

Romans 12 (Part 1) • Living Sacrifices

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · September 06, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Open your Bibles to Romans chapter 12. As we get started in chapter 12, I have to start tonight by congratulating those of you who have been sticking with this study up to this point. And the reason I say that is because the first 11 chapters are not for the faint of heart. There are things that we covered in the last several months, like justification and sanctification, propitiation, you guys remember what that means? Lots of things.

I can only imagine what the believers in Rome, how they reacted to this letter when they got it. But now that we get to chapter 12, the Apostle Paul is going to set aside his rather deeper theological thoughts, and he's going to begin to exhort us. And he's going to exhort us based on what he has been writing about, okay? And that's an important thing. This evening we're going to take a whopping two verses.

We've been doing like a whole chapter at a time going through the first 11 chapters, but tonight we're going to go a lot slower. Let's read those verses first, and then we're going to pray. Chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, it says, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. You can see why we're only taking two verses, can't you?

Let's pray. Father God, as we get into the scripture tonight, as we look at these two verses, as A.W. Tozer used to say, an ocean of truth and a drop of speech, we pray that you would open our hearts, open our minds, open our spirits. Lord, to what you have to say in these verses, and we really pray that you would help us to understand things. We confess to you tonight, Lord, that we are wholly dependent on your Holy Spirit to speak words of life and truth and wisdom, and we trust, Lord, that you are going to speak knowing what each and every person in this room needs the most.

So use this time, Lord God, to strengthen hearts, encourage us, and to help us to grow in our knowledge of you. We ask it in the authority granted us through the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen, amen, amen. You know, for years, I have admitted that it was about at the age of 15 that I first recognized

my need of a Savior, and I became convinced after I heard a musical group sharing the gospel. They invited, they actually showed up at our school, and, you know, this is back in the 70s when they let Christian groups come into the public schools and talk to us and stuff like that. Some of you guys who have the hair the same color as mine, you know what I'm talking about.

And they invited us all to this evening meeting at a nearby town, a little town in Minnesota, and I heard the gospel for the very first time, and I was deeply impacted by the sharing of the gospel that night, and I was convinced, as that young man shared the gospel, that I needed a Savior, and I accepted Him that night, and I was convinced then, and I remain convinced today, that my sins are forgiven. And I know that I know that I know that when I was 15 years old, I was saved. What took time, however, was for me to become convinced that I needed Jesus as my Lord. Savior was easy. I mean, admitting that I needed a Savior was really fairly easy.

Admitting I needed a Lord, someone to control and guide my life, that was hard. And again, that took about 10 years. And so, for those first 10 years after I was, you know, like 15 to 25, I would pray every night, but I never prayed for direction, I never prayed for wisdom. I just said, thank you, Lord, for forgiving my sins, and I usually prayed about 15 seconds before I fell asleep, you know. And that was really kind of the extent of my prayer life, and that was the extent of my Christian life, as it relates to salvation and that sort of thing.

I didn't ever feel the need, you know, when you're young, and things are going well, your body's healthy and strong and everything, you know, I had a job and I was married by this time, and things were going okay, you know. I didn't really see the need. I didn't see the need to go beyond that part of the relationship. And I think a lot of young people feel the same, you know, they hear the gospel, they've even perhaps responded to the gospel at some point in their life, but they've just never seen the need to go much further than to simply refer to and relate to Jesus as anything more than Savior. Well, without getting into all the gritty details of, you know, what happened in my life, I'll just tell you that it was when I was 25 years old that the Lord graciously allowed me to see just how much I needed Him as Lord, and to go beyond simply referring to Him as my Savior.

He has remained that, of course, but to go on and begin to embrace Him as Lord, and that changed everything, obviously, as you can well imagine. That was when my serious walk with Jesus really began. Up to that point, it was fairly casual, you know. The reason I share that with you is because what we're going to be talking about this evening is all about this whole issue of crowning Jesus Lord. And there's a lot of people who know about Jesus, there's even people who know Jesus on what was like, I had the more

casual kind of acquaintance level, you know, it was kind of like I met Jesus in an elevator and we said, hi, I'm Paul, hi, I'm Jesus, cool, you know, and then we kind of went our separate ways almost, you know.

But it was different after the Lordship thing began. Everything changed. My life changed. My marriage changed. Good grief, my career changed.

