“Transformed: More Than Meets the Eye” (Romans 12:1–2)

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” These are some of the most important and strategic words ever penned in human history. They serve as a halftime address—a coach’s “chalk talk.” Paul’s words in Rom 12:1–2 are capable of leading God’s people to victory. But please don’t let your familiarity with these verses lead to passivity. Study them anew and afresh. If you do, God will transform you from the inside out.

After devoting eleven chapters to heavy-duty theology, Paul transitions in chapter 12 from doctrine to duty, from creed to conduct, and from belief to behavior. He says, “In light of what God has done, here is how we should live.” To put it another way, the apostle encourages us to turn our theology into “walkology.” In other words, we are to live out our beliefs. Paul uses the imperative thirteen times in the first eleven chapters of Romans; he uses it eleven times in chapter 12 alone! In fact, this chapter has more commands in it than any other chapter of the New Testament. It is a chapter of action! Paul’s thesis is: Beliefs should impact behavior. In 12:1–2 he shares two appropriate responses to the theology of chapters 1–11.

1. Present your body (12:1). This verse is one of the most important in the entire Bible and contains more key theological terms and truths for its size than perhaps any other verse of Scripture. Verse 1 gives the “what” that we are to do in response to God. Paul opens this new unit with the word “Therefore” (oun). This important word begs the question: What is the word “therefore” there for? “Therefore” looks back to all the doctrine that Paul has covered in chapters 1–11. It is a “call to arms,” for the most important part of doctrine is the first two letters. Paul believes that you haven’t really learned the Word until you live the Word. How well have you learned the Word? Have you been applying the truths of Romans? When you study the Bible on your own, do you bring it to bear on your life? Are you just a hearer of the Word or are you a doer of the Word? Only when you become a doer of the Word, have you truly learned the Word.

Paul writes, “I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God.” Instead of a command or a demand, Paul urges, or better yet, exhorts his readers (see NET). The verb parakaleo denotes a sense of urgency with a note of authority (cf. 12:8; 15:30; 16:17). This term was used in classical Greek of “exhorting troops who were about to go into battle.” What a great word picture of the Christian life where God is our general and we are enlisted in a spiritual battle. Although parakaleo is a strong word, it is worth noting that the noun form (paraklete) is used to describe the Holy Spirit who comforts, encourages, and exhorts. Paul functions as a Christian coach who challenges and encourages us to reach a particular goal. There is further tenderness in this appeal, for Paul speaks as a Christian brother to other Christian brothers and sisters. This is a family affair! The apostle exhorts us to respond to “the mercies of God.” Although the key word of Rom 9–11 is mercy, Paul’s use of “mercies” refers back to 1:18–11:36. In 1:18–3:20 humankind is described as sinful and condemned. Yet, in 3:21–4:25 God showcases His mercy in the person and work of Christ by offering us salvation as a free gift. In 5:1–8:39 God’s mercy frees us from the law and empowers us to grow up in Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. In this section we also discover the blessings of full assurance and security in our relationship with God. This leads right into 9:1–11:36 where Paul informs us that God’s love for His people is unconditional. Is God merciful? You better believe it! God chose us, called us, saved us, released us, and will one day take us home to heaven. Indeed, God’s mercies are past finding out (11:33–36)! That is why I’m convinced that the best motivation to live for Christ is a good memory of all of the mercies He has blessed us with.
Admittedly, it can be difficult to always be cognizant of God’s mercies. I can often fall back into an unhealthy works-mentality. I can apply this orientation to my personal life, ministry, marriage, and children. When I adopt this faulty motivation, I often see results, but only for a few days. Long-lasting change only occurs when gratitude for God’s mercies is the chief motivation. The Bible’s way of preaching holiness begins by reminding Christians who they are, what they are, and what they have. Who are we? We are the children of God with all of the power of God working on our behalf? Where are we? We are in the kingdom of God and have died to the dominion of sin. What do we have? We have the Holy Spirit, we have Jesus’ intercession working for us, and we have the power of God ready to come to our aid. Hence, the best way to motivate people is to show them what God has done for them and let them rise to the challenge of responding to that love appropriately.

