

Romans 12 2E

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

2 And 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.

Jesus demanded, not a **reformation** of **behavior**, but a **transformation** of **character**. Repeat

Do you understand what this means? It is essentially what verses 1 and 2 are about. Our job is not to try to make our behavior to conform to some standard that was handed to us. The focus is not on the **outside**.

No, our job is to display the remarkable change that has happened **inside** of us.

What we are to display is the **different person** that Christ has made us into.

What that means is that the Christian's approach to a problem is completely different than the world's. Suppose you have a problem in your life that just seems to be impossible to overcome. Suppose it is a temptation. Suppose it is a sin that seems to continually beset you.

How do we approach that problem? Do we drum up all the **will power** we can muster and attack that problem head on? Do we rely on our human will power to give us the victory over it? Does **all our focus** come to bear on this problem.

No, oddly enough that is not the Christian approach. We might think that if we could just get rid of **that one thing** that plagues us that we would then be all we were intended to be. But that is not the case. Because what we will find is that when we get **that one item** put in its place, another will arise. And we will need to start all over again.

No, by this point we should really know better. Think about what Paul has told us so far. What has he told us about **what** a Christian **is**? What has he told us about **who** a Christian **is**? That is where we must start when we are dealing with any problem. We don't see ourselves and **our identity** as someone who has **done** a certain thing. While it is true that we have done any number of wrong things, that is not **who a Christian is**. No, we must start with **our identity**. We must start with our history **from God's perspective**. We must start with the miracle of what God has done to every believer.

So suppose you have something in your life you can't seem to overcome. How should you think? Well, for starters, pull your eyes off your sin. Because the ultimate problem is not that you are **committing this sin**. The problem is that you are violating that which Christ has made you. You are being a **hypocrite**. You are carrying out a scheme. You are play acting. That is the problem.

I really like the illustration that Martyn Lloyd Jones uses here. He says this: "I have occasionally used an illustration like this: Think of these problems as hurdles. How do you jump over a hurdle? You do not walk up to the hurdle and try to elevate yourself over it. It cannot be done. If you want to get over that hurdle, you turn your back on it, and walk away from it as if you have forgotten all about it. Then, when you have gone a great distance; and the higher the hurdle the longer will be your walk; you turn round, run for all you are worth, and vault over it. That is essentially the Christian teaching; you have this great background. So first you renew your mind.

He goes on:

And renewing means what it says- Re NEW. We once had a mind which we do not have any longer. The whole trouble with humanity is that it has lost its true mind, it has become insane. It needs to get back the mind it once had. The mind needs restored to a condition which has been lost. And this transformation by the renewing of the mind is a continuous process."

So the renewing of our minds is **believing again** those things that God says are true. We are taking minds that were fitted for living in and for this world, and we are changing the thoughts in those minds to be fitted for our true destiny. So when we face a sinful habit we are **not saying**, man Jon, you **are** this terrible sinner because of what you are doing and you need to stop doing this **so you will no longer be** a terrible sinner. No. The new thinking is, Jon, God has proclaimed you to be a saint. He said that you are a new creation. But you are acting like that isn't true of you. You are acting like there has been no change in you. You are acting like you are like the rest of the world. **You need to quit acting like something that you are not.** You have got to fill your mind with those things true to your new identity. That is the turning your back on the hurdle and acting as if it does not exist. You examine the truth about what God says about every true believer. You focus your attention on that. You believe that. You say, Yes Lord, to that.

Then you take **that truth, that attitude, that identity** you just focused on into your dealing with the sin that plagues you. And you will find that your faith in the Word of God will allow you to clear that hurdle. It was just an opportunity for God to show off His power in your life.

Notice too that this process of transforming our minds is not the process of **an intelligence infusion**. When a person becomes a believer, he does not suddenly become smarter. He doesn't suddenly have an intellectual capacity that he did not have prior to salvation. He doesn't suddenly get a new and better brain. But

he does get a new disposition, a new heart, a new controller. So now the thoughts have a **different controller**. The flesh no longer controls every thought we have. We now have the Spirit of God in us that guides us. And that Spirit reminds us of who we are and who's we are.