I was a rock and roll disc jockey at the time when I was 25 years old, and it wasn't more than about a year later that I was on staff at a church as a youth pastor and later as an assistant pastor. So everything kind of changed. But what we're going to talk about is giving Jesus permission to be Lord, okay? And as we look at these verses, Romans 12, 1 and 2, and by the way, these verses have been called the most powerful verses in the Bible. I don't know if that's true or not, but I can tell you they are among some of the most well-known of all of the verses in the Bible.

And yet what's really interesting about them is that most people never discover how these particular verses are connected to everything that came before. Those of you that have been with us in the previous part of this study, you know that we've taken months to get through chapters 1 through 11, and all the things that the Apostle Paul gave us there, and all the revelations of insight, theological insights, and it's just been absolutely amazing. But what he now tells us in these first two verses in chapter 12 is all predicated on that. And that is the reason why he begins this verse as he does. But I want you to notice as you look with me again at these verses, please notice in verse 1 this very simple word, therefore, therefore.

You know, people have kind of created this little funny little limerick thing, like whenever you see the word therefore, you should stop and ask what that word is there for. And you know, it's kind of a good way to remember that the word therefore is about to make a statement that is predicated on something that has been declared in the past. So whenever you see that word therefore, you know that this is a statement that has context. And the context of what Paul is saying here in verses 1 and 2, the context is chapters 1 through 11, okay? And so it's very important that we see that.

In what Paul is saying to you and me, well, what the Holy Spirit is saying, since this is inspired Scripture, is he's saying that in light of all of the doctrinal revelations that have come forth in the first 11 chapters, Paul is now going to go on to exhort you and me about how we should live our lives, how we ought to live. And by the way, that's where lordship comes in, in case you were wondering. And this, of course, raises the important question. Does what you believe find a reflection in your daily life, in your actions? You know, it's easy, very easy, I would say, to believe something, but to live in a way that really doesn't reflect that belief.

You know what I mean? You can believe certain things about God, and yet you can live your life like it's not true. It's been said that that journey between the head and the heart, that 18 inches, is the longest journey known to man. And it's probably true, you know, we can know intellectually something to be a fact, biblically and so forth, and yet it doesn't affect our heart life, our outside life, and so forth. And this is one of those situations.

In the previous 11 chapters, we learned a lot, and particularly in the last few chapters, about the mercy of God. And you could say that the first 11 chapters are all about the mercy of God, but Paul really emphasized it in the last couple of chapters before we got to 12. And so establishing, as he did, the mercy of God, okay? God's mercy, he now says, I appeal to you, and that's how the verse 1 starts. I appeal to you, and what he's saying is, I appeal to you based on what I just got done saying, okay?

And what he got done saying is that God is merciful, gracious, and all the other wonderful things that went along with it. And for those of you that weren't here for the first 11 chapters, I'm going to put just some of the things that he talked about in those chapters up on the screen, and the way he reminded us. For example, he told us about the promise of our acquittal from the guilt of sin, right? He told us about the promise of our release from the penalty of sin. He reminded us of the promise from God that we are free from condemnation.

No condemnation for those who are in Christ. He talked about the blessing of being under grace and not under the law. He talked to us about the blessing of being able to have a personal relationship with God, where you can crawl up on his lap and call him Abba Father. He went on to talk about the blessing of the Holy Spirit, who now lives in you as a believer. Believe me, that's a blessing.

He talked about the promise that God's Spirit is constantly helping us in our weakness when we don't know what to pray. He told us about the promise that we will never be separated from God. And of course, we talked about the promise of eternal life. Guys, this is the mercy of God. So what he's saying now, in view of all these things, in light of all these things, and predicated upon all these things, I appeal to you.

I appeal to you based on all these things now that we know. And I probably didn't even cover them all. Here's my appeal, Paul's saying. Present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Now, that's a great phrase.

It's even poetic. What we need to do is we need to stop and dissect it so that we fully understand it. Because it's one thing to just read it in your Bible. You know, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing. And you can kind of go on and read the thing, and you can kind of go, wow, that's really cool.

And then walk away unchanged. So we want to look at this. And I need you to, first of all, understand that when Paul says present your bodies, he's not just talking about your physical body, not just talking about the flesh. Although that is part of it, certainly, but that's not all of you. You are, interestingly enough, just like God, a triune being.

