

# Romans 12:2 Commentary

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Romans 12:2 And **do not be conformed** (2PPPM) to **this world**, but **be transformed** (2PPPM) by the **renewing** of your **mind**, **so that** you may **prove** (PAN) **what** the **will** of **God** is, that **which** is **good** and **acceptable** and **perfect** (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** kai me **suschematizesthe** (2PPPM) to aioni touto, alla metamorphousthe (2PPPM) te anakainosei tou noos eis to dokimazein (PAN) humas ti to thelema tou Theou, to agathon kai euareston kai teleion.

**Analyzed Literal:** And [you are] to stop conforming yourselves to this age, but [are] to continue being transformed by the renewal of your mind, in order for you to be provi

ng what [is] the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

**Amplified:** Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**BBE:** And let not your behaviour be like that of this world, but be changed and made new in mind, so that by experience you may have knowledge of the good and pleasing and complete purpose of God.

**GNB:** Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God---what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

**NIV:** Do not conform any longer 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. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**NLT:** Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and

pleasing and perfect his will really is. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Stop being poured into the mold by the external and fleeting fashions of this age, but undergo a deep inner change by the qualitative renewing of your mind. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth:** And do not follow the customs of the present age, but be transformed by the entire renewal of your minds, so that you may learn by experience what God's will is--that will which is good and beautiful and perfect.

**Wuest:** And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being but is patterned after this age; but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing and complete will, and having found that it meets specifications, place your approval upon it.

**Young's Literal:** and be not conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, for your proving what is the will of God -- the good, and acceptable, and perfect.

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans 3:21-5:21	Romans 6:1-8:39	Romans 9:1-11:36	Romans 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	Gods Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith

Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#)

## AND DO NOT BE CONFORMED: me sunschematizethe (2PPPM)

- Ex 23:2; Lev 18:29,30; Dt 18:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; Jn 7:7; 14:30; 15:19; 17:14; 1Co 3:19; 2Co 4:4; 6:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 2Co 7:1; Gal 1:4; Eph 2:2; 4:17, 18, 19, 20; James 1:27; 4:4; 1Pe 1:14,18; 4:2; 2Pe 1:4; 2:20; 1Jn 2:15, 16, 17; 3:13; 4:4,5; 5:19; Rev 12:9; 13:8
- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

May the song of our heart ever be...

[Give me Jesus](#)

Give me Jesus

Give me Jesus

**You can have all this world**

Just give me Jesus

God's continual charge in both the Old and New Testaments to not conform to the ways of this lost and hell bent world...

Ex 23:2 "You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice;

Deut 18:9 "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations.

John 15:19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

2Cor 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. 17 "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. 18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

2Cor 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Eph 4:17 This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind...20 But you did not learn Christ in this way,

Jas 1:27 This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Jas 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

1Pet 1:14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

1Pet 4:2 (1Pe 4:1) so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

1John 2:15 Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Rev 13:8 And all who dwell on the earth will worship him (Antichrist - Rev 13:7), everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

Other Translations of Ro 12:2

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold. (Phillips )

And do not fashion yourselves after this world (EMTV)

Stop being molded by the external and fleeting fashions of this age

**And (kai)** - Note the clear connection with the believer's presentation in the previous passage, which is now to be worked out in everyday practice. Indeed, our daily actions should be an extension of our act of consecration. Worship of our Savior should be followed by working out of our salvation. Our sacrificial presentation should lead to our spiritual transformation.

The believer's lifelong goal and "motto", if you will, should be...

**Not Fleshly Conformation**  
**BUT**  
**Spirit Wrought Transformation**

The eyes of the LORD are searching to and fro throughout the earth (2Chr 16:9) for men and women who will not be conformed but rather transformed by the Holy Spirit into the image of Jesus Christ. Beloved, there is no "middle ground", no neutral territory - if you are a follower of Christ, you are either a conformer or a transformer! Your life is being changed either by pressure from without (conformation) or by power from within (transformation). As we yield in Romans 12:1 and [meditate on His Word](#), God's Spirit transforms us into "living sacrifices" with "renewed minds", God saturated people who radiate His glory. May God be pleased to

raise up a generation of transformers, not conformers, men and women whose lives are controlled by a Divine Power from within, not worldly pressure from without. Amen.

**Sanday and Headlam's** paraphrase - *Do not adopt the external and fleeting fashion of this world, but be ye transformed in your inmost nature.*

Beware of the subtle trap of seeking to avoid all manner of worldly behaviors and influences and yet failing to be transformed by the Spirit, for this is simply another form of legalism. To keep out the weeds of the world, seek continually to yield to and walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16-note) Who produces the fruit that effectively strangles the weeds. John Piper says it this way...

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The focus is not first on getting the outside of the cup cleaned up, but on getting the inside cleaned up. In other words, **transformation and non-conformity on the outside** must flow from a **new mind**. Be transformed in the renewing of your mind.

**Wuest** has an enlightening "amplified version" - And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being but is patterned after this age; but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing and complete will, and having found that it meets specifications, place your approval upon it. ([Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

**William Newell - Fashioned** (conformed) is literally, ***schemed-together-with***. It is the very word of 1Co 7:31:*scheme* (Greek, *schema*), made into a verb, with the conjunction along-with (sun/syn), for prefix. **The devil will rope you into his "scheme," unless you surrender your body to God to be by Him delivered.**

**Harry Ironside** ([Romans 12 Commentary](#)) introduces his comments on this verse noting that Romans 12:2...

makes clearer the meaning of the Ro 12:1. The Cross of Christ has come in between the believer and the world (cp Ga 2:20-note). To conform ourselves to the ways of this present evil age (Ga 1:4) is to be unfaithful to the One whom the world has rejected but whom we confess as our Lord and Savior.

"I would give the world to have your experience," said a young woman on one occasion to a devoted Christian lady.

"My dear," was the reply, "that's exactly what it cost me. I gave the world for it."

The loyal heart exclaims with gladness, not grudgingly,

**Take The World, But Give Me Jesus**

All its joys are but in name;  
But His love abideth ever,  
Through eternal years the same.  
-Fanny J. Crosby

Moved by the "[expulsive power of a new affection \(read classic sermon by Thomas Chalmers\)](#)," it becomes easy for the soul to say with Paul:

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal 6:14-note).

We are not to suppose that nonconformity to the world necessarily involves awkward behavior, peculiar dress, or rude manners. But the entire world system is summed up in three terms: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life [or the ostentation of living]" (1Jn 2:16-note). Therefore nonconformity to the world implies bringing the body and its appetites under the control of the Spirit of God, subjecting the imagination to the mind of Christ, and walking in humility of spirit through a world where self-confidence and boasting are the order of the day.

And so in Romans 12:2 we are commanded to be transformed by the renewing of our minds; that is, as the mind is occupied with Christ and the affections set on things above, we become like Him who has won our hearts for Himself. As we walk in loving obedience, we prove the blessedness of the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Ironside, H. Romans).

**Alexander Maclaren**...writes that Paul is...

making the transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of his letter, and that he lays down broad principles, of which all his subsequent injunctions and exhortations are simply the filling up of the details. One

master word, for the whole Christian life, as we then saw, is **sacrifice** (See sermon entitled - [Romans 12:1 The Sacrifice of the Body](#)), **self-surrender**, and that to God. In like manner, Paul here brackets, with that great conception of the Christian life, another equally dominant and equally comprehensive. In one aspect, it is self-surrender; in another, it is growing transformation (Ro 12:2). And, just as in (Ro 12:1) we found that an inward surrender preceded the outward sacrifice, and that the inner man, having been consecrated as a priest, by this yielding of himself to God, was then called upon to manifest inward consecration by outward sacrifice, so in this further exhortation (Ro 12:2), an inward 'renewing of the mind' is regarded as the necessary antecedent of transformation of outward life...Note, then, that the foundation of all transformation of character and conduct is laid deep in a renewed mind...

The Gospel of Jesus Christ presents itself, not as a mere republication of morality, not as merely a new stimulus and motive to do what is right, but as an actual communication to men of a new power to work in them, a strong hand laid upon our poor, feeble hand with which we try to put on the brake or to apply the stimulus. It is a new gift of a life which will unfold itself after its own nature, as the bud into flower, and the flower into fruit; giving new desires, tastes, directions, and renewing the whole nature. And so, says Paul, the beginning of transformation of character is the renovation in the very centre of the being, and the communication of a new impulse and power to the inward self....

If you want to change your characters, and God knows they all need it, change the deep convictions of your mind; and get hold, as living realities, of the great truths of Christ's Gospel. If you and I really believed what we say we believe, that Jesus Christ has died for us, and lives for us, and is ready to pour out upon us the gift of His Divine Spirit, and wills that we should be like Him, and holds out to us the great and wonderful hopes and prospects of an absolutely eternal life of supreme and serene blessedness at His right hand, should we be, could we be, the sort of people that most of us are? It is not the much that you say you believe that shapes your character; it is the little that you habitually realise. Truth professed has no transforming power; truth received and fed upon can revolutionize a man's whole character....

Make of your every thought an action; link every action with a thought. Or, to put it more Christian like, let there be nothing in your creed which is not in your commandments; and let nothing be in your life which is not moulded by these. The beginning of all transformation is the revolutionized conviction of a mind that has accepted the truths of the Gospel. ([For full messages Read Romans 12:2 Transfiguration](#))

**Spurgeon** calls our attention to the basic principle "that the only way to escape being **conformed** to the world is to be **transformed**. The customs of society will lead us away unless the grace of God (**Ed**: see study of Titus 2:12-note where grace of God is our instructor) rules in us with divine power. We are set to prove to the world what the mind of God is: may we have grace to accomplish our mission."

**Do not be conformed** combines a negative particle (Greek = [me](#)) with the **present imperative** which conveys the sense of "Stop doing this!" implying that they were already allowing themselves to be poured into the mold of the godless world (Gal 1:4, 1Jn 2:15-note, 1Jn 2:16-note, 1Jn 2:17-note, Jas 4:4-note). Paul commands them to stop acting like earth dwellers (the term John uses in the Revelation of the unsaved - see Tony Garland's discussion of [Earth Dwellers](#)). However do not misunderstand what Paul is commanding. He is not saying believers are to make a list of "don't's" which we need to stop doing -- that is the essence of legalism (listen to Pastor **Ray Stedman's** excellent Mp3 entitled [Legalism](#) [\(Transcript\)](#)). The only way to not be conformed is to seek Jesus first and as His presence and power become more experientially intimate in your life (cp Jn 3:30), the things of this fallen world will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. The right order is the Spirit of Christ first, then the lusts of the flesh (cp Ga 5:16-note)

**Frederick Godet** explains that "Paul has just pointed to the believer's **body** as a **consecrated instrument**...In the use of his **consecrated body**, the believer has first an everywhere present model to be rejected, then a new type to be discerned and realized. The model to be rejected is that presented to him by the **present world**, or, as we should say, the reigning fashion, taking this word in its widest sense...The term (this) **present world** is used in the Rabbis to denote the whole state of things which precedes the epoch of the Messiah; in the N. T. it describes the course of life followed by those who have not yet undergone the renewing wrought by Christ in human life. It is this mode of living anterior to regeneration which the believer is not to imitate in the use which he makes of his body. ([Romans 12:1-2 The Basis of Christian Activity](#)) (Bolding added)

**J. C. Ryle** - It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that the man "born of God" will be a man who, more or less, resists and overcomes the world (cp 1Jn 5:4).

**WHICH ARE YOU...  
THERMOMETER  
OR**

## THERMOSTAT?

**Jon Courson** asks "Are you a thermometer—adjusting to the temperature of the culture, or are you a thermostat—changing the climate of the culture? If you are a conformer, a thermometer, you're in for perpetual frustration because by the time you take the temperature and figure out what's hot, by the time you change your look, or buy the car, or redo your house—the world will have moved on, leaving you out of style. Truly, this is a great mystery to a lot of Christians. They try to make their ministries relatable by analyzing what the world is doing in order to emulate it. But by the time they figure it out and implement it, the world has moved on. That's why Christians are known for being out of style. What's the key? Don't be a thermometer. Be a thermostat. Don't be a conformer. Be a transformer. Say, "I'm in a whole different place than you are, world. I'm living for eternity. I'm preparing for heaven." (Jon Courson's Application Commentary)

**J C Philpot** has a word of warning for believers who think they can keep one foot in the unholy world and maintain sweet communion with the holy God!...

In proportion as we are conformed to the spirit of this world, our **understanding** becomes dull in the things of God, our **affections** cold and torpid, and our **consciences** less tender and sensitive. (Ed: **Dear reader - Stop right here! Before you read further, ask yourself whether you have "drifted" in any of these three areas—understanding, affections, conscience. Be honest with yourself. If you are having trouble answering ask God's Spirit to help you and He will - Ps 139:23-24. The passing pleasures of this world pale in comparison to perpetual pleasures of paradise in the presence of God. Don't sell yourself and your enjoyment of eternity short beloved! If you need to cast off some "filthy" clothes, then by the Spirit's enabling power "Just do it!" For example, if you have found yourself watching television shows or movies that years earlier would have shocked you, then STOP NOW! Beloved, I am convicted as I write this note and am asking myself these same questions. Remember this is not about a guilt trip but is about God's glory and your good [temporally and eternally]!**)

There is an eternal opposition between God and the world lying in wickedness. In order, then, that our spiritual experience of the truth of God should maintain its ground, it must not be dulled and deadened by conformity to the world. It is like the saber that the soldier carries into battle; it must not trail unsheathed upon the ground lest point and edge be dulled; both must be kept keen and sharp, that execution may be done upon the foe.

