

VISION 2026



Segment 1 (week of March 2nd): What does it mean to seek and submit to God's leading in our lives with respect to stewardship?

Sources: James Montgomery Boice, "Romans Volume 4: The New Humanity (Romans 12-16)"; R. Kent Hughes, "Romans: Righteousness from Heaven"

Reflections on Pastor Tom's sermon on Mark 5:1-20: *Breaking Free*

This sermon addresses the fundamental question, Who is this One? Last week we saw that Jesus demonstrated his power over nature. This week we see him exercising power over the demonic world. Our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil. If Jesus has power over a demon-possessed man, do we question his power to free us from other forms of evil? The devil uses the world and the flesh to carry out his purposes. Being under the control of evil takes many different forms. Are we chained to things like worry, anger, greed, lust, gossip, and materialism? Being under their control causes bondage. However, the demoniac came under the control and influence of a new master and was given a new Spirit—the Holy Spirit who liberates and sets free. **Until we experience the mercies of God we will never be able to offer our bodies up as living sacrifices.**

Study of Romans 12:1-2 (part 1)

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

In these verses, we read Paul's succinct, yet rich exhortation to commit ourselves to God. This passage shows us what it means to seek after and submit to God's leading in our lives. Paul describes the basis of this commitment, the character of this commitment, the demands of this commitment, and ultimately the effects of this commitment.

This week we will focus on the first two of these elements—the basis and character of this commitment. Next week we will focus on the last two of these elements—the demands and effects of this commitment.

The basis, or the "how", in this passage, is "by the mercies of God." And what mercies are these? None other than the deep theological discourse Paul had provided in the first eleven chapters of Romans—namely, God's mercy to a fallen people through the person of his Son, our Savior, Christ Jesus.

In fact, the final verse of chapter 11 transitions from this theology to the application we have here in chapter 12: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” The more we comprehend God’s mercies to us, individually, the greater our commitment to him should be. Furthermore, this is not a suggestion. When Paul says “I appeal to you”, this is not a request, but a reminder of our obligation, because of what God has done for us. Therefore, we must meditate on the Gospel, for it is as the Spirit works this truth of God’s mercy deeper into our hearts that we will then respond in commitment to him.

The character, or the “what”, of this commitment, is that we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship. The Greek word translated “to present” in this passage refers to the technical ritual of a sacrifice, and the fact that we are to present our “bodies” points clearly to the totality of the sacrifice, as we see repeatedly throughout the Old Testament. The difference, of course, is that we are not physically killed, as the Old Testament sacrificial animals were, but are living, holy and acceptable to God, presenting all of ourselves to God for his use, including our time, talent, and treasure. Our sacrifice is holy and acceptable not due to our own “presentation” of our bodies, of course, but because of Christ’s work to set us apart to God. This obligation of total sacrifice is not reserved only for some Christians—such as those who dedicate their lives to full time ministry—but applies to all sons and daughters of God. As noted above, if we understand the truth of Christ’s work for us, then our only response could be total commitment to him. Anything less would be irrational. Yet, our sin nature so often tries to hold certain desires back from total subjection to God.

Discussion Questions on Romans 12:1-2 (part 1)

- How are we able to present our bodies as living sacrifices? What does Paul have in mind when he references the mercies of God? Why is it important that we have in view the wonderful salvation which he has been writing about when we consider how we ought to live?
- It seems like there are a lot of other ways Paul could have described our “spiritual worship,” so why does he say that it is presenting our bodies as living sacrifices?
- What does the totality of this sacrifice look like in our lives? How would our lives look different if our totality of sacrifice included our time? And our money?
- What does it mean to be “holy and acceptable to God”?
- When we discern God’s will, Paul promises that it will be good, acceptable, and perfect. Good, acceptable, and perfect to whom? If we do God’s will, as Paul commands us, will we look back at the end of our lives and feel dissatisfied, or wish we had spent more time chasing our selfish pursuits?



Application Questions

- Watch the first Vision 2026 video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4Sfqr6cKVI>. In this video, Pastor Tom and Stacey described some of the miraculous ways God has led APC throughout the years. What are examples in your life where you've seen God lead?
- At APC, we often remind ourselves to "attempt something so great for God that if he is not in it, it is destined to fail." Have you ever done that in your own life? Why or why not? What was the result?
- What does being a child of God, a follower of our precious Savior, look like in your life?
- God made us his treasure and was willing to die to buy us back from death. Is he our treasure? Are we living a life of total commitment to him as our love response to him? Or are there areas in our lives where we refuse to commit to him, where we want to maintain control?
- Do you believe you are obedient to God? Are you willing for the Spirit to show you areas of your life where you need to surrender to God and obey him?
- Do you struggle with anxiety? What specific thing are you anxious about? Do you believe that God is truly good and wants what is best for you? This kind of exercise is difficult. Many of us are anxious about money—perhaps because we are concerned about our future and our security. At the root of this worry is a lack of faith that God is good, that he wants what is good for us, and that he has laid a plan for us before the foundation of the universe. Take time to name the sources of your anxiety and pray that God would deepen your faith in his goodness and love for you in each of these areas.

