

Living the transformed life: Romans 12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 August 2020

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning. Good to have you.

Thank you.

In these last couple of weeks. And also, it's perhaps overdue me saying this, but let me just say a word of thanks to all those who work to make this possible.

I stand here and preach, but there are those who are behind the camera. There are those who do the editing in their own homes. And ENA in particular has put in many hours, many days at work.

And I'm thankful to ENA and to Gordon behind the camera today and to Josh and others who lead the praises week by week. We are a team who are in partnership in the gospel.

[1 : 33] And I'm thankful for those who are involved in that partnership. The service tonight should be online just before six o'clock. And the YF will continue this evening at half past seven and the prayer meeting at half past seven on Wednesday, both on Zoom.

So these, I think, are all the intimations. We're going to sing now to God's praise. And we sing the words of the hymn, Your Grace, that leads the sinner home from death to life forever.

Your Grace, that leads the sinner home from death to life forever.

And sings the song of righteousness by blood and not by merit.

Your Grace, that leads the sinner home from death to life forever.

[3 : 05] The joy of your salvation. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am restored.

And now I freely walk into you. In the arms of Christ my Lord. Your grace, that leads the sinner home from death to life forever.

By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am restored. And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

In the arms of Christ my Lord. Let praise rise up and overflow. My song resend forever. For grace I am redeemed. Let praise rise up and overflow.

My song resend forever. For grace will see me welcomed home. My song resend forever. My song resend forever. For grace will see me welcomed home.

[4 : 52] To walk beside my Savior. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am restored.

By grace I am restored. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am restored.

By grace I am restored. By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am restored. By grace I am restored. And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

Unite their hearts in prayer. Now let's pray. Our Heavenly Father we thank you for this day. We thank you that once more on your day we are found. Not in your house.

But we are found in the spirit of worship. Gathered around your word. And looking to you in prayer. We thank you that we have the call. And we have the assurance that as we come in the name of Jesus.

[6 : 07] Trusting in the finished work of Christ we will be received. We acknowledge that we are sinners. But we thank you that Christ is our Savior. And we thank you that he is the one who came to this world.

And lived for us. And died for us. And rose from the dead. So that we could be made righteous. So that we could have salvation. We thank you Lord for the work of grace.

God's riches. God's righteousness offered to us. At Christ's expense. We thank you for the cross where Jesus died. To make that grace available.

And we thank you Lord for all that we sang of. Even in that hymn. For the grace that leads the sinner home. We thank you Lord that we have been saved from death. That we have been saved into eternal life.

We thank you for our redemption. We thank you that we are restored into a close walk with you. We thank you Lord that we are your children. And that we can call you our Father.

[7 : 08] So we pray that in this hour of worship. That you would draw near to us. That you would help us. That you would speak to us through your word. And that you would work in our lives.

In the power of your spirit. We thank you that in prayer we can bring others to you. And we pray for those Lord who are in particular need. As we have done week by week.

We pray for those Lord who are grieving. We are conscious of those in Scalpy. And in Scarp. The Hoosianish area. Who are grieving this week.

And we pray for your comfort. To be upon the families of those who have lost loved ones. We pray for those who have lost loved ones in past weeks and months as well.

We continue to pray for Nanny and the family. We ask that you would be their comfort. That you would be their refuge and strength. We pray on for those who are sick. We think of Ian Davidson and Shona.

[8 : 06] We continue to pray for them as Ian receives treatment. We pray for Elaine also in hospital and Stornley over these past days. And we ask Lord that your hand of healing would be upon her.

We pray that you would steady her. And Dalalic. And that they would know your presence. And that they would know that you are with them. And that your people are remembering and praying for them.

And for others Lord who are struggling. Who are sick. We ask that you would be with them. We pray for Aina as well. Having been in hospital in these past days.

We thank you that she is home now. But we pray that you would continue to speed her recovery. We pray Father for those who struggle with the illness of addiction.

Those who struggle with alcohol. And we know that at this time of lockdown. It has been particularly difficult for some. And as we think of them Lord. We don't name them but we bring them to you.

[9 : 03] And we thank you that as we have the faces of people in our mind. We can carry them to you in prayer. And we ask Lord that you would break the chains of addiction.

