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We're ready now to resume in Romans chapter 12 and before we leave our Examination of this concept of the mercies of God. I want to First of all point out again Dan asked this question on the break and it was a good one back in in Romans chapter 9 When Paul quotes God's words to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy I will have compassion on whomever I have had compassion That word compassion is this same word oiktirmos or a derivative of it and the first word there for mercy is eleos and Once again that the distinction there is eleos is the principle Or emphasizes the principle generally speaking and oiktirmos Generally emphasizes the expressions of that characteristic and so Paul is Urging us and the source of this motivation. He says I want to motivate you to Present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service Do not be conformed to this world But be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God? So Paul is has made his case from a doctrinal point of view He has demolished the arguments of those who think that righteousness comes by what we do He has said righteousness comes by what we think by who we trust this was the mistake that Israel made and as a result, they were fruitless and had to be set aside and We stand by faith In Romans 11 20 because of lack of faith Israel and By-extension believers in this age who don't See the purpose of life as being righteousness by faith will be broken off.

They're not going to be in the productive Part of God's plan. They're going to be in the discipline phase of God's plan You stand by faith do not be arrogant, but fear don't boast over the branches So now he says I beseech you Brethren you believers by the mercies of God by the things that are available from the Concrete expressions of God's mercy that we have seen it's by mercy that he grafted Everyone into this tree. It's his mercy.

That is the Purpose even in setting Israel aside in the same way that the reason he Hardened Pharaoh and the reason he brought discipline on Egypt was to display his mercy to Israel The case that Paul makes in Romans 9 he's there's an analogous case being made here The reason that God has been harsh with Israel and has set them aside is so that he might show mercy in this age And in this dispensation So he says that ought to be our motivation Now this is a critical thing because there's a lot said about Romans 12 1 & 2 In fact, I turned on the TV this morning and there was a very well-known Television ministry from a very good teacher of the Word of God Happened to be on and he happened to be addressing this very verse. I'd already done My work and was kind of going over it and here comes this very eloquent very well Read and very good teacher of the Word of God who who was addressing this same verse Romans 12 1 and he talked about this idea of Presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice and He went back and looked at a passage in Malachi that we have looked at where the Israelites were bringing Less than the best to God they were defiling his altars They were bringing the blemished and the lame and the sick sheep And God held them to account and he said you have defiled my altar and they said in what way have we defiled your altar? In what way have we been less than faithful and

what the same thing that that Paul? The words that he puts in their mouth in Romans 9 Why does he yet find fault who of us has resisted his will we're we're doing what the law requires We're bringing the sacrifices and the point that this gentleman made this morning was that God wants the best God wants the Perfect the unblemished the spotless Lamb the first fruits of the crop the firstlings of the flock The lamb without spot and without blemish and that's a very good point and I present it to you for your consideration. I would also point out however that this exhortation Based on God's mercy and the opportunity to receive God's mercy Paul says I'm urging you I'm exhorting you Because of the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice and It's easy to launch off and say well, you know, there's a hymn our best.

He wants from everyone our best And and that's a good and a worthy point, but one of the things that happens when we think about sacrifice I was looking at the hymn that we would sing this morning and one of the hymns that That came up for consideration by its very title is put your all on the altar For God and in our tradition of the church and in a lot of our teaching and a lot of our thinking when we come to this idea of presenting ourselves as a sacrifice, it's along the lines of this I Surrender all I'm just going to take my hands off the wheel God you take charge you take control and I remember having this Idea myself when I was younger and first started Trying to figure out what the Christian life was all about and I thought you know I fail so often. I don't know what it is. I should be doing.

I'm uncertain about exactly how I should Act and so forth I just wish God would take control and I would pray to God and say God I'm just I if it was up to me, I would just be a passenger in my body I would just kind of coop myself up in a little room in my mind and you can just put the Holy Spirit in here You can operate my body send me to Africa have me do whatever be whatever you just take charge I'm I would just like to surrender. I just want to give up take my hands off the wheel and let you drive and This is often presented as what is meant here by presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice We when we think of the sacrifice we think of the altar We think of the calf or the ox that was bound and laid on the altar and it's it's helpless. It's passive But that's not what the idea is here and we find that out from this word for present the word for present here is a Very interesting word.

It's a compound word in Greek and The first part of this word is the same as what we saw in Para Kaleo and This is the word Par Istami Histami is the word to stand and para means alongside and it means to you can put or place or stand something alongside you and hence the idea of presenting The interesting thing about this word is is how it is often used When you say well, I'm going to present myself I'm just going to lay myself out there take my hands off and and let God just oh Lord Just use me. Just use me as you see fit. I surrender I'm just going to shut my eyes and you just take control and I'll be sort of unconscious in the process That's not what this word is talking about.