Now we are told that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Now, how does **this happen?** We are renewed by believing the truths of God. It is by the Word of God that our minds are renewed. It is a simple fact that our minds cannot be renewed if we do not know what the Word says.

This is a very important point. If all you know of God's word you learn on Sunday morning you are in a very fragile state. Your mind cannot possibly be as renewed as it ought to be. I am talking to every single individual here this morning. If you are a believer, it is your responsibility to know what God says. It is your responsibility to read God's Word. Answer this question for me. **How much of God's Word did you read or listen to this week?** This is a vital question. We live in America. We all have Bibles. We all have some free time. How much of God's word did you incorporate in your lives this week? What did you read? Compare that to what you **watched on tv?** Think about this. What excuse can we possibly use before God if we are not filling our minds with what God said? How can we possibly be transformed by the renewing of our minds if our minds are not reading and thinking about the Word of God? It is impossible. It is not something that God intends to happen. We must fill our minds with what God says.

And not only must we read God's word, we must work at it until we understand it. We may not understand every passage, but there is no excuse to not understand the general gist of it. We all have a tendency to think in the way we have always thought. And we often think that way because we have always thought that way that the way we think must be true. But we are wrong. God's word is true. And it often shows us that we are raving lunatics in comparison. We tend to slide back to our old way of thinking. We think something is right because we have always thought it. We think something is wrong because we have always thought it. But until we get this information from God's word, we cannot trust what we think. We cannot trust what we perceive. Until we fill our minds with what God says we cannot prove God's will.

We cannot go on living the life that does not reflect our new births. We need to consider, why did Christ come to this planet. And we will find the answer in scripture. Christ came to create new creations. He came to create a new humanity. We see from that that Christ did not just come to save us from hell. We see in Romans 8:29 that Christ is the first of many brethren. When we begin

to understand that, when we begin to incorporate that in our thinking, we being to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Titus 2:11-15 (NKJV)

**11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,
12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,
13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,
14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and**

Next comes the positive of what Christ is accomplishing in His people

purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

15 Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

So we might ask ourselves, what are we saved for? What are we saved to? Is it just to save us from hell? Is it just to give us passage into heaven? No. This is God's word on the matter. He intends to have our external behavior to conform to our internal change.

This new change is transforming us from one kind of person to another.

Colossians 1:12-13 (NKJV)

12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

Wow, look at this. How in the world can it be said of us that we are now **qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints**. We know our histories. We know what we are like. We know our failures. How can this possibly be so? We know it could not be by any righteous works that we could ever do. So how could it be true? The answer is in verse 13- **He has delivered us**. God's word tells us that we have been taken out of one realm and delivered to another. It has nothing to do with anything we have done. It has nothing to do with our credentials or our effort. It only has to do with what God has done.

We see this same teaching in I Pet 2:9-11

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

Can you see how it is now that we face the difficulties in our lives? It is no longer by examining each difficulty we face to determine how we could possibly overcome such an insurmountable obstacle. No. It is just the opposite. We look at **who we are**. We look at **our resources**. And we wonder how anything can stand in the face of such insurmountable resources. It is not that we have any goodness or power. It is that God is our resource and Christ has overcome all the obstacles. We are simply riding on His coattails.

And notice the other side of this perspective. We can no longer think **in terms of a lifetime**. When we think in terms of **this lifetime** we get distracted. We get impatient. We develop the wrong expectations about life. You will never find sustenance in focusing on this life. You will never endure if this is your focus. You will never remain faithful **if your eyes are fixed on those things you have now**, those things **you want to have now**, and **those things you are afraid to lose now**. No. We see in verse 11 the transformed perspective. Sojourners and pilgrims. That is transformed thinking. That is renewed thinking. We must always see our lives in the perspective of the life to come. We must always see **this life as temporary** and **the next life as permanent**, this life as **passing** and the next life as **fixed**, this life as **something short** and the next life as something **that is long**. If we do not fix our minds in that manner, we will sway back and forth with the events of this life.

