

Not Conformed But Transformed

Romans 12: 2

Romans 12: 1 – 2 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. ²Do 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.

- What Paul is calling us to do is right there in the middle of verse 1—give our bodies to God as a living sacrifice.
 - So, think about what Paul is saying. Christianity is not just a spiritual commitment to Christ; it is also a physical commitment.
 - Christianity is not just giving your heart to Jesus; it is giving all to Jesus. Think of it in terms of this riddle.
 - Question: In a bacon and egg breakfast, what's the difference between the chicken and the pig?
 - Answer: The chicken is involved, but the pig is fully committed!
 - So, as Christians, which are we more like? Are we the chicken, just sort of involved with Jesus, or the pig, fully committed?
- Here in Romans 12, Paul is calling us to be like the pig—fully committed. Don't just give a bit or piece of yourself, give your entire being to the work of the Lord. Your marriage, your family, your home, your job, your leisure, your recreation, is all a living sacrifice to God.
 - It is sad that this sounds strange to many Christians today. But over and over again, in Scripture, this is the life that Christians are called to live.

Colossians 3: 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- Whatever really does mean whatever. Cooking dinner, cleaning house, doing yard work, raising children, going to school, going to a job, living in retirement—for a Christian it is all done in the name of Jesus for the glory of God.
- Your body—that is your mind, your eyes, your ears, your mouth, your hands, and feet, all that you are is to be offered to God as a living sacrifice.
- If we don't count that as a big deal, then we are not truly counting the cost. Think of how Jesus described this being fully committed.

Matthew 13: 45 – 46 The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

- The life of a Christian isn't one of half-hearted devotion, but rather a philosophy of all in.
 - In poker "all in" means you've pushed all your chips to the center of the table. It's a huge gamble if all you are holding is a pair of twos. But it is no gamble at all if you are holding a royal flush.



- In the same way, it's a big deal to sell everything to buy one thing. But it is nothing to sell all your trinkets to have a treasure of unsurpassed value.
- This is what Paul is telling us here. It is a no brainer to give your body as a living sacrifice to God because the forgiveness, adoption, and eternal glory that is yours in Christ is priceless.
 - That's why, shortly before his death, Jim Elliott famously said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."
- Last week, we took a peek at the Greek and focused in on the last two words of verse 1, which are translated as spiritual worship in our English Bible. The translation spiritual worship comes from the Greek words "logikos latreia."
 - Logikos means reasonable or logical, and latreia means priestly service.
 - Paul is telling us is that just as the only logical response to a poker player going all in with a royal flush, the only logical response for a Christian is to go all in, offering their entire being to God as a living sacrifice.
 - The word living implies that this sacrifice of our bodies isn't a one and done thing, but a perpetual day after day thing. Every day a Christian is called to go all in, be fully committed. Why? Why on earth would a person do that?
- Why would a poker player go all in with a royal flush? They have a sure winner, an unbeatable hand. Why does a Christian go all in?

Romans 12: 1 by the mercies of God to present your body as a living sacrifice.

- Or as another translation puts it in view of God's mercy offer your body as a living sacrifice.
 - A Christian looks at the mercy God has shown them in Christ and overwhelmed by what they see, says, "I am all in!"
- If we are not willing to say all in to Christ, all in for the glory of God, then it means we are not seeing God's mercy as we ought to. We are devaluing the cross. Devaluing the depths of our sin, devaluing our justification, adoption, and glorification. Trading the trinkets of today for infinite, eternal glory.
- When we rightly see who we are and what Christ has done, offering ourselves as a living sacrifice is the only logical response.
 - So, if you are struggling to go all in for Jesus, the answer isn't to leave here and go try harder. The answer is to spend more time contemplating the mercies of God in your life. Contemplating what it means that:

2 Corinthians 5: 21 For our sake God made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Jesus we might become the righteousness of God.

- When we view God's mercy what are we looking at? The cross. And what do we see? Jesus all in for us. Doing for us what we could never do for ourselves.
 - Jesus saw you in your sin and misery and pushed all the chips into the center and said, "I am all in to have that man, that woman, as part of my family." "I am willing to give up everything to win them from the hand of Satan."
 - And because Jesus did that for you,

Romans 8: 38 – 39 neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- If you see the worth, the surpassing value of the love of God for your life, if you see what God did to give you that love, then how can you not, completely, and unreservedly give your life to him as a living sacrifice?
- So, if it is so logical, so reasonable, why do we struggle so much to do it? Why do we so often behave like the chicken giving bits and pieces, rather than the piggish full commitment of a living sacrifice?
 - That brings us to take a deeper look at the how, which Paul gives us in verse 2.

Romans 12: 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.

- So, there are actually two hows in this verse that help us to understand how to do what Paul is calling us to do—offer ourselves as living sacrifices. Do you see them?
 - First, we change the way we think—we renew our minds, and then with a renewed mind we go and live life seeking to discern the will of God.