In response to God’s mercies, Paul challenges us “to present” (paristemi) our bodies. Although this exhortation is not an imperative, it should be understood as such (cf. 12:2). But please note that Paul does not say “yield” or “surrender” your bodies but “present” them. Yield and surrender are biblical terms, but they imply a measure of reluctance or hesitancy. Present, on the other hand, implies a glad, happy, willing offering of oneself. If I yield or surrender a gift to my wife, she will not be impressed by my efforts. Our presentation of our bodies to God as a sacrifice for His use, just like my presentation of a gift to my wife, is to be a joyous and spontaneous act. God is not asking you to dedicate your gifts, abilities, money, time, ideas, creativity, or any such thing. He is asking you to sacrifice yourself. This is an appeal to those who have been set free by grace to live under grace by presenting all that they are to God. Incidentally, Paul uses the same verb “to present” (paristemi) in 14:10 where it means that one day you will “present” yourself before the judgment seat of Christ. If you faithfully “present” your body to Christ you will experience great reward at the bema. Beliefs should impact behavior.

Paul states that you are to present your body as a “living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.” The words “living,” “holy,” and “acceptable” all follow the noun “sacrifice.” There are three qualities of our sacrifice: (1) Living: In the Old Testament believers were called to “make” a sacrifice from a dead sacrifice. In the New Testament believers are called to “be” a sacrifice from a living sacrifice. The point is: God wants you to live to die. Most believers could take a bullet for Christ in a moment of courage, but every believer struggles to die to self and live for Christ on a daily basis. (2) Holy: We are to be wholly dedicated, “set apart” from the world and belonging to God. The term speaks of being fully abandoned to God. This means that as individual Christians and as a corporate church, we must do all that we can to ensure that holiness is promoted. That is why we must exercise church discipline. That is why we must speak the truth in love. That is why we must disciple new believers. We are commanded to be holy as God is holy. (3) Acceptable: The term “acceptable” builds on the Old and New Testament concept of the sacrifice as pleasing God. When you present your body as a sacrifice that is living and holy God is pleased.

Paul states that when you present your body as a sacrifice you have fulfilled your “spiritual service of worship.” The Greek adjective translated “spiritual” is logikos, from which we derive the English word “logical.” Logikos pertains to reason or the mind, and therefore does not really mean “spiritual.” It is better translated “reasonable” or “rational” (see the NASB marginal note, NET, KJV, NKJV). I think what Paul is saying is: “If you consider all that God has done for you—a sinful being—the only reasonable response is to offer Him your life” (cf. 6:1–3, 15–16). After all, this is the only logical response! Why would freed slaves continue to serve their old master? Presenting your body to serve the interests of your new Master, on the other hand, is completely logical—very much in keeping with good sense. A response of sacrificial worship expresses a heart of gratitude. It puts feet to our faith. Beliefs should impact behavior.
When I was growing up in Bremerton, WA, I was quite prankster. My favorite prank was “the present.” I had some boyhood friends who lived in east Bremerton in close proximity to the shipyard and downtown traffic. In a rather carnal moment, we decided that we would wrap up an empty box with a ribbon and bow and place the present on the busy street corner. We then attached a fishing hook to the present, complete with a fishing line and pole. Soon thereafter we positioned ourselves in my friend’s third story bedroom and waited for a hapless victim. Drivers and walkers alike would desire this present. Some would make multiple trips around the block eyeing the present. When someone finally succumbed to the curious temptation, we would rip the present out of their grasp using a fishing pole. It was a horrible prank!

Similarly, perhaps you’ve offered your body to Christ. You’ve declared that you will honor God with your body. But then you found yourself in a compromising situation. Your hormones screamed to be satisfied, and you obliged. Maybe you promised God that you would not get involved in one more dead end relationship, but then you became lonely and someone swept you off your feet. Perhaps you assured God that you would honor Him with ethical behavior at work, but then your boss offered you a promotion if you would just compromise yourself a bit. I can assure you that God doesn’t like being “pranked.” He may have a sense of humor, but He’s not laughing when you break promises with your body. Rather, He would say, “You’ve been bought with a price” (1 Cor 6:19).

So how can you present your body as a sacrifice?

- **Resolve to make worship a priority.** Worship is a Monday through Saturday lifestyle that doesn’t have to end on Sunday afternoon. Throughout the week you should worship the Lord and have your own private worship services. Determine today to present yourself as a sacrifice. Don’t put off this logical decision. Every morning declare, “Dear God, because of Jesus, I am Yours.”

- **Seek out ministry opportunities.** Do some chores, run an errand, lend a hand. Take the extra time to make a visit. Pick up the phone and check on someone who is going through a struggle. Volunteer to help on a project that will show God’s grace to someone else. Look for ways to demonstrate your love for the Lord in practical ways. Why? Martin Luther once said, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” The busier you are, the less likely you will be to give into your illegitimate bodily urges.