For those who struggle with that particular affliction. We pray for our young people. Also at this time. We are conscious that this would have been the week.

That we would have gathered for the holiday club. And although we were not able to gather. We pray for the young ones. We thank you for the Sunday school. That has gone out week by week.

And for the youth fellowship. We thank you Lord for these means to which we can stay connected. But we ask Lord that you would bless them. That you would protect them. And that you would cause them to look to you.

We pray that these young people. We pray that these young people. Wouldn't just come to church and Sunday school. As they have done so faithfully. But we pray that they would do more than that. That they would look in faith to Jesus.

[10 : 02] And that they would give their lives to Jesus. Remembering their creator in the days of their youth. And we ask that they would walk with Jesus. And bring glory to the name of Jesus with their lives.

So Lord we pray that you would bless them. That you would protect them Lord from this world's influence. That seeks to try to conform them to the patterns of this world.

We ask that they would be transformed. By the renewing of their minds as they hear. And as we pray that they would believe scripture. So hear our prayers. We pray for our country.

We ask that you would continue to give wisdom to those in leadership. We pray as we hear of different places going back into lockdown. For wisdom. And for clarity of thought.

And correct decisions to be made. In these difficult days. We look to you Lord. We trust you. You are the sovereign God. And we ask Lord for your help.

[11 : 02] And for your hand upon us. And we pray all these things together. With the forgiveness of our sins. In his name. And for Jesus sake. Amen. Boys and girls. Good to not see you.

But know that you're there. I hope you're well. And I hope you're doing well. At the end of your summer holidays. I'm looking forward to school. As it starts again on Wednesday. Now I've got something to show you this morning.

I didn't get it from my house. My house only has Barbies. And Sylvanian families. And girly toys like that. But I got a loan of this.

From Michael. I don't know if you can. Can you see this? Can you see this alright Gordon? Do you want me to come closer? Come a little bit closer? I don't know if you've ever seen one of these things before.

How's that? Tell me when. This is what is called a transformer. And at the moment. It just looks like a robot.

[12 : 02] Doesn't it? It's got a wee face. And it's got the legs. And you can see the arms. And it just looks like a robot. But watch this.

If I do that. Now it's a helicopter. Put it higher. It was flying a bit lower there. Put it higher.

There's a helicopter. So it's a transformer. One second you look. And you think. Look at that cool helicopter. Flying through the air. One move. The right hands.

It's a transformer. It's back to a robot. And why am I showing you that boys and girls? Well I'm showing you that. Because. Because we're called to be.

To be transformers. God wants us to be transformers. The passage that we're going to be reading today. With the older ones. Is Romans chapter 12.

[12 : 59] And in Romans chapter 12. And at verse 2. It says. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world. But be transformed.

Be transformed. By the renewing of your mind. So God wants us. If we're Christians. He wants us to. He wants us to be transformers. He wants to transform us.

And he doesn't want to transform us into helicopters. And he doesn't want to transform us into robots. That's the robot yeah. But he wants to transform us into people.

Who are more. And more. Like. Jesus. And how does he do that? Well I know if you were here.

You would answer that question. How does he make us more. And more like Jesus. Well. He does that. As we trust in Jesus. As we ask Jesus to come into our lives. And take our sin away.

[14 : 00] And be our saviour. And then he transforms us. Day by day. As we spend time with him. And as we listen. To what he's saying to us.

As we open the Bible. And he does. That transforming work. As we spend time. With him. Not just listening to what he says in the Bible.

But speaking to him. In prayer. Now with this robot here. It's just. One click. And it's transformed. One click.

And it's transformed back. But for us. For us. We're saved. In one second. Boys and girls.

If you're not a Christian. This morning. And if you know. That you have sin. In your heart. That that needs to be forgiven. Then. All you have to do.

[14 : 57] Is pray. Right where you are. Just now. And say. Lord Jesus. I know that I'm a sinner. And I want my sins to be forgiven. And I want to be a Christian. And if we pray that from our hearts.

In one second. We're transformed. We're transformed. In our hearts. So that we go from someone who's. Who's lost. To someone who's saved. Someone who's. Who's full of sin.

