

Romans
Your Only Reasonable Response to the Gospel (Part 4)
Romans 12:1-2
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Romans, chapter 12. Last Sunday we examined the command, in Romans 12:2, not to be conformed to the mindset of our age. Sadly, throughout the history of the church, there have been people connected to Christianity, and some even genuine believers, who have misunderstood that command and misapplied that command.

In fact, such misunderstanding has even led to what is called obscurantism. Now that may not be a word you use every day - obscurantism. You can recognize the word obscure in there.

Webster defines the word obscurantism in this way - it is an opposition to the increase and spread of knowledge, especially new ideas.

History's most famous example involves the conflict between the Roman Catholic church and the astronomer Galileo. I don't know if you saw the article or not. It was fascinating. Back in October 31st of 1992, I remember seeing the article and it has fascinated me ever since. The New York Times ran an article entitled "After 350 years Vatican says Galileo was right, it moves!" The article says this, "After more than 350 years after the Roman Catholic church condemned Galileo, Pope John Paul II, is poised to rectify one of the church's most infamous wrongs - the persecution of the Italian astronomer and physicist for proving the Earth moves around the sun." With a formal statement at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on Saturday (this was back in 92), Vatican officials said the Pope will formally close a 13-year investigation (like we needed 13 years to figure this out) - into the church's condemnation of Galileo in 1633. The condemnation which forced the astronomer and physicist to recant his discoveries led to Galileo's house arrest for 8 years before his death in 1642 at the age of 77. The article goes on to say, this theory had been presented in a book published in 1543 by Copernicus in opposition to the prevailing theory advanced by the 2nd century astronomer, Ptolemy, that the sun and the rest of the cosmos orbited the Earth.

But the contest between the two models was purely theoretical and theological, until Galileo observed the four largest moons of Jupiter exploding the Ptolemaic notion that all the heavenly

bodies must orbit the Earth. In 1616, the Copernican view was declared heretical because it refuted the interpretation that God fixed the Earth upon its foundation not to be moved forever. I'm not making that up! When in 1632 Galileo published his findings, it was an endorsement of the Copernican theory. The article says he was summoned to Rome for trial by the Inquisition one year later. Galileo defended himself by saying that scientific research and the Christian faith were not mutually exclusive - that the study of the natural world would promote understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures. But his views were judged false and erroneous. Aging, ailing, and threatened with torture by the Inquisition, Galileo recanted on April 30th, 1633. Because of his advanced years he was permitted house arrest in Sienna. And then the article finishes this way - I love this. Legend has it, that as Galileo rose from kneeling before his inquisitors, he murmured, "Even so, it does move!"

That's obscurantism - the church taking the Scripture and oppressing those who have come to new understandings of the truth. Obscurantism also caused some to sanction American slavery, to oppose women's suffrage and civil rights.

So how can we keep from being conformed to the mindset of the age and yet avoid this danger of obscurantism? This is the only way - by insisting that both what we believe and what we reject are clearly taught in Scripture using only the grammatical-historical method of interpretation. For example, if we take the two poetic passages that the Roman Catholic church used to fight Galileo, and use a grammatical and historical hermeneutic, you don't land at their interpretation. Listen to Psalm 93:1, "The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The Lord has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved". You don't get from that text to everything revolves around the Earth. Or Psalm 104:5 was the other text they used. "He established the earth upon its foundations, So that it will not totter forever and ever." Again, you don't land with an earth-centered solar system based on those verses.

Or when you consider, for example, the attempt to justify American slavery you quickly discover that both in the Old Testament, in Exodus 21:16, and in the New Testament, in 1 Timothy 1:10, there is explicit condemnation of kidnapping in order to make someone a slave. In fact, under Old Testament law, it was a capital offense. So, understand this - if we are going to avoid this

danger in not being conformed to the mindset of the age, and we're going to continue to think biblically, we must always ask what does the Scripture say, not what does tradition say, or what does traditional, even interpretation, say. What does the Scripture say?