- **Commit yourself to physical exercise.** Discipleship demands discipline. If you want to “present” your body, you need to subdue it. Most godly people who I respect are committed to physical exercise (e.g., walking, hiking, weightlifting, athletics). God wants all of you! This shouldn’t scare you because if you let God have your life He can do more with it than you can.

[In 12:1 we have the “what” of the command (“present your body as a sacrifice”), and in 12:2 we have the “how” we are to respond to God.”]

2. **Renew your mind (12:2).** Presentable bodies come from changed minds because the mind controls the body. Verse 2 gives the means by which we can carry out the sweeping exhortation of 12:1. There are two commands, one negative one positive. In 12:2a Paul continues his thought from 12:1 by using the word “and”: **And do not be conformed to this world.** The term “conformed” (suschematizo) literally means to be molded or stamped according to a pattern. The verb is passive, implying that if you don’t actively and intentionally resist this age, you will be conformed. As the Phillips translation reads: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.” Paul’s use of “world” is not a reference to planet earth, but rather to the world system (lit. aion = “age”). Being conformed to this age refers to having the same type of thinking as this age.
The world’s philosophy is pretty simple: If you want something, go get it (partners, possessions, and power). People are important primarily because of what they can do for you. If they can’t do anything for you, don’t waste your time on them. Public opinion defines truth . . . popularity is more important than holiness. Faith and everyday living are unrelated. Live for the moment and don’t concern yourself with consequences. You are the center of your universe; don’t let anyone push you around! Our world also screams tolerance (religions are the same; accept and affirm same sex marriage) and truth is not absolute (what’s good for you is good for you). You must not be shaped by these influences. You must fight against the tide of sin, self, and Satan. How much television do you watch in the course of a week? How many movies do you watch in the course of a year? What type of music do you listen to? What magazines, books, and websites do you read? How much time are you devoting to social networking? Who are your friends? What type of influence do they have on you? What are your hobbies? How do you send your discretionary time?

Even though Paul is writing to the church, we are a group of individuals. These verses are speaking specifically to YOU. Will one diseased fish affect the whole tank? Will one mad cow infect the whole herd? Will one person conformed to the world have an affect on our church? YES! Hence, I dare you to be different. Stand up for Christ. Don’t go with the flow; go against the grain. Rebel against the status quo—become a disciple of Christ. Your life will be an adventure.

Beliefs should impact behavior.

Turning from the negative to the positive, Paul goes on to say, “but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The term “transformed” is the Greek word metamorphoo, which forms the root for the English word “metamorphosis.” When a tadpole is changed into a frog or when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, we speak of it as a metamorphosis. That is what God wants for each of His children. At what stage are you in this Christian transformation? Are you staying in the larva stage? Caterpillar? Baby butterfly? Full-grown butterfly? Where are you on the conformity to Christ growth chart?

There are three critical observations related to the verb metamorphoo: (1) Paul uses the present tense: this is not an “on again, off again” transformation, but a continuous one. (2) The verb is passive, the implication being that the catalyst in the transformation is God. (3) The verb is imperative, indicating that we do indeed have a responsibility. The Spirit “changes” us and enables us to offer ourselves completely to God. This takes place in the mind, which is renewed or changed (lit. “made new again and again”) by the Holy Spirit. Before you were saved, you were so accustomed to sin that you wore a groove into your heart and mind, like a river cutting a gorge through rock. What you now need to do is make some new grooves. That’s why Paul says you must be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

So how can you renew your mind?

- Saturate yourself in godly thinking. Read God’s Word. But it is really more than just reading. It is a matter of absorbing and interacting with God's Word. When we read the Bible we must constantly be asking ourselves, “What does this mean for my daily life.” Saturating ourselves in godly thinking also means exposing ourselves to godly writers, teachers, and influences. We need to meet regularly with friends who share our commitment to Christ. We must work to expand our thinking so that we are not just one-dimensional believers.

- Memorize Scripture. But you may object, “Memorization has never come easily for me.” “I’m too old; my mind left me a long time.” For what it’s worth, you can memorize Scripture. The great men and women I know who have been successful at this discipline have merely read various sections of Scripture over and over and the memorization took care of itself. You don’t need a Navigator’s Scripture Memory System. Just read and meditate on Scripture and watch how God hides it in your heart.
• *Slow down.* It has been said that Americans have three idols: Size, Noise, and Speed! Worship runs in the opposite direction. It reminds us of our littleness. It reminds us to be still, and know that He is God (Ps 46:10 ESV). It reminds us that we need to wait upon the Lord. Today would you begin the discipline of renewing your mind by getting away from the hustle, bustle, and distraction of life? Turn off the TV, turn off the radio, turn off your cell phone, shut down your computer, and hear from God.