1. How does the Christian mindset, or Christian worldview, differ from the mindset of the world?

- Today it seems there is no real difference between the professing, born-again Christian, and the culture we live in when it comes to divorce, abortion, sexual immorality, how we pursue our vocational, even how we pursue leisure activities.
- We watch what the world is doing, and we want to win its approval. We do not want to be social outcasts, so we allow the standards and customs of our culture to dictate our behavior instead of the Word of God. Too often we bend to the will of the woke rather than the will of God.

Romans 12: 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

- The key to change, the key to a growing willingness to offer yourself as a living sacrifice is to have a mind that is not conformed to the world's way of thinking, but rather transformed by the cross.
- Many Christians today do not want to dig into the Word or think deeply, instead, they want their religion to be one of feeling and emotion. The Word of God repeatedly rebukes those who are satisfied with a diet of milk in their Christian life. We are called to:

2 Corinthians 10: 5 destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

- That is not a touchy-feely Christianity that Paul is describing, is it? It is a calculating, thoughtful, logical, destruction of the world's way of thinking that results in a Christ centered way of thinking.
- The first step in doing that is to understand the difference in world views between a Christian and the world. I am not going to do a long exegesis on each of these but let me just touch on them briefly so we can begin to see the difference.
 - The first difference between the world's way of thinking and a Christian worldview is the foundation that each is built on. The world's thinking is built on a liar and a lie.

John 8: 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- But a Christian worldview is built on truth. What did Jesus say about himself?

John 14: 6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

- What did Jesus say about the word of God?

John 17: 7 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

- If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit has opened your eyes to see the truth. Why would you want to continue to be enslaved by the lies of the world? And yet, so often, we are.
 - What are those lies? Let's start with the doctrine of man. The world's doctrine of man is that man is no different from the animals. But what does the Christian worldview say?

Psalms 8: 4 – 6 what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,

- Man wasn't raised up from the animal kingdom, but was specially created by God, in the image of God, to rule and reign over creation. Man isn't just one of the animals. Man has a special place in the created order.
- But the world's thinking is also schizophrenic, isn't it? On one hand, man is just another animal, on the other hand, man is his own God, in control and totally independent, with no need or dependence upon God.
 - ♦ "Your life can be whatever you make it, so make it a good one."
 - ♦ You don't like the sex assigned to you at birth, change it. You're in control. You are your own god, and you can be whatever gender you want to be.
 - ♦ You can control the climate.
- But the Christian worldview is that while God made us to rule over creation, our greatness is nothing compared to God's.

Psalms 8: 4 What is man that you are mindful of him?

Isaiah 40: 13 – 15 Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales.

- The world confers no dignity on man, man just evolved, yet somehow the world seems to think that man is in control.
- But a Christian world view sees the dignity of man and the wretched helplessness of man, all at the same time. Dignity because, unlike anything else in creation, we are made in the image of God, and wretched helplessness because of the way that sin has marred that image in us.



... The Christian religion consists of two points, which it is equally important for man to know and equally dangerous not to know; and it is equally merciful of God to have given signs of both... It teaches men then these two truths alike: that there is a God, of whom men are capable, and that there is a corruption in nature which makes them unworthy. It is of equal importance to men to know each of these points: and it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness as to know his own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer who can cure him. Knowing only one of these points leads either to the arrogance of the philosophers, who have known God but not their own wretchedness, or to the despair of the atheists, who know their own wretchedness without knowing their Redeemer.” Blaise Pascal

- Now these divergent views of man result in a divergent view of man’s accountability.
 - Here the view of the world splits in two. Some believe that man is accountable to no one but themselves. Since we have no dignity conferred on us by a creator, like the rest of the animal kingdom we live and die and that is the end. But others, who fail to grasp our wretchedness because of sin, believe there is a day of accountability but that we can somehow stand before God and justify ourselves.
 - But a Christian worldview recognizes that because God created us, we are accountable to Him for what we do with our lives, so what we do matters. But a Christian worldview also sees our wretchedness and knows that because of that, the words of the Isaiah ring very true.

Isaiah 64:6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

- And because a Christian knows that they are accountable, a Christian has a different perspective on time.
 - What is the world’s view in regard to time? The moment you are in is all that matters. As the old beer commercial used to say, “You only go around once in life, so you have to grab for all the gusto you can.”
 - R. C. Sproul writes, “For secularism, all life, every human value, every human activity must be understood in light of this present time....what matters is now and only now.”
 - To think like the world is to think only in terms of the moment and what is in it for me. But to think as a Christian is to think in terms of an eternal destiny that is rooted in a sure and certain hope.

Hebrews 6: 19 – 20 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

- A Christian world view has a certain hope because they see Christ crucified, dead, buried, raised to life, and ascended to heaven, and because the Bible tells us that Christ is the firstfruits, of what is to come, we know that what has happened to Christ, will also happen to those who have faith in Christ.
 - But what does the world have? It is a choice between nothing, there is no hope—you are born, you live, you die. Or there is a wishful thinking

kind of hope, “I hope there is something after this life. I hope I am good enough to have a good after life.

- A secular worldview fixes its mind on the here and now, but a Christian worldview is fixed on eternity.