It is only someone who has a hope greater than this life who can give up this life for Christ's sake. It is only someone for whom death offers more than life who can face this life in the manner it must be faced. Even Christ did what He did for the joy set before Him. There was something better in eternity that he had in mind, and He kept it in mind during his whole mission. He told us in Matthew **6:19-21 (NKJV)**

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Christ had no misconceptions about this life. He never promised a pleasant existence. His appeal was never for what is gained in this life. His point was that

any difficulty faced in this life will be well worth what will be gained in the next. He knew that many in his audiences would **be killed** because they believed in Christ. Many would suffer **the rejection** of friends and family. He knew that in 70 AD the Romans would level Jerusalem and the suffering would be horrendous. But He never hesitated in saying that **what the suffering Christians would face** would be worthwhile. There would be more gained than lost. Look at what Paul says. It is the same thing. He suffered much but he viewed dying as being better than living. He always pointed to a resurrection with a reward.

This is the core of our mind renewal. We see this life with a completely different perspective than the world does.

How do **we** see this life? Do **we see** ourselves as sojourners and pilgrims? Do **we see** what we give up as being nothing compared to what we gain? Do we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven on a daily basis, or treasures on earth? Where are our hearts?

Let's look at another passage of scripture showing us about a renewed mind.

2 Peter 1:2-21 (NKJV)

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Do you see this? This is what every believer has. This is what our minds must be wrapped around. We have **already been given all the things** we need for life and godliness. It is ours. Does it always seem it? No. Do we feel it? Not always. Can we see it? No. But we must believe it because it is true.

And how do we get all those things? Through the experiential knowing of Christ. This is not just information but familiarity. As we live for Christ, as we love Christ, as we know Christ we find that we have everything that we need to live our lives. And these lives are called by Christ to glory and virtue. Again, we have a future. There is no renewed thinking without this baseline. We have an eternal destiny in Glory!

4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

His Divine power has given to us exceedingly great and precious promises.

Now suppose I were to promise my kids a new car if they got straight a's in college? (I never would, but suppose I did.) How would that promise do them

any good? It would only do them good if they remembered it. If they reoriented to the promise daily. If it changed how they thought about their day to day activity. Well that is true of us as well. If we will hold **those thoughts, those promises of God in our minds** they will allow us to be partakers of the divine nature. It will change our behavior. It will change our perspective. It will change how we live. And will **that** cause us to escape the corruption of this world? No. We have already escaped that. We escaped that in Christ. That change has already been wrought in true believers. We now, **by believing the promises**, put on the behavior befitting to our new identity.

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we see it again. It is because of our new identity and our new thinking that we live, we work, we act. And we give it all diligence. We give it everything we've got. Verses 5-7 describe the process of Verse 2 in Romans 12. This is sanctification. This is mind renewal. God is transforming us. But what are we doing? Making every effort. We are giving all diligence. That is what Christians do.

And what is the result as we give all diligence to do these things? We are fruitful in knowing Christ. In other words, our lives bear fruit for Christ. Knowing Christ produces changes in our lives. And look at the things that are changing.

Virtue, Knowledge, Self Control, Perseverance, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, Love. Do you see anything in that list that you don't want more of? I don't.

These are all things that are accomplished as our minds are renewed.

9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Look at what this is saying. Our greatest danger comes when we forget. This is something that scripture continually addresses. We must remember. And what is remembering but thinking the same thing again? Here it is again. The renewal of our minds. It is critical. It is core in the growth of a Christian.

Look again what this is telling us. If we lack Virtue, Knowledge, Self Control, Perseverance, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, Love, why is that? We aren't thinking right. We aren't seeing right. We aren't "getting it". We are acting like we have not received from Christ the forgiveness of our sins.