Paul concludes that you are to present your body and renew your mind so that you may “**prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable** and **perfect.**” The key word is “prove” (*doximazo*). Notice, Paul doesn’t speak of “finding” or “discovering” God’s will. He says that you can “prove” God’s will. However, the apostle is not dealing with questions such as: Should I get married? Where should I go to college? Should I buy a new house? Should I move to Seattle or to Portland? These questions are important, but they are secondary when it comes to God’s will. The “will of God” here deals with obedience to His general will. As you obey God’s revealed will, He may well unveil His specific will for your life. But if you refuse to obey His explicit moral will, there’s no point praying for God to reveal His specific, individual will for your life. If you obey the clear injunctions of this text, God’s will “finds” you!

God wants your body and your mind; He wants all of you. Is there anything or anyone that you are withholding from God? Is your marriage and family yielded to Him? Is your vocation His? What about your finances or hobbies? Will you present yourself to Him today and every day hereafter? If you will, your life will never be the same.

It is likely that when you were growing up you used to say the Pledge of Allegiance every day in school. The pledge is a reminder that you are a citizen of the United States. Romans 12:1-2 is the Christian Pledge of Allegiance. It serves as a reminder that you are a citizen of heaven. You belong to heaven. Will you worship the Lord today by pledging your allegiance to Him?
Scripture References
Romans 12:1–2
Romans 6:12–13
Romans 8:29
2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:16–18
2 Corinthians 10:3–5
Galatians 2:20

Study Questions
1. Romans 1–11 demands the response set out in 12:1–2. Have I been guilty of failing to apply my biblical knowledge? If so, in what specific areas? How can I become a doer of the Word and not merely a hearer (James 1:22)? Who can hold me accountable to applying the Scriptures?

2. What “mercies of God” is Paul thinking of in Rom 12:1? How do these “mercies” motivate me to live a Christ-honoring life? Why are God’s mercies such a crucial impetus to Christian living? How can I share with other believers how God’s mercies motivate me to obey?

3. How can I “present” my body to God as an act of worship (Rom 12:1)? What does this look like on a daily basis? What parts of my body are most prone to disobey (e.g., eyes, lips, feet)? What sins am I most susceptible to? What area(s) of my life is God asking me to sacrifice to Him?

4. How can I “renew” my mind (Rom 12:2)? Since the Holy Spirit does the renewing and transforming (Titus 3:5; 2 Cor 3:18), what is my part in the process? Why is it so difficult to retrain the mind? How can I encourage others in my life to think biblically?

5. What does it mean to “prove what the will of God is” (Rom 12:2)? In what area of my life do I deeply desire to know God’s specific will? Today, will I commit to obeying God’s revealed will so that He may choose to lead me in more specific ways?
parakaleo must be given its full weight: Paul wants to show that the exhortations contained here [12:1–15:13] could be boiled down to their essence, they would be reduced to the words: Give yourselves wholly to God; do not be shaped by the old world order, but let new thought patterns transform your life.” Thomas Schreiner, Romans. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 640.

Boa and Kruidenier, Romans. 361.

Moo comments: “Therefore” must be given its full weight: Paul wants to show that the exhortations contained here [12:1-15:13] are built firmly on the theology of chaps. 1-11. The English verb ‘exhort’ captures well the nuance of the Greek parakaleo in contexts such as this. Its semantic range lies somewhere between ‘request’ and ‘command’: an exhortation comes with authority, but the authority of a preacher who is the mediator of God’s truth rather than the authority of a superior issuing a command.” Douglas J. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans. New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 748-49.

James 1:22: “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

The term parakaleo often introduces a discrete section in a letter (1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 10:1; Eph 4:1; Phil 4:2; 1 Thess 4:1; 1 Tim 2:1).

See also Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner, “Romans” in the Revised Expositors Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 182. Ash writes, “The word ‘urge’ is stronger than a mere request (‘Now here’s an idea. Go away and think about it.’) but different from a command with sanctions (‘Do this or else’). It means to exhort or appeal.” Christopher Ash, Teaching Romans, Volume 2 (London: Proclamation of Trust, 2009), 151. Stott rightly reminds us that “in spite of our newness in Christ . . . holiness is neither automatic nor inevitable.” John R. W. Stott, Romans: God’s Good News for the World (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 317.