So it is with our enlightened understanding, with our tender conscience, and our heavenly affections. If we let them fall upon the world, it is like a soldier trailing his saber upon the pavement; every step he takes dulls both edge and point. If we are conformed to this world, we lose the sweet understanding that we had before of the precious truth of God; we lose that tender sensitiveness of conscience, whereby sin—any sin—becomes a grief and a burden to the soul. A Christian should be what was said of an ancient knight, "without fear and without reproach." The least suspicion of either would have been a blot upon the noble knight's escutcheon. So the Christian's shield should be without a stain, his reputation without a blot. His character should not only be free from blemish, but even from suspicion—as untarnished as the modesty of a woman, or the honor and bravery of a man.

Now, we often get into this worldly conformity, and run the risk of dulling the sword and sully the shield, by degrees. We give way in this and that thing. We are hedged in, it is true, by the precepts of the gospel, the alarms of a tender conscience, and many powerful restraints—so many banks and dykes to keep out the sea of the world. But, as in Holland, if one breach be made in the dyke, the sea at once rushes in, so, if one gap be made in the conscience, then the sea of worldliness rushes through the breach, and but for God's grace would soon deluge the soul. But even apart from having any peculiar temptation to make a wide breach like this, our social ties, our daily occupation, the friends and relations whom we love in the flesh, all, through their power over our natural affections, draw us aside from time to time into this worldly conformity.

Here, then, is the point where we have to make our chief stand; for if we are conformed to the maxims, the principles, the customs, and the spirit of the world, we so far lose that spiritual position which is a believer's highest blessing and privilege. We descend from the mount of communion with the Lord, and fall into a cold, miserable spot, where the life of God, though not extinct, is reduced to its lowest ebb. The Apostle therefore says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." ([The Living Sacrifice Presented](#))

**Conformed** (4964) ([suschematizo](#) [word study] from **sun/syn** = together with + **schema** = external form, appearance) means to form according to a pattern or mold, to fashion alike, to conform to the same pattern outwardly. The meaning is to form or mold one's behavior in accordance with a particular pattern or set of standards. The preposition "sun" in this compound verb denotes a



personal assimilation to or conformity with the pattern indicated.

**Barnhouse** picks up on the root word **schema** and says "we are not to go along with the world's **schemes**."

This verb speaks of an outward conforming, that which is external and does not represent what is on the inside. So when a believer conforms to the fallen world's standard, this external does not represent the new creation on the inside of the believer. Believers are to be changed by what is transpiring on the inside (see below "but be transformed...") such that it effects the outside.

**Suschematizo** is used only here and in 1Peter 1:14 (see notes) where it describes those who **conform** themselves to **their former lusts** (strong desires in this context that emanate from the fallen nature, the **flesh**, that evil disposition inherited from Adam) **which** were theirs in their ignorance (before God in His kindness opened the eyes of their heart to see the liberating truth of the Gospel and the new life in Christ Jesus their Lord).

To reiterate, **suschematizo** refers to an **outward** expression **that does not reflect (or come from) what is within** in this case Christ in us the hope of glory (see Colossians 1:27-note), Christ our life (see Colossians 3:4-note). **Suschematizo** is used of masquerading or putting on an act, specifically by following a prescribed pattern or scheme (a "schema"). The root noun [schema](#) (also source of English word **scheme** = a systematic plan or arrangement for attaining some particular object or putting a particular idea into effect) denotes a pattern of life that does not come from within but is imposed from without, in this case **this present evil age** (Gal 1:4) or world system which **lies in the power of the evil one** (1John 5:19, cp Jn 12:31, 14:30, 2Cor 4:4, Ep 2:2, Rev 12:9).

**Suschematizo** also conveys the thought of following a manner of life that is unstable and changing rather than enduring. Paul's prohibition is directed against a manner of life that does not come from nor is representative of the new creatures (creations) believers are in their inner being as the result of regeneration by the Holy Spirit Who now indwells every child of God (see Romans 8:9- note).

**William Barclay** explains that the root of **suschematizo**: is [schema](#), which means the outward form that varies from year to year and from day to day. A man's [schema](#) is not the same when he is seventeen as it is when he is seventy; it is not the same when he goes out to work as when he is dressed for dinner. It is continuously altering. So Paul says, "Don't try to match your life to all the fashions of this world; don't be like a chameleon which takes its color from its surroundings. ([The Daily Study Bible Series - Online](#))

**Haldane** quotes the apostle **John** "'We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.' (1Jn 5:19NLT) By **conformity** to the world is meant assimilation to the people of the world; or the sentiments, conduct, and customs by which they are distinguished. It is the character of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, that they walk 'according to the course of this world,' acting conformably to those maxims which regard only the present life; and they 'who mind earthly things' are described as the enemies of the cross of Christ; but the conversation of believers, as being pilgrims and strangers, is in heaven. ([Haldane](#))

Not being conformed is not a negative approach so much as it is a positive one. It is not that you stop doing a few things that other people are doing that are regarded as "wrong". It is more that you start doing some things that they don't do at all, like loving your enemy (try this one in your own strength), forgiving when you have been unjustly wronged, returning good for evil, showing kindness to those who are repay you with an ungrateful attitude. These are attitudes and actions that **living sacrifices** are to carry out. This quality of conduct is what it looks like practically to not be conformed to the world. The way to see this supernatural lifestyle become a reality is to "be transformed by having your mind renewed" so that you begin to think less and less like the fallen world thinks and more and more like Christ in us would have us think and act.

**Dear Christian, how is your love for Christ today  
compared to your love when you first met Him by grace through faith?**

**C H Spurgeon** in his highly recommended devotional (Morning and Evening) addresses this question expounding on the inestimable worth of **not being conformed to the world**..

If a Christian can by possibility be saved while he conforms to this world, at any rate it must be so as by fire (cp Jude 1:23). Such a bare salvation is almost as much to be dreaded as desired. Reader, would you wish to leave this world in the darkness of a desponding death bed, and enter heaven as a shipwrecked mariner climbs the rocks of his native country? Then be worldly; be mixed up with Mammonites (those devoted to the pursuit of wealth), and refuse to go without (outside) the camp bearing Christ's reproach (see Heb13:13-note).

But would you have a heaven below as well as a heaven above? Would you comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? (see Ephesians 3:18-note; Ep 3:19-note) Would you receive an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord? (see notes 2Pe 1:10-note; 2Pe 1:11-note) Then come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing

(2Co 6:17, Is 52:11). Would you attain the full assurance of faith (see note Hebrews 10:22)? You cannot gain it while you commune with sinners.

Would you flame with vehement (marked by intensity of feeling or conviction) love? Your love will be damped (literally made slightly wet but here figuratively meaning stifled or deadened!) by the drenchings of godless society. You cannot become a great Christian - you may be a babe in grace, but you never can be a perfect man in Christ Jesus while you yield yourself to the worldly maxims (short, pithy statements expressing general truths or rules of conduct) and modes of business of men of the world.

It is ill for an **heir of heaven** to be a great friend with the **heirs of hell** (read especially James 4:4)

It has a bad look when a courtier (a companion to a king, in our case the King of kings!) is too intimate with his king's enemies.

**Even small inconsistencies are dangerous.** Little thorns make great blisters, little moths destroy fine garments, and little frivolities (those things not having any serious purpose or value) and little rogueries (dishonest, unprincipled, mischievous ways of conduct - in agriculture a rogue is a crop plant which is inferior, diseased, or of a different, unwanted variety!) will rob religion of a thousand joys.

**O professor** (a person who affirms a faith in or allegiance to something), too little separated from sinners, you know not what you lose by your conformity to the world. It cuts the tendons of your strength, and makes you creep where you ought to run. Then, for your own comfort's sake, and for the sake of your growth in grace (see 2 Peter 3:18-note), if you be a Christian, be a Christian, and be a marked and distinct one. (Amen!) **Ed note:** Bolding, definitions and Scriptural references added for amplification and emphasis).

Do you understand what Spurgeon is saying? If the passion and flame we once had for Christ has lessened, one of the reasons may be that we have become too enamored with this present evil age. Nothing will dampen our love for Christ as will love for the world. (cp notes on "two masters" in Matthew 6:24 (note))

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Romans 12:1 (note) speaks of a specific act in which we offer ourselves to God and Romans 12:2 tells us of two ongoing activities (both are present tense) that carry out the intent to present ourselves as a living sacrifice.

A believer's continued practice of conforming to the world's way of thinking and acting is inconsistent with having given his or her body to the Lord the King and to the King's service. Indeed, such a practice is forbidden because it negates and seriously mars the presentation the believer has made as a **living sacrifice** and amounts in essence to a sacrifice that places itself on the altar but then begins to "crawl off the altar". To reiterate the present tense of the verb **suschematizo** indicates that this duty to resist conformity is necessary every moment of every day for the rest of our life on earth. Whereas **Romans 12:1** (see notes) calls for a decisive commitment, (Romans 12:2) deals with the maintenance of that commitment. The process of non-conformity is a continuous duty that runs parallel with the continual process of being transformed (see discussion below) or as Harris summarizes it -- "a continual renunciation and renewal."

We are to stop allowing ourselves to be fashioned after the schemes of this passing evil age in which we live. Practically this means we must be careful what we read and watch (see discussion of **to this world** below). We must not be afraid to be different (to be like Christ - see John 15:18, 19, 20, 21). This same idea of not being conformed to the world is found in 2Ti 2:4-note,

No soldier engaged in active duty entangles himself with the everyday affairs of this life. (see note on 2 Timothy 2:4)

You can't be in God's army and be a civilian. You can't serve God and mammon (see Matthew 6:24-note). As citizens of heaven (see Philippians 3:20-note) we are to "set [our] mind on things above, not on the things that are on the earth" (see Colossians 3:1-note; Col 3:2 note).

The danger of being conformed to the world's way of thinking and doing is ever present. James says that those who seek to practice pure and undefiled religion must keep themselves unstained by the world (James 1:27-note). James further warns us of the danger of "Friendship of the world" (Ja 4:4).

Righteous Lot (see 2Pe 2:7-note; 2Pe 2:8 note; 2Pe 2:2:9-note) represents a tragic OT example of a believer who gradually conformed to the world (and it cost him a "lot"). First he pitched his tent toward Sodom (Ge 13:10, 11). Then he moved into Sodom (Ge 13:12, 19:1). Before long, Sodom moved into him (conformed to the world) and he lost his testimony to the pagans and even with his own family (Ge 19:9, 14, 26, 1Co 15:33). When judgment fell on Sodom, Lot lost everything. Abraham, the separated believer, the **friend of God** (James 2:23), had the greater ministry to the pagans than did Lot, the friend of the world.



## Compromise

leads to

## Conformity

which leads to

## Defeat

It is when the believer is separated from sin (2Cor 6:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 7:1) that he or she exerts the greatest influence for God. The price of spiritual power is a purity of heart. As discussed below spiritual transformation starts in the mind and heart. A mind dedicated to the world and its concerns will produce a life tossed back and forth by the currents of culture (see Ephesians 4:14-note). But a mind dedicated to God's truth will produce a life that can stand the test of time. We can resist the temptations of our culture by [meditating on God's truth](#) and letting the Holy Spirit guide and shape our thoughts and behaviors.

**J C Ryle** notes that the believer who seeks to redeem this short time on earth must be fully aware of the continual need to **fight the world**. The subtle influence of that mighty enemy must be daily resisted, and without a daily battle can never be overcome. The love of the world's good things, the fear of the world's laughter or blame, the secret desire to keep in with the world, the secret wish to do as others in the world do, and not to run into extremes (Ed: Have you ever been accused by other believers "You're getting a bit too radical with your stated desire to not love the world"?)—all these are spiritual foes which beset the Christian continually on his way to heaven and must be conquered. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world." "Be not conformed to this world" (Jas 4:4-note; 1Jn 2:15-note; Gal 6:14-note; 1Jn 5:4; Ro 12:2). (J. C. Ryle. Holiness)

**Expositor's Bible Commentary** - The **dedicated life** is also the **transformed life**. Whereas v1 has called for a decisive commitment, v2 deals with the maintenance of that commitment. We need to "bind the sacrifice with cords...unto the horns of the altar" (Ps 118:27). Significantly, there is a shift in the tense of the verbs (from the aorist "present") to the present tense, pointing up the necessity of continual vigilance lest the original decision be vitiated or weakened. The threat comes from "this world," whose ways and thoughts can so easily impinge on the child of God. ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary 6-Volume New Testament. Zondervan Publishing](#))

### TO THIS WORLD (AGE): to aioni touto:

- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**World (1658) (aion [word study])** is better rendered as **the age** referring to the present sinful age which John reminds us "lies in the power of the evil one" (1Jn 5:19), Satan himself, who Paul describes as "the god of this world (aion)" (2Cor 4:4). This present evil age is contrasted with the age to come (Mt 12:32).