To someone who's had their sins washed away. But. The transforming of our lives. To make us more. And more like Jesus. That's not a one click thing.

That's a day. By day. Hour by hour. Week by week. Month by month. Year by year thing. God is doing that. Every day. As we spend time with Jesus.

And he makes us. More like Jesus. Jesus. So boys and girls. Remember the transformer. And remember. If we're Christians.

[15 : 56] As we spend time with God. Reading his word. And praying. His promises. That he will make us. More and more transformed. To be like Jesus.

And we'll pray now. Lord God. We thank you. For the promise. That you've given us. In your word. That you. Transform us.

By the renewing of our minds. And we know that when we. Are reading the Bible. And not just. On our phones. Or on the iPads. Or listening to. To all the different things.

In this world. But when we're in the Bible. Your word. We thank you. That you're. You're transforming us. You're working. On us. To become more. And more like Jesus. And that's what we want.

We want to be. More and more like Jesus. So that. When people see us live. They see something. Of Jesus. In our lives. And that they. Would want to know Jesus. Through.

[16 : 52] The things that we do. And the things that we say. We thank you Lord. That when. We ask you. To forgive our sins. You take them away. Instantly. You take them away. Forever.

But we thank you. That once. You save us. You start. A work. On us. Where you make us more. And more like Jesus. So. Whether we're.

We pray. That you would make us more. And more. Like Jesus. As we spend time with you. And we ask all this. In Jesus name. Amen. Well let's.

Turn now. To God's word. We'll read from Romans chapter 12. We'll read the whole. Of this chapter. This is God's word. God's word. Therefore. I urge you brothers. In view of God's mercy.

To offer your bodies. As living sacrifices. Holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer. To the pattern of this world.

[17 : 49] But be transformed. By the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test. And approve. What God's will is. His good pleasing. And perfect will. For by the grace given me.

I say to every one of you. Do not think of yourself. As more highly than you ought. But rather think of yourself. With sober judgment. In accordance with the measure of faith. God has given you. Just as each of us.

Has one body. With many members. And these members. Do not all have the same function. So in Christ. We who are many. Form one body. And each member belongs. To all the others.

We have different gifts. According to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying. Let him use it. In proportion to his faith. If it is serving. Let him serve.

If it is teaching. Let him teach. If it is encouraging. Let him encourage. If it is contributing. To the needs of others. Let him give generously. If it is leadership.

[18 : 47] Let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy. Let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Be devoted to one another. In brotherly love. Honor one another. Above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal. But keep your spiritual fervor. Serving the Lord.

Be joyful in hope. Patient in affliction. Faithful in prayer. Share with God's people. Who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you.

Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud. But be willing to associate with people.

Of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right. In the eyes of everybody. If it is possible. As far as it depends on you.

[19 : 44] Live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge my friends. But leave room. For God's wrath. For it is written. It is mine to avenge. I will repay.

Says the Lord. On the contrary. If your enemy is hungry. Feed him. If he is thirsty. Give him something to drink. In doing this. You will heap burning coals on his head.

Do not be overcome by evil. But overcome evil. With good. Amen. And may God bless that reading. Of his word to us. Let's pray for a moment.

Before we turn back to this passage. Our Heavenly Father. We thank you for your word. And we thank you. For the Holy Spirit.

Who is our teacher. And who turns our eyes upon Christ. As we turn to the truth of scripture. So we pray Lord.

[20 : 41] As we do each week. For the help of the Holy Spirit. That we pray that our eyes would be opened. That our ears would be unblocked. That my tongue would be loosed.

And Lord. That we would be enabled. To speak your words. And to hear. The message that you have for us. In this day. So hear our prayers. Help us.

We pray. And we pray Lord. For ourselves. As a congregation. But for every. Gathering of your people. Whether. In real. Physical. Gatherings. Or whether in virtual gatherings.

We pray. That as your word. Goes forth. It would go forth. In the power of your spirit. And that you would use your word. To transform. Us. As your people.

To be more. Like Christ. And we pray these things. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Having just come back.

[21 : 38] From Inverness. On holiday. These last few days. One of the. Things that struck me. In the city. Was the abundance of signs.