As God is in his nature, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he created you to be body, soul, and spirit. And so you are created in the image of God that way. And that's part of what it means to be created in the image of God. And he wants you to bring all of that to him. Present all of you, right?

It's an appeal to the whole person. But then he goes on to say, he says, present your bodies. Did you notice that? I think it's the NIV that says offer your bodies. And by the way, in the Greek, that's a verb.

And you guys remember your grammar. Verbs are action words, remember? And so this is an action word. He's asking you to take action, present yourselves. He's telling you and me that this is an act of the will to present yourself to God.

It's an act of the will. It's not something God's going to do for you. He already did the heavy lifting. Now he says to you and me, I want you to take the initiative, the effort to present yourself, right, to the Lord. And we need to talk about here now what we're being asked to do and what you're being asked to choose to do.

Because you'll notice he says, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Well, as soon as we see the word sacrifice, we instantly think of the old covenant, the Mosaic covenant, God made between himself and Israel, and in which he created a system of sacrificial offerings whereby people could be forgiven and whatever else they were used for. They were used for things like that. And I trust that most if not all of you know enough about the sacrificial system and what was involved, but of course you know animals were brought to the priests and they were sacrificed for various things. But it's interesting here that Paul uses this language that harkens back to the old covenant as he speaks to you and me about lordship.

Because that's what, make no mistake about it, that's what he's talking to you and me about, lordship. And so he uses this language that harkens back to the Old Testament. Well, so we have to ask ourselves the question, why did he use the sacrificial model or illustration to talk to us about lordship? Well, for starters, we need to make sure that we understand that we're not talking about sacrifices for the purpose of gaining forgiveness, right? You do not need to offer a sacrifice to God in order to be forgiven.

That's already been offered. That job was taken care of and taken care of very well by Jesus who sacrificed himself on the cross that we might be forgiven. And this is underscored in the book of Hebrews.

Let me put this up on the screen for you from Hebrews chapter 10. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

I want to call your attention to those last three words. Once for all. Those last three words mean that no further sacrifice is needed. It's been done. Remember that old song, Jesus paid it all.

Well, that's just what the writer of Hebrews is saying. Jesus paid it all. There's no reason to pay anything more. So we know that Paul isn't talking about sacrifices for the purpose of forgiveness. The second thing that's kind of different about this sacrifice is that it's not an animal on the altar.

It's you. You're on the altar. Now that's a new thought. That's a brand new one right there. But there's another even bigger difference between what Paul is talking about here and what took place under the Mosaic Covenant because all of the sacrifices under the Mosaic Covenant had one thing in common.

They all ended up dead. All the animals that ever were placed upon the altar were, you know, their blood was sprinkled on the altar, they were burned, at least part of the animal, and the animals all died. All of them. Now that was the point of the sacrifice. But we notice the language is different here as Paul speaks about this sacrifice as a living sacrifice.

He says to present yourselves to God as a living sacrifice. So in other words, this sacrifice doesn't involve physical dying. In the Mosaic Covenant, it was the physical death of the animal that took place, right? So there's no physical dying involved here. But wait a minute.

This is where it gets interesting. And this is what I think some people would find even challenging. This sacrifice does involve death. It's just not of the physical kind. But it does involve death in one important respect because lordship, and I want you to remember this, lordship always involves dying.

Dying to self. That's probably one of the reasons why I avoided it for ten years. I was rather pleased with living for self, you know, between the point when I accepted Jesus as my Savior and when I realized I needed him to be my Lord. It's all about offering yourself to God, and in order to do that, self has to die. And dying is never fun.

It's always a big mess. I think that's one of the reasons. Can you imagine? We read about, you know, sacrifice in the Bible, and we just, we're reading about it. Can you imagine watching it?

I mean, those of you people who are a little bit queasy about, you know, a lot of blood, there was a lot of blood. I mean, it was gory and bloody and it was a mess. But see, that's what dying is all about. Dying isn't easy. Dying's never been easy.

Dying to self has always been hard. Turning away from sin is just as hard. I remember Jesus using some rather graphic illustrations to describe turning away from sin, like gouging out eyes and cutting off hands. Wasn't meant literally, obviously, but it was meant to convey how hard things like that actually are. But, you know, when we understand that lordship involves dying to self, that helps us to have a greater understanding of what Jesus was talking about when he talked about taking up our cross.