We find this out in the way that it's used elsewhere for example, if you'll turn back to acts Yeah, I believe it's acts chapter 23 we find that Paul is is being sent by a Tribune he's going to send him

on up to Someone else to to be heard and to make his case and When he does this and I can't find the exact location now and unfortunately, I didn't write it down but there is a Here we go, it's in Acts chapter 23 verses 23 and following when they're going to send Paul to Felix the governor this Tribune called two of the centurions and he said that the third hour of the night get ready 200 soldiers with 70 horsemen and 200 Spearmen to go as far as Caesarea Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor and he writes a letter and basically the Tribune is trying to get Paul safely out of this hotbed of Animosity and hatred and these people that have sworn a blood oath that they're going to kill Paul before they eat another meal and so forth and so he gets all of these soldiers and he gets these mounts these means of transportation and they're going to they're going to take Paul over to Felix and and grant him safe conduct, but this Tribune takes these soldiers and these mounts and It says he provides them for Paul to ride on But this is the word from Par is to me or or in this case is para stasi and it means to put at his disposal to place it at his Disposal to provide it for his use to have it serve his purpose and So what we begin to see here is that this is not the the Tribune is not Sacrificing the soldiers and sacrificing the mounts and saying well just take them and do with what you will they have a specific purpose They've been provided In order to accomplish a purpose. He has placed it at Paul's disposal so that Paul can get from point A to point B and We have this same word used even here in Romans if you look back in Romans chapter 6 Paul had started to make this point earlier in the book and then he he makes some more Doctrinal points before he brings this exhortation to full Force but in Romans chapter 6 Talking about having died to sin and having been baptized into Christ's death and that the death that Christ died He died to sin and the life that he lives. He lives to God in verse 10 It's talking about Christ the death.

He died. He died to sin once for all but the life he lives he lives to God So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life and Yield your members to God as instruments of righteousness Well, guess what the word is here for yield. It's par is to me Which by the way if you were going to spell this out in English would be par Probably h i s t e m I Yield yourselves present yourselves place yourselves at God's disposal as men who have been brought from death to life You're not a passive dead thing laying there on the altar You're you've been raised to life.

You have the ability to act and to do you have capabilities you place yourself at God's disposal as an instrument or a weapon of Righteousness someone who's been brought from death to life and you you present Your members to God as instruments of righteousness sin has no dominion over you because you're not under law But under grace the very same word and the very same concept back there as here Christ died to sin and now the life that he lives he lives on God's behalf and He has as his purpose in life pleasing God not pleasing himself That was his attitude when he went to the cross and died and now that he's been raised. That's his attitude now the difference between that and and and some of the points that were made this morning in this in

this man's sermon on Romans 12 1 is When you go on through the verse and he says present yourself present your bodies a living sacrifice Holy acceptable to God which is your reasonable service? And he says don't be conformed to the world be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove What is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God all of the points that he made about good and acceptable and perfect? Had to do with our perception of God's plan and he went back to psalm 100 Where he says at the end of psalm 100 when it says enter into his gates with Thanksgiving enter into his courts with praise be Thankful unto him unto God and bless his name why for the Lord is good And he said see God is good if you present yourself as a sacrifice good things will happen to you This is all going to work out for benefit Reminds us of a lot of the sermons have been preached out of Romans 8:28 everything's going to work together for good if you if you Make the sacrifice to God God's going to reward you with good and that should be your motivation that good things are going to happen It's going to be acceptable God's will for you is not going to be unacceptable. You're not going to say Oh, this is an unacceptable set of circumstances.

This is an unacceptable Result and this was the argument that was made out of this passage, and it's a very common Thing and I don't mean to disparage the pastor that made it but look at what Paul is saying He doesn't say I beseech you by the opportunity to reap good things I beseech you by the good result that you're going to have in your life to present yourself as a sacrifice He says I beseech you by the mercies of God This is going to be acceptable to God. This is going to be pleasing to God. This is in God's best interest Put yourself at God's disposal Whatever the result may be and the result is going to be the good what God considers to be good And that's what's important.

It's so easy for in a subtle way To always be motivated by what we think is going to be good for us Christianity presents itself today as a problem-solving way of life come to Christ and he will heal you he will bind you up He will prosper you so a seed of faith, and you will reap a great benefit Churches that are popular. Why are they popular? What do they offer? They offer a wonderful worship experience if you come to our church this morning You're going to hear contemporary music the kind of music that you like the kind of music that Stimulates you and lifts you up if you come to our church this morning You're going to be with people that you'll enjoy being with they're going to make you feel good They're going to have a glad hand for you and have a warm Word and and they're going to turn around and tell you how much they love you in the service And if you come to our church, you're going to find that we've got ministries for you. We've got daycare for you We've got helps for you.