Telling us what to do. There were. There were signs. Telling us to wear masks. There were signs in the. E-skate center. The shopping center. Telling us. To walk this way.

Not that way. but to follow the one-way system. There were signs telling us to stay two meters apart, signs telling us to wash our hands or to use hand sanitizer.

There was no shortage of signs and instructions telling us what to do. Now, we've come to Romans chapter 12.

But if we look back the way, and we're encouraged to look back the way, even from the first word of Romans 12, the first word is therefore. And whenever we see the word therefore, we know that it's connecting what was gone before with what's now coming.

[22 : 36] So if we look back in Romans and do a quick survey of Romans chapter 1 to 11, the interesting thing is that we find very few instances where the Apostle Paul tells us what to do.

The letter begins, don't worry, I'm not going to do a long study through the whole of the first 11 chapters, but the letter begins, and in chapter 1 to halfway through chapter 3, we have this dark and disturbing portrayal of our sin.

We see the danger that we're in because of our sin. And by the midpoint of chapter 3, we're at an end of ourselves, and we're crying out.

What must we do? We see the sin. We see the danger. What must we do? And in response to that question, Paul says from the second half of Romans chapter 3, right through until now, he says it's not about what you have to do.

It's not about instructions that I'm going to give to you. It's not what we have to do that brings salvation. It's Jesus and what he has already done.

[23 : 52] Romans 3, 21 and 22 are key verses in this whole book. But now, says Paul, A righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. And that's the key message of this letter. We can be made righteous.

We can be saved from sin and Satan and death and hell through faith in Christ. Through believing in the finished work of Christ.

Through putting our faith in what he has done. And not what we may try to do. And Paul teaches the same thing in the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. For it's by grace you have been saved. Through faith. And this not from yourselves. It is the gift of God.

[24 : 59] And what comes through so clearly in this letter is that righteousness cannot be worked up through our own efforts. Righteousness does not come through what we do.

But righteousness comes down from heaven in Christ. And it can be received as a gift of God. So can I ask at this juncture in the book of Romans.

Where we've spent so much time delving into Paul's gospel. The good news about Jesus. Can I ask as I've asked so many times before. Have you received this gift of grace yet?

Have we received this righteousness that comes down from heaven. And is offered to us. Are we saved? Have our sins been forgiven? Can we be sure that if we were to die tonight we would avoid hell and we would have a place prepared for us in heaven?

And if we can't be sure of that. If we do not believe that we are saved. If we haven't done business with God and received this gift of grace. What are we waiting for?

[26 : 10] We heard it so powerfully last week through Gordon Thompson. Jeremiah 8.20 The harvest has passed. The summer has ended.

And we are not saved. And now another week has passed. And still I expect there will be some people this morning who are watching or who are listening in.

And still you're not saved. And can I encourage you? Can I urge you? Can I plead with you? To believe in Jesus. Not just to listen.

Not just to play around with us in our minds. But to believe in Jesus. Will we not accept by faith this gift of righteousness.

This salvation that comes from God. Will we not act on this? And be saved. Now many who Paul wrote to in Rome were saved.

[27 : 17] Just as many who are watching and listening in this morning are saved. So what does God have to say to us through Paul if we are already Christians?

Well, that's the focus now. Paul turns to those who are Christians. And he addresses the question of how they and how we should live if we are Christians.

So that's our focus for the message this morning. I want us to consider how we are to live if we are those who are in Christ.

And the first point to note is that if we are in Christ, if we are Christians, we are to live always seeing God's mercy. We are to live seeing God's mercy.

That's the first point. Therefore, verse 1, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy. Now if you are driving a car, you must always keep your eyes on the road.

[28 : 21] If you don't, you will crash. If you are playing a sport like tennis or golf or the snooker that we are seeing on the television just now, as you take your shot, you must always keep your eye on the ball.

If you don't, you'll miss. Make a mess of it. And for the Christian, if we are to live lives which are pleasing to God, if we are to live lives which will bring glory to the name of Jesus, if we are to live lives which we will know the strengthening joy of the Lord, we must always keep in view God's mercy.

We must always be seeing God's mercy. Now what is mercy? Well, as the children sing in Sunday school, mercy is when God does not give us what we deserve.