Let me show you this on the screen from Matthew 16. Matthew chapter 16, beginning at verse 24, then Jesus told his disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. I want you to think about those words.

First of all, the reference to the cross, which is really crazy. I mean, I hate to say this, but in our modern kind of Christian view of things, we've kind of romanticized the cross a little bit. To us it's become jewelry. To the people of the first century, it was death. It was a cruel form of execution, in fact, probably one of the most cruel.

People could hang on a cross for days before they actually died. And I'm not, by the way, criticizing people who wear a cross as a pendant or jewelry or whatever. That's fine. I'm just saying if that's the extent of your understanding of the cross, it needs to go deeper and you need to understand the cross is an instrument of death. Nobody ever got nailed onto a cross and lived to tell about it later.

They all died. The cross was very effective in killing people. And so it's interesting, isn't it, that Jesus talks about following him and that's an element of lordship. And he says, but there's this element where you need to take up your cross. Take up this instrument of death and follow me.

And he already anticipated the question, why? Why should I have to do that? Well, here's why. If you save your life, you'll lose it. But if you lose it for me, you'll find it, you know?

So just like the altar served in the sacrifice of animals, the cross serves for you and me the understanding of dying, but dying to self. And this is exactly what the apostle Paul wrote about when he wrote his letter to the Ephesians in chapter 4. Let me show you on the screen. Paul writes, assuming that you've heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. And when Paul talks in that passage about putting off the old self, that's a reference to dying to self.

And it's a fairly comfortable way of saying it, but it's saying the same thing, and the same thing that he's saying here in Romans chapter 12. But I want to be careful that you don't think of this in the wrong way, because dying to self is not just about giving up worldly pleasures. There are groups over the years who have sought to keep people from experiencing anything that's pleasurable. And Christians have really gotten a bad rap, culturally speaking. A lot of people who are not Christians look at you and they think, you guys never have fun, like ever.

Your life is just one...the sadder you are, the happier you are, it seems, you know. And you have to go through life closing your eyes, closing your ears and saying, not for me, thank you, you know, sort of a thing. But you need to understand something. First of all, it is possible to change your outward behavior without changing your heart. And that's an important thing to remember.

You can belong to a Christian group that has all kinds of rules. Don't touch that, don't do that, don't watch that, never go there, don't wear that. And there are, believe me, plenty of groups that have decided that this whole idea of, you know, giving up worldly pleasures is all about keeping rules. But what is really being talked about here in the Scripture is not just a change on the outside, it's a change on the inside. It's a transformation of the heart.

It's a transformation of priorities, where I begin to prioritize the things of God above my own. And you see, that flies in the face of everything the world has taught us before we came to Christ. And I, like I said, I was 15 when I met Jesus, but between 15 and 25, I was just being completely indoctrinated by the world. And the world was telling me, you know, do you. Do what makes you happy, you know.

It can't be wrong if it feels so right. And all the other little things that the world says that we hear and apply in our lives. And then we become a Christian, and Jesus says, if you want to follow me, you need to take up an instrument of death. And we're kind of like, what? What did you say?

But again, it's about a transformation of priorities to the point where I truly begin to submit my desires, my longings to God. Here's why. Not because there's a rule, but because I've come to a place in my life where I've recognized life is better that way. And if I continue to be Lord of my own life, I'm only going to go deeper in trouble. And I didn't get into detail about what happened at the age of 25, but I'll just tell you that what happened was Sue and I came that close to getting a divorce.

Thankfully, the Lord intervened. But it was a rough year that last year before we really both gave our hearts to the Lord. It was really rough. But the roughness, the pain that we went through was exactly what God used to say, Paul, you've been Lord. You've been Lord of your own life up to this point.

How's that working for you? Yeah, not very well. My marriage is on the brink of disaster. And that's when the Lord began to reveal to me my need for Him as more than just my Savior. I needed Him as my Lord.

I needed to invite Him. But that's the point. I needed to invite Him. He was waiting. You know, that's the one thing I've learned about God in however the years that I've walked with Him, my 40 plus years of walking with the Lord, I have learned that He is the most incredible gentleman and He will not force Himself on you.