Now of course, we will still arrive at faulty interpretations because of our predispositions; because of our fallenness. But this is, in the end, the very best protection we have. Our thinking as Christians must always be shaped by what the Scripture teaches using the right hermeneutic. And that is the point of the text that we come to in our study of Romans this morning.

Let's read again Romans 12:1-2, these great hinge verses that move us from the doctrine - the doctrinal explanation of the gospel, to the practical application of the gospel. Romans 12:1, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." These two verses teach us that your only reasonable response, and mine as well, to the salvation that we have received in the gospel, is to give ourselves to God both body and soul, in a radical and total commitment to God.

Now Paul has provided us here with two insights about this commitment. First of all, the grounds for a life of total commitment to God. In the first half of verse 1, and the key expression there is "by the mercies of God". By the mercies God has provided us through the gospel and in salvation - that's the grounds of this life of total commitment.

We're discovering secondly, and the middle of verse 1 down to the end of verse 2, the demonstration of a life of total commitment to God. Using the language of Old Testament sacrifice, Paul tells us first, present your body to God. And we looked at that in detail.

In verse 2 he says, "present your mind to God". Notice how he puts it in verse 2 - "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect". The sacrifice we

owe God in response to the salvation we have received in the gospel is not only our bodies, but our minds as well. Now in verse 2, there's just one basic exhortation about our minds but it is expressed as two separate commands. There is a negative command in the first half of verse 2 about how we are not to think, and there is a positive command in the second half of verse 2 about how we are to think.

Now last time we examined the first of those, the command about how not to think, and I called it this, "We must reject the thinking of our age". Verse 2 says, "do not be conformed to this world". The Greek word, conformed, means "to form something according to a pattern or mold". Don't be shaped by the mold of, literally, this age. The word age translated world here, often describes the world as it exists at a particular point in time. A period of time in the mindset of that period of time. Like we use the expression "the age of enlightenment". That's the way this word is used. Don't be conformed to this age. You see, every age is dominated by certain ideas and philosophies. And Paul says don't let your age's ideas and philosophies push you into its mold. Because Satan is the one, as we discovered last time, who controls that mindset or that zeitgeist of the age. Paul says don't allow your thinking to be conformed to, or to be shaped by, the spirit of the age, the prevailing thoughts, the philosophies, the opinions of your time.

Last time, we examined some of the prevailing ideas and philosophies of our time. We looked at naturalism. We considered humanism, Marxism, and post-modernism. So, there's the negative command - reject the thinking of our age. You must reject those "isms" along with every other human "ism".

Now today, we come to the second half of the verse where we discover the positive command about how we are to think. Not only are we to reject the thinking of our age, but we are also to embrace the will of God, embrace the will of God. That's the message of the second half of verse 2. Now, notice first of all the command itself. It comes in those words "be transformed", "be transformed". "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". The little Greek word translated *but* here is not the normal word for *but* - there are several in Greek. This one is a strong adversative. In other words, it implies that these are the only two alternatives. Don't do this, but instead to do this which is the only other option you

have. Your thinking will either be shaped by the mindset of the age or by the will of God. That's what he is saying. Those are the only two options.

As I said last week, there are no independent thinkers. We all like to think of ourselves that way but God says that's simply not true. Every idea that exists in the world can ultimately be traced back to either God or Satan. And you are being influenced by one or the other. Now the Greek word for transformed there is a word, a Greek word that you'll recognize because it is been simply transliterated into English and we use this word. The Greek word is, *metamorphoó*, from which we get the English word, metamorphosis. In its sense here, the Greek word means "to change something inwardly in its fundamental character or condition". That's the definition of the leading Greek lexicon. Let me say that again, "to change inwardly in fundamental character or condition, to be transformed".

The guys who used to do the Moody science films, several years ago produced a documentary entitled "Metamorphosis", and I particularly liked the way they described what happens in metamorphosis. They wrote this, "The transformation from caterpillar to chrysalis to adult butterfly defies Darwinian evolution through random variation and small gradual steps. In fact, some evolutionary biologists have called the process of metamorphosis, butterfly magic. That's not surprising given that inside the chrysalis, the cells of the caterpillar break down into a chemical soup. Then, new cells, butterfly cells, form from the molecular components. In just a few days, these cells are reassembled into an adult butterfly that has virtually no resemblance to a caterpillar."

