

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.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 (ESV) So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

## I. Intro

- A. 2025 is in just getting started, but our mission has not changed
- B. 2025 report:
  - 1. \$106,974 more given to the budget (\$659,686 2023, \$766,660 2024) 16% growth
  - 2. We met budget, and I thank you for giving.
  - 3. 60 more people on average for the year, 80 more people on average in the fall semester. 25% growth
  - 4. Lots more numbers to celebrate, but thats not our point today.
- C. This year can be a beautiful year of ministry and growth, lets start off right.
- D. I'll be preaching this passage to North Park Church for the 17th time, it is that important to me as your shepherd.
- E. We are to bring God our response of praise with our whole self, no days off, no-one exempt.
- F. And we do this together as a body of believers, the church.
- G. Ministry in 2025:
  - 1. Don't let fear hold you back
  - 2. Don't let disappointments keep you down
  - 3. What is holding you back from serving in the fullness of the calling God has placed on you? Release that to Him!
- H. Scripture teaches:
  - 1. Each of us is gifted
  - 2. Each of us is in the process of being equipped
  - 3. Each of us has been given the Holy Spirit

## II. Text

- A. Romans 12:1-2
  - 1. The appeal comes from the MERCY of God, kindness draws us into right relationship and service
  - 2. Personal responsibility is a big part of the Spirit Filled life: We are called to respond to God.
  - 3. A living sacrifice is our worship: humble and submitted to God continually.
  - 4. Not conformed, but transformed
  - 5. Grow so you can understand the Lord's will, it is good
- B. 1 Thessalonians 2:8
  - 1. Affectionally desirous: other translations: we love/care for you so much
  - 2. Produced something: shared the gospel and ourselves:
    - a) We share the gospel
    - b) We share the ministry (ourselves)
    - c) We are connected because of Christ
  - 3. When you spend time together, you learn this aspect of ministry.

## III. Point

- A. Avoid Conformity
  - 1. There is a pattern and system of the world
    - a) The pattern is selfish, and sin
    - b) And we are bombarded with it, desensitizing us to it.
    - c) Then shamed into acceptance

- d) Lets not take the bait:
  - (1) Love people no matter what
  - (2) Stand in the truth no matter what
  - (3) Proclaim the truth no matter what
  - (4) Remember: people are more likely to receive the truth when you are in a healthy relationship with them and with God.
- 2. This pattern seeks:
  - a) To blame someone
  - b) To seek vengeance
  - c) To rely of self
  - d) To feed the fleshly desires
- 3. These patterns and systems will leave you empty and searching for meaning and purpose
- 4. There will never be enough of the world to feed the desire of the heart
  - a) There will never be enough money to satisfy
  - b) There will never be enough power/influence to satisfy
  - c) There will never be enough victories to satisfy
  - d) There will never be anything the world has to offer that will replace God and His plan.
- 5. You know the obvious problems with this, but what about the church?
  - a) The church, filled with people who have been changed by Christ, should do things differently.
  - b) We cannot gather more people and call it a success
  - c) We cannot build more buildings and call it a success
  - d) We cannot polish up the package and call it a success.
- 6. Success in the church is only found in obedience and reliance on God.
  - a) We are successful when we obey God
  - b) We are successful in transformation.
- B. Welcome Transformation
  - 1. Transformation is a process
    - a) Definition: Oxford: make a thorough or dramatic change in the form, appearance, or character of.
    - b) Change comes through the continued work of the Spirit in your life
  - 2. The challenge for folks who have been in the church for a while is to open yourself up to continued growth and transformation
    - a) You are changed at the moment of justification, you are transformed continually over time.
    - b) We sometimes think transformation is for someone else, but I'm challenging you to embrace this truth personally and in a productive way:
      - (1) Let the word produce something in you
      - (2) Not just knowledge, but transformation
  - 3. To be transformed is a response to sovereign God:
    - a) We struggle with this when we expect God to change to meet our desires and expectations
    - b) He is the same, His standard is the same, we walk in that truth daily.
  - 4. CONTINUAL TRANSFORMATION should be our EXPECTATION
- C. Promote Affection
  - 1. Affection causes us to respond to one another in a way that builds rather than tears down.
  - 2. This can be a real challenge when you respond to people from the flesh.
    - a) Reactions from the flesh do not promote affection
    - b) Reactions from the transformational work of Christ
  - 3. This years theme:
    - a) Share the Gospel, share yourself

- b) Serve as you are called and equipped
  - c) Share your life with the church
  - d) Serve in ministry and life with the amazing people God has redeemed and brought to worship together here.
  - e) Love each other, worts and all
4. Speak a good word for Christ
  5. Help others
  6. Serve the mission
  7. Ministry is going to be messy if you are doing it right, You will need your church and your savior.

IV. Close