He waits. He waits for us to invite Him in, first of all, to be Savior and then to be Lord. And He will let me live a period of my life as just having in my Savior and not my Lord just so He can show me what that produces. And it was kind of like the Lord was saying to me just what He said there in that passage we read in Matthew. If you seek to save your life, you're actually going to lose it.

The more you seek to save your life, to have your life, to be Lord of your life, the more it fritters away, the more it slips out of your fingers. And it all feels like it's going really well at first and then it just absolutely bombs. So you see, dying to self is not just about giving up worldly pleasure. It becomes a deliberate choice to prioritize God and His will above my own. Boy, that's hard.

I mean, those words come out of my mouth really easily. But when it comes to the reality of doing that on a day-to-day basis, and I've been walking with the Lord for, you know, about over four decades, and it's still hard. It is still hard to prioritize His will above my own. And dying to self, and this is an important thing too, is it not, I wish it was a once-for-all action on our part. I really do.

Wouldn't that be fun? Lord, I give myself to you, you know, body, soul, and spirit. Wee, I'm done. No, it's every day. Because, you know, you say, and the next day come in, something else presents itself.

And, you know, it's a daily act of surrender. So at the end of verse one, he tells us how God sees this action on our part. He says it's holy and acceptable to God. Isn't that something? It's a holy thing.

And it's an acceptable thing. Here's the deal, here's the deal. God will always accept your surrender, right? You come to Him and you say, Lord, I need you to be Lord of my life. I have been Lord of my life far too long.

I have sought my own way, I've followed my own desires, my own thoughts, and I'm done, I'm tired. And, you know, sometimes you got to get to that point where you're sick and tired of being sick and tired. I wish, I wish as a young man, I didn't have to run into a brick wall to learn that lesson, I really do. I wish I

could have learned it just by learning it. I wish somebody could have said to me, hey, Paul, you know what?

You need to surrender your life to the Lord. I would have gone, yeah, you're right. Not me, way too hard up here. But it's acceptable when we finally make that choice. It's holy and acceptable.

And then Paul tells us what this act is to us. He told you what it is to God. It's holy and acceptable. What is it to you? He says, it's your spiritual worship.

Did you see that in there? Now, I'm reading this out of the ESV. And some of you have probably a New King James on your lap or maybe some other translation. And you have some slightly different wording. Your Bible, if you have a New King James, says it is your reasonable service.

And you might say, well, what's the difference? I mean, why is there a difference in these two translations between the ESV that says it's your spiritual worship, and by the way, the NIV says your spiritual act of worship, and then the New King James that says it's your reasonable service. Well, the reason is because of the Greek language that God chose to have the men write the Bible, the New Testament, in, that language is so full that it can literally mean both of those things. I looked up all these words in this phrase in my Greek dictionary, and it can mean your spiritual worship, and it can mean your reasonable service. And you know, it's very, very possible that the Apostle Paul meant all of it.

I mean, he knew Greek really well, and he knew what all the nuances of these Greek words meant. We're sitting here trying to make it sound legible in an English sentence, and it very well could mean all those things. It is your spiritual and reasonable act of service and worship before God. What's wrong with that? But I've always kind of loved the idea that it is a spiritual act of worship, because you know, when we worship the Lord, which we did tonight, and by the way, I could have kept doing that, how about you?

That was incredible. That's really what worship ought to be. You know, we've tried to define worship as Christians. What is, if I were to pass out pieces of paper to everybody in a pencil and said, write down on that piece of paper what is worship, you'd probably have a lot of different definitions. But we tend to define things by outward sort of explanations.

And the more Pentecostal you are, the more that is actually the case. You know, worship is raising your hands. Worship is singing aloud. Worship is music. In some cases, it's falling on the ground.

And in some cases, it's yelling hallelujah at the top of your voice. And some people would say, worship is worship, and they'd all have all kind, you know what worship is? At the root, it's surrendering your life

to God. And you know what that means? That means you can sit up here and you can raise your hands and you can sing and not worship.

Yeah. It's possible to be involved in a worship service and not worship the Lord. Because what is your spiritual act of worship? To offer yourself as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. So worship ought to lead us to a place where we say, Jesus, I am yours.

I am not my own. I've been bought with a price. And I belong to you. That's where worship should lead us every time. It's not an emotional shouting fest.

It's a surrender. It is your act, reasonable and spiritual act of worship. Verse two goes on to say, do not be conformed to this world. And I think it goes without saying, this is probably one of the biggest challenges facing believers. Well, I'll tell you one thing, it's one of the biggest challenges facing parents raising teenagers.