It's really incredible. It is a metamorphosis. Do you understand that God's plan for you is to experience just as radical a change in your moral character, as the caterpillar does to the butterfly? That's God's plan. He wants you, Christian, to be transformed, to experience metamorphosis in your character. Now, be transformed in the Greek text, is in the present tense which makes it clear that this transformation is not something that happens in a moment of time. It's not some sort of a second blessing in which you are transformed instantly into something you weren't before. Rather, this is describing, this "be transformed" is describing a continual process. In fact, we could translate it like this, "continue being transformed". And

again notice, just like with the word "conformed" in the first half of the verse, this verb "transformed" is passive, "be transformed". We don't produce the transformation, but we must cooperate with the one who does, the Holy Spirit. This radical, gradual transformation in us, accomplished by the Spirit, happens - you ready for this - because of what occurs in our minds. The transformation, the metamorphosis of our character, begins in the mind.

So I want you to notice in our text, secondly, the means. We saw the command, be transformed, but notice the means by "the renewing of your mind". "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind". Now, immediately let me draw a couple of conclusions here that just fly in the face of modern Christianity. Notice first of all, that the Christian life is not primarily emotion. It's not about how you feel or even what you experience, rather, at its most fundamental level, the key is how you think. Again, I'm not saying emotion isn't involved. Of course, we are emotional beings. But our emotion doesn't drive this process. It is not the driver in your Christian life. A lot of Christians live by their emotion. They're driven here and there by their emotion. The key isn't how you feel. Listen, I feel lots of different ways throughout the day, and if I didn't have a good night's sleep, and I get up, before I have a cup of coffee, I feel a certain way. Who cares? It doesn't matter. The key is what you think, what you know to be true about God, and about your relationship to God, and about what He's doing.

This passage, when it says "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" also means that the Christian life, not only is it not primarily about emotion, but it's not primarily about behavior either. Christians don't live like they do simply because the Christians around them live that way. Rather, they live like they do because they have experienced an inward change and that inward change, then, produces a change in their behavior. Paul says, for us to be radically changed in character, to experience a metamorphosis - I want you to think about this now and think about yourself - for you to be changed in your moral character, for you to experience a metamorphosis, your mind must first be renewed. There's to be a change in the way you think about, literally, everything. God intends, can I put it this way, I don't mean this disrespectfully, but God intends to reprogram your mind. Believers simply don't think like unbelievers.

By the way, I was reminded recently, I was reading a quote by Lloyd-Jones, in which he was saying that the problem in the churches he grew up, is the pastors always assumed that everybody was a Christian and never said anything about the test and examination of yourself. I never want to do that or to be that and that's my heart and passion. I know there are people sitting here this morning who claim to know Jesus Christ but who really don't. So here is a test of the reality of your faith. Do you find yourself constantly agreeing with the thinking of the age and disagreeing with what you find in this book? That's a very bad sign if that's true of your soul because it means your mind has not been transformed and it may very well mean that you've never been born again. You have never experienced regeneration. You don't have new life. And so you don't agree with God against the world. You agree with the world against God. It's a test.

Now here in our text, in Romans 12, Paul doesn't explain how this renewal takes place. But he does explain exactly how this renewal takes place in another passage that he wrote. I want you to turn over to Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4, and here he says it more explicitly. Look at verse, verse 20, let's start there. He's just talked in verses 17 to 19 about how pagans live, and he says, you don't live like pagans anymore. Verse 20, "you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard him" - that's hearing Christ in the gospel and responding to the gospel - "and you have been taught in Him" - that's a continuing sitting in the school of Christ, being His disciple, learning from Him, from the Scripture. So you have verse 21 both the initial hearing of the gospel and responding, and you have the ongoing hearing from Him through His word, just as the truth is in Jesus. And here's what you've been taught. Verse 22, "that in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self", which is, you put off like a piece of clothing, the behavior of the person you used to be, "which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit", verse 24, and put on the new self. So, you put on those things that are in keeping with the new person you've become, the clothes that belong on the new man, which in likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Now notice verse 23. Right in between "put off" and "put on" is this, "and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind". Be renewed. Now again, notice Paul's language carefully. You are not told to renew your own mind. But you are told to "be renewed". You're to allow someone

else to renew your mind. The implication here is that only God can renew your mind but you can either hinder that renewal or you can encourage and promote it. This renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit. We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit or, the way Paul puts it here is, facilitate the process of renewal that the Spirit wants to produce within us.

