under a bushel, oh no, as the little song goes, or let your light so shine before men.

And Paul, without a doubt, is telling us the choice we need to make. And so here, in the latter part of verse two, he clearly seems to be saying, or is clearly saying, in the latter part of it, prove it.

[32:30] Prove it. Prove me right on this. Or really prove God right. Prove to the world the right way.

the right way. That is, confirm the supremacy of a holy life. Confirm the far surpassing good of a holy life in service to the Lord, in devotion to the Lord, in communion with the Lord, in worship of the Lord.

Confirm the far surpassing good of that. That's what he is commanding us to do. And where does this confirmation come in?

You know, when Adam and Eve were still in the Garden of Eden, that is before the fall, and they were commanded, you know, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, the knowledge of good and evil.

And, obviously, if you understand the story, it's pretty clear this did not seem right to them. It didn't seem fair. In fact, Satan tempted them to get to thinking that God was unfair, holding out on them something that they really needed.

[33:49] So they didn't think it was fair, and so they sinned. They disobeyed God. But, if they had obeyed God's command, you know what they would have discovered? That it was good.

That it was acceptable or well-pleasing. they would have discovered that it was perfect. Absolutely perfect. But Adam and Eve failed to prove the will of God.

They failed to prove it. And we've been suffering ever since. In fact, all of mankind then, of course, was plunged into sin and condemnation and corruption. And so now, here, Paul says that we are to prove the will of God.

Which, in this case, is what? It is that we place our lives, lock, stock, and barrel, on the altar as living sacrifices to the Lord, no matter what the cost.

That's His will that we do that. It is to live holy lives. This is the will of God. Holy lives that are acceptable to God.

[35:01] it is, rather than continue to conform to the kind of person we once were, apart from Christ, we are to yield to the transforming, renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the will of God. And so to make our lives profound expressions of who we are now in Christ. This is the will of God. This is it. For every born again believer.

So we're to prove it good. We're to prove that acceptable. We're to prove that perfect. And listen, God's will is good.

And acceptable. And perfect. By the way, in the original text, these words are not adjectives. They're nouns. They're nouns. Not just simply the good will to prove the good will of God and the acceptable will of God or the perfect will of God.

[36:09] That would be adjectives. But these are nouns. And so he's saying that these words represent what God's will is in its nature. in the whole.

Good and acceptable and perfect. Sherry and I attended the pre-national day of prayer breakfast this last week.

It was really very good. And they had a featured speaker and it was Gracia Burnham. You might remember her story, Martin Gracia Burnham. A number of years ago, missionaries in the Philippines for the New Tribes Mission.

You might remember that in 2001, they were kidnapped by, I guess you'd just call them militant Islamist terrorists.

A group that goes by the name of Abu Sayyaf, something like that, however you pronounce it. They were held for ransom by this terrorist group. Terrible. Tragically, during their rescue, the Filipino army rescued them and Martin was shot and killed there.

[37:19] Gracia lived, she survived, she was wounded but survived and was rescued. And what a story she has. She shared a bit of that at the breakfast the other morning.

But the point I want to make is this. At one point in her testimony, she quoted, and you've heard this quote, I'm sure, quoted Ted Turner a number of years ago.

Remember what he said about Christians? He said Christianity is for losers. Do you remember that? It was really a famous quote, infamous quote. And she quoted him, Ted Turner said Christianity is for losers.

And then she said, he's right. She said, I am a loser. I'm a loser.

That's what I am, she said. I got to thinking about that right then. And you know, she's right. She's right.

[38:22] And we should all be losers in the sense of what she meant, the way she meant it. I got to thinking about that and I applied it to Paul.

Paul wrote these words here. In the first two verses of Romans chapter 12. I got to thinking about what Ted Turner said and Gracie Burnham's reference to it and all this turning my mind.

You know, the Apostle Paul was a loser. He absolutely was. He was lost to this world. Lost to the world.

In the sense that the world had no hold on him. that's what we ought to understand from these two verses. The Apostle Paul, the world had no hold on him.

The world had lost all grip whatsoever on his life. Remember what he said in Philippians 1.21, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

[39:25] Those are the words of a man who's a loser. not in the sense that we use that term. But in the sense that the world had lost all grip on his life.

And here in Romans 12, 1 and 2, I believe Paul is begging us, come on, join me in that. Come on, get on the altar with me.

Join me. Lay it all on the altar and prove it right. In 1875, Francis Havergal wrote the words to a very famous hymn, Take My Life and Let It Be.

Famous hymn. I think we have a couple of different tunes in our hymn book, but she wrote the words. I think if the Apostle Paul had been living back in 1875, that would have been one of his favorite hymns.

Do you know the words? Listen to them. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

[40:37] Take my moments and my days, let them flow in endless praise. Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee. Take my voice and let me sing always only for my King.

Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee. Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold. Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, make it Thine. It shall be no longer mine. Take my heart, it is Thine own. It shall be Thy holy throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour. At Thy feet its treasure store. Take myself and I will be ever only all for Thee.

[41 : 42] Tremendous words. That's Romans 12, 1 and 2. Thank you.