Matthew 6: 31 – 33 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

- A secular worldview sees no point in suffering and pain, but a Christian worldview recognizes that:

Romans 8: 28 – 29 for those who love God all things work together for good... *so that they may be conformed to the image of his Son.*

- Perhaps the best way to see the outcome of these two very different worldviews is to use the leader of each worldview as the prime example of that worldview.
 - Think of the picture that we have of Satan and his fallen worldview.

Isaiah 14: 12 – 15 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! ¹³ You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ ¹⁵ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.

- What is the driving force of this Satanic worldview? You can see it there in all the I will statements. I will ascend; I will set; I will sit; I will make.
- A self-exalting, self-made man, trying to claw his way up. But what is the result? He is cast down and cut down. That is a perfect illustration of the secular worldview and the outcome of that worldview.
- Now contrast that to Jesus, who obviously is the prime example of the Christian worldview.

Philippians 2: 5 – 11 Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- What a contrast. Rather than seeking to hold onto what was rightfully his, Jesus went down—becoming a servant, dying on the cross. Rather than seeking for self, Jesus sought for us and sought to do the will of the Father. And the result? God raised him up and exalted him.
- If we are conformed to the world in our thinking, we act like the world. We will live as if the momentary pleasure and comfort of today is all that matters. We will be trying to justify ourselves, serve ourselves and glorify ourselves.
- But if our thinking is transformed through the Gospel, we will think very differently about life. We will see the dignity that God created us to have. But we will also

see our wretchedness. Seeing our wretchedness will allow us to see our savior, and seeing our savior will fill us with a sure and certain eternal hope that will change the way we live our lives here on earth.

Romans 12: 2 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.

- Because we think differently from the world, we will live differently from the world.

2. How do I know that truly have a Christian worldview?

- To have a Christian worldview is to have the mind of Christ. It is to think like Jesus which will make you willing to live like Jesus, who said:

John 6: 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

- What is the driving force that determines each minute of each day how you are conducting your life? Is it, “What’s in it for me?” Or, is it “What is the will of the Father for me in this moment?”
- Now maybe you are thinking, my problem is I don’t know what God’s will for me is, if I knew I would do it.
 - And it is true, much of God’s will remains hidden from us until it happens. As far as specific details of our lives, God’s will isn’t always clear. But we know all that we need to know of God’s will to seek that will for our lives.

1 Thessalonians 4: 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification

- There it is. That is God’s will for your life.
 - Who you marry, where you go to school, where you live, what your job will be are just details that God will work out and reveal to you day by day. But the most important aspect of God’s will has been clearly revealed to each of us. Our sanctification. Our becoming more and more like Christ. This is what God wants for you.
 - Everything that God brings into your life is to accomplish His will. Your spouse, your kids, your job, your health, all of that, whether it is good or bad, is brought into your life by God to accomplish His ultimate will for your life—your sanctification—your becoming more Christ-like.

3. How do we move from the mindset of the world to a Christian mindset?

- Paul tells us here in Romans 12: 2. It is to have a transformed way of thinking.
- There are only two places that word transformed appears in the New Testament. Here in Romans and later in:

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, just as from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

- Transformed in Greek is the word *metamorphoō*, which of course is where our English word *metamorphosis* comes from. And what is *metamorphosis*? It is change over time. The way we change, the way we are transformed, sanctified is to behold Jesus.



• You become what you behold. If you fix your eyes and your thoughts on yourself, you will become more and more like Satan.

- But if you fix your eyes and thinking on Christ, you will think and live more and more like Jesus, which will allow us to discern God's good, pleasing, and acceptable will for everything we do in life. Just think about these verses as we close.

Ephesians 6: 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord.

Ephesians 5: 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Ephesians 5: 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church.

Ephesians 6: 5 Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ.

Matthew 25: 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

- What is the driving force in each of those calls to obedience? It is seeing Jesus. Seeing Jesus in our parents, our spouses, our employers, those who live around us. We submit, love, obey, work, and serve, because we see that all that we do is for Jesus, who has done it all for us.
- Daily looking at the cross, and seeing Christ empty himself of all but love and die for us, will transform our thinking, and renew our minds so we more and more have the mind of Christ.
- The greatest obstacle to understanding more of God's will for us is our own infatuation and obsession with ourselves. What is the wall between ourselves and seeing God's will done in our transformation? We are. Our pride. Our thinking of ourselves more highly than we should.
 - If we want to climb the unclimbable mountains of God's majesty and begin to discern His good, perfect, and acceptable will, we must die to our sense of our own grandeur. We must break free from our illusions about the pleasures and acceptance of our small world and fix the eyes of our hearts on the bigness and beauty of the mercy of God shown to us through the cross.
 - Let the cross be the dominant force transforming your thinking, and your world view.
 - Come to the cross and see your wretchedness, your helplessness before a holy God as you contemplate the fact that the only means of your salvation was for God to send His Son to die for you.
 - Come to the cross and see the love and dignity that God has conferred on you because having you in His family was of such worth to Him that it was worth giving His Son's life to have your life.
 - Come to the cross and see how Jesus stooped low and made himself nothing to save you and glorify you.
 - Come to the cross and see how suffering turns to glory and despair to hope.
 - Come to the cross and be transformed with ever increasing glory into the image of Christ your Lord.