

[00:00:03.420]

Well, Shabbat shalom, everyone. And good morning. And again, to those of you who are watching us on the Internet: we welcome you to be with us. If you're enjoying our service, again, I would ask you to let people know about us that our reach may go beyond the building walls, but all throughout Maryland, D.C., Virginia and in fact, the United States. Might be interesting: we've had people watch from as far as Canada, upstate New York and Alaska.

[00:00:37.820]

So may the word of God go out to all who need to hear it. This morning, I've decided to continue on in the Book of Romans after the series we did in Romans 11. It just seems natural, if you will, to go on to Romans 12. And we're going to be going through the rest of the Book of Romans in the weeks to come. And so this morning, we're going to be looking at just two verses, Romans, 12 verses 1 and 2.

[00:01:08.900]

But I want to start with a little story. A tearful and distraught woman approached the pastor. And by the way, the pastor had been speaking on worship during the service. "I'm frustrated," she said. "My worship experience is not as meaningful and fulfilling as I know it should be. I don't have any victory", she said, "or a sense of accomplishment in my life. I struggle with everyday obedience and constantly feel defeated. Can you help me?"

[00:01:44.270]

She asked the pastor. Well, he asked her how she tried to fix the problem, and this is what she said. "I've tried everything. I go to church for every service. I've gone to places where they speak in tongues. I've gone to places where they have healings. I've tried speaking in tongues. I've tried being slain in the spirit. I've been prophesied over. But nothing helps. I need God to do more for me." The pastor replied, "Dear one, the key to true worship and spiritual victory and true happiness is not in trying to get all that we can 'from God', it's in giving all that we have and all that we are 'to God'."

[00:02:32.390]

And I'm afraid that too many people come to God, come to worship, come to services and come to pray, hoping for some personal benefit. But the proper focus is not only on what we want to receive, but on what we should give. You see as believers, we're called to serve God with our whole being. And this occurs in and becomes our worship. It can include many things: prayer, praise thanksgiving, serving God by serving others.

[00:03:15.280]

But above all else, our supreme act of service, our supreme act of worship is to offer ourselves wholly and continually to God as a living sacrifice. And it's in the giving that we receive. It's in the giving that we receive. And this joy and this satisfaction, which so many believers lack, can only be received by surrendering back to the Lord, what he has already given to us. When we surrender our body, our mind and our will to God as a living sacrifice, then we can truly give our spiritual worship and receive His peace.

[00:04:09.520]

And so on this Shabbat morning, we'll be looking at: Romans 12 versus 1 and 2 as we discuss the topic of surrender. Ooo, I can feel the chills and the bodies of you out there. "Surrender." And we'll be looking at four things. We'll be looking at the basis of surrender, the act of surrender, the transformation of surrender and the proof of surrender. So, follow along with me, as I read from Romans, Chapter 12, verses 1 and 2.

[00:04:49.020]

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you might prove that you might prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Can you all say with me? Amen. Paul begins by using the word "beseech".

[00:05:31.240]

It's a verb, by the way. And its meaning is to call a side. But in this context, it's to call a side with exhortation and admonishment and encouragement. And the "therefore" that we read, refers back to the previous four verses that we looked at last Shabbat. And even based on all that has come before that. Quoting from Romans, 11:36 "from Him and through Him and to Him are all things to Him be glory forever. Amen."

[00:06:10.760]

The "therefore" is also because of all the mercies of God discussed in the first 11 chapters of Romans. Both the motivation and the reason that we can do what God is urging us to do is because of and by the mercies of God. And so just what are some of the mercies of God? Well, we've received grace. Well, Yeshua died in our place. Well, we've been forgiven. Well, we're freely justified by faith. Well, we've been reconciled to God. Well, we've been given eternal life with the father. Well, we're indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

[00:07:03.940]

Well, we're being conformed to the image of our Messiah. Well, our Messiah is continually interceding for us. Well, we have the love of God and nothing can separate us from it. Amen. We've received faith. We've received peace. We've received hope. We share in Messiah's righteousness and glory. We can call God "father" because we are his children. And when you really stop and think about it, it's amazing, all of the great mercies that the child of God has received.