And what do we deserve as sinners? What are the wages of sin? Well, the wages of sin are death, punishment. That's what Romans chapter 6 verse 23 says.

And yet we know if we're Christians, we're not punished for our sin. Because Jesus was punished for our sin. As we sang in the opening hymn, that the Prince of Life, Jesus, without a stain, was traded for this sinner.

[29 : 50] And if we're Christians, we don't die in our sin because Jesus died in our place on the cross. So where and in whom do we see God's mercy?

Well, we see it in Jesus. We see it at the cross. That's where we get the clearest, sharpest, most majestic views of God's mercy.

So in application here, let's make sure that we don't allow anyone or anything to get in between us and Jesus.

Let's ensure that there is nothing and there's no one that we take into our lives that blocks our vision of Jesus. Let's watch out for any influence, any teaching, any philosophy, any preaching even, that takes us away from Jesus and his cross.

See, living out the Christian life must be done in response to and with a clear view always of God's mercy.

[31 : 09] We begin our Christian lives by saying, God have mercy on me, a sinner. We begin our Christian lives as we come to the cross.

But we must never move away from the cross. We must never lose sight of the cross. We must never think that it's time for us to move on from the cross.

But we must live our lives always seeing God's mercy. So that's the first point. As Christians, we are to live seeing God's mercy.

The second point here is we are to live sacrificially. Still in verse 1. Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God.

We're to live sacrificially. Now, ever since the fall, ever since sin came into this world, our default way of living is to live for self.

[32 : 21] We don't have to teach a baby to be selfish. It's in them. We don't need anyone to give us classes on how to think about ourselves because we default to that.

That's our natural sinful position. At the center of sin is I. S-I-N. And so when sin is in control of us, life is all about me, me, me.

How can I be happy? How can I be fulfilled? How can I be appreciated? How can I be celebrated? And yet the irony is that when we live in such a way always as to want to make me happy, we always seem to end up sad.

The Gospel Herald, it once published an article entitled How to Be Miserable. It gave the recipe for How to Be Miserable.

And this is what was published. How to Be Miserable. Think about yourself. Talk about yourself. Use I as often as possible.

[33 : 36] Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others. Listen greedily to what people say about you. Be suspicious. Expect to be appreciated.

Be jealous and envious. Be sensitive to slights. Never forgive a criticism. Trust nobody but yourself. Insist on consideration and the proper respect.

Demand agreement with your own views on everything. Sulk if people are not grateful to you for favours shown them. Never forget a service that you have rendered. Be on the lookout for a good time for yourself.

Shirk your duties if you can. Do as little as possible for others. Love yourself supremely. Be selfish.

This recipe is guaranteed to be infallible. And that's where sin takes us. It takes us to a life of self-centeredness.

[34 : 47] And it's a life of abject misery. And we see that sometimes in the people who have the most. And who have the approval of the world and the riches of this world.

when we actually get under the skin and see how they're really doing. They're the most miserable people alive. Because that's where sin takes us. But when we become Christians when we believe in Jesus and all that he has done for us life stops being all about me, me, me.

And it becomes all about him, him, him. we see it with John the Baptist. Remember what John the Baptist said from the prison cell.

He said, He, Jesus, must increase. I must decrease. And we say that not through gritted teeth but we can sing it with joyful hearts.

We heard the recipe for being miserable as published in the Gospel Herald but what's the recipe for joy? Well I'm sure you probably heard it in the Sunday school class.

[36 : 05] To know joy we need to put Jesus first, others second, yourself last. J-O-Y Jesus first, others second, yourself last.

Or in other words we are to live sacrificially. Not selfishly but sacrificially. That's what we're called to. We're called to be living sacrifices.

We're called to offer our bodies, our lives, our everything for the exaltation of Jesus, not self. A challenging word.

And we may ask the question at this point, what if we don't want to? What if there's actually no desire if we're honest and no motivation, no drive within us to live like that?

What do we need to do to fix that? Where do we need to go to deal with that? Well we need to go back to the cross. we need to see Jesus again.

[37 : 21] We need to get a clear view of his mercy. We need to receive a fresh measure of his grace. So we're to live always seeing God's mercy.