**See word study on related word: kosmos**

**Maclaren** says **world** is "the sum total of godless men and things conceived of as separated from God...No doubt the Gospel has sweetened society; no doubt the average of godless life in England is a better thing than the average of godless life in the Roman Empire. No doubt there is a great deal of Christianity diffused through the average opinion and ways of looking at things, that prevail around us. But the World is the world still. There are maxims and ways of living, and so on, characteristic of the Christian life, which are in as complete antagonism to the ideas and maxims and practices that prevail amongst men who are outside of the influences of this Christian truth in their own hearts, as ever they were. ([For full messages Read Romans 12:2 Transfiguration](#))

**William MacDonald** explains that the **world** as "as used here means the society or system that man has built in order to make himself happy without God. It is a kingdom that is antagonistic to God. The god and prince of this world is Satan (2Cor 4:4; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11. All unconverted people are his subjects. He seeks to attract and hold people through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (1John 2:16). The world has its own politics, art, music, religion, amusements, thought-patterns, and lifestyles, and it seeks to get everyone to conform to its culture and customs. It hates nonconformists—like Christ and His followers. Christ died to deliver us from this world. The world is crucified to us, and we are crucified to the world. It would be absolute disloyalty to the Lord for believers to love the world. Anyone who loves the world is an enemy of God. Believers are not of the world any more than Christ is of the world. However, they are sent into the world to testify that its works are evil and that salvation is available to all who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." ([MacDonald, W and Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Trench** has described **aion** as "that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale." ([World - Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament](#))

**Aion** then is the **spirit of this age** that seeks gratification of self independent of and regardless of the consequences or cost to self or others. This "**world**" or **age** is self-centered, self-pleasing, self-indulgent, self-concerned and indifferent to needs of others. The prevailing, popular thinking and culture is in continual rebellion against God and His authority and seeks to conform all the world's inhabitants into its godless "world view". The "**world's** view" impregnates mankind, molding, corrupting and degrading and in the process affecting all culture and every institution.

This **world** or **age** is like that in the days of Judges when "there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." (see Jdg 17:6- note ; Jdg 21:25-note)

The result of **being conformed** to this **age** is not a **renewed mind** but "a **depraved mind** (reprobate - a mind not enduring trial and so not of standard purity or fineness and in the final analysis a mind that is rejected) (which does) those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." (Ro 1:28; 29; 30; 31; 32- see **notes** Ro 1:28; 29; 30; 31; 32).

This **age** contrasts sharply with "**the age**" (the messianic age or millennial reign of Christ on earth is the next "age") to come when righteousness reigns (see 2Pe 3:13-note).

**Denney** - "**This world**" or "age" is opposed to that which is to come; it is an evil world (Galatians 1:4) of which Satan is the God (2Corinthians 4:4). Even apparent or superficial conformity to a system controlled by such a spirit, much more an actual accommodation to its ways, would be fatal to the Christian life. By nature, the Christian is at home in this world (cf. Ephesians 2:2); such as it is, its life and his life are one; and his deliverance is accomplished as he is transformed by the renewing of his mind. ([Romans 12 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Paul** writes that our Lord...

gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue (to pluck out, tear out; take out from a number and so deliver, set free from danger) us from this **present evil** (pernicious) **age** (aion), according to the will of our God and Father (Gal 1:4-note).

Before we were saved, we were conformed to this present evil age and

walked ( ordered your behavior) according to (dominated by) the **course** (**aion** - the spirit of the age) of this **world** (kosmos = world's values and way of doing things), according to the prince of the power of the air" (Ep 2:2-note).

When we come to the kingdom of God, we should abandon the thought-patterns and lifestyles of the world because the world wants to control our mind, but God wants to transform our mind (cf Ep 4:17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23 24; Col 3:1ff- **notes** Ep 4:17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23 24; Col 3:1ff).

And so because of the **mercies of God**, believers are **in** the world but are not to be **of** the world. This truth is illustrated by a submarine which is fully functional **in** water but is ruined if water comes within. A submarine on the ground (out of the water) is useless and is not accomplishing its mission. When it is in the water it must be insulated (not isolated) from the water. If the water ever gets into the submarine then there is cause to sound the alarm. Believers are to be insulated from the world (like Daniel in the midst of idol infested Babylon) but not isolated from the world.

**A boat in the water is by design**

**but**

**Water in the boat is big disaster**

**Morris** writes that "Christians have been introduced to the life of the world to come; what a tragedy, then, if they conform to the perishing world they have left."

**Keith Krell** gives an excellent illustration of the subtle nature of becoming conformed to the world reminding us that...

The term "conformed" literally means to be molded or stamped according to a pattern. The Phillips translation

reads: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." The contours of the world's mold flow along the lines of:

- (1) fortune-money and materialism,
- (2) fame-popularity and acceptance,
- (3) power-influence and control, and
- (4) pleasure-sensual desires.

We must not be shaped by these influences. We must fight against the tide of sin, self, and Satan.

On a bright sunny day when you first walk into a dark movie theater, you usually remark about how dark it is. If there was no usher to show you to a seat, you probably had to stand in the back for a few minutes until the darkness seemed to clear and you began to see again. Before long, you could see without difficulty. Indeed, you seemed to be able to see normally. "Normally," that is, until you walked out into the sunlight again and the bright glare forced you to cover your eyes. (**Ed note:** Physiologically this phenomenon is what is referred to in ophthalmic terms as **adaptation**. The eye takes approximately 30 minutes to fully adapt from bright sunlight to complete darkness and become one million times more sensitive than at full daylight. In this process, the eye's perception of color changes as well. However, it takes approximately five minutes for the eye to adapt to bright sunlight from darkness.)

We Christians are often in the same predicament. We live in a dimly lighted world, where sin is the rule and not the exception. And yet we are really **children of the light** (see Ephesians 5:8-note, cp sons of light and sons of day - see 1Th 5:5 note note) We must always be on our guard that we do not become so accustomed to the darkness of our world that we think it is normal and conform to its dubious guidelines. It is not normal. The dim moral and spiritual insight of the world is not the standard that the Christian is to walk by.

**Comment:** I can identify with the seductive and subtle nature of what I call "spiritual adaptation" or gradually being conformed to the world - I had heard about a show called "The Sopranos" but since we did not receive the so called "premium (pernicious)" channels, I paid no attention to the hype. And then one night I was "surfing" [usually a bad thing for a man to be doing!] and I encountered a show that was "entertaining" so I parked for a while and began to be intrigued with the characters and subplots...before I knew it the show was over. A free station had made re-runs of the Sopranos available and I had taken the bait. But as my eyes "adapted" there was a high price, for I found myself continuing to watch and listen to language that would have previously prompted me immediately to change channels or walk out of the room. Adaptation from the glorious pure light of Jesus to the dim, dreary, decadent lights of this world is possible for any of us. May God's Spirit energize us to be vigilant so that we continually set a guard at the doorposts of our minds lest we fall for the seductive and subtle snares of this evil world system.

**John Piper** advises believers to not be conformed but instead to "cultivate the mindset of exiles. What this does mainly is sober us up and wake us up so that we don't drift with the world and take for granted that the way the world thinks and acts is the best way. We don't assume that what is on TV is helpful to the soul; we don't assume that the priorities of advertisers is helpful to the soul; we don't assume that the strategies and values of business and industry are helpful to the soul. We don't assume that any of this glorifies God. We stop and we think and we consult the Wisdom of our own country, heaven, and we don't assume that the conventional wisdom of this age is God's wisdom. We get our bearings from God in his word. When you see yourself as an alien and an exile with your citizenship in heaven, and God as your only Sovereign, you stop drifting with the current of the day. You ponder what is good for the soul and what honors God in everything: food, cars, videos, bathing suits, birth control, driving speeds, bed times, financial savings, education for the children, unreached peoples, famine, refugee camps, sports, death, and everything else. Aliens get their cue from God and not the world. (Read Dr Piper's full sermon [The War Against the Soul and the Glory of God](#))

**Augustine** wrote "Two cities have been formed by two loves; the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God, the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord" ([The City of God](#)). Many, sad to say, reside in the earthly city of self-love.

## ILLUSTRATIONS RELATED TO THE WORLD, WORLDLINESS

A scuba diver lives in the water but breathes the air. He is able to function because he takes his environment with him. If he "conforms" to environment around him, he will eventually die! (Modified from source unknown)

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The **world system** is committed to at least four major objectives, which I can summarize in four words: fortune, fame, power, pleasure. First and foremost: Fortune, money. The world system is driven by money; it feeds on materialism. Second: Fame. That is another word for popularity. Fame is the longing to be known, to be somebody in someone else's eyes. Third: Power. This is having influence, maintaining control over individuals or groups or companies or whatever. It is the desire to manipulate and maneuver others to do something for one's own benefit. Fourth: Pleasure. At its basic level, pleasure has to do with fulfilling one's sensual desires. It's the same mindset that's behind the slogan: "If it feels good, do it." (Charles Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity*, p.219)

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Addressing a national seminar of Southern Baptist leaders, George Gallup said, "We find there is very little difference in ethical behavior between churchgoers and those who are not active religiously...The levels of lying, cheating, and stealing are remarkable similar in both groups. Eight out of ten Americans consider themselves Christians, Gallup said, yet only about half of them could identify the person who gave the Sermon on the Mount, and fewer still could recall five of the Ten Commandments. Only two in ten said they would be willing to suffer for their faith. (Erwin Lutzer, *Pastor to Pastor*, p. 76)

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The course of rebellion against God may be very gradual, but it increases in rapidity as you progress in it; and if you begin to run down the hill, the ever-increasing impetus will send you down faster and faster to destruction. You Christians ought to watch against the beginning of worldly conformity. I do believe that the growth of worldliness is like strife, which is as the letting out of water. Once you begin, there is no knowing where you will stop. I sometimes get this question put to me, concerning certain worldly amusements, "May I do so-and-so?" I am very sorry whenever anyone asks me that question, because it shows that there is something wrong, or it would not be raised at all. If a person's conscience lets him say, "Well, I can go to A," he will very soon go on to B, C, D, E, and through all the letters of the alphabet. . .When Satan cannot catch us with a big sin, he will try a little one. It does not matter to him as long as he catches his fish, what bait he uses. Beware of the beginning of evil, for many, who bade fair to go right, have turned aside and perished amongst the dark mountains in the wide field of sin. (C. H. Spurgeon)

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The world's smiles are more dangerous than its frowns. (Source Unknown)

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Some years ago, musicians noted that errand boys in a certain part of London all whistled out of tune as they went about their work. It was talked about and someone suggested that it was because the bells of Westminster were slightly out of tune. Something had gone wrong with the chimes and they were discordant. The boys did not know there was anything wrong with the peals, and quite unconsciously they had copied their pitch.

So we tend to copy the people with whom we associate; we borrow thoughts from the books we read and the programs to which we listen, almost without knowing it. God has given us His Word which is the absolute pitch of life and living. If we learn to sing by it, we shall easily detect the false in all of the music of the world. (Donald Grey Barnhouse) (**All illustrations from [Sermon Illustrations](#)**)

## **BUT BE TRANSFORMED:** alla metamorphousthe ( 2PPPM)

- Ro 13:14; Psalms 51:10; Ezekiel 18:31; 36:26; 2Co 5:17; Eph 1:18; 4:22, 23, 24; Col 1:21,22; 3:10; Titus 3:5
- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind (GNB)

**But (235) (alla)** (see **term of contrast**) presents a strong reversal of direction (and thought) following up a negative command with a strong positive command to emphasize the dramatic contrast being external conformity and internal transformation.

The opposite of being **conformed** to this world is being **transformed** by the renewing of your mind. The battle ground between an

evil conformity and a good transformation is within the mind of the believer. Note that **transformed** is **Passive Voice** which indicates that this process is being performed by an outside force, the Holy Spirit (see especially 2Cor 3:18) God's Word (See discussion below under "renewing of your mind"), not a change produced by our self effort. We must be (passive) transformed by God, trusting Him to do in and through us what only His Spirit can accomplish.

**Keith Krell** illustrates the **passive voice** this way "If I said to you, "I'm going to the store"-that's active. If I said to you, "I was taken to the store"-that's passive, someone else drove me. Paul is saying once we become living sacrifices something beautiful happens-someone else transforms us! The word translated "transformed" is a word that has been brought into the English language without translation. It's the word "metamorphosis." When a tadpole is changed into a frog or when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, we speak of it as a metamorphosis. That is what God wants for each of His children-for us to be transformed from the spiritually defeated, dull, and depressing existence so many endure, into the victorious, vital, and enriching experience that is available to the believer in Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, **transformed** is **present tense** signifying that this is not a one time event, not a single crisis experience but a transformation that is progressively realized, a gradual **process**.

**PBPGIFWMY**

Every believer can now wear the **PBPGIFWMY** button which means "Please Be Patient. Go d Isn't Finished With Me Yet." (see [related devotional](#)).