[00:07:42.730]

And so in light of his great mercies, let's talk about surrender. You see how I kind of fit that in there? And let's first look at the act of surrender: verse 1. Therefore, I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice wholly acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Dear ones, we are called upon to surrender and present ourselves as living and holy sacrifices.

[00:08:20.560]

And it's an appropriate and reasonable response, in light of all the mercies that we've received from God. Now, the verb "present" in the Greek, I'll mess it up, but it's "parestemi", it was often used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures for a priest presenting an offering on the altar. And here it carries the idea of surrendering something or yielding up something. In other words, the believer is called upon to yield or surrender his or her body as an act of sacrificial worship.

[00:08:55.940]

And it's in the imperative mood which sets it apart as a command. It's not a suggestion. It's a command. And the tense of the verb is in the infinitive. Which indicates that we're to present our bodies once for all times. The gift which was brought to the altar became consecrated to God and no longer belonged to the one who offered it, it belonged to God. Believers no longer belong to themselves, but to God, who's redeemed or purchased them (purchased us) with the price of his son.

[00:09:34.550]

When someone asked William Booth, do you know who William Booth was? He was the founder of the Salvation Army. When they asked him the secret of his success. Booth remained silent for several moments. Finally, with tear filled eyes, he said this: "There have been men with greater brains or opportunities than I, but I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth that there was." Several years later, when Booth's daughter heard about her father's comment regarding his full surrender to God. She said this: Please listen.

[00:10:15.290]

"That wasn't really his secret. His secret was that he never took it back." He never took it back. That's the problem with a living sacrifice. It can get off the altar. Yet we, like William Booth, can respond to God's grace and mercy in saving us by giving him our all and never, never, never taking it back. And since we're a living sacrifice, I know that's a bit of an oxymoron, we need to daily lay down our desires and put our energy and resources at God's disposal.

[00:10:55.010]

In a hymn that was written by Alicia Hoffman, he asks this: "Is your all on the altar on sacrifice laid? Your heart does the spirit control?" Those are penetrating questions. How would you answer them? What has God done for you and in what ways have you been living for yourself? And what are the rewards of living for the Lord? And in consideration of all that the Lord, in his mercy, has done for us, we're to give our bodies as living sacrifices to God.

[00:11:33.780]

I mean, Messiah showed his love by dying for us. We need to show our love by living for him. Now, by body, Paul means not only are skin and bones, but the totality of our being. Not only our physical being, but our mind and our emotions and our will. You see, before we trusted Messiah, we use or presented our body for sinful and pleasures and purposes. But now that we belong to God, we want to use our body for his glory.

[00:12:05.340]

Just as Yeshua took upon himself a body in order to accomplish God's will on Earth, so we must yield our body to Messiah that He might continue God's work through us. Therefore, we offer our bodies as instruments of righteousness to God. We offer our feet, to walk in his paths. We offer our lips to speak as truth and spread the good news. We offer our tongues to bring healing, our hands to lift up the fallen and perform services

[00:12:40.890]

He directs. Our arms to embrace the lonely and the unloved. Our ears to listen to His word and the cries of distress around us and our eyes to humbly and obediently look toward God. The Lord created our body for himself, and in this life, he cannot work through us without, in some way, working through our body. And it's because our bodies still remain unredeemed that it must be yielded continually to the Lord. Otherwise, sin will reign and we will obey its lusts.

[00:13:23.930]

And so we're commanded to offer our body as a living and holy sacrifice. Now, I mentioned earlier the language here is from the Tanak's sacrificial system. And there a priest would take an animal, slough it, place it on the altar on behalf of the person who brought the sacrifice. Now, the sacrifice of animals is no longer. Because the Lamb of God was sacrificed in our place, the redeemed of the Lord are now to offer themselves all that they have, all that they are, as a living sacrifice.

[00:14:00.180]

Where true worship starts under the Brit Hadashah is with the offering of one's self to God as a living sacrifice. Now, there are two sacrifices in the Bible that illustrate the difference between dead and living sacrifices. The first is Isaac. You remember Genesis Chapter two. Isaac, as a teenager, willingly put himself, or rather allowed his father, to put himself on the altar and would have died in obedience to the Lord's will. Praise God, He sent a substitute, a ram in Isaac's place. But when he got off the altar, he was a living sacrifice to the glory of God.