We're to live sacrificially. And thirdly, we're to live as those who are serving the Lord. Therefore I urge you brothers, verse 1, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your spiritual act of worship. That's the NIV. Now if you have a King James version, as many of you do, you'll notice that it reads slightly differently.

It says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

It's a different translation, but it's actually the same meaning. The logic here is not difficult to track. If we see and receive God's mercy in Christ, then we'll want to express our love for and our gratitude to him in worship and in reasonable service.

[38 : 42] if you want a picture of that, take a look at John chapter 12 verses 1 to 8. I've got no time to go there today, but in that passage we see a woman who is known, she's notorious for her sinful life and she comes to this home where Jesus is dining and she takes out this jar of expensive perfume and she anoints Jesus, she pours it over Jesus.

Now why did she do that? Why did she take a bottle of perfume which the commentators reckon was worth 40,000 pounds of our money and pour it all out over Jesus?

Well, it was a spiritual act of worship. She, as a woman who knew her sin, had received God's mercy in Christ, she had been forgiven much and her response was to serve Jesus in this way.

She sacrificed what she had, that expensive gift, that family heirloom, her life savings, she sacrificed what she had to serve Jesus.

And that's how we are called to live, as servants of God, as those who with our eye constantly on God's mercy shone towards us.

[40 : 06] want to express our love for him in our worship and in our reasonable service. So that's the third point, we're to live serving.

The fourth point is we're to live as those who have scriptural thinking. Do not conform, verse 2, any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will. Now note there in that verse the negative and the positive, the do not and the do.

J.B. Phillips, in his translation, his paraphrase of the New Testament, on this chapter, he translates this verse in this way.

He says, don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds from within. Now if I could put it this way, the world and the ways of this world, the world is a crusher, but God is a potter.

[41 : 22] That picks up in the imagery of Romans 9, 21. If you go into an old scrapyard, you see the cars who have been in an accident or have come to the end of their lives and they get dragged into the yard and they take up a bit of space for a period and then they're pushed into the crusher.

And when they come out, you can hardly tell what they once were. They're so smashed up, they're so compressed. And that's a picture of what the world does to us.

It tries to, under the direction of the prince of this world, the devil, to crush us and to mould us into its shape and bring us into conformity with its ways.

The children often sing a song in Sunday school. I won't sing the song, but I'll give you the words. Watch your eyes, watch your eyes, what they see. Watch your ears, watch your ears, watch your hands, watch your hands, watch your hands, watch your feet, watch your feet, where they go.

And it's a simple song, but it's a powerful message. What we watch, and what we listen to, and what we do, and where we go, it shapes us.

[42 : 50] It shapes us. You may not think it does, but it does, it shapes us. And Paul is saying here, be careful what you watch, and what you listen to.

Be careful at where you go, and be careful what you put your hand to. Get out of the scrapyard of this world, says Paul, and get into the scriptures. Get into God's word.

Because it's in the scriptures that God meets with us, it's through the scriptures that God renews our minds, it's through the scriptures that he transforms us.

And the word used there for transformed, if I could just park up on that for just a moment. It's an interesting word, it's a word that's very rarely used in the New Testament.

I think it's only used four times. It's the same word that's used for transfigure, the transfiguration. Remember when in Matthew 17, Mark 9, Jesus, he goes to the mountain and he is transfigured and something of the glory of Christ is seen.

[44 : 00] It's that word that's used, transformed, transfigure. And that's our purpose as Christians, we are to show out something of the glory of Jesus.

And that word transformed, transformed, the tense that's used in this verse is the present tense. And that means that this transformation, as I said to the children, it's an ongoing process.

Literally, what Paul is saying is continue to let yourselves be transformed. And the word transformed there, it's in the passive voice.

Notice that Paul doesn't say transform yourselves. But let yourselves be transformed. You know, just like the toy. The toy can sit there on the table all day and all night.

It will never change from my helicopter to a robot until somebody picks it up and does the click. And then in the hands of the child, it's transformed.

[45 : 09] And for us to be transformed, for us to be made more like Jesus, we can't do that by ourselves, we cannot do that for ourselves, we cannot do that to ourselves.