In addition "be transformed" is in the **imperative mood** (command), which indicates that believers have some responsibility in this transformation. How so? We are to have tender hearts and obedient, submissive wills so that we might allow the Spirit to do His work within our hearts and lives, and not quench, grieve or resist Him.

**D L Moody** - The Scriptures were not given for our information, but for our transformation.

**Sanday and Headlam's** paraphrase = "do not adopt the external and fleeting fashion of this world, but be ye transformed in your inmost nature"

**Be transformed** (3339) (**metamorphoo** from **metá** = denotes change of place or condition + **morphoo** = to form from morphe = form, shape referring to the essential form of a thing) has the basic meaning of changing into another form and is the term from which we get metamorphosis, which in biology denotes the amazing change of a lowly worm into a beautiful butterfly. So the change in view here is not a superficial fluctuation of fashion or conduct but a vital change revealing a new life. **Metamorphoo** describes Jesus' **transfiguration** in which His glory shined through His garments so that what Jesus really was on the inside was made manifest to Peter, John and James (Mt 17:2, Mk 9:2)

**Metamorphoo** describes the process by which that on the inside shows forth to the outside such that that everyone can see. In Romans 12:2 it describes an inward renewal of our mind through which our inner spirit is changed into the likeness of Christ.

The verb **morphoo** does **not** refer to what is **outward and transient**, but to what is **inward and real** and thus that which produces an outward expression which proceeds from and is truly representative of one's inward character and nature. Hence on the **Mount of Transfiguration** the glory which was Jesus' essential and eternal inner divine nature, shone outward, for a brief time and to a limited degree. In a similar way, the believer's inner redeemed (divine - 2Pe 1:4-note) nature is to continually be manifest outwardly in our daily thoughts, words and deeds.

**Metamorphoo** is found 4x in the NT - Mt 17:12, Mk 9:2, Ro 12:2, 2Co 3:18 and is translated twice as **transfigured** and twice as **transformed**.

Matthew 17:2 And He was **transfigured** before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

Mark 9:2 Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was **transfigured** before them;

Romans 12:2 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.

2 Corinthians 3:18-note But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

To **be transformed** describes a change on the **outside** that comes from the **inside** (an "inside job" so to speak). Paul is calling for an **outward change** in the character and conduct of the believer, which is to **correspond with his or her inward spiritual**



**condition.** As someone has well said...

**God loves us too much  
to let us stay as we are.**

Paul is saying that as we make the conscious presentation of our bodies to God, shun (Php 2:13NLT) the pressure to be squeezed into the world's mold, and allow God to renew our minds, then that which is on the inside begins to show forth outwardly so those around so that they see more and more of Christ in us the hope of glory (Col 1:27-note) and less and less of our self (cp similar spiritual dynamic in Jn 3:30).

The world seeks to change our mind, and thus exerts pressure from without. But the Holy Spirit desires to renew our mind and He does so from within as we take in the Word and obey truth illuminated in the Word (cp Jn 17:17). If the "liberated" thinking (deceptive thinking for they are in bondage, not at liberty) of this world system influences and controls your mind, you are a conformer. On the other hand, if God controls your thinking, you are a transformer. It is easy to have an external conduct that looks good, but an inward life and manner of thinking that is offensive to God (cf Titus 1:16-note; 1Jn 3:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20). God's perfect righteousness and holiness is not satisfied with external piety that men see, but is more concerned about who we really are on the inside (cf Jas 1:26-note, James 1:27-note). Reputation is what others think about us. Character is what God knows is true about us. When God measures the character of a man or woman, He does not put the tape measure around their head but around their heart!

If you are continually being transformed by the joy of Christ in your heart, it will show on your face (cf Proverbs 15:13).

[William Newell](#) explains that "to be **"transformed"** or **"transfigured"** into the image of Christ is the blessed path and portion of the surrendered believer in the midst of this present evil world...Note that neither in world-conformity, nor in Christian transformation, are we the actors (Ed note: that is, we are not the ones initiating this action): the verbs are **passive**, in both cases. It is, **"Be** not fashioned, " and **"Be transformed."** In the first case, Satan and the world have abundant power, they know to fashion anyone found willing. But how are we to be **transformed**? The answer is, **By the renewing of your mind**; and here we come again upon that wonderful part of our salvation which is carried on by the Holy Spirit; and we must look at it attentively. ([Romans: Verse by Verse](#))

**William Barclay** - The word he uses for being transformed from the world is metamorphousthai. Its root is **morphe**, which means the essential unchanging shape or element of anything. (Ed Note: [For more on morphe and schema see Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament](#)) A man has not the same **schema** at seventeen and seventy, but he has the same **morphe**; a man in dungarees has not the same **schema** as a man in evening dress, but he has the same **morphe**; his outward form changes, but inwardly he is the same person. So, Paul says, to worship and serve God, we must undergo a change, not of our outward form, but of our inward personality. What is that change? Paul would say that left to ourselves we live a life **kata sarka**, dominated by human nature at its lowest; in Christ we live a life **kata Christon** or **kata pneuma**, dominated by Christ or by the Spirit. The essential man has been changed; now he lives, not a self-centered, but a Christ-centered life. This must happen, Paul says, by the renewal of your mind. The word he uses for renewal is **anakainosis**. In Greek there are two words for new-**neos** and **kainos**. **Neos** means new in point of time; **kainos** means new in point of character and nature. A newly manufactured pencil is **neos**; but a man who was once a sinner and is now on the way to being a saint is **kainos**. When Christ comes into a man's life he is a new man; his mind is different, for the mind of Christ is in him. When Christ becomes the centre of life then we can present real worship, which is the offering of every moment and every action to God. ([Romans 12 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Harrison** adds that "Our pattern here is Christ, Who refused Satan's solicitations in the temptation and was transfigured (metamorphoo--the same word as that translated "transformed") in His acceptance of the path that led to Calvary (Mk 9:2, 3). As His mission could be summarized in the affirmation that He had come to do the Father's will (Jn 6:38), the Christian's service can be reduced to this simple description also.

Paul knows that it is a moral axiom that we become like the gods we serve and so using **metamorphoo** he writes to the saints at Corinth explaining...

we all, with unveiled face **beholding** (present tense = continually. Some like the NIV favor this verb means reflecting, others like the NASB, KJV that it means to gaze upon) as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (present tense = pictures a continual process; passive voice = indicates transformation is wrought by the Spirit) into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." ([2Cor 3:18-note](#))

If one takes the NASB, KJV renderings, the meaning is that as we continually gaze at the **"mirror"** of the Word of God, especially the Gospel, (cf, 2Cor 4:4) in which the glory of Christ is seen, the Spirit of Christ is progressively transforming us from one level of Christ likeness to another. This is another description of progressive **sanctification** (Click to see this sanctification or present tense salvation graphically displayed and contrasted with justification and glorification). The change "from glory to glory" that is the lot of



believers under the New Covenant is such a wonderful contrast to the diminishing glory that Moses experienced under the Old Covenant (see Paul's explanation in 2 Corinthians 3).

What does it look like to be transformed? Here are some thoughts from **A W Pink's** book "The Holy Spirit"...

Here, then, are some of the principal effects produced by our being "changed," or reformed, conformed, and transformed by the Spirit of God. There is a growing realization of the ineffable holiness of God and of the righteousness and spirituality of the Law, and the extent of its requirements. There is a deepening sense of our utter sinfulness, failure and blameworthiness, and the daily loathing of ourselves for our hard-heartedness, our base ingratitude, and the ill returns we make to God for His infinite goodness to us. There is a corresponding self-abasement, taking our place in the dust before God, and frankly admitting that we are not worthy of the least of His mercies (Gen. 32:10). There is an increasing appreciation of the grace of God and of the provision He has made for us in Christ, with a corresponding longing to be done with this body of death and conformed fully to the lovely image of the Lord; which longings will be completely realized at our glorification.

**Haldane** adds that **metamorphoo** "signifies the change of the appearance of one thing into that of another. It is used by the fabulous writers to signify the change or metempsychosis of animals into trees, or of men into the appearance of other animals. This term denotes the entire change that passes on a man when he becomes a Christian. He is as different from what he was before, as one species of animal is from another. **Let not men be so far the dupes of self-deception as to reckon themselves Christians, while they are unchanged in heart and life.** 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or creation); old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.' (2Co 5:17) If there be not a radical difference between their present state and that in which they were by nature, they have no title to the character of Christians. This shows that, in general, it is not difficult to discriminate Christians from the world. If the change be as great as the word of God here teaches, what difficulty can there be, in most cases, in judging of the character of those who profess Christianity? It is not the heart we are called to judge. If the person be metamorphosed, as the word originally implies, from a state of nature to a conformity with Christ, it will certainly appear, and the state of the heart will be evident from the **life**. As there are degrees in this transformation, although all Christians are transformed when they are born again, yet they ought to be urged, as here, to a further degree of this transformation. ([Haldane](#))

**Hodge** - The **transformation** to which Christians are exhorted, is not a mere external change, but one which results from a change of heart, an entire alteration of the state of the mind. The word **nous**, mind, is used as it is here, frequently in the New Testament, Romans 1:28; Ephesians 4:17, Ephesians 4:23; Colossians 2:18, etc. In all these and in similar cases, it does not differ from the word heart, i.e. in its wide sense for the whole soul. ([Romans 12 - Hodge's Commentary on Romans](#))

AND GOD SAID: Let us **FORM** man in our image.

THE DEVIL SAYS: I will **DEFORM** man by sin.

THE WORLD SAYS: We must **CONFORM** man in our image.

EDUCATION SAYS: Let us **INFORM** man by knowledge.

SOCIETY SAYS: We will **REFORM** man by culture.

ONLY CHRIST SAYS: I will **TRANSFORM** man by grace.

([Middletown Bible](#))

**Alexander Maclaren** writes this "transformation is no sudden thing, though the revolution which underlies it may be instantaneous. The working out of the new motives, the working in of the new power, is no mere work of a moment. It is a lifelong task till the lump be leavened. Michael Angelo, in his mystical way, used to say that sculpture effected its aim by the removal of parts; as if the statue lay somehow hid in the marble block. We have, day by day, to work at the task of removing the superfluities that mask its outlines. Sometimes with a heavy mallet, and a hard blow, and a broad chisel, we have to take away huge masses; sometimes, with fine tools and delicate touches, to remove a grain or two of powdered dust from the sparkling block, but always to seek more and more, by slow, patient toil, to conform ourselves to that serene type of all perfectness that we have learned to love in Jesus Christ. And remember, brethren, this transformation is no magic change effected whilst men sleep. It is a commandment which we have to brace ourselves to perform, day by day to set ourselves to the task of more completely assimilating ourselves to our Lord. It comes to be a solemn question for each of us whether we can say, 'To-day I am liker Jesus Christ than I was yesterday; to-day the truth which renews the mind has a deeper hold upon me than it ever had before.' But this positive commandment is only one side of the transfiguration that is to be effected. It is clear enough that if a new likeness is being stamped upon a man, the process may be looked at from the other side; and that in proportion as we become liker Jesus Christ, we shall become more unlike the old type to

which we were previously conformed. And so, says Paul, 'Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed.' He does not mean to say that the nonconformity precedes the transformation. They are two sides of one process; both arising from the renewing of the mind within. ([For full messages Read Romans 12:2 Transfiguration](#))

## BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND: te anakainosei tou noos:

- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Renewing** (342) (**anakainosis** from **anakainóo** [in depth discussion] = renew qualitatively in turn from **aná** = again + **kainóo** = make new in turn from **kainos** = qualitatively new which is derived from a root meaning to turn out fresh and denotes that which is new in its own way) refers to a **qualitative renewal** or **renovation** (renovate = from Latin renovatus = past participle of renovare, from re- + novare = to make new, from novus = new) which makes a person different than in the past - new heart, new Lord, new home, new purpose and goal, etc.

The basic root word **kainos** is the epitome of the wholly different and miraculous "spiritual transaction" which is brought about at the time of our **regeneration** (Titus 3:5-note) and which then continues in "day to day salvation" (sanctification) as we present our bodies to God as living sacrifices, make choices to not become conformed to this present evil, ungodly world but to be transformed by God's Holy Word. When we make these choices to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, the Holy Spirit transforms our mind to be able to think an entirely new way that we could not think before we were saved by grace through faith. That beloved is the essence of the noun **anakainosis**.

The related verb form **anakainóo** is used by Paul to encourage the saints at Corinth writing...

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is **being renewed** (**anakainoo** = present tense = continuous process; passive voice = outside force producing this effect, i.e., the Spirit) day by day, for momentary, light affliction is producing (working out) for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.. (2Cor 4:16, 17,18)

Again writing to the saints at Colossae Paul encourage them that

and have put on the new self who is **being renewed** (**anakainoo** = present tense = continuous process; passive voice = outside force producing this effect, i.e., the Spirit) to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him. (see Colossians 3:10-note)

The noun **anakainosis** is used only twice in the NT, **Romans 12:2** (see discussion) and **Titus 3:5** and means to cause something to become new and different with the implication of becoming superior. **Anakainosis** is not known outside Christian literature nor in the Greek Septuagint (LXX). The reference in **Titus 3:5** refers to the first and unique renewing by the Holy Spirit Who creates a life that was not there before.

