

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide
Romans 12:1-3

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of Romans, we are exploring the idea of being a living sacrifice to God.

Verse 1 says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” Here, Paul uses language of the altar to signify that our sacrifice to God is a spiritual act of worship.



Verse 2 says, “Do not conform 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.” The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, “Philosophers wanted hearers to base all decisions on reason; Paul adds an eschatological (end times) perspective.” This perspective allows us to consider ourselves as citizens of the coming new world, and what it takes to get there. This involves the renewing of our minds and being able to discern God’s will...what is good and pleasing.

Verse 3 says, “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” Here, the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible says, “Many philosophers urged a sound view of oneself based on one’s role in the larger universe; Paul urges believers to consider their roles in Christ’s body.”

Questions to Consider

1. Describe the kind of sacrifice Paul urges us to make. What are the characteristics of this sacrifice and how can we do this?
2. What is the purpose of the transformation by the renewing of our minds?
3. How would you describe the pressures put upon a someone to conform to the world? How does the inward transformation of a believer change this?
4. How can we know the will of God?