We need God, the Holy Spirit, to do that in us. But he does that when we're in the Bible. He does that when we're in Scripture.

James Montgomery Boyce says, how does this transformation happen? Through the renewing of our minds and the way our minds become renewed is by the study of the life-giving and renewing Word of God.

Without that study, we remain in the world's mold, unable to think and therefore unable to act as Christians. But with that study, blessed and empowered as it will be by the Holy Spirit, we begin to take on something of the glorious luster of the Lord Jesus Christ and become increasingly like him.

Now if we're honest, and we need to be, sometimes we can be slow, we can be reluctant to pick up our Bibles. We can be much more ready to pick up our phones and a tablet than we are to pick up our Bibles.

[46 : 30] And maybe that's because we think nothing much will happen when we read the Bible, but to encourage us in our Bible reading, think about this.

Every time you open the Bible as a Christian, praying that God will work by his Spirit, you and I are like clay that are on the potter's wheel, and God, day by day, is molding us and shaping us.

As we are in God's Word, he is molding us, he is shaping us, he is transforming us into people who are more and more like Jesus.

Very often, when we pick up these things, there's a crushing influence on us. But as we pick up Scripture, the transforming influence of God the Holy Spirit is shaping us and molding us to be more like Jesus.

Remember Jesus' prayer for the disciples in John 17 and verse 17. He says, sanctify them by the truth. Your Word is truth.

[47 : 41] So we're to live as those who are scriptural in our thinking. That's the fourth point. The fifth point is we are to have sober judgment. Verse 3, For by the grace given me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, who are many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

But note in particular that phrase. We're to think of ourselves with sober judgment. Now sober judgment is something that's necessary if we're to be effective in any area of life.

If somebody is drunk and their judgment is impaired, no one lets them near the building site. No one lets them into the desk at the office. No one allows them to be behind the wheel of a car because they will only do damage to themselves and to others.

And in God's service, as we seek to live for him, we're called to think of ourselves with sober judgment. Now what is it that makes our thinking, to pick up on the allegory there, what is it that makes our thinking sometimes drunken thinking and not sober thinking?

[49 : 16] Well, sometimes it's the sin of pride. Pride makes us drunk in our thinking. Pride makes us think that we are much more gifted than we actually are.

And pride causes us to look around and think that everybody else is much less gifted than they actually are. and when we are drunken in our thinking, when we allow pride to come in and impair our judgment, we do damage within the body of Christ the church and we can't serve God.

On the other hand, sometimes it's not the sin of pride that makes us drunk in our thinking, sometimes it's the sin of false humility that stops us from serving God.

We go to the other extreme and we don't look in the mirror and think we're great, but we look in the mirror and we say, oh, I have no gifts. I'm too old. I'm past it.

I'm too young. There's nothing I can do. It's no use me trying to do anything. All I ever do is make a mess. That too may sound very humble.

[50 : 29] It's drunken thinking. If someone gave you a gift and you denied ever receiving it, that wouldn't be humility.

That would be dishonesty. And we're told in verse 6 here, we have different gifts. Not we may have, but we have different gifts according to the grace given us.

When we are saved, when we receive the grace of Jesus, he gives us gifts that we're to use in his service. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

Verse 6. If it is serving, let him serve. If it is teaching, let him teach. If it's encouraging, let him encourage. If it's contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously. If it's leadership, let him govern diligently.

If it's showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. And so Paul is saying to us in these verses, be encouraged to use your gifts to serve Jesus.

[51 : 35] Be encouraged to use your gifts to bring glory to the name of Jesus. Everyone has a gift. If you're not sure what your gift is, then maybe within the body, within the church, you should speak to the people around you and ask them, what is my gift?

How can I serve? Because certainly you can. Sometimes other people see it more clearly than we do. But we are encouraged here, we are instructed to use our gifts to serve Jesus.

I remember being at a meeting some years ago and there was a minister there who was taking the meeting, a minister called Dick Lucas, who was the minister of a big church, St.

Helens in London. He was very elderly at the time when he was preaching and so he spoke with great gravitas and he was reflecting on the story that we mentioned earlier, the story of when the woman anointed Jesus with that expensive perfume.