[00:14:44.460]

Our Lord Yeshua is the other illustration of a living sacrifice. I mean, he actually died as a sacrifice in our place, in obedience to the father's will. But he rose again. Amen? and today he is in heaven as a living sacrifice, still bearing in his body the wounds of calvary. Both these stories illustrate the willingness to offer what God wanted. Everything they held dear. The living sacrifice we are to offer to the Lord who died for us: is the willingness to surrender to him, all our hopes, our plans, everything that is primarily precious to us.

[00:15:25.850]

And as we die daily to our old self, to the world and to the flesh and to the devil, we become a living and a holy sacrifice. A holy sacrifice means a sacrifice that's set aside for a special purpose. In a book about Eisenhower, President Eisenhower, a book called The Priority of Knowing God, Peter Deursen tells about an occasion when President Eisenhower was addressing the National Press Club.

He opened his remarks by apologizing because he wasn't a great orator.

[00:16:06.190]

And then he told his audience that his situation reminded him of a boyhood experience on a Kansas farm. Eisenhower recalled: "An old farmer had a cow that we wanted to buy. We went over to visit him and asked about the cows pedigree. The old farmer didn't know what pedigree meant, so we asked him about the cows butterfat production. He told us he hadn't any idea. Finally, we asked him if he knew how many pounds of milk the cow produced each year. Well,

[00:16:40.270]

the farmer shook his head and said, I don't know, but she's an honest old cow and she'll give you all the milk she has." Eisenhower then concluded his opening remarks: "well, I'm like that cow. I'll give you everything I have." God doesn't expect more from us than we have to offer, but he does want us to be faithful and to give him our very best. Have you ever heard this phrase: "on the line"?

[00:17:13.940]

If you are an athlete, you've heard that phrase. It's probably one of the most dreaded phrases in all existence. It might come pouring out of the coach's mouth at the beginning of practice or in the middle of practice or at what you thought was the end of practice. Its three little words that strike fear in the hearts of every member of the team. Just when you think it's safe, safe to take a breather. The coach yells "on the line" and you drag yourself to the end line of the basketball court or the goal line of the football field.

[00:17:47.330]

And then you wait to hear whether you need to face wind sprints or suicide drills or some other form of torture. And you know one thing for sure: you're going to run till you drop. So why do athletes present themselves to the coach day after day and say, in essence, "OK, coach, do what you want with me. Run me into the ground if you must. I'm here to do what you say." You know why they do it?

[00:18:14.120]

You do it because they know that the coach has their best interests at heart and that only through his wise direction can they absolutely and ultimately succeed. Athletes in training, if you will, are a great picture of the believers life. Believers are to be living sacrifices. They're to give themselves to their coach. Capital C. Just as an athlete, is successful only to the extent that he puts his life into the coach's hands for a couple of hours a day.

[00:18:46.390]

So is the believer successful in service to God only when he puts his life in God's hands. Twenty four hours a day. Give yourself to God completely. Why? Did you forget the beginning of the message? Because of what he did for you. Truly, it's reasonable to give yourself to the Lord and say, "I'm laying my life down for you, Lord, because you gave Yourself for me. You have great things awaiting me, and I don't want to miss any of them now or eternally, and such an offering is holy. It's set apart.

[00:19:30.060]

It's it's acceptable and it's pleasing to God." We should also give our life as a living sacrifice because it's reasonable and because it's worship. It's worship. The word translated, "reasonable" or "spiritual" is "Logikas". And you can probably imagine that's where we get our words, "logic" or "logical". It's as if any other service of worship outside of it being a living sacrificial worship is not logical or understandable before God. When you offer your life as a living sacrifice, you'll receive far more than you give. The hope of eternal life with Messiah soars only as we live for him.

[00:20:17.440]

David Livingstone, many probably have read of him or know of him, the missionary to Africa. He wrote this in his journal. "People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice, which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity? the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind and bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter?"

[00:20:52.770]

He continues. "What a word. What a view and what a thought. It is emphatically no sacrifice, say rather, it's a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering and danger now and then. With a relinquishing of the indulgences of this life, may cause the spirit to waver and sink, but only for a moment. All of these are nothing when compared with the glory which will so soon be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which he made who left his father's throne on high to give himself for us."