Stated another way this renewal as used here in Romans 12:2 depicts an essential change in character of your thinking - you can now think a way that heretofore was not possible. Now your new mind allows you at least the potential to see life the way God sees life. The believer belongs to heaven and to the age to come and no longer has to (or should) think like an unbeliever.

**Trench** says that the **renewing** of our minds "is the gradual conforming of the man more and more to that new spiritual world into which he has been introduced and in which he now lives and moves...the restoration of the divine image" ("the mind of Christ" [1Co 2:16])

In **Paul's letter to Titus**, we encounter the only other use of **anakainosis** in the NT...

But when the **kindness** (describes a genuine goodness and generosity of heart = God's loving, benevolent, entirely gracious concern to draw us to Himself and redeem us from sin forever - see discussion of chrestotes) of God our Savior (soter) and His love (philanthropia) for mankind **appeared** (see discussion of epiphaino), He **saved** (click for discussion of sozo) us, not on the basis of **deeds** (see discussion what constitutes good deeds) which we have done in righteousness (because man's righteousness falls far short of God's perfect standard of what is right), but according to His **mercy** (eleos = outward manifestation of pity which assumes need on the part of those who receive it and sufficient resources to meet the need on the part of those who show it, in this case God our Savior), by the washing of **regeneration** (paliggenesia - carries the idea of receiving new life, of being born again or being born from above) and **renewing** (anakainosis - in this context describes the new life that emerges from the new birth) by the Holy Spirit (the Holy Spirit, working through the

Word, empowers our new life in Christ)." (see **notes** Titus 3:4; Titus 3:5)

This **renewing of** our minds is nothing short of a "mental revolution" - taking our "normal" (selfish, self centered) human way of seeing life and giving us a point of view we could not have without God's Spirit changing our way of thinking. Paul moves beyond the initial change of mind to a continual yielding of the mind to the will of God. One of the best ways to "energize" and facilitate this "mental revolution" which produces transformation is to **memorize** the living Word of God (see **Memorizing His Word**), allowing implantation of the "seed" (see 1 Pe 1:23-note; 1 Pe 1:24 -note; 1 Pe 1:25-note cf Jer 23:28, 29, James 1:18-note, James 1:21-note) which His Spirit can germinate into a new way of thinking for as Jesus declared "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (Jn 6:63) It behooves every believer therefore to have a steady intake of these words which are the only words that guarantee "spirit and life"!

Many books can inform,  
but only the Bible can transform.

**For example, are you having trouble loving someone totally unlovable!?** Then allow the Spirit to **'renew your mind'** by memorizing 1Cor 13:4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (see **notes** 1Co 13:4; 5; 6; 7; 8) asking God to change your thinking in the process. Don't be legalistic but also don't think lightly of the power of His Word, His Spirit and the grace in which you stand to change your mind, heart and actions (cf Ps 107:19, 20 - See Spurgeon's comments on [Verse 19](#); [Verse 20](#)). Remember that the Word of Truth is not given to merely **inform** but to **transform**. Our Father is not seeking smarter sinners but saints who are growing more and more like their Savior through the intake of the Word (see 2 Peter 3:18-note). (See discussion of related topic [Application as the fruit of Inductive Bible Study](#))

The crucial ingredient in this **mind renewal process** is regular ingestion of "everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD" (Dt 8:3, "every word" in Mt 4:4, Why? see Lk 1:37ASV), cultivating an "infant like" attitude (see 1Pe 2:1-note for what you need to do to cultivate this desire and give you an "appetite". If you do not have an appetite for God's Word, do a personal inventory with 1Pe 2:1. Be honest.) and

**like newborn babes long for** (epipotheo - earnestly, intensely crave a command in the **aorist imperative** = indicates this is NOT optional! Do this now. Without delay. It is vitally important!) for the **pure** ("no additives", unadulterated, nothing that would cause decay!) milk of the **word**, so that by it you may **grow** in respect to **salvation** (1Pe 2:2-note).

Every believer needs to cultivate a heart attitude like Job who affirmed...

I have not departed (withdrawn, ceased, removed myself) from the command of His lips; I have **treasured** (laid up, concealed or hidden = the same Hebrew verb used by the psalmist in Ps 119:11 - [See Spurgeon's note](#)) the words of His (God's) mouth more than my necessary food"! (Job 23:12-note). (**Question:** Could Job's attitude toward the Word in any way explain how he was able to persevere in the face of such incredible testing?! Look at the context - specifically notice what Job had just declared in Job 23:10-note)

**William Newell** writes that "the object of this "renewing... includes the **mind**, with its **thoughts**; the **imagination**--so untamed naturally, the sensibilities or **feelings**; the **tastes**, or natural preferences, all which, since the fall of Adam, are naturally under the influence and power of the sinful **flesh**, and must be operated upon by the Holy Spirit, after one's regeneration. The **memory**, also, must be cleansed of all unclean, sinful recollections...**the renewing of the mind** takes in the whole sphere of conscious life for the child of God. ([Romans Verse by Verse](#))

**Mind** (3563) (**nous** with 6/24 uses in [Romans](#) -- [Click](#) to study these uses) refers to reflective intelligence. Nous is the mind as the organ of mental perception and apprehension. Simply stated, the **mind** is the seat of understanding, the thinking faculty. The **nous** can be **fleshly** (see Colossians 2:18 - note) where **flesh** denotes the principle of evil which dominates fallen man. **Nous** can signify the new nature which belongs to the believer by reason of his new birth, for now **we have the mind** (nous) **of Christ**. (1Cor 2:16). In many context (the current verse included) nous stands for the seat of emotions and affections, mode of thinking and feeling, disposition, moral inclination and as such is equivalent to the **heart**.

**Nous** - 24x in 22v in the **NAS** - as composure (1), comprehension(1), mind(20), minds(1), understanding(1).

Lk. 24:45; Ro 1:28; 7:23, 25; 11:34; 12:2; 14:5; 1 Co. 1:10; 2:16; 14:14f, 19; Eph. 4:17, 23; Phil. 4:7; Col. 2:18;  
2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:5; 2Ti 3:8; Titus 1:15; Rev. 13:18; 17:9

Your **mind** is the control center of your attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions. Paul says that God wants your mind because He knows the power of the mind and wants it for Himself. He wants you to think His thoughts. As you do, your mind will be renewed. As your mind is renewed, you will be able to fulfill His will for your life.

**Denney - nous** in the Apostle's usage is both intellectual and moral—the practical reason, or moral consciousness. This is corrupted and atrophied in the natural man, and renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit. The process would in modern language be described rather as sanctification than regeneration, but regeneration is assumed (Titus 3:5). ([Romans 12 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Vine** describes this renewing of one's mind as "the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God, which is designed to have a transforming effect upon the life."

**How does this supernatural mind renewal take place?** As the believer chooses to saturate his or her mind with the abiding seed, the living and active Word of God, the Spirit progressively "renovates" our mind so that the way we see, think and feel lines up more and more with the mind of God.

**David Guzik** explains the trap we often fall into regarding the mind renewal necessary to bring about transformation...

The battle ground between conforming to the world and being transformed is within the mind of the believer. Christians must think differently.

"I don't want to be conformed to this world. I want to be transformed. How do I do it?"

By the renewing of your mind. The problem with many Christians is they live based on feeling, or they are only concerned about doing.

The life based on feeling says,

"How do I feel today? How do I feel about my job? How do I feel about my wife? How do I feel about worship? How do I feel about the preacher?"

This life by feeling will never know the transforming power of God, because it ignores the renewing of the mind.

The life based on doing says,

"Don't give me your theology. Just tell me what to do. Give me the four points for this and the seven keys for that."

This life of doing will never know the transforming power of God, because it ignores the renewing of the mind.

God is never against feeling and doing. He is a God of powerful and passionate feeling, and He commands us to be doers. Yet feelings and doing are completely insufficient foundations for the Christian life. The first questions cannot be "How do I feel?" or "What do I do?" Rather, it must be "**What is true here? What does God's Word say?**"

**If your mind is to be renewed** "this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate (meditation is the same Hebrew word used in Psalm 1:2-note) on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to ALL that is written in it (When you study the Bible "hit or miss," you miss more than you hit) , for then you will make your way prosperous (referring to spiritual wealth not necessarily fiscal prosperity) and then you will have success" (because your mind is renewed) (Joshua 1:8-note). (See related resource - an Inductive Study on the **Power of God's Word**)

**Joshua 1:8** (note) called Joshua and by way of application all believers to think "Biblically", reading, assimilating and reflecting on and obeying the Word of God, so that we live "Biblically" in all we say and do. As clearly stated in Joshua 1:8 (note) a key element in this process is **meditation** which is so crucial to mind renewal but unfortunately is a vital spiritual discipline which is seldom practiced by Christians today. Now think with me for a moment. **Is meditation optional?** Not really because reading the Bible without meditating on it is like eating without chewing. It's not how many times you "go through" the Bible, but how much of the Bible "goes through" you! One of the most productive ways to study the Bible for yourself is to learn to read it **inductively** (see Introduction to Inductive Bible Study). [Click here](#) to download lesson one of the Precept inductive Bible study on Romans 12-16.

**A. W. Tozer** when speaking of the Bible once said "Read it much, read it often, brood over it, think over it, meditate over it—meditate on the Word of God day and night. When you are awake at night, think of a helpful verse (**Ed note:** see 2Pe 1:4-note regarding His precious and magnificent promises). When you get up in the morning, no matter how you feel, think of a verse and make the Word of God the important element in your day. The Holy Ghost wrote the Word, and if you make much of the Word, He will make much of you. It is through the Word that He reveals Himself. Between those covers is a living Book. God wrote it and it is still vital and effective and alive. God is in this Book, the Holy Ghost is in this Book, and if you want to find Him, go into this Book.

**Vance Havner** understood this truth about the **power of God's Word** to renew our minds writing that "The storehouse of God's Word was never meant for mere scrutiny, not even primarily for study but for **sustenance**. It is not simply a collection of fine

proverbs and noble teachings for men to admire and quote as they might Shakespeare. It is **rational** for the soul, **resources** of and for the spirit, **treasure** for the inner man. Its goods exhibited upon every page are ours, and we have no business merely moving respectfully amongst them and coming away none the richer.

**Ray Stedman** adds these comments on the **meditation** in his sermon on (Psalm 77:12 - [See Spurgeon's Note](#)) - "I will **meditate** on all Thy work, And muse on Thy deeds": He writes: "**Meditate**, muse, what does that mean? It is not enough to recall what God does. One must also think through as to the significance. That is the important thing. "I will meditate on them, think about them, concentrate upon these, until I see the meaning of these events." That is the important thing. Here is the trouble with many Christians. Many faint at the second step. They do the first, they think about what God has done in their life or in another person's life, or in the past, such as the resurrection or some other event of history. But then they expect some kind of an automatic reaction to occur. They feel just to think about the event should do something for them. But it isn't like that. "I will meditate on them. I will muse on them. I will think them through." There is need to ask, "What does this mean? How does it affect me? What is the significance of this event?" (sounds like "**Inductive Bible Study**")! When the writer (of [Psalm 77](#)) began to do that, then the answer came. (his mind was renewed!) This is what we need so much today. I dare say that this is a major reason for the weakness of Christians today. We don't want to think about events. We don't want to take time to think about what God has said or what He does, and thus come through to a significant understanding of the meaning of God's action. Turn off your television sets and think about what God has said! You can think even while you are working. I find that some of the most valuable and glorious times of understanding of what God is doing come when I meditate on the Scriptures as I am driving on the highways or in the city. A certain part of my mind can handle the activities of driving, if I am not facing any traffic problem, and I can give myself to thinking about Scripture passages. I have discovered that this is far better than the radio in turning a long trip into a short one. Oftentimes I can spend an hour or two thinking about these things and the time goes by so fast that I arrive at my destination hardly realizing that an hour or so has gone by. You can meditate like this while you are washing the dishes. I don't know a greater place for a woman to meditate than while washing the dishes. You don't need to think about washing the dishes! You can do that automatically. But if you have a verse of Scripture propped up on the window sill before you or a passage that you are trying to think through to an understanding of it, your kitchen sink can become the greatest altar you have ever experienced. Try it. This is what the psalmist is telling us here." ([The Cure For Doubt](#)) (For off site article click [Biblical Meditation](#))

**John Stott** explains how **transformation** takes place, noting that "Although Paul does not here tell us how our mind becomes renewed, we know from his other writings that it is by a combination of the Spirit and the Word of God. Certainly regeneration by the Holy Spirit involves the renewal of every part of our humanness, which has been tainted and twisted by the fall, and this includes our mind. But in addition, we need the Word of God, which is the Spirit's 'sword', and which acts as an objective revelation of God's will. Here then are the stages of Christian moral transformation: first our mind is renewed by the Word and Spirit of God; then we are able to discern and desire the will of God; and then we are increasingly transformed by it. (Stott, J. R. W. The message of Romans Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP)

To summarize, God transforms our minds and makes us spiritually minded by the instrumentality of His Word (John 17:17) and His Spirit (John 6:63). As you make God's Word your insatiable [delight](#) ( Psalm 1:2-see note) and as you read and memorize it, you in turn make possible the delightful discipline of meditating on His Word day and night (you cannot muse, mutter over, ponder or rehearse what is not already in your heart and mind) and the result is that your very innermost being becomes "*Bibline*" (Spurgeon's description of the great writer John Bunyan -- Spurgeon said if you were to prick Bunyan he would bleed "*Bibline*"), as God Spirit takes the word you are eating and gradually renews "the spirit of your mind" (2Cor 3:18; see Ephesians 4:23-note). This [transformation](#) and **renewing** of our minds takes place as we behold the glory of God, choosing to spend time in His presence meditating on His Word day and night! This process is the only effective preservative against outward conformity to this present age.