Harold W. Hoehner, “Romans” in The Bible Knowledge Word Study (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2006), 188. BDAG s.v. parakaleo 2: “to urge strongly, appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage.”

The noun oiktirmon (“mercy”) appears five times in the NT (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 1:3; Phil 2:1; Col 3:12; Heb 10:28).

See Rom 9:11, 15, 16, 18, 23; 11:30–32. It is true that mercy occurs in Romans only in chapters 9-11 (9:15, 23; 11:31) and not in chapters 1-8, but most believe that mercy sums up the grace and compassion of God throughout the epistle. As Stott, Romans, 320 says, “The gospel is precisely God’s mercy to inexcusable and undeserving sinners, in giving his Son to die for them, in justifying them freely by faith, in sending them the life-giving Spirit, and in making them his children.” Boa and Kruidenier, Romans, 367 writes: “This concludes Paul's introductory exhortation following eleven chapters of doctrinal foundation. It would not be off the mark to say that all of Romans 1-11 could be summarized under the rubric of ‘the mercy of God.’ Starting with the initial chapters when the utter sinfulness of humans is revealed, it quickly becomes obvious that mercy is all that can save the human race. By the time we get to the end of chapter 11, Paul declares that God’s grand purpose is to have mercy on all (the elect) without exception. Therefore, when Paul says in Romans 12:1, ‘in view of God’s mercy,’ he is saying, ‘in view of Romans 1-11’; ‘in view of your sin, God’s salvation, your sanctification, and God’s sovereignty, it really is a spiritually reasonable thing for you to sacrifice yourself for him.’ That is Paul’s conclusion to Romans 1-11 and his introduction to Romans 12-16.”

The NIV’s “God’s mercy” conceals the fact that the Greek word for “mercy” is in the plural (“mercies”).

Paul appeals to the mind (“Therefore”), to the emotions and to the heart (“by the mercies of God”), and to the will (“you”). See Michael Eaton, Romans. Preaching Through the Bible (Kent, UK: Sovereign World Trust, 2010), 224–25.

Michael Eaton, Romans: A Practical Exposition, forthcoming.
presenting ourselves to God is an ongoing one.” Grant R. Osborne, Romans. The IVP NT Commentary series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 318–19.

18 A form of the word “present” (paristemi) is used five times in chapter 6 (see 6:13 [2x], 16, and 19 [2x]). Osborne comments: “Many churches see a once-for-all sense in the aorist infinitive to offer here and therefore argue for a ‘second work of grace,’ a crisis spiritual transformation that occurs only once. But that is to misunderstand the aorist force. It can only have an idea of one-time action in certain contexts, and the aorist infinitive rarely has this force. Instead, it draws its force from the main verb, the present-tense I urge, and it is followed by two present-tense imperatives in verse 2—conform and be transformed. Thus its force is more of a continuous action. The process of presenting ourselves to God is an ongoing one.”


21 Boa and Kruidenier, Romans, 364.

22 Ash, Teaching Romans, Vol 2, 153.

23 Paul’s use of soma (“body”) has significance but likely refers to the whole person (Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 750–51; Schreiner, Romans, 643). Stott, Romans, 322: “Then our feet will walk in his paths, our lips will speak the truth and spread the gospel, our tongues will bring healing, our hands will lift up those who have fallen, and perform many mundane tasks as well like cooking and cleaning, typing and mending, our arms will embrace the lonely and the unloved, our ears will listen to the cries of the distressed, and our eyes will look humbly and patiently towards God.”

24 Paul uses the phrase “pleasing to God” in a figurative sense in Phil 4:8.

25 It is interesting that the term for “sacrifice” (thysia) used here is never used to translate an offering in the Hebrew OT. But it is used of the priest’s service in “standing before the LORD.” See Allen P. Ross, “The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans” (Rom 12:1–21): www.christianleadershipcenter.org/romans9.htm. Accessed 25 June 2011.

26 Boa and Kruidenier, Romans, 363. Bruce, The Letter of Paul to the Romans, 213 writes, “The sacrifices of the new order do not consist in taking the lives of others, like the ancient animal sacrifices, but in giving one’s own (cf. Heb. 13:15-16; 1 Pet. 2:5).”

27 The word “living” (zao) may also denote the spiritual state of believers. They are now “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11, 13; 8:13). Those who are alive in Christ are called to give their lives to him as a sacrifice (see Schreiner, Romans, 644).