A renewal. So here again we meet this concept of renewal. Why is Paul so consistently referring to this as renewal? Well to understand that you have to first of all remember the theological background. Scripture is clear, Genesis 1:27, that you and I were made in the image of God. However, at the fall, that image of God in man was terribly marred. That's implied by the fact it needs to be renewed right? So we remain in God's image. That image was terribly marred at the fall. We were born with a distorted image of God. But at salvation, we were regenerated by the Spirit and that renewal began. Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us not on the basis of deeds we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit". That happened at the moment of salvation. That renewal began. In other words, the new birth, the moment of salvation, began the lifelong process of being renewed in God's image. Colossians 3:10 says "the new self (the new person you are in Christ) is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created Him". In other words, back into the image of God, that image of God in which man was created, which was marred at the fall. You are in the process, Christian, of being restored into that image.

Now Romans 12:2 says that the means God uses to accomplish the overall renewal of our character into God's image is specifically the renewal of our minds. But here in Ephesians 4:23 notice Paul is even more specific. He says be renewed, not just in your mind, but in the spirit of your mind. Now that is such an important expression because, Christian, I hate to tell you this, but you don't get a new brain at salvation that makes you smarter, more intelligent than you were before. What changes isn't your capacity to think. We enter salvation with a capacity to think. We leave salvation with the same capacity to think. What changes is our way of thinking. The spirit of your mind is your way of thinking. Can I put it this way? The grid, through which you see and interpret everything, that's the spirit of your mind.

This renewal, that Paul is talking about, totally transforms your way of thinking. But how does this renewal of our thinking take place? What does the Spirit use? Well, John 17:17 is very clear. Jesus is praying and He says, "Father, sanctify them in (by means of) the truth, your word is truth". So we are renewed. The Spirit changes our minds, the way we think about everything, by means of the Word of God. It's the work then, understand this, it's the work of the Spirit and it's the work of the Word. You have to have both to have your mind renewed. Paul says, allow the Spirit to transform you by renewing your mind with the Word of God. Stop thinking like you used to think. Stop thinking like your age thinks and start thinking like God thinks.

Psalm 1:1-2. In fact, turn back there. Look at Psalm 1. This is such an important Psalm. It stands at the gate of the psalter and establishes for us the two ways - the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. So how do you discern the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked? Well, verses 1 and 2. "How blessed" - the Hebrew word is, "oh to be envy, how enviable is the man" (the man or the woman). Notice this, "who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked". The counsel of the wicked is the advice of the wicked. There you have it - the mindset of the age. Blessed is the person who doesn't walk in keeping with the mindset of the age - with the counsel of the wicked. "Nor stand in the path of sinners" - that is - commit the same the same sins, live in the same pattern or lifestyle that sinners do. "Nor sit in the seat of scoffers" - that is associate, positively connect with - those who scorn and scoff at God. "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night". Do you notice the one positive way the Psalmist describes the righteous? If I said define righteous for me, what would you say? Well the Psalmist begins the psalter by saying here's how you define a righteous man - his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. Here's the bottom line, this is what I want you to see, this is Psalm 1:1-2, this is Romans 12:2. On every issue you are either in lockstep with the Bible and what God says, or you are in lockstep with the spirit of the age. That's it. God says there's the way of the righteous, that is the way of the Bible. And then there's the way of the wicked. That's everything else. The wisdom of the world. Either you delight in the Scripture and meditate on it day and night or you're walking in the counsel of the wicked.