[00:21:36.950]

And like Livingstone, believers who offer a living sacrifice of themselves usually do not consider it to be a sacrifice. And it's not a sacrifice in the common sense of losing something valuable. I mean, the only things we entirely give up for God to be removed and destroyed are sin and sinful things. Which only bring us injury and death.

[00:22:00.980]

But when we offer God the living sacrifice of ourselves, He does not destroy what we give him, but refines it. Purifies it. Not only for his glory, but for our present and eternal good. Dear ones, true worship does not consist of elaborate and impressive prayers, intricate liturgy, stained glass windows, lighted candles, flowing robes, incense and classical sacred music. Nor does it require hand clapping or hand raising. It also does not require great talent, skill or leadership ability.

[00:22:52.560]

I mean, sure, those outward forms may be part of genuine worship. But they alone are not acceptable to God. Only after the worshipper has offered their being, as a living sacrifice, can one truly worship. Because then he or she worships God in both spirit and in truth. While visiting Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the White House, Wendell Willkie (nobody remembers Wendell Willkie). He was, by the way, the Republican candidate for president in 1940. Wendell Willkie asked President Roosevelt, "Mr.

[00:23:33.610]

President, why do you keep that frail, sickly man, Harry Hopkins, at your elbow?" By the way, Hopkins was a close friend of Roosevelt and also a chief foreign policy adviser. Roosevelt replied, "Mr. Wilkie, through that door flows daily and incessant stream of men and women who almost invariably want something from me. Harry Hopkins wants only to serve me. And that's why he's so near to me." The apostle Paul exhorts us on the basis of God's mercies to give our bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice.

[00:24:14.210]

He calls that our reasonable service. In other words, we should be driven by such a deep love for and gratitude to God that we want only to serve Him. Now, you may try to serve God without loving Him, but you can't love God without serving Him. Well, let me repeat that. That's a good one. You may try to serve God without loving him. But you can't love God without serving him. So let's look at the transformation of surrender.

[00:24:52.510]

Verse two begins by stating two different indications of believers who've offered their lives to God's service. Quote, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." "Conformed", "transformed". Offering or surrendering of your life to God causes a new direction in life or a new lifestyle. This direction, however, is not simply a goal of a new manner of living. You see, we are shown what we must do to obtain the goal.

[00:25:29.780]

There is something that that we should shun and something that should be done. Well it almost rhymes. No, it does rhyme. And this new direction is needed, why? Because, well, because the world wants to control your mind. Has anybody noticed that lately? God, though, wants to transform your mind. The world wants to conform your mind to its way of thinking, God wants to transform your mind so that you can start thinking clearly.

[00:26:03.800]

And being conformed is a passive verb. Indicating that conforming or being put into a pattern or a mask is something that we allow, please listen, to be done to us. The fact that the verb is imperative states that we are commanded not to let that happen. You see, the world seeks to pressure us into its mold, doesn't it? The world seeks to conform us to that mass of thoughts, opinions, standards, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims and aspirations which pressure us from all sides.

[00:26:47.120]

And if you don't believe me, just turn on your TV when you get home. But we must not be conformed to this world. To its entertainment, its fashions, its vocabulary, its music, its opinions and its attitudes. But its dominance is so powerful. Well, how can we resist its influence? Well, the verse continues. "Keep on being transformed by the renewing of your mind." The renewing of your mind. Now the Greek word translated, "transformed" here and "transfigured" is the word "metamorphosis".

[00:27:23.820]

It comes from a total change from the inside out, like a caterpillar metamorphizes, transforms into a butterfly. And the key to this change is the mind. The outward transformation is created by an inner change in the mind. The mind, which is the control center of our attitudes, thoughts, feelings and actions. And so how does God renew the mind? Well, it's really simple. God transforms our minds and makes us spiritually minded by His Word.

[00:27:56.760]

How simple is that? You see, as you listen to God's word, read God's word, meditate on God's word, memorize God's word, God's spirit renews the mind and the lifestyle is not conformed but transformed. And this renewed mind allows us to see ourselves, to see others and the world from the perspective of Yeshua and from the perspective of his cross. And it will replace our delight in our sins with a hatred for them. And instead of rejecting sinners, we'll have a love for sinners.