I mean, I hear from a lot of them and it's a very, very big deal. And like I was saying, this is what Paul is saying here when he says, don't be conformed to the world or to the pattern of this world. This is what we were talking about earlier. And this is where other groups have jumped in and said, we're gonna do this by making rules. I mean, you got all kinds of groups.

You got groups like the Amish, who've taken radical steps to not be conformed to the world. We're not even gonna drive a car. We're not gonna wear the same clothes you guys wear. We're not gonna live like you guys live. It's pretty radical.

I'm not sure that's what the Lord was talking about. But then you even got other groups that just, again, their church is defined or their walk with the Lord is defined by giving strict rules. And some of you maybe even were raised in a church environment where you kind of just lived by rules. You were given rules. You can't go to movies.

You can't drink this. You can't go there. You can't say this. You can't wear that. And nobody really ever explained what the deal was.

It was just the rule. But I believe the best defense against conforming to the ways and behaviors of the world is really found in the second part of this verse. If you look with me again in your Bible, Paul says, you know, do not be conformed to this world but be transformed. That's the key right there. It's transformation.

And how? By the renewal of your mind. In other words, change your stinking thinking, right? That's what has to change. We think that we can change people's behavior by just giving them a rule.

Don't do that. And we'll wag our finger at them. Don't do that. Well, that's what you tell a two-year-old. But an adult, you explain the situation so that in their mind, they understand what's going on and what the consequences are so that they can make a reasonable and rational decision related to that thing.

So Paul says, be transformed by the renewal of your mind. And that's the best way right there to avoid a worldly association or a conforming. Of your life to the ways of the world. But again, again, again, it's all about your thinking. He says, by the renewing of your mind.

Not your attitudes necessarily, but your mind. And may I just say that our modern culture has moved away from focusing on the mind. Big time. What does our modern culture use today as a barometer for understanding right, wrong, good, bad, hot, cold? I mean, any decision they have to make.

Today, it's all based on feelings, right? Feelings are emotions, are a wonderful gift from God. But they were never meant to lead your life. Because your feelings come from your heart. And your heart, the Bible tells us, is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

Wow. And yet we have a generation, multiple generations, of people that were raised to believe that feelings are the end all, say all. Like I told you before, the song, and they were priming the pump back in the 70s. You know, when that song came out, you light up my life. And that lyric, like I've already.

He quoted, it can't be wrong if it feels so right. There was also a song back in the 60s, Me and Mrs. Jones, anybody remember that? It was a song about adultery. And in the lyrics of the song, it was like, it's all about how it feels, this feels so great.

And that's justification. And now we have, we're generations into this idea, and now it's just a given. And we say things like, hey, if it feels good to you, do it. But that's not my, it doesn't work for me. It's just, you know, and when people write me about what's going on in their lives, and they want help with this or that, I've told you this before, if I could count the number of times they say in one particular message, I feel.

I feel like. I feel that. I feel this is. I feel, I feel, I feel, I feel. And you can tell what's going on.

It's all about emotion. And Paul says, that's not the critical element. We have to be renewed in our mind, in our thinking. And the only way I believe that your mind can be transformed, as he's telling you

and me to do, is by exposing our minds to the truth of God's word over and over and over and over again. And by the way, I'm not talking about daily devotionals.

I don't, no, I was about to tell a lie. I was gonna say, I don't have anything against devotionals, but I do. Most of them are really superficial. And there's a lot of people who nibble on devotionals, and they call that their quiet time with the Lord. Now, a devotional can be used well if it launches you into a study of God's word, but that's what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about a deep dive into the scripture, and not even just a casual reading. I don't wanna say this in a vain sort of a way, but that's one of the reasons God put teachers in the church is to help people understand, to break down the word of God and help it to be more digestible. And we need teachers. I need teachers. I need Bible teachers.

You need Bible teachers. That's why we do this. We go through the scripture. We dissect it. We talk about it.

We meditate on it. That's how the word gets in, guys. It's not just, I'm gonna read a chapter a day. You know, you can do that. You can blow through the Bible in a year or whatever.