But how exactly does the Spirit use this Word to renew our minds? Let me give you the two ways that are laid out in Scripture. How does this happen? How does the Spirit use the Word to renew your thinking? Number 1. The Spirit uses the Scripture, that we learn and apply, to change the spirit of our minds - that's Ephesians 4:23. You just looked at it. But there's another text that gives us a second way that the Spirit uses the Word to renew us. Number 2, the Spirit uses specifically what we learn about Christ to transform us into His image.

I want you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3. This is a verse that merits its own sermon, maybe its own series, but I just want you to look at it with me. If you don't know this verse you need to know it. Star it, memorize it - it is absolutely key in your understanding of spiritual growth. Paul has just been talking about the difference between the old and the new covenant and talking about how Moses, in the Old Testament and understanding it, was veiled to those who didn't believe. And then he makes this contrast in verse 18. "But we all" - notice "we all" - he's talking now about something that happens to every Christian. We all, if you're a follower of Christ, this happens to you. It is happening to you. "We all with unveiled face" - now this is in the context here - once we come to Christ, we are no longer blinded to what the Scripture teaches. If you look back in verses 14 to 16, that's what he's says about the Jewish people - their minds were hardened. Verse 14, "for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;" - what does he mean? He means, they don't get it. They don't understand, they don't see, they don't comprehend spiritually. Verse 16, "but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away". So now go back to verse 18. Every Christian - "we all, with unveiled face" - we're no longer blind to the Scripture. We see it, we comprehend, we get it. We are "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord". By the way the word "Lord" here, in context, is a reference to Christ, specifically.

"Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord". Now, stop there for a moment. Why does Paul use this idea of a mirror? What's he talking about "beholding as in a mirror"? Well I think he uses that expression for two reasons. First of all, to emphasize the careful examination with which we are to look at the Scripture. When you look in the mirror, to see if everything is put together (you did that this morning probably), you looked in the mirror to see if everything was

okay. And what do you do? Well, you get pretty close and you look intently to make sure there isn't something that needs to be dealt with before you go out in public, right? That's the emphasis here. When we look in the Scripture, we carefully contemplate what we see of the glory of Christ just as carefully as we examine our own faces in a mirror. I think that's one of the ideas here. "Beholding as in a mirror" - you look at what you see in the Scripture with such careful contemplation just like you did your own image in the mirror this morning when you were deciding it was okay to go out.

But I think there's another reason he uses this mirror image here. It's to remind us that when we study the Scripture, we don't see God. We see His reflection. When I look here in the Word of God, this isn't God. This is His reflection. I see something of His character, of His glory. Everything that's here is true, absolutely true. But it's not everything there is to be known of God, nor it is as clearly comprehended as one day we will comprehend. Listen to 1 Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see in a mirror dimly" - that's how we see God. It's like we see His reflection in a mirror. It's not as clear, but then he says, the day is coming when we will see Him, what? Face to face. So when you look in the Scripture, you don't see God. You see the reflection of God in the truth that is revealed about Him. It's true. There's no untruth here. It's without error. It is a perfect reflection of God but it's not God - we look as in a mirror dimly. But someday, face to face.

So he says, "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord". "Beholding as in a mirror" - in other words, looking really carefully, really intently like we're looking at ourselves in a mirror and, not seeing God Himself, but His reflection here. Notice how he goes on. We are being transformed into the same image. Literally, the Greek text says, "into an icon". We are being transformed into an icon of Jesus. That is, into an icon of His glorious, moral character. So you're not going to physically look like Jesus. You're going to have a body like His body and its attributes, right? Philippians 3. We'll have a body like unto His glorious body. But it doesn't mean your face is going to look like the face of Jesus Christ. What does he mean, into the same image? He means the same image of His moral character. You're still going to be you. But your moral character is going to be just like His.

Again, here's a test of your own heart. You see Christian hypocrites, that is, those who aren't really Christians, they try to live like Christians and they can somehow. They can fool some people some of the time, but they're not inside what they pretend to be. So let me ask you a question as you sit here this morning. Is your Christianity merely exterior? Is it merely what you pretend to be? Or is what you show to others a reflection of who you really are on the inside? One is true Christianity. The difference, or the other, is not. It's the difference between tying apples to an oak tree (not advised) versus an apple tree that produces apples because that's the kind of tree it is. What's your faith like? Is your faith like apples tied to an oak tree? You try to put on the behaviors, kind of fool everybody, make it look like you're a Christian? Or are you an apple tree? Are you, in your heart and character, what you seem to be to others? If you are a real Christian, you're gradually becoming like Jesus Christ in His moral character. That's an astounding truth.