**Ray Stedman** has some practical insights on what a **transformed mind** looks like writing that "sin [affects] the human perception -- it makes us look at another person in terms of a symbol, not as a person. We see them as either "someone who can help us" or "someone who opposes us" -- and we resent them or bless them accordingly. But when the **mind is transformed** by the Spirit of God, you no longer look at people that way. You see a man as a person, even though he has been a crotchety, grouchy, old boss whom you thought was out to make every moment that you lived unpleasant. You begin to see that he is a person with an ulcer, that he has his own problems and troubles, and that he needs help. This is the **transforming of the mind**. You begin to see that money and material things are no longer important, as they once seemed to be. The big thing in your life no longer becomes this matter of whether you can close this deal and make so much money, but whether you will do it in a way that honors and glorifies the Lord your God -- whether you make money or not. That is a sign of a **transformed mind**. You no longer take everything that is said to you personally, but you become able to back off and look at it objectively....This is the work of the Spirit of God, and you find a concern for others beginning to show and to grow in your life. You see more and more how utterly self-centered you've been, and you become concerned that you demonstrate that concern for someone else. This is the **transformed mind**. ([Discovering the Will of God](#)) (Bolding added)



**Pastor Claude Stauffer** has some thoughts on how not to renew your mind - "Don't go to the world for help with your mind. God will help us control our thoughts and bring them into subjection to Jesus, to conform to His way of thinking. What we need to do is present our selves to God to do so. Satan can bring evil thoughts and desires into our minds, and we can't stop him from doing so. But we can stop from playing with those satanic thoughts. We can take such evil thoughts captive in Christ and cast them down. We aren't to open our minds up to the New Age techniques that lead to mind control. We aren't to follow the Eastern Mysticism of emptying our minds either. We are to present ourselves to God and seek that He transform and renew our minds in the Spirit. Here is where many people go wrong. People might never think of going to an astrologer, or witch, or soothsayer, or New Age channeler, (thought far too many do), but they will go to a secular psychologist who has been trained in the philosophy of this world which is self-centered. Even so-called Christian counselors often go to the world for their training. How can someone trained in the world, (which Romans 12:2 tells us not to be conformed to) do anything but bring a person into conformity with the world's way of thinking? I believe there are godly Christian counselors, people with the spiritual gifts of exhortation and discernment, used by God to help people in their time of need; but it is absolutely wrong and fruitless to seek the transformation God offers from worldly sources. It just won't work. Remember, Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6), and any other counselor is a "step down" from Him. You can't top Jesus for counseling, yet so many people don't even consider Him as a viable resource. Such people probably haven't even experienced a true, real relationship or living relationship with Him. Jesus does speak to us through counselors, but godly prayerful, Spirit-filled counselors that will always steer a person to Jesus in their time of need. Beware Christian, don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Paul in his letter to the Philippians gave us a good objective to follow in the Spirit regarding our thought life (Read Php 4:6-note, Php 4:7-note, Php 4:8-note, Php 4:9-note)...Follow that plan in the Spirit and your mind will definitely be transformed by God. In effect what God is saying to us through the inspired words of Paul in Romans 12:1, 2, and in the above Corinthian and Philippian passages is if you give me your life and mind, if you give me your whole heart, I'll give you My life, mind and heart. That's a deal no one should turn down. ([Living Sacrifices](#))

**Haldane** adds that **renewing of your mind** signifies that "It is not the conduct merely, but the heart itself, of the Christian that is changed; and it is from the renewal of the mind that the conduct is also renewed. The transformation or change that passes on the man who becomes a believer of the Gospel, is not one produced by enthusiastically imaginations, monkish austerity, or a spirit of legalism, endeavoring to attain salvation by good works (cp Ga 5:7, 8, 9). It is produced by the renewing of the mind, and by that only. **Many persons become for a time changed in conduct from various motives, who are not changed in heart by the Spirit of God, and the truth believed respecting the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.** But such changes are generally temporary, and though they should continue for life, they are of no value in the sight of God. That change of life which the Lord will approve, is a change produced by the renovation of the mind, in the understanding, the affections, and the will... Indeed, nothing can be more true than that these renewal of the mind is necessary for a successful inquiry into every part of the will of God. The natural man is in everything opposed to the mind of God. ([Haldane](#))

**James Montgomery Boice** - Harry Blamires, an Englishman who wrote an important Christian book in 1963 titled *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* Blamires was a student of C. S. Lewis. His book's main thesis, repeated over and over in chapter 1, is that "There is no longer a Christian mind," meaning that in our time there is no longer a distinctly Christian way of thinking. There is to some extent a Christian ethic and even a somewhat Christian way of life and piety. But there is no distinctly Christian frame of reference, no uniquely Christian worldview, to guide our thinking in distinction from the thought of the secular world around us. Unfortunately, the situation has not improved over the past thirty years. In fact, it has grown worse. Today, not only is there little or no genuine Christian thinking, there is very little thinking of any kind. The Western world (and perhaps even the world as a whole) is well on its way to becoming what I have frequently called a "mindless society." (Boice, J. M. *Romans*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House)

#### SO THAT YOU MAY PROVE: eis to dokimazein (PAN) humas:

- Ro 12:1; Ps 34:8; Ep 5:10,17; 1Pe 2:3
- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Analyzed Literal:** in order for you to be proving what [is] the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

**NIV:** Then you will be able to **test and approve** what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. (The NIV use of two words accurately reflects the meaning of [dokimazo](#), which the NAS translates with the single word "prove").

**NLT:** Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.



**Weymouth:** so that you may learn by experience what God's will is

**Wuest:** by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing and complete will

**So that (eis)** reads more literally "unto proving", and here conveys the purpose of the transformation (transforming renewal) of one's mind.

**Denney** notes that the purpose of the transforming renewal of our mind "is that Christians may prove, i.e., discern in their experience, what the will of God is. Cf. Romans 2:18. An unrenewed mind cannot do this; it is destitute of moral discernment—has no proper moral faculty." ([Romans 12 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

The ability to **test and prove** what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God begins with having a **renewed mind**. To truly perceive life from God's perspective we must live it in His way. Paul assures us that this is not the great risk so many fear. Paul is saying in essence "Trust God's will to be good (cp Pr 3:5-6), test your confidence by doing God's will and you will discover God's way truly is good, pleasing and perfect". The **present tense** infinitive makes clear that this testing of what God's will is in any given situation or question must be an ongoing practice.

**Stauffer** - The mind renewed by God will be better suited to discern God's will because distractions are removed that would hinder such discernment. (Ibid)

**Prove** ([1381](#)) ([dokimazo](#)). means to test or examine something with the object of the test being to display or prove the genuineness of that which is tried. In the secular Greek culture [dokimazo](#) described the testing of metals by fire to see whether they were pure (especially used to test authenticity of metal coins).

[Dokimazo](#) was a technical Greek expression found in an early manuscript, which referred to the action of an examining board testing to approve those who had successfully passed the examinations for the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

[Dokimazo](#) is used 4x (out of 22 total NT uses) in Romans ([Click](#)) Consider studying the following selected uses of [dokimazo](#) in context to help get a sense of this picturesque Greek word (1Co 3:13, 1Co 11:28, 2Co 8:22, 2Co 13:5, Gal 6:4, Eph 5:10-note, Php 1:10-note, 1Th 2:4-note, 1Th 5:21-note, 1Ti 3:10, 1Pe 1:7-note, 1Jn 4:1). Then **Click** in depth study of this great Greek word [dokimazo](#).

According to **John Piper** [dokimazo](#) "has two implications: one is the idea of testing and proving something's value. And the other idea is the capacity to assess it and approve of a value when you see it. It is very hard in English to bring out both these ideas with one word. The NIV does it in fact by using two words. It refers to the renewing of your mind, then says, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is." That is the full idea. **Test and approve.**"

**Alexander Maclaren** expressed it like this: To know beyond doubt what I ought to do, and knowing to do it, seems to me to be heaven on earth, and the man that has it needs but little more. The one who is committed to God sees life with a sure eye. While the careless and uncommitted are in confusion, he knows God's will...

**Maclaren** in another discourse describes "the great reward and crown of this transfigured life. Paul puts it in words which, if I had time, would require some commenting upon. The issue of such a life is, to put it into plain English, an increased power of perceiving, instinctively and surely, what it is God's will that we should do. And that is the reward. Just as when you take away disturbing masses of metal from near a compass, it trembles to its true point, so when, by the discipline of which I have been speaking, there are swept away from either side of us the things that would perturb our judgment, there comes, as blessing and reward, a clear insight into that which it is our duty to do. There may be many difficulties left, many perplexities. There is no promise here, nor is there anything in the tendencies of Christ-like living, to lead us to anticipate that guidance in regard to matters of prudence or expediency or temporal advantage will follow from such a transfigured life. All such matters are still to be determined in the proper fashion, by the exercise of our own best judgment and common-sense. But in the higher region, the knowledge of good and evil, surely it is a blessed reward, and one of the highest that can be given to a man, that there shall be in him so complete a harmony with God that, like God's Son, he 'does always the things that please Him,' and that the Father will show him whatsoever things Himself doeth; and that these also will the son do likewise. To know beyond doubt what I ought to do, and knowing, to have no hesitation or reluctance in doing it, seems to me to be heaven upon earth, and the man that has it needs but little more. This, then, is the reward. Each peak we climb opens wider and clearer prospects into the untravelled land before us.

And so, brethren, here is the way, the only way, by which we can change ourselves, first let us have our minds renewed by contact with the truth, then we shall be able to transform our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ, and our faces too will shine, and our lives will be ennobled, by a serene beauty which men cannot but admire, though it may rebuke them. And as the issue of all we shall have clearer and deeper insight into that will, which to know is life, in keeping of which there is great reward. And thus our apostle's

promise may be fulfilled for each of us. 'We all with unveiled faces reflecting'—as a mirror does—'the glory of the Lord, are changed . . . into the same image.' ([Romans 12:2 Transfiguration](#))

In the margin of many pages in **D. L. Moody's Bible**, he wrote the letters **T** and **P**, meaning

## Tried and Proved

Moody had put into practice passages from God's Word, proving that they work. You too can try and prove God's wonder-working Word.

**Calvin** remarks that "If the renewal of our mind is necessary for the purpose of proving what the will of the Most High is, we may hence see how much this mind is opposed to God.

### WHAT THE WILL OF GOD IS: ti to thelema tou Theou:

- Ro 12:1; 7:12,14,22; Ps 19:7-11; Ps 119:47,48,72,97,103,128,174; Pr 3:1-4; Pr 3:13-18; Ga 5:22, 23; Ep 5:9; Col 4:12; 1Th 4:3; 2Ti 3:16,17
- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

As **Middletown Bible** rightly reminds us "The heart-cry of the believer (should be) "I WANT WANT GOD WANTS, no more and no less! I want nothing but God's best! Not my will but Thine be done!"

**Will** ([2307](#)) (**thelema** [word study] from **thelo** = to will, the ending **-ma** signifying the result of something, in this case of God willing) is what one wishes or has determined shall be done or that which is desired or wished for. It refers to a desire which proceeds from one's heart or emotions. This term expresses the result of one's purpose or desire. **Thelema** has both an objective meaning ("what one wishes to happen") and a subjective connotation ("the act of willing or desiring"). Thelema conveys the idea of desire, even a heart's desire, for the word primarily expresses emotion instead of volition. Thus God's will is not so much God's intention, as it is His heart's desire.

#### Related Resources:

- [THE WILL OF GOD in depth article](#)
- [Will of God - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Will of God - The Topical Concordance](#)
- [Will of God - Charles Buck Theological Dictionary](#)
- [John Piper's sermons related to the Will of God](#)

**Zodhiates** says that **thelema** is the "Will, not to be conceived as a demand, but as an expression or inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, that which pleases and creates joy. When it denotes God's will, it signifies His gracious disposition toward something. Used to designate what God Himself does of His own good pleasure. ([Zodhiates, S. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))

**Thelema** - 62x in 58v -

Mt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; 18:14; 21:31; 26:42; Mark 3:35; Luke 12:47; 22:42; 23:25; Jn 1:13; 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39, 40; 7:17; 9:31; Acts 13:22; 21:14; 22:14; Ro 1:10-note; Ro 2:18-note; Ro 12:2-note; Ro 15:32-note; 1Cor 1:1; 7:37; 16:12; 2Cor 1:1; 8:5; Gal 1:4; Ep 1:1-note, Ep 1:5-note, Ep 1:9-note, Ep 1:11-note; Ep 2:3-note; Ep 5:17-note; Ep 6:6-note; Col 1:1-note, Col 1:9-note; Col 4:12-note; 1Th 4:3-note; 1Th 5:18-note; 2Ti 1:1-note; 2Ti 2:26-note; He 10:7-note, He 10:9-note, He 10:10-note, He 10:36-note; He 13:21-note; 1Pe 2:15-note; 1Pe 3:17-note; 1Pe 4:2-note, 1Pe 4:19-note; 2Pe 1:21-note; 1Jn 2:17; 5:14; Rev 4:11-note. **NAS** = desire(1), desires(1), will(57).