We've got self-help. We've got step programs we've got ministries that are going to meet your needs and Christianity presents itself today as a thing that will be good for us that we're going to benefit we're going to find what we need and There's nothing intrinsically wrong with that all of us probably at the point of salvation The reason we come to Christ is we recognize our need. We need something that God provides We're afraid of going to the lake of fire and we and our main

motivation isn't necessarily always that we recognize What a great and holy God Is present in the universe and that he requires us to to meet his standard of righteousness We're usually most of us get scared into salvation when they start preaching Fire and brimstone we say I don't want to go to the lake of fire.

I don't want to suffer eternal damnation and and when we are young in the faith our Motivation for studying the Word of God is I don't want to be disciplined. It's like our children Our children don't at the early ages of one and two and three don't obey us because they say, you know I've got such wonderful parents and they mean such so well for me and I know they're wise and and all these things really Make a lot of sense and I really need to participate and cooperate and try to please them and yeah kids obey because they don't Want to get a spanking they don't want to be disciplined They don't want to suffer the consequences of disobedience and it is in their own best interest to obey to conform to to do and That's okay for a child But as we grow we put away childish things and and it's a wonderful thing when our children reach the point of starting to be self-starting and motivated because they Understand why we have rules they care about parents and they don't come do the dishes because they know they're going to get a reprimand If they fail to help or they fail to volunteer or they fail to do what they're supposed to They start realizing boy, you know, my mom works hard all day. I ought to give her some help I don't want her to be stuck with all of these dishes I don't want her to be stuck with all of these chores I need to pitch in and help and they start to act out of love and out of looking at the interests of Their parents and what their parents consider important and that's a shift in motivation Isn't it? Hopefully all of us as we mature begin to do that and we stop doing things out of a sense of fear or out of a sense of duty and we start To do it because we're motivated by love That's what should happen in our Christian life and we don't have to hang our heads in shame that that for a lot of years of our life We've basically been in it for the blessing if you will We know that well, this is the life that will prosper.

This is the only way to be happy This is the only way to have peace is to pursue the things of God and we say well I want to have peace. I want to have joy. I want to have blessing I don't want to be under discipline.

So I'm going to to get with the program, but there's a point at which we learn about the plan of God and we learn about the character of God and as we see his glory revealed and as we see his Character revealed we appreciate him and we begin to see life and history and the forward progress of his plan And it motivates us and we see that there are things that should happen because it's in God's Interests if you will it makes God's point it accomplishes God's purpose and we start to operate out of love That's what Paul is Calling us to here. He says look at the mercies of God. Look at the compassions of God Look at what God is doing look at how gracious he is and how his glory is reflected when he can have mercy on the vessels of mercy and Paul says when you Present when you put yourself at God's disposal.

This is acceptable to God. This is what pleases God He doesn't say if you don't do this, you're going to be in big trouble He says this is what's going to please God This is reasonable in the

light of what God has done and it's it's a call to our higher motivations to our higher sense of Love of what is in God's best interest and that's why it's a sacrifice now Let's go back to what we were talking about earlier about these blemished sacrifices that the Israelites brought in Malachi Why would someone? Make that choice here. It is it's sacrifice time.

You go out and look over the flock and you've got this new healthy young Ram that is boy, you know if you could keep that ram he's got the best blood He's got the the best combination of genetic factors. He's strong. He's healthy There's not a blemish on him anywhere and you've got this kind of limping.

Here's one. That's kind of sickly he was the runt of the of the crop of lambs that year and You think you know just from a practical point of view if I keep killing the very best that my flock produces I go take that down to God and sacrifice it what's gonna happen to my flock it just makes sense to keep the strongest and the best and weed out isn't that what nature itself teaches you that the Survival of the fittest and so forth and here I am taking the best of my flock and slaughtering it for God all the time I'm just gonna have a runty weak flock Someone who's willing to take that Healthy Virile Best of the flock down and sacrifice it what's going to be in his mind. Why is he willing to do that? He's got faith He trusts God he recognizes that it's more important to please God Than it is to worry about how the flock is going to turn out next year and who's going to sire the next crop of lambs He recognizes that pleasing God is worthwhile and God deserves the best God requires the best and it's a joy to take and give God the best.

It's a completely different mindset Who is it? That's going to withhold that lamb that best of the flock and take something that's blemished and something that's sickly Somebody who's not really trusting God if I don't look out for myself here If I don't kind of husband this flock and keep the best my flock might disappear something bad might happen to me economically What what's going to happen to me? Taking the best and the firstfruits and Sacrificing it to the Lord is in its best Form is an expression of faith. It's recognizing that pleasing God is more important So what if my maybe my flock is going to die out and disappear? Maybe they'll all be slaughtered by disease because I didn't have the healthiest it doesn't that's not as important as pleasing God I love the Lord. I want to present to him the best That should be our motivation when we come to God and present ourselves as a living sacrifice We don't do it with one eye on How the tote board is going to turn out on the bottom line, you know? All is so much of the Christianity in the media is so your seed with us and you'll reap you know, if you're just willing to sacrifice now, you'll get back a hundredfold and Everything is presented as as what benefit we're going to get come to our church and look at all the benefits you'll get Come to Christ and look at all the benefits you'll get For us, especially as growing believers We need to reach the point of recognizing that it doesn't really matter what happens to us What counts is that God is pleased and that's an expression of faith.