28 Interestingly it appears that Paul is discussing the church as an entity here rather than each individual separately (though some overlap certainly exists). “Your bodies” is plural, but “sacrifice-alive, holy, and pleasing” is singular. The church, then, is to collectively offer itself as a living, holy, and pleasing sacrifice, which can only be accomplished when each member agrees and participates here. Paul continues the corporate motif that has pervaded Rom 9–11 while also introducing the individuals who make up the group. However, for the benefit of the reader, I typically address Paul’s words to the individual.

29 Paul uses this same metaphorical sense in Phil 4:18.

30 See Ex 29:18, 25, 41; Num 15:7–14; Ps 51:19; 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:10; Phil 4:18; Col 3:20; Heb 13:21 (see Osborne, Romans, 319).

31 The only other NT use of logikos is 1 Pet 2:2.

32 C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans, 2 vols. ICC series (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 2:601–5; James D. G. Dunn, Romans 9–16. Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1988), 2:711–12; Schreiner, Romans, 645. Hoehner 188 rightly states, “If Paul meant ‘spiritual,’ he probably would have used the adjective pneumatikos since he used it twenty–four times in his writings, three of those in Romans (1:11; 7:14; 15:27).” Moo, Romans, 394 suggests that “informed” or “understanding” is the best single equivalent in English.

33 Schreiner, Romans, 646 brings out that there is an eschatological aspect as well; the transfer of realms from the law to grace is connected to the inauguration of the new age in Christ, a time of spiritual worship as daily conduct. This of course does not replace the corporate worship of the people of God in the church service. But it does mean that the corporate service is a launching of daily worship. The two are inseparable parts of a larger whole—serving God in every area of life.

34 Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 754.

35 Paul also refers to negatives in Rom 12:3, 14, 16, 19, and 21.

36 Technically in the Greek text this is the first imperative (i.e., command) verb, but in Rom 12:1 when Paul “urges” us to present our bodies it has the force of a command.
The only other NT use of *suschematizo* is found in 1 Pet 1:14. BDAG s.v. *suschematizo*: “to form according to a pattern or mold, form/model after something.”

Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 242 offers this additional insight: “Believers are commanded to refrain from being molded after the cultural norms of this age. For if they do not participate in Church, prayer, and reading the Word, Christians will automatically become victims of the world which will mold them. Hence Paul used the passive tense of the verb *conformed* (*syschematizesthe*), which refers to the world’s influence that will conform believers after its image. Consequently, a passive believer will be influenced to act and look like the people of this age unable to be distinguished as a child of God.”

The word translated “world” is not *kosmos* but *aion*, which means “age.” Paul is not saying that the world is evil, which would contradict Genesis 1. Barnett suggests that Paul deliberately uses the term *aion* to refer to “the period of time that began with the ‘fall’ of Adam and ended with the ‘revelation of the sons of God’ (8:19). Paul Barnett, *Romans: The Revelation of God’s Righteousness* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus, 2003), 271.

See Titus 3:5 “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 757 remarks, “This re-programming of the mind does not take place overnight but is a lifelong process by which our way of thinking is to resemble more and more the way God wants us to think.”


Tony Evans, *Free at Last* (Chicago: Moody, 2001), 45.

The Greek construction *eis to* ("so that") could be either purpose or result. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 757 opts for the former while Schreiner, *Romans*, prefers the latter. I concur with Moo and understand this as a purpose clause.

In most instances, when the term “acceptable” is used in the NT, it refers to that which is acceptable to God (see 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:18; Phil 4:18; Col 3:20; Heb 13:21).

The word *teleios* ("perfect") in this context means unstoppable, complete. No one can interfere with it.

Elsewhere Paul uses *dokimazo* ("to prove") to say that believers must test or examine what the Lord’s will is (Eph 5:10).

In a ministry setting this is a very important principle to keep in mind. We can’t expect casual Christians who are constantly living disobedient, fleshly lives to able to discern what God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will for their lives are. We need to remind people of the principle that God reveals His will to those who are walking according to His plan and purposes.

Pao observes “The Reversal of Romans 1 in Romans 12”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romans 1:18–32</th>
<th>Romans 12:1–2</th>
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<td>Worshipping created things rather than the Creator</td>
<td>Be involved in spiritual worship (12:1)</td>
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<td>(1:25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degrading our bodies (1:24)</td>
<td>Offer our bodies to God (12:1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual impurity (1:24)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given over to a depraved mind (1:28)</td>
<td>The mind will now be renewed (12:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filled with every kind of wickedness (1:29)</td>
<td>Called not to conform any longer to the pattern of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>this world. (12:1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