**James Denney** - The will of God is identified with what is **agathos**, good in the moral sense, **euarestos** well pleasing, sc., to God; and **teleion** ethically adequate or complete: Deut 18:13, Mt5:48. No one discovers the line of action which from possessing these characteristics can be identified as the will of God unless he is transformed from his native affinity to the world by the renewing of his mind by the Holy Spirit. ([Romans 12 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

In these first two verses of Romans 12 note the progression...

## Dedication

leads to

## Discernment

leads to

## Delight

in God's will.

We understand the will of God through the Word of God. The Spirit teaches us as we submit to Him (Jn 14:26,16:13), renewing our mind producing transformation and this ongoing process enables the believer to more and more discern what is the "will of God" in various settings. Could it be that one reason so many who profess Christ have difficulty discerning God's will for their life is that they are conforming to the world's way of thinking and failing to spend time in His Word to allow the Spirit to renew their minds and transform them from glory to glory? A "renewed mind" in a sense results in a "holy instinct" if you will. Until you lay your life on God's altar as a living sacrifice—until **your** will is dead—God's will won't be manifest in your life.

**Oswald Chambers** writes that...

We should be so one with God that we don't need to ask continually for guidance. Sanctification means that we are made the children of God. A child's life is normally obedient, until he chooses disobedience. But as soon as he chooses to disobey, an inherent inner conflict is produced. On the spiritual level, inner conflict is the warning of the Spirit of God. When He warns us in this way, we must stop at once and be renewed in the spirit of our mind to discern God's will (Ro 12:2). If we are born again by the Spirit of God, our devotion to Him is hindered, or even stopped, by continually asking Him to guide us here and there. ". . . the Lord led me . . ." and on looking back we see the presence of an amazing design. If we are born of God we will see His guiding hand and give Him the credit. ([Excerpt from My Utmost For His Highest](#))

Conscience is that ability within me that attaches itself to the highest standard I know, and then continually reminds me of what that standard demands that I do. It is the eye of the soul which looks out either toward God or toward what we regard as the highest standard. This explains why conscience is different in different people. If I am in the habit of continually holding God's standard in front of me, my conscience will always direct me to God's perfect law and indicate what I should do. The question is, will I obey? **I have to make an effort to keep my conscience so sensitive that I can live without any offense toward anyone. I should be living in such perfect harmony with God's Son that the spirit of my mind is being renewed through every circumstance of life**, and that I may be able to quickly "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2; also see Ephesians 4:23-note). ([Excerpt from The Habit of Keeping a Clear Conscience - My Utmost For His Highest](#)) (Bolding added)

**Ray Stedman** adds that a **genuinely committed heart** will begin to discover the will of God and...

to experience the conscious guidance of the Spirit of God (Ro 8:5-note, Ro 8:9-note, Ro 8:14-note, Ps 143:10-note, Gal 4:6, Gal 5:16-note, Gal 5:18-note). You discover that when you have put God in His rightful place and you are willing to do His will, this in itself is the will of God. There is so much nonsense made about the matter of the will of God in Christian affairs. We think of it as specific directions at a specific time, and we only seek it when we have some big problem to face. But this isn't what the will of God is at all. The will of God is your being willing to do his will. As Paul writes to the Thessalonians, "**this is the will of God, even your sanctification** (holiness)" {1Th 4:3KJV-note}. That is, even your willingness to be available to Him, this is his will. Once you get to that place, then He is free and able to direct your steps (Pr 20:24) -- every one of which is a fulfillment of His will. It is evident that there is a gradual growth of this awareness, as Paul sets it forth here. He says you will discover, or prove, "**what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God**" That is, at first, you will learn that what God sends is good (cp Jas 1:17-note, Ps 84:11-note). When you begin to see your daily happenings, your experiences, your trials, your joys from this point of view, you begin to see that all these things are designed for your good (cp Ro 8:28-note, Ge 50:20, 1Pe 1:6-note, 1Pe 1:7-note). You learn not to murmur or complain (Phil 2:14-note), and, even though you still, perhaps, have difficulty in seeing how everything is going to work out together for good, you still believe it.

And I think **Pastor Stedman's prayer** is worth repeating

Our Father, we pray that we will more than just intellectually grasp this truth, but that it may grip our hearts and

our souls, and release our paralyzed wills, and energize us to begin to be available to You, not in words but in deeds. In Jesus' name. Amen (**Ed**: And all God's people said "Amen"!)

#### THAT WHICH IS GOOD: to agathon:

- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

As we live for Him, we are assured that His will for our lives will be "good and acceptable and perfect" and that our life will be pleasing to Him. For a child, what can be better than knowing he or she is living in a way that pleases their parent. Such a life brings comfort, confidence, assurance, etc. Therefore, how much more so should we as children of our perfect, holy, heavenly Father seek to so live, so that we might continually be in the "center of His will", pleasing to Him!

**Good** (18) (**agathos** [word study] 19/102 uses in Romans -- Ro 2:7, 10; 3:8; 5:7; 7:12, 13, 18, 19; 8:28; 9:11; 10:15; 12:2, 9, 21; 13:3, 4; 14:16; 15:2; 16:19) describes that which is "**good**" in its character or constitution or beneficial in its effect. Much of the difficulty we experience about submitting to the will of God would disappear if once we could see clearly that the "character" of God's will is always **agathos** or **good** and beneficial in its effect! We struggle and struggle in vain to submit to a will that we do not believe to be good, but when we see that it is good, we submit to it with delight. We want it to be accomplished.

The **will of God** isn't a curiosity for us to study, it's a command for us to obey. God isn't obligated to reveal His will unless we're willing to do it, for as Jesus declared...

If any man is willing to do His will (note the **condition**), he shall know of the teaching (this is the **promise**), whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. (John 7:17)

There is a wonderful promise here for everyone earnestly seeking the truth. Those who are fundamentally committed to doing God's will will be guided by Him in the affirmation of His truth. God's truth is self-authenticating through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. An axiom which should permeate our study of God's word in order to understand God's will is...

#### Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge

**Haldane** writes that "The will of God is here distinguished as **good**; because, however much the mind may be opposed to it, and how much soever we may think that it curtails our pleasures, and mars our enjoyments, obedience to God conduces to our happiness. To follow His law is even in this world calculated to promote happiness. ([Haldane](#))

#### AND ACCEPTABLE : kai euaireston:

- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### PLEASING TO THE FATHER

That which God wills and recognizes You cannot add anything to the will of God and in any way improve it. You could take anything away from it and make it better. It is totally acceptable.

**Robert Haldane** well remarks, "That which the Lord enjoins is acceptable to Him, and surely this is the strongest motive to practice it. Nothing else is acceptable to Him, however specious it may appear to human wisdom. All injunctions that proceed merely from men in Divine things are unacceptable to God. He approves of nothing but obedience to His own commandments. ([Haldane](#))

**Acceptable** (pleasing - NIV) (2101) (**euairestos** [word study] from **eu** = well + **arestos** = pleasing, desirable, proper, fit, agreeable from **aresko** = to please or be pleasing/acceptable to) means that which causes someone to be pleased. It is something which is well approved, eminently satisfactory, or extra-ordinarily pleasing.

**Euairestos** - 9x in 9v in the **NAS** - **NAS** = acceptable(3), pleasing(2), well-pleasing(3), which is pleasing(1).

Ro 12:1, 2; 14:18; 2 Co. 5:9; Eph. 5:10; Phil. 4:18; Col. 3:20; Titus 2:9; Heb. 13:21.

**Gary Inrig** in "[A Call to Excellence](#)" writes that "The concept of pleasing God is especially important for the Apostle Paul. Indeed, it

was the goal and controlling ambition of his life, for, as he writes to the church in Corinth, “we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.” (2Co 5:9-note). Only a believer indwelt by the Spirit can please God, for “those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (see Ro 8:8-note). A further prerequisite is faith, for “without faith it is impossible to please Him (God).” (see He 11:6-note). The ambition to please God determines a person’s commitment of life (Ro 12:1-note; 2Ti 2:4-note), his daily walk (Col 1:10-note; 1Th 4:1-note), his spiritual priesthood (see He 13:15-note; He 13:16-note), and his relationships (Col 3:20-note). The believer tests everything in life, “trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Ep 5:10-note). A man who lives to please people by making their approval of more importance than God’s stands condemned (Gal 1:10), as does an individual determined to please only himself, regardless of the impact on others ( Ro 15:1-note; Ro 15:2-note; Ro 15:3-note)

**Pastor Charles Tindley** was a noted African American preacher in Philadelphia in the early 1900's when he wrote a wonderful hymn entitled, "NOTHING BETWEEN", which addresses those practices and attitudes which must be rejected if Christians are to know the will of God, good, pleasing and perfect. "NOTHING BETWEEN" reminds us in clear terms that we must all be sober minded (see 1Peter 1:13-note; 1Pe 5:8-note) and constantly guard against those allurements and temptations that can so easily squeeze us into the world's mold. As you read this old hymn ask God to show you those things that so often come between you and the sweet will of your Master:

## NOTHING BETWEEN

[Click to play](#)

**Charles A Tindley**

Nothing between my soul and the Savior,  
Naught of this world's delusive dream:  
I have renounced all sinful pleasure—  
Jesus is mine! There's nothing between.

Nothing between, like worldly pleasure!  
Habits of life, tho' harmless they seem,  
Must not my heart from Him ever sever—  
He is my all! There's nothing between

Nothing between, like pride or station:  
Self or friends shall not intervene;  
Tho' it may cost me much tribulation,  
I am resolved! There's nothing between.

Nothing between, e'en many hard trials,  
Tho' the whole world against me convene;  
Watching with prayer and much self denial—  
Triumph at last, with nothing between!

### Chorus:

Nothing between my soul and the Savior,  
So that His blessed face may be seen.  
Nothing preventing the least of His favor:  
Keep the way clear! Let nothing between.

**The price of spiritual power  
is purity of heart.**

(cp Proverbs 4:23-note)

**Ray Stedman** relates the following convicting story of what it means to not be **CONFORMED** but to be **TRANSFORMED**:

"I heard this week of an incident in the life of Jerome Hines, the Metropolitan Opera singer. Many of you know the story of his life -- how, as a boy growing up in California, he became convinced that he had a good voice. Someone urged him to train it, and so he did. He became possessed of a desire to become a star in the Metropolitan Opera Company. That was what he lived for. He built his life around that, gave up all other activities, all other pursuits, all other pleasures, to give himself to the necessary work of training to become an opera star. He learned the arts of intonation, of musical projection. He learned several languages so he could sing operatic roles. He gave himself to that tremendous desire within him to be a star in the Metropolitan Opera. It finally came true. He became a star. And he said it was empty, hollow. One day he heard a man

singing. The voice was as good as his, and the man could have done what he did. He heard Beverly Shea singing, "I'd Rather Have Jesus." The words he sang were,

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold,  
I'd rather be His than have riches untold,  
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land,  
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hands  
Than to be the king of a vast domain,  
And be held in sin's dread sway.  
I'd rather have Jesus than anything  
This world affords today.