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

I really have a problem with anyone who would imply that our wills are not heavily engaged in the process of sanctification. If scripture says "Be even more diligent" who am I to say that my effort is not required? Now my effort never **wins** anything from God. It never **earns** anything from God. But it does **prove** that sanctification is happening in me. It **proves** that I am being transformed (something that God does) by the renewal of my mind (something that I am actively involved in as a built in response to the miracle that God has done in my heart.)

And what are we to be diligent about?

We should make our call (God's calling us to Himself) and our election (His electing us into His family forever) sure. This is about **our** perspective. Not **God's**. God **already knows** for certain who are the elect. But we should be diligent to make sure we know that it is sure for us. And as we do the list we've mentioned, we will gain assurance. Assurance always comes through faithfulness. Assurance never comes through disobedience or unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness results in stumbling. It results in us being uncertain where we stand with God.

11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If our call and election is sure, if we are seeing the steps of Christian growth in our lives, we are assured of our entrance into the kingdom of God that begins here and never ends. That is what we are called **for**. And that entrance is a certainty. Why? Because it is God who is supplying it and He is supplying it abundantly.

12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,

Look at the language here. Reason, Remind, Know, Truth. Can you see why I am jumping up and down on this point? I think it is vital because scripture repeats it

so often. Peter is reminding us over and over of what? CONTENT! TRUTH! MIND FODDER! THINKING FUEL! THOUGHTS! And Peter was an apostle. If anyone would have the capacity to zap people for God Peter would. But when he ministers what does he do? He reminds. And how long is he going to stick to this strategy? Until he dies. He is never going to waiver from the method of delivering truth to accomplish the spiritual ends he hopes to accomplish.

14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

I cannot stress this enough. Peter is getting ready to die. What does he want to leave for these people? A reminder. A truth. A teaching. Mind fuel. Why? Because that is how we grow as Christians.

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

We will close with this. The apostle knows he is about to die. He is putting forth those things that are most important. And what does he say? The message we told you is true! That is the most important thing he can convey. That is the capstone to his life's work. That is the most important thing he could say.

Any experience he could convey is secondary. Any feeling he could make them feel is secondary. He wants them to know one thing.

What I said is true!

You can trust this truth. You can bank on this truth. You can build your life on this truth. You can depend upon this truth. You can incorporate this truth. It came from God. Believe it. Trust it. Think it. Live it. Believe it. Do it.

What we think, what we believe, what we remember are the most important things about us. Why? Because they **come from** what we are and **they shape** who we are. Anyone who says that doctrine does not matter is a fool. Anyone who emphasizes that how they experience God is the only thing that matters is a fool. Anyone who only cares about their experience of God is a fool. The apostles focused on a message, a truth, a reality, the facts. We must start there. We must proclaim this truth. We must believe this truth. And we must live this truth. And it is all do be done in the company of fellow believers.

We are told to be

be transformed

and this is the transforming that God is doing to us and we are actively involved in. And how is it being done?

by the renewing of your mind

That is the gist of it. It is by believing the truth where we previously believed lies. That is the heart of Christian growth.

My great fear for myself and for you is that we will leave this passage the same way we came into it. And that would be a horrific failure. All of us have room to grow.

We all have truths **we think** we believe but our lives show that we really don't believe them.

We all have lies that we prefer because the truth would require too much change. We all have things about us that we can't see but others can, places where we simply have never done business with the truth.

And we all have opportunity in our days to change our habits so that instead of filling our minds with the world's fodder we can fill our minds with the truth of God's Word.

If there has been no change in these things over the last 7 weeks, we have failed.

I hope that is not the case. Let's look at that this week. The question is, **what simple changes would God have me make to incorporate more Word thinking, Word living, and Word hearing in my life?** Prayerfully ask God that question and I guaranty you that He will lead you to the answers.