That's when faith really starts hitting the road in terms of of Lifestyle in terms of priorities and in

terms of the decisions that we make and the actions that we take is this may appear and May in fact not turn out very well. Look at the Apostle Paul. Look at his circumstances He made decisions consistently that pleased God and fulfilled God's calling for him and his circumstances were lousy And he enumerates them several places in Scripture, but Paul didn't measure by that and he didn't say, you know I must be doing something wrong because I'm not really prospering.

I'm I'm sowing seed and so forth Paul measured by Whether God was pleased Paul exhorted other believers because so that God could be pleased He said I have betrothed you to Christ as a bride and I don't want you to fall short. I Want you to be a pure Virgin bride when Christ returns I don't want him to find a spot or a blemish in you as a church and that's the reason that he traveled and that's The reason that he sacrificed himself He cared for the church and he cared about the things of God and he knew that that was what would please God the most Then he didn't worry about how it turned out for himself and in the very act of Denying himself and the very act of setting aside whatever might be in his own best interest He has actually secured eternally the very greatest blessings from God the very greatest rewards from God and it's one of those ironies of God's plan that in the very act of denying ourselves we find the greatest of Blessing and the greatest of fulfillment, but it's at the point that we're willing to surrender all Not because we expect to get in return not because well if I Sink now, I'll float later, but because we genuinely care about what God Values and what pleases God? That's the point at which God is pleased and that's the point at which our Inheritance is secure So when Paul says present your bodies as a living sacrifice Holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship Some Bible say it's your reasonable service, but it's It's what we should do if we really do recognize the mercy of God if we really do care about these things It ought to be a reflex if we're growing believers we ought to be past the I want a blessing and I don't want discipline motivation and we should be reaching the point of I Really want God to be pleased. I really want God's glory to be reflected and I'm not concerned about what happens to me and When we do think about what's going to happen to us we trust God the man who took that unblemished lamb down and sacrificed it When he did it right Trusted God for the well-being of his flock and he knew that how can I possibly go wrong in putting first things first and pleasing God? How can I possibly go wrong? Maybe I will maybe I won't suffer economically because of this but the thing that's most important to me is pleasing the Lord and that's what I've done That's what Paul is calling us to here in the light of the mercies of God Do not be conformed to this world That is the contrast.

What does it mean to be conformed to this world? What is this world? How did Paul describe this world in chapter 1 out to please self looking out for number one? Pursuing one's own priorities one's own pleasure one's own well-being and it's a very convicting message if we are going to be transformed we we understand and we've reviewed many times in the past the principle of Transformation by the presence of the Word of God and the Spirit of God within us What is what are we being transformed away from conformity to the world? What is the church at large today? Doing it's conformed to the world. It's holding out the hope of Self gratification self aggrandizement Bettering oneself getting a better deal having a better life having a problem-

solving Having people who can surround you and lift you up and comfort you and so forth Rather than saying this is what a holy and righteous and merciful God deserves We're not motivated by worship. We're motivated by What will turn out the best for us and we shouldn't be that way Especially as we grow our motivation ought to change we shouldn't be thinking well, you know, I I'm expecting a blessing I'm a believer and God's going to bless believers who are faithful and believers who study his word and so forth And you know, I really do need that blessing and I really do need that that approval from God for my own well-being Hopefully we'll reach the point of being motivated When we see the mercy of God when we see the glory of God That's going to create a sense of urgency in our soul to do whatever it takes to please him and accomplish his purpose We'll continue this study next week and move forward in the next couple of verses here in Romans chapter 12 But let's close here in prayer Father we thank you for the expressions of your mercy and grace toward us.

We thank you for your patience with us as we grow you're disciplining of us as children your nurturing of us all of the provision that you make through your word through your spirit through the gifts that you've distributed in the body of Christ through the experiences that you bring our way through each of the tests that we face the Prosperity tests and the adversity tests and we know that all of these things are designed to bring us closer in our thinking to the way that you think and closer in our actions in our way of life to the Actions and way of life of our Savior Jesus Christ who lives his life to please you We pray that in the light of these things we will grow and we will to reach that point of Seeing life and history and the forward movement of your plan from your perspective and living our lives in that light We thank you for these things you think we thank you for all the opportunities that we have Through your expressions of mercy toward us in the person of our Savior Jesus Christ, and we ask these things in his name. Amen