

**Great Verses of the Bible**  
**I Beg You, Brothers and Sisters**  
**Romans 12:1-2**  
**June 18, 2023**  
**Pastor John Mars**

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Good morning, Church. Gentlemen, Happy Father's Day! If you consider yourself an adult male (I am not going to define that for you), but if you consider yourself an adult male, if you are able, I would encourage you to stand. Gentlemen, thank you for your courage, your strength, your example, and your love. And we pray that God would bless you with an awesome day this day, and you would feel our love and appreciation for all that you do, but especially for the example that you set. God bless you!

We continue in our series of sermons today on "Great Verses from the Scriptures." This is one of my favorites: Romans, chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, 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, 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."

May God bless the reading of His Word.

We have all known someone that marched to the beat of their own drum. Sometimes that is good, and sometimes it was bad. I saw a shirt that I'm gonna get once I retire. It said, "The voices in my head are back. Cool!" Jeannine had a friend who definitely marched to the beat of her own drum. Her name was Kay. She was a sixth-grade schoolteacher, never married, lived to be 101. I knew her in her late 80s. She was Jeannine's sixth-grade schoolteacher. And she taught in a school that was largely impoverished kids who had very limited resources and very small worlds, and she expanded their worlds. And often her teaching wasn't sixth-grade curricula. She would sneak her students out of the classroom, take them down to the gym, and teach them ballroom dancing. Or she would bring utensils to school and teach them etiquette, and how to properly set a table, and what fork you used at what time, in case they actually got an opportunity to go out to dinner. She was a person who was extraordinary, and she liked to keep you just a little bit off balance. You know, when you and I encounter one another, I say, "Hey, how you doing? How's it going? How's life treating you?" and that kind of stuff. She would go, "John, what have you done this week to make the world a better place?" Or, "John, what is your long-term goal for happiness in life?" Or, "John, how do you think the recent actions of the government are going to impact the environment?" That's her greeting statements. And she always was trying to get me, somehow or another, in a loving and grace-filled way. Right after Jeannine and I got married, one day she called me and she said, "John, I've decided I'm going to be your second wife!" At age 95. (Ask me, after we get done, what the rest of that conversation was!) Then she called me about two weeks later and said, "John, I've decided I'm going to get married, and I want you to do the wedding." I said, "Well, Kay, I'd be honored to do the wedding. Who's the lucky fella?" She said, "I haven't decided yet. But he's got to have all of his own teeth." I guess your priorities are different at 95. She and Jeannine

used to vacation together. She had a big, huge motorhome. Now this lady was 4' 8". She looked like an ant driving a bus. So, they're in the mountains of central Idaho, steep mountains, twisty roads. And she said, "Jeannine, this is going to be my last trip in the motorhome." Now that's sad, but it's also an honor that she is including Jeannine in her last trip in her motorhome. She follows up by saying, "Yeah, I got diagnosed with macular degeneration. And I have been declared legally blind!" She was one of those people that did not conform to society. She did not conform to the world, but she transformed the world around her and made it a better place.

One of my biggest burdens, and one of the things I think is one of the greatest challenges of the modern church, is conforming to the world. We are bombarded with so much information. We have to be very, very careful what we choose to digest, what we choose to take in, or we will unwittingly be conformed to this world. I see this happening in faith communities all the time. I see faith communities and individual Christians, for instance, allowing their politics to shape their faith, instead of their faith shaping their politics. And I see people allowing the standards and priorities of this world to shape their belief systems and what they do. And it could sneak in very, very insidiously, and you never even know it's happening.

In our Scripture today, Paul addresses this. Paul, in Romans, follows his general pattern. For 11 chapters, he has plumbed the depths of theology, speaking and talking mostly of God's mercy. But then he turns to practical application: What do you do? How do you live this out? And so, in chapter 12, he begins, "I beg you, I beseech you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercies..." For much of the first 11 chapters of Romans, he has talked about the mercy of God: the mercy of God to the Jewish people, the mercy of God to the Gentile peoples, the mercy of God to all sinners, to everyone. In view of what God has done for you, in view of what God has done in you, in view of God's love, in view of God's mercy, in view of God's grace, in view of God's patience and in view of God's forgiveness, it is just reasonable that you offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God. There are two meanings to this: living sacrifices, not dead sacrifices. "Offer your bodies." Again and again in Paul's writing, he reminds us that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We talk often about how we are the hands and the feet and the mouth of Christ. We are the bodies of Christ. This is the body of Christ, and Christ has no body here except ours. Paul says, "In view of what God has done for you, it is only reasonable that you would offer yourself in return." It also means that we have been made alive in the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit enlivens us, enlightens us, and so we are truly alive. And we are to offer ourselves, in our enlivened state, in service to God. That's all of us. That's all of you, not some of you. That's not part of the time, it's all of the time. A sacrifice is permanent. A sacrifice is complete. Offer your whole self, every aspect.