Notice we are being transformed into the same image, verse 18, "from glory to glory", that is, from one level of glory to another. In other words, this change in us, into the moral character of Jesus, is a gradual process. And then he concludes, "just as from the Lord, the Spirit". The Spirit accomplishes this gradual renewal in us. The Holy Spirit uses our contemplation of the glory of Jesus Christ in the Scripture to change us into the same image. And oh, by the way, Christ, according to 2 Corinthians 4:4 is in, is the image of God.

So we being to have the same moral character as Jesus. Can you look back in your life and see some of those changes? You're not perfectly like Him today. Nobody is. But can you see that you're more like Him today than you were five years ago? More like Him than you were 10 years ago if you've been in Christ that long? We begin to have the same moral character; we begin to think about everything the way Christ thinks about those things. We begin to act like Christ would act. But mostly, our thinking has changed into His thinking. That's why 1 Corinthians 2:16, speaking of the Scripture, says "we have the mind of Christ". It's here. And as we read it, and as we study it, and as we meditate on it, we begin to get the same mind.

Now why is this transformation so important? Why does Paul spend so much time in Romans 12, in 2 Corinthians 3 talking about this transformation? Because, listen to this folks, it is

ultimately why God saved you. God didn't save you so you could miss hell. God saved you in order that you would be like His Son. Romans 8:29. Remember, we looked at it in detail. Those whom God foreknew, that is those whom He predetermined to have a relationship with, He also predestined, or predetermined our destiny. To what? To become conformed to the image of His Son. Why? So that His Son would be the firstborn among many brethren. The preeminent one. The prominent one, among all of His brothers. Ultimately, God wants every believer to be like His Son so that we forever reflect the glory of His Son. It's why God saved you.

Now, go back to our text. Go back to Romans 12 because Paul, here, explains what happens when all that takes place. When the Spirit renews our minds with the Word, notice the result in verse 2. So that, you may prove what the will of God is, good and acceptable and perfect. That which is good and acceptable and perfect. Now the word prove here means, as a result of careful examination, you discover or you accept something as proven. You discover something is proven or you accept something as proven. When the Spirit renews our minds with the Word of God we discover by experience the value of God' will.

Now let me just say here, I know many of us were brought up in settings, where, when you started talking about God's will, you were talking about who you should marry, what car you should buy, where you should live. That's not the kind of will that's being talked about here. God's will, here, is in the sense of His revealed will in His Word. When you are transformed in your mind, when your thinking is transformed, you will approve God's will in His Word. That means you will understand it, you will fully agree with it, and you will seek to obey it. You will approve God's will. When we do that, we discover that God's will is - notice how he describes it - we discover that God's will in His Word is good. It's beneficial for us. And that is a discovery to people because, before we were Christians, we didn't understand that. Go back to Romans 8:7 and you learn that the natural man hates God's will as revealed in His law. Why? Why do people - you know you tell people that you've come to faith in Christ and they say, "Well you're not going to get all religious on us are you?" What do they mean? They mean you're about to lose all the joy of living. That's what they mean because that's how they think. They think God's law is bad. God's will, as revealed in His Word, is bad. And everything else is good. But when

you come to Christ, that all changes. When you got saved, now 1 John 5:3 is true. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not what? Burdensome. Not burdensome. No, we've discovered they're good. It's only there that we discover truly a flourishing soul is in obeying God because He designed us. He knows how we work. He knows what's good.

But we also discover not only that God's Word is good - God's will and His Word is good - but we discover that it is acceptable. That is, it's pleasing. Some would say pleasing to God - that's obvious right? I think here, in keeping with the rest of these, it's pleasing to us. We not only discover that God's Word is good, but we find ourselves delighting in it. Remember Psalm 1:2, "His delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night."