And he noted that in that extravagant act of worship, some objected. He said, why was this money not used for the poor? And Jesus said in response to the objections, leave her alone.

[52 : 58] She's doing what she can. And I've never forgotten how Dick Lucas at that point, he paused. And he looked out over the congregation, which was mainly ministers, and he peered over his glasses and he said, what about you?

Are you doing what you can? It may be a little, it may be a lot, but God expects you to do what you can in his service for his glory.

I loved what Gordon said last week in the evening service, I think. He said towards the end of the service, I'm not a professional. Sometimes I struggle to read the passage.

Sometimes I'm stammering my way through the sermon. He says, I'm not a professional, but I'm doing what I can. And we know the blessing of that, as God uses him.

So our calling is to exercise sober judgment, not to think too highly of ourselves, not to think too lowly of ourselves, but to do what we can for Jesus.

[54 : 09] on the judgment day. That's what God will expect from us. Not to have done what we can't, but to have done what we can in his service.

No less than that, no more than that, but what we can. So we're to live as those who exercise sober judgment as we use our gifts for his glory.

And finally, we're to live as those who are sincere, who show sincerity in our Christian lives. Gandhi, during an interview once with a reporter from the West, said, I like your Christ, but not your Christianity.

And if you go into the interview, the problem that he was getting at was the encounters that he had had with insincere Christians.

Those who took the name of Christ, but who didn't show out anything of the character of Christ. And that is not a new problem. It's a problem that was in Roman AD 57.

- [55 : 25] It's a problem that goes through every generation. And so Paul, he brings this chapter through to a conclusion with that exhortation to be sincere. to be the real deal, not to be a hypocrite, not to be a mask wearer.

Verse 9, through to the end, my time is gone. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need.

Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn. And so on it goes. With instruction after instruction, exhortation after exhortation.

And when we read through these verses, who do we see? We see Jesus so clearly.

- [56 : 35] He was the one, the only one who was wholly sincere all of the time. He is the one who hated evil, verse 9, so much that he came to this world to wage war with it and overcome it.

He was the only one who ever lived a perfectly, sinlessly good life, verse 9. He's the one who showed such love and such devotion, verse 10, to his people that he was willing to go to a cross for us.

He was always full of godly zeal, always joyful. He blessed those who persecuted him to the point of praying, Father, forgive them to those or for those who executed him and drove the nails and threw his hands and his feet.

He rejoiced with those who rejoiced at a wedding in Cana. He wept with those who wept at a graveside, at the graveside of Lazarus. You know, and we could go through all of these verses from 9 to 21.

And we could draw lines between these verses and the ministry and the life of Jesus over and over again. He was 100% always sincere, real, perfect.

- [58 : 08] But the challenge for those who are in Christ, the challenge for those who are Christians, for those who are Christ's ones, is a challenge to be like him.

To be sincere. To be real. So the other people, when they see us, do not say, I like your Christ, but not your Christianity.

But rather, look at us and say, I like your Christianity. It's sincere. It's real. And I want to know. I want to know. I want to know. And I want to know your Christ. And that's a challenging note to finish on, but I need to finish.

So let's pray. Lord God, we pray that you would help us as those who are in Christ. If we have believed in Jesus, help us, we pray, to live in a way that brings glory to your name.

And in a way that causes other people to look in faith to the one who loved them and who died to make it possible for them as well as for us to be saved.

- [59 : 18] So help us, we pray, to live for your glory. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to God's praise in Psalm 111.

Psalm 111 from verse 1 to verse 4. Praise ye the Lord with my whole heart. I will God's praise declare where the assemblies of the just and congregations are.

And down to his works most wonderful he hath made to be taught upon. The Lord is gracious and he is full of compassion.

Praise ye the Lord with my whole heart.

I will God's praise declare where the assemblies of the just and congregations are.

[60 : 32] The whole works of the Lord our God are great above all measure.

Sought out they are of every one that doth therein take pleasure.

His works most honor, rubble is, most glorious and pure.

And his untainted righteousness forever doth endure.

His works most wonderful he hath made to be thought upon.

[61 : 58] the Lord is gracious and he is full of compassion.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all, both now and forevermore.

Amen.