Are you gonna retain and learn and understand? You know, I've had so many people over the years write to me and say that, you know, I read my, I decided I wanted to read the Bible, and so I read it through. Like, I read the whole Bible through twice. And they'll say, didn't understand a thing. You know, I didn't get this.

I didn't understand that. And then they sit under a Bible teacher. Now I get it. And it begins to do that work of transformation. And it is truly a wonderful thing.

One of the benefits of having your mind renewed is given to us really in the rest of verse two. Look with me in your Bible. It says that by testing, now this is after the mind has been renewed, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God. Do you know that's the biggest question Christians ask? Did you know that?

How can I know the will of God? If I wrote a book and it was like how to know the will of God, I would know that it would be a big seller. Because everybody wants to know. How do I know the will of God? Well, you know what Paul said?

Here's how you know the will of God. By having your mind transformed through the word. Then you'll know. You'll be able to test and discern what is the will of God. And he even enunciate, he goes on.

It's the good, the acceptable, the perfect. That's when you start to really, you understand good, acceptable, and perfect from the basis of a renewed mind and the word of God, not what you feel, right? It's what you know. It's what you know. Even when what, and here's the thing.

When you know something, and you feel something differently, which one is gonna win? I hope it's what you know, you know? People have said to me, I don't think, I confess my sins, I don't think God forgave me. I say, okay, well, let's go to the word. First John 1.9.

If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just and will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Does the Bible say that God forgives you if you confess your sins? Yes. Do you know that now? Yes.

Do you believe it? No. Why? Because I don't feel forgiven. Pastor, they want me to help them feel better.

I can't do that. You're gonna start to walk in peace when you accept what you know as the truth and what you feel as a lie. That's what's gonna start making a difference. But you know, it also takes time and effort. I mean, I've got all 66 books of the Bible on our YouTube channel, and I've had people write to me and say, I went through the entire Bible with you, Pastor Paul, Genesis to Revelation, and they'll tell me, you know, it took me two years or it took me three years to go through the whole Bible with you or something like that.

And I think to myself, wow, that's pretty incredible. That's real dedication. But you know, the testimonies that come from those people are incredible. I went back and looked at my email over the years and I just, I did a search in my Gmail, I just searched for testimony. And I brought up, because people love to write and just say, here's my testimony.

And I read, I was reminded about the testimony of this 27-year-old young mother of five who was raised LDS and who had gotten away from her LDS upbringing and decided after the birth of her fifth child, she was gonna get onto YouTube and see if somebody actually taught through the Book of Mormon. She couldn't find anybody. But then she remembered, well, you know, we Mormons, we believe in the Bible. She said, later I discovered we really don't. But she said, you know, we believe it.

So I thought, well, I'll just read through the Bible then. I'll see if somebody's teaching you through the Bible. And she said, Pastor Paul, you came up. And she went through the whole thing. And she found Jesus by going through the Gospel of John.

And she met the real Jesus. She found out Mormonism was a lie. And she started that work of transforming her mind. And she talked in her letter about how she has Bible studies every morning with her sweet little children who love Jesus and talk about how excited they are to see Him one day. And then there's the testimony of the man who endured 17 years of hard drug addiction who wrote me a note and told me how he found Jesus in the pages of Scripture.

And along with it, freedom from drug abuse. And he prayed and said, Lord, give me the same desire for your word that I used to have for drugs. And for the last seven years, he's been pastoring a church down in Louisiana. And I still correspond with him today. In fact, he's going through his men's group with one of my books.

This whole transformation of the mind, I don't wanna leave you with the impression that this is a simple sort of necessarily a thing. It's like, hey, be transformed. It sounds really nice. Be transformed. By the way, no, it means I'm gonna buckle down and really get into the word.

And I'm gonna take notes and I'm gonna figure out what this is really saying and what it means and how it applies to my life. Because the Bible tells us very clearly, it's not those who hear, it's those who do. And we wanna be doers of the word, right? Not just hearers only. And so it's more than just going through the word.

It's saying, Lord, how do I apply this to my life? How do I live this out? Give me the strength to walk it out. Give me the courage to live it out day by day. Take notes.

I'm gonna take notes. I'm gonna take notes. I'm gonna take notes. I'm gonna take notes. I'm gonna take notes.

I'm gonna take notes. Takes time, takes time. I have often said, and I truly believe this in my heart, that God called me to be a pastor and not just a pastor, but a teacher to save my life. In other words, he gifted me as a teacher so that I'd be in the word. I need this.

