



Leader's Guide

LESSON 19

Dr. Jerry Nelson

In response to the sermon on January 27th.

Romans 12:1-2 Sacrificial Living

Key Points

In Romans 12 we find a change in direction. We turn from theology and historical context to life application. What is our response to the doctrinal truths we have learned? Albeit brief, these two verses offer numerous challenges. They center on the way we live our lives:

- Holy living in response to God's mercy
- Obedience in the context of worship
- Non-conformity to this world
- Transformation as a way of life
- Knowing God's will

In these short verses we find the essence of spiritual formation. For formation to take place, change must occur. Otherwise, we may not be forming, but rather, conforming. To conform means to give the same shape. That's what the world does to us. To transform means to change in composition and structure. That's what the Spirit does within us. He works from the inside out. These internal changes impact our actions. The way we live our lives becomes significantly different. The focus of our love changes, as does the focus of our worship. What we think about changes. How we interact with others changes. Transformation means that the old is giving way to the new, and we are able to better discern the will of God, for his will becomes our will.

Personal Reflection

The internal work of the Spirit and the change that takes place is closely linked to our understanding and experience of God's mercy. Throughout Romans we have been reminded of our sinfulness and God's great mercy and grace. Mercy experienced produces gratitude resulting in a closer union with God. This chapter starts out with this premise. If we try to "do" the rest of this chapter without that premise, then a true heart-felt response may quickly degenerate into duty-bound "love".

How did God change you through His mercy, and how has he sustained you with His grace? This is a powerful lesson. In preparation, we encourage you to meditate on these verses throughout the week, asking the Spirit to bring to mind the circumstances that brought about transformational change. Take time to offer a heart response of worship for each way you can identify the Spirit's work.

Discussion Questions

1. In the OT, sacrifice and worship were closely related. They are here as well. What was sacrificed then? What is sacrificed now? What are the sacrifices that please God?
2. Discuss the implications of offering our "bodies" as living sacrifices rather than just our hearts or minds.
3. What keeps me (us) from a willingness to completely yield to God's will for our lives?
4. Describe the "pattern(s) of this world" that most hinders your transformation.

5. In our culture, we don't talk much about sacrifice. Rather, we focus on indulgence. What practical ways do you resist current trends so that you can live sacrificially?
6. Why does Paul start with the renewing of your mind?
7. What will "be(ing) transformed by the renewing of (my) mind" look like? What will contribute to that transformation?
8. Can you identify any changes in your thoughts, attitudes and actions over the past five or ten years that have been spiritually significant? If so, describe them.

How did that change take place; what did God do, how did you respond?

9. Why do you desire to know the will of God? What if God's will includes pain and sacrifice? Would you be willing to follow the Spirit anyway? What would give you the courage to do so?