And it's perfect. We learn that God's will is perfect. Why? Because it captures God's perfection and it begins to imprint that perfection on us as we obey it. Not perfection in this light but moving toward that perfection. Colossians 1:28, "we proclaim Christ admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man complete". Literally, perfect in Christ. Instead of allowing the mindset of the age to push you into its mold, allow the Spirit of God to transform you by the renewing of your mind. Then you will discover that God's will, in God's Word, is good for you. It delights you and it's absolutely perfect. This is how Christians think about the Scripture.

Very quickly, what are the implications of this positive command to embrace the will of God. Let me just give you a few very quickly. Number one. How you think is a test of whether you're a Christian. Back in chapter 8 we discovered that those who are in the flesh have a mind set on the flesh. Those who are in the Spirit, who've been redeemed, who've been regenerated, have a mind set on the things of the Spirit. Listen, what you think tells you everything you need to know about whether or not you're a Christian.

Secondly, the only way you can keep from being conformed to thinking of this age, is to embrace God's will. Those are the two options. John Stott writes, "These two value systems, this world and God's will, are incompatible even in direct collision of one another. Whether we

are thinking about the purpose and meaning of life or how to measure greatness or how to respond to evil, about ambition, sex, honesty, money, community, religion, or anything else - the two sets of standards divert so completely that there is no possibility of compromise.

Listen, you got choose. And you have made a de facto choice even if you haven't made an active choice.

Number three. The Spirit alone can renew your mind. Listen, you can't change you. You can move around your behavior. You can change your behavior but that's like rearranging the deck chairs in the Titanic. The ship is going down. Only God, the Spirit, can truly change you whether it's in regeneration or whether it's in the renewal as a believer.

Number four. The renewal of your mind with Scripture is absolutely crucial in the process of progressive sanctification. In fact, it's this renewing of your mind that distinguishes biblical sanctification from simple behavior modification - something unbelievers do every day. If you're struggling with a sin your life, understand this, your greatest problem is not your behavior. Your greatest problems are your thinking and your character and the two of them need to be changed, need to be transformed, and only God the Spirit can do that through His Word.

Number five, your mind is renewed by learning, understanding, and applying God's revealed will in Scripture. That's how your mind is renewed. There are three stages in that transformation. You must first understand the truth with your mind, and then as you understand it, you meditate on it, you think about it - it begins to change your affections. So your mind is changed at the understanding level, then your affections begin to follow that, and then your affections lead your will to make different choices.

Number six. Our primary roles in this renewal - what are you supposed to do? Here they are. Two. First of all, consistent exposure to the Word of God. You can't be transformed by that which you don't know, and don't read, and don't think about. The Spirit isn't going to do that for you. Psalm 1:2, "in His law he meditates day and night". Read the Bible. Study the Bible. Meditate on the Bible. Listen to the Bible taught. Pray the Bible. And secondly, you must make a genuine effort to obey what you learn.

"Therefore, I urge you brothers and sisters, because of the mercies of God", that you have experienced in the gospel, "present your bodies as a living sacrifice". And present your mind to God. And that means you must reject the thinking of your age and you must embrace the will of God as its revealed in the Word of God. This is Paul's call to us based on the mercies of God. May each of us heed this admonition.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for the brilliant clarity of your Word. I pray that You would use what we've studied today in all of our lives. Lord, I pray for those who may be here this morning who are not in Christ, who claim to be, but they're just pretenders. It doesn't reflect their heart. It doesn't reflect how they think. It doesn't reflect their characters. Oh God, help them to see that. Help them to see that they're stapling apples on an oak tree. And Father help them instead to cry out to You, to truly change them at the heart level, even today. Father, I pray for many of us who are in Christ. Lord, help us to see how this change takes place. Help us to do what we're commanded to do - to be in the Scripture, to be seeking to obey the Scripture. And then, Father, we pray that you would do, through Your Spirit, what only You, our God, can do and that is that you would transform us more and more each day, into the moral character of Jesus Christ. Until we see Him, and when we see Him, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.