[00:28:32.220]

And we should allow the transforming word of God to work within us and produce outward results instead of permitting external pressures to conform us to this world and to shape us. I truly believe if we will read and meditate on God's word daily, it will influence our thoughts and help us to grow more like Messiah. Then and only then will we be able to prove the wonder of God's will to a doubting world. For if we are being transformed by the Word, we won't be conformed by the world.

[00:29:11.160]

And finally, what about the proof of surrender? Well, verse two concludes by teaching us that the purpose of the transformed life is to demonstrate the delight of doing God's will. Quote, "so that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Dear ones, the mind that the Holy Spirit has renewed, reeducated and redirected results in a life that can prove what the will of God is. This renewed mind means we can not only know God's will, we can live out, or prove, what the will of God is. And, by the way, "prove" in the Greek is proved by testing.

[00:29:57.390]

You see, we can live out God's will and prove the following three qualities of God's will. We can prove His will is good, well pleasing and perfect. Good, well pleasing and perfect. As a believer is transformed in his or her mind, he or she is made more and more like Messiah. He comes to not only approve of God's will instead of his own will for his life, but to prove it. And then he discovers that God's will is what is good for him and that it pleases God. And that it's complete. Or just as it should be in every way possible.

[00:30:41.030]

But how does this occur? Well, your mind controls your body and your will controls your mind. Your mind controls your body and your will controls your mind. You may think that you can control your will by your willpower. How's that going for you lately? You will, sooner or later, fall. It's inevitable. You see, it's only when we yield our will to the will of God that His spirit can take over. And it's then that He

can give us willpower or the "want power", if you will. That we will worship in spirit and truth and live the victorious life, which is good, acceptable and perfect.

[00:31:24.290]

Any of you ever built a house or had somebody build a house for you? Any of you ever dealt with an architect? One architect said that many of his clients who asked him to design a house had already made the plans for the house in their mind. What they really wanted was the approval of their plans. Are you following me? What they really wanted was the approval of their own ideas and the satisfaction of seeing him draw what they thought would suit their needs.

[00:31:55.530]

Well, some believers proceed in the same way when they ask the divine architect to plan their lives. They pray for wisdom and guidance, but in their hearts, they've already decided how they will attain certain goals or what goals they should be pursuing. They've missed the message of Romans 12:1-2. You see, while they gladly trust Messiah for salvation, they hold back from making the full surrender that's necessary to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

[00:32:32.690]

And so, as I conclude. To sum up: Paul's appeal is addressed to the people of God, based on the mercies of God, and concerned with the will of God. And only a clear vision of his mercies will inspire us to present our body to him and to allow him to transform us according to His will. As a believer is transformed in his mind and is made more and more like Messiah, he comes to approve and desire God's will, not his own will, for his life.

[00:33:08.990]

It's then and only then that he discovers that God's will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way possible. God has a good, pleasing and perfect plan for all of us. But only by being renewed spiritually can we really understand and do and enjoy the will of God. God wants the eternal best for us. And because of this, he demonstrated mercies in Yeshua that we should joyfully give ourselves as a living sacrifice.

[00:33:45.320]

God has a good, pleasing and perfect plan for his children. He wants to transform people by renewing lives so that they can live to honor and obey Him. And so as the worship team comes back to the Bema, I would like to ask the following questions. Have you ever presented your body as a living sacrifice? Will you present your body as a living sacrifice? Are you seeking, by God's grace, to take the necessary steps to allow God to renew your mind?

[00:34:26.900]

Will you allow God to renew your mind? And take a moment for reflection. Maybe this afternoon, look back over Romans 12:1-2. Rehearse the motivation for giving yourself to God as a living sacrifice. Maybe you can ask yourself: what are some of the things I can do this week that indicate that I'm giving myself wholly and totally to God? And you know what? You might even write down what you think it means to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[00:35:08.100]

What situations will you handle differently, if you are not conformed to this world? And remember, please remember, it is your reasonable service to him who gave His all. Shabbat shalom.