Years ago, I learned something really cool. You ready? When it says, "your reasonable act of worship," the word in Greek that is translated "worship" is also equally viable to translate it as "service." So where it says "worship," you can substitute "service," your reasonable act of "worship," your reasonable act of "service." True worship of God, true service of God, is offering every aspect of ourselves to God all of the time. You don't go out and serve God; you are a servant of God. We don't just worship God in church; our lives are a worship of God. We don't just serve God when we go on missions or work a

Walk with Christ; we are the servants of God. It makes a difference. For this to take place, there must be a fundamental, radical change.

Paul says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world. Don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This is a fundamental change. It may start in a moment, but it is a movement. It may start in a moment, but it is a movement. And it is perpetual and continual, and it continues throughout a lifetime, consistent and persistent, constant and continual, not just a one-time event. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

My computer is stupid. It can't do anything except what I tell it to do. Nothing. Just once I would like to put my password in, and get it wrong, and have it flash: "Close enough!" Your mind, my mind, is like my computer. You get out of it exactly what you put in it. And if you fill it with garbage, you're gonna get garbage out. If you fill it with crud, you're gonna get crud out. But if you fill it with Christ, guess what you're going to get out? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, in view of God's mercies, that you present yourself as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable act of worship, or service. And do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This world has a lot to offer, and some of it is good and some of it is not. We must be very careful and cautious about what we accept and whom we accept it from. Don't allow the world to dictate to you. This can happen very, very, very subtly. I have recognized it in my own life. I remember, and I've used this example before, so forgive me for this, but years ago now I was in a phase where I wanted to be relevant. You know, I wanted to be hip. I wanted to address what's going on right now. Well, it didn't work. What I did was, I saturated myself with what was going on in the world. And what I noticed, when I went back at the end of that year and evaluated what I had done and how I had preached, I realized that my sermons had gotten more negative and pessimistic and darker and darker and darker. The reason was: that's what I was filling my mind with.

Check often your motivations, your attitudes, and your priorities. Why is it that you're saying these things? Why is it you're doing these things? Why is it that when something happens, your mind is going to a dark place? What's creeping in? If we do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, and we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, Paul said then we can test what God's will is, test whether we are on the right track, test whether our attitudes and our priorities are conforming to Christ's attitudes and priorities, or whether we are off base. This does not happen instantaneously, but it happens with consistency and persistency. We live into God's will. This is a continual transformation. Again, this is not a once for all. This is a continual, perpetual transformation, not an immediate revelation, but a continual transformation. Now sometimes, every once in a while, .0001% of the time, there's an instantaneous revelation. It happens. But most often the way God's will is revealed in our life is we live into it. We offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God, and we get up every day and we say, "God, you are my priority today. Today, I'm going to do my very best to live as You want me to." And that consistency and that persistency is not an immediate revelation but a living manifestation. What you do is you show up for work every day and say, "Today, Lord, I am a living sacrifice. Not some area of my life, but all of my life. Not part

of the time, but all of the time.” You show up for work every day, everywhere you are, whatever you are doing, you are a living sacrifice. That means if you are at work, you are worshiping God and serving God. That means if you're on vacation, you are worshiping God and serving God. That means if you're at school, you're worshiping God and serving God. A living sacrifice. We don't just worship God in church. We don't just serve God when we go on missions. Our life is to be a living sacrifice. You aren't going to serve God; you are a servant of God.

So, you don't go to serve God, you are a servant of God. For that to happen, you cannot allow the world to think for you. You got to do your own thinking. Let Jesus think for you. Let's pray.

I want to challenge you. I want to challenge you to consistently and persistently evaluate your priorities, your motives, and whether or not Christ is doing your thinking, or the world is doing your thinking. Let's pray.

Lord, forgive us when we allow the world to have undue influence on us. Forgive us when Christ is not the center of our lives. Forgive us when we only give You a part of who we are and not all of who we are, and some of what we do and not all. And Lord, this morning we commit ourselves to being living sacrifices, giving You all of ourselves. And Lord, we are vowing to take a close look at our priorities and our motivations. In Christ's name, amen.