I need this just as much, if not more than you do. Because you know, as a teenager, I was a pretty undisciplined young man. And I really seriously doubt I would have ever really dug into the word of God until I was kind of faced with my need for it. But then the calling on the Lord to begin teaching, you know, I often wondered, Lord, why did you call me into the ministry? Because he did it at a time when I shouldn't have been in the ministry yet.

I was not mature enough. And Sue and I had just really started walking with the Lord. God was just beginning to, he was healing our marriage, and it was a wonderful healing. But the pastor of the church we were attending needed help, and so he grabbed us, and we became the leaders of the youth group, literally weeks after we gave our lives to Christ and his Lordship. And so I started, I had to start teaching the kids.

I didn't know anything. I mean, I was clueless. And they were like, well, Paul, you're going to be teaching the senior high youth group. Really? Many of those kids in my youth group were believers longer than me.

What am I going to say? So I had to get into the Word. I had to start digging into the Word. Crazy thing. I started digging into the Scripture and I started loving digging into the Scripture.

That's the thing about consuming the Word. The more you do it, the more you want to do it. Right? You literally, you literally have to create an appetite. If you're kind of like one of those people that's like, you know, I really, I hear what you're saying, Pastor, but I'm just not driven to really get into the Word.

You need to force yourself. And just do it. You got to do it because you know it's the right thing to do. It's kind of like going to the dentist, okay? Nobody likes going to the dentist.

We go because we have to. Otherwise, your teeth are going to fall out. That's what my parents used to tell me. You don't want your teeth to fall out, do you, Paul? No.

Well, then let's go to the dentist. Okay. I wasn't going to be happy about it, but, you know, you do it. And you understand that your mind needs to be renewed. You understand that the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.

And I need this in my life. You know, we talk, how many of you guys take vitamins? Put your hand up. Yeah, a lot of us take supplements, vitamins, stuff like that. You know why we do it?

Because it's good for us. Because we put it in our body and it makes a difference. Do you understand that the Word of God makes a difference when you consume it? Just like vitamins. We know what to do with our physical bodies.

Why is it we have such a hard time feeding our spirit? The Word of God is living. It's active, right? I used to really get freaked out about putting active things in my body, like yogurt. My mother was a registered nurse, and she used to try to get me to eat yogurt.

She says, Paul, there's all these active bacterias in here that are good for you. That was enough. I didn't want to hear any more. I'm not putting active bacteria in my body, even though my mother said it was good. So I didn't eat yogurt until I was probably, you know, into my 30s, and I'm like, I can't get enough of this stuff, you know?

I could eat yogurt every day. But the Word of God is also active. You don't just put it in your heart and it's not going to do anything. It'll do something. It's active.

It's living. Guys, the Word is living. It's alive. It's not just like reading Reader's Digest. The Bible is alive.

And when you take it in, it will change you from the inside out. And that's the exciting thing. I want to close this evening. Some of you may know that there was a Bible translation that came out in the — it started coming out in the 40s, like 1947. It was called the J.B.

Phillips translation. And J.B. Phillips did this translation by himself. It never gained super great popularity, but it was interesting. And he, from about 1947, probably through up to about 1960, he was releasing different parts until he finally got the whole Bible out.

Anyway, I want you to read, or I want you to read with me, the J.B. Phillips translation of these two verses that we just looked at here tonight. We're going to put it up on the screen. J.B. Phillips translation, Romans 12, 1 and 2.

With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship to give him your bodies as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold, but let God remold your minds from within so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good. It meets all his demands and it moves you toward the goal of maturity. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I thank you so much that we can take time like we're doing tonight and just dig into the scripture.

I thank you, Lord God, that you have given us your word and that your word is alive. And Lord, your Holy Spirit takes that word and literally can transform our lives. I thank you for that, Lord. And I just really pray that each and every person here has been challenged to dig deeper, to know more, to prioritize their lives and your lordship in their lives. I thank you, Lord, for sending your son to pay the penalty of our sin, my sin.

And I thank you, Lord, that he bore the punishment that we deserved so that we might have our sins forgiven and be given the gift of eternal life. I thank you and praise you for the incredible good Lord that you are. And I ask you to continue to teach us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray all these things. And all God's people said together, amen.

Amen. God bless.