That song got to Jerome Hines. He began to think about it, and, out of that incident, he became a Christian. But he didn't quit the opera. A lot of people thought he should have. They thought the opera was "worldly"! No, opera is not worldly -- except to those who think like worldlings and live like wordlings in the opera. Jerome Hines stayed in opera, but everything was different. He was not longer singing for the advancement of Jerome Hines, he was singing for the glory of God. He dedicated his art, his work, his all to that purpose. That is right. God doesn't take us out of the world; he wants us to live in it, but to change our thinking. Jerome did. A few years ago Hines had an opportunity to sing the role that he had always wanted to sing. He trained for it, with months and months of hard work, and he was given the role. He was contracted to sing that role in the opera for ten years. When he went to the opera to practice he found some people performing a rather lewd dance. He asked, "What is this?" He was told, "This is the choreography that introduces the opera." He said, "There's nothing in the opera like this!" "No," they said, "we're changing it a bit, modernizing it, bringing it up to date." Jerome Hines said, "I won't sing if you are going to have this kind of a dance in it." He was told he had better go talk to Mr. Bing. Jerome Hines went to Rudolph Bing, the Metropolitan Opera general manager, and said to him, "Sir, if you have that dance in the opera then I am not going to sing in it." Bing told him, "If you don't sing, you will be ostracized and blacklisted in opera because you are under contract to sing." Hines said, "Sir, I can't sing in that opera. I am not going to let my name be used to entice people to come in to see filth like this. You can break me, sir, and the union can break me. I've worked hard for months to train for this role, but I will not sing in your opera if that dance is in it." Bing said, "Jerome, you don't have to sing. If you really feel that way, you don't have to sing; we'll get someone else. But we can't change the contract." So Jerome Hines had to give up that role. It cost him, over the period of ten years, something like a hundred thousand dollars. How many of you are willing to give your body to God in such a way that you would be willing to give up a hundred thousand dollars rather than do something with your body that would be offensive to your Lord?" That is what Paul is talking about by not being conformed to this world -- not going along with its pattern of thinking, not being willing to go in for all that it goes in for in its pursuit of pleasure and happiness. "That's tough," you say. You bet it's tough! If you do that day after day it gets very hard, because you are under constant pressure -- and it gets to you after a while. "Everybody is thinking this way, everybody wants to do that, nobody understands you -- so why don't you give in?" There is only one answer to that question. In order to stand up against that kind of pressure you need what Paul talks about next: "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." There is no way that you can keep from being conformed to the world unless you are being transformed by the renewing of your mind. Something has to happen to your thinking. You can't go on thinking the way the world around you thinks and still not give in and be conformed to what it does. What we need is a change of thinking. That comes day by day by being renewed again and again and again. You need a mind that will see through all these silly schemes of the world. There is that kind of a mind. In the Scriptures it is called "the mind of Christ," {1Co 2:16}. The mind of Christ is the way of looking at life as Jesus does, seeing life as he sees it. It is seeing what is really there and not what seems to be there, seeing what really is important, not what looks to be important. You can't have that mind unless you are having your mind renewed every day. The mind of Christ, of course, looks at the world and does not say that the basis of life is the advancement of self. When it looks at the world it says that the basis for living, the reason for life, is to serve God and to advance his will. Not your will, but his will be done; not the building of your kingdom and your empire, but the advancement of his kingdom. This is the basis for life. This is really what human beings are here for. And to maintain that kind of thinking in the midst of the world takes a renewed mind." (Stedman, Ray: [Living Day by Day](#))



- [Romans 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Perfect** (5046) (**teleios** [word study] from **telos** = goal) an adjective which describes some entity which is finished, brought to its end, lacking nothing necessary for completeness. **Teleios** includes the ideas of having no defect whatsoever and of having reached the goal, purpose or end which was originally intended. It is often translated "mature" or "complete".

**Teleios** - 19x in 17v - NAS = complete(2), mature(4), more perfect(1), perfect(12).

Matt 5:48; 19:21; Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6; 13:10; 14:20; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28; 4:12; Heb 5:14; 9:11; Jas 1:4, 17, 25; 3:2; 1 John 4:18.

The "**will of God**" is "**perfect**" in that it lacks nothing for completeness (except me to fulfill it) and it achieves the desired end or goal that God had originally intended.

God's "**perfect**" will is all that we need to lead a life that is holy and wholly satisfying (and wholly enabled by the Holy Spirit to Who we daily surrender and obey) and by which we become mature and complete in Christ (Col 1:28-note)

**Haldane** - The **will of God** as exhibited in His word is **perfect**. Nothing can be added to it, nothing can be taken from it... ([Haldane](#))

**Study the following NT uses of teleios** in context to give you a deeper understanding of this great Greek word: **Teleios** is an adjective so note especially what it is modifying for added insights Mt 5:48-note, Mt 19:21, 1Cor 2:6, 1Cor 13:10, 1Cor 14:20, Eph 4:13-note, Php 3:15-note, Col 1:28-note, Col 4:12-note, Heb 5:14 [mature]-note, Heb 9:11-note, Jas 1:4 [2x]-note, James 1:17-note, James 1:25-note, James 3:2, 1Jn 4:18.

In the Septuagint (LXX) **teleios** is used to translate the following Hebrew words and/or phrase: "blameless" (describing Noah in Ge 6:9), "wholly devoted" (Solomon's prayer for the hearts of the people toward God 1Ki 8:61), "whole" (David's prayer for Solomon was that he would serve God with a "whole heart" 1Chr 28:9).

A transformed mind produces a transformed will, by which we become "innervated" and "energized" (enabled), with the Spirit's help, to lay aside our own plans and to trust and accept God's will, no matter what transpires. This is not easy nor is it the natural response which means it has to be a supernatural, God driven response and yet we are not puppets and thus must make the choices for or against the will of God. There is really no middle ground.

**Wuest translates this verse:** And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being, but is patterned after this age; but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing, and complete will, and having found that it meets specification, placing your approval upon it ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Translation of the New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

In sum in Ro 12:2, Paul gives us first a negative command and then a positive one: negatively, stop being continually conformed to this world's way of thinking and positively, be continually transformed. Not conformed, transformed. Devote your life as a Christian to being changed. Don't settle in at the level of transformation you now have. O how many Christians throw away their birthright by coasting. Be transformed is present tense, on-going, continual growth in non-conforming yourself to the world. The focus is not on getting the **outside** of the cup cleaned up, but on allowing God to clean the **inside**. (cp Mt 23:25,26)

**Transformation and non-conformity** on the outside must flow out of a new (saved) mind, every day of our life as we continue in...

waiting eagerly (**apekdechomai**) (present tense = speaks of the general bent of our life) for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Ro 8:23-note)

**Comment:** See **Rapture vs Second Coming** (cp the motivating aspect of "**looking for the blessed hope**" in Titus 2:11-note, Titus 2:12-note, Titus 2:13-note, 1Jn 3:2-note, 1Jn 3:3-note - **what you are looking for will determine what you are living for!**)

## THE WILL OF GOD

**Nothing More**

**Nothing Less**

**Nothing Else**

**Nothing Better**

An **Outline** on the topic of **God's Will...**

## I. SANCTIFICATION IS GOD'S WILL FOR US

A. Avoiding sexual immorality and impurity is God's will for us - 1Th 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (note)

B. Wise living is God's will for us - Ep 5:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 (notes)

C. Non-conformation, transformation and renewal are God's will for us - Ro 12:1, 2

D. Continual Rejoicing, Ceaseless Prayer and Constant Thanksgiving are God's will for us - 1Th 5:16, 17, 18 (notes)

**II. SECURITY IS GOD'S WILL FOR US** - Jn 6:38, 39, 40

**III. SERVICE IS GOD'S WILL FOR US** - Ep 6:5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (note) 1Pe 5:2 (note)

**IV. SUFFERING IS GOD'S WILL FOR US** - 1Pe 3:17 (note), 1Pe 4:19 (note)

Some final sage advice from **Ray Stedman** regarding God's Will...

When you are confused and don't know where you are, you renew your mind by reading through a passage and thinking it through and letting the Word speak to your heart. Then you go back to your routine and determine that your life will be in line with the Word of God. The rest of the book of Romans is designed to tell you how to have your mind renewed so you won't be conformed to the spirit of the age. This is where we learn that the methods of the Christian are not rivalry and competition, but obedience to the Word of God and a heart that expects God to operate. Then life becomes exciting. God wants your life at work and at home to be exciting, with this constant battle around you, so that you might understand how to live and overcome and conquer in the name of Jesus. I don't know what you are going to be doing this week, but I know that living a Christian life isn't something that is done only in church. It is done wherever you are. It starts with a change in your thinking. You don't let yourself think like other people around you think. That can only come as you are exposed to the truth as it is in Jesus. Now, what are you going to do with your life? Are you going to wrap it up in a napkin of affluence and bury it in forty years of self-indulgence? Well, that would be the dullest experience you could have. When you get before the throne of God, all you will find out is that you have wasted all those years. Oh, you will be there, if you know the Lord, but you will find you have wasted your life, and it will be worth nothing before his throne. And you will have lived the dullest kind of existence.

But if you are willing to bring your body to God and say, "Lord, here it is. I have trouble with it, and I'm sure you will too, but here it is. You wanted it. I give it to you for the rest of my life, to be your instrument for whatever you want." God says, "All right, I'll take it." If you then, on that basis, begin to recognize the systematic brainwashing of the world and refuse it, and constantly renew your thinking in the truth as it is found in Jesus and the Word of God, then I will tell you something: You are going to have an exciting life, beyond what you ever dreamed. It will never be dull. It will be awfully hard sometimes, but never dull, never boring. What are you going to do with your life?" (Stedman, Ray: [Living Day by Day](#))

God wants our bodies and our minds; He wants our total submission. Is there anything or anyone that you are withholding from God? Is your marriage and family yielded to Him? Is your vocation His? What about your finances or hobbies? God wants to stretch you. He isn't a part-time lover; He is the all-consuming lover! Will you present yourself to Him anew and afresh? If you will, your life will never be the same.

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**J R Miller** (1907) - The impression of a holy and separate life

If we are Christians, we are not of this world—we belong to the kingdom of heaven. It is very easy for us, being in the world, to become of it—to let our lives grow like the world. But this is not the way to make ourselves a living sacrifice to God. "It is not conformity that we need," says Bushnell; "it is not being able to beat the world in its own way; but it is to stand apart and above it, and to produce the impression of a holy and separate life. This alone is safety and success."

Instead, then, of conforming to the world, taking the world's color—our duty is to seek to be transformed into the heavenly life. The word "transformed" means to be transfigured, that is, to become bright and shining in our life. The secret of it is given in the words, "the renewing of your minds." The candle is to be lighted within our hearts and minds—that its beams may shine out through our life, making it glow! ([Counsel and Help](#))

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**John Newton** "Be not conformed to this world." Romans 12:2

Conformity to the world is the bane of many professors in this day. They have found a way, as they think, to serve both God and Mammon. They may attain to a scheme of orthodox notions—but they will remain

destitute of the life, power, and comfort of piety—so long as they cleave to those things which are incompatible with it.

**We must not conform to the spirit of the world.** As believers, we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth. Heaven is our country, and the Lord is our King. We are to be known and noticed as His subjects; and therefore it is His desire, that we do not adopt the sinful customs of the land in which we sojourn.

**We must not conform to the maxims of the world.** The world in various instances calls evil good, and good evil. But we are to judge of things by the unerring Word of God—uninfluenced by the determination of the great, or the many.

**We must not conform to the world in their amusements and diversions.** "What fellowship has light with darkness, or what concord has Christ with Belial?" What does a believer have to do into those places and companies, where everything tends to promote a spirit of dissipation; where the fear of God has no place; where things are purposely disposed to inflame or indulge corrupt and sinful appetites and passions, and to banish all serious thoughts of God and ourselves?

If it is our duty to redeem time, to walk with God, to do all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to follow the example which He set us when he was upon earth. It must of course be our duty to avoid a conformity with the world in those vain and sensual amusements, which stand in as direct contradiction to a spiritual frame

of mind. So far as a Christian is infected by a conformity to the spirit, maxims, and sinful customs of the world, true piety will be hindered.

May the Lord enable you and I to lay this subject to heart, and that we be preserved from that growing evil—a sinful conformity to the world! ([John Newton's Letters](#))

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### Thomas Watson

To be godly and earthly, is a contradiction. Those who are eaten up with the world will be rejected, as ungodly, at the bar of judgment. We read that the earth swallowed up Korah alive, Nu 16:32. This judgment is on many—the earth swallows up their time, thoughts and discourse. They are buried twice; their hearts are buried in the earth before their bodies. How sad it is that the soul, that princely thing, which is made for communion with God and angels, should be put to the mill to grind, and made a slave to the earth! How like the prodigal the soul has become, choosing rather to converse with swine and feed upon husks—than to aspire after communion

with the blessed Deity! Thus does Satan befool men, and keep them from heaven by making them seek a heaven here on earth.

God himself sounds a retreat to us to call us off the world. "Love not the world" 1John 2:15. "Be not conformed to this world" Romans 12:2. Do not hunt after its honors and profits.

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### Octavius Winslow - A worldly Christianity? "Do not be conformed to this world." Romans 12:2

THE world, and the love of it, and conformity to it, may please and assist the life of sense, but it is opposed to, and will retard, the life of faith. Not more opposed in their natures are the flesh and the Spirit, darkness and light, sin and holiness, than are a vigorous life of faith and a sinful love of the world. Professor of the gospel! guard against the world; it is your great bane: watch against conformity to it in your dress, in your mode of living, in the education of your children, in the principles, motives, and policy that govern you. Grieve not, then, the Holy Spirit of God by any known inconsistency of conduct, any sinful conformity to the world, any inordinate pursuit of its wealth, its honors, its pleasures, its friendships, and its great things. Pray against the sin of covetousness, that canker-worm that feeds at the root of so many souls; pray against the love of dress, that sin that diverts the mind of so many professors from the simplicity of Christ, and takes the eye off from the true adornment; pray against a thirst for light and trifling reading, that strange and sinful inconsistency of so many, the certain tendency of which is to starve the life of God in the soul, to engender a distaste for spiritual aliment, for the word of God, for holy meditation, and for Divine communion and fellowship—yes, pray against the spirit of worldly, sinful conformity in everything, that the Holy Spirit do not be grieved, and that Christ do not be dishonored and crucified afresh in and through you. It is to be feared that much of the professed Christianity of the day is of a compromising character. The spirit that marks so many is, "What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" There is a betraying of Christ before the world—a bartering of Christianity

for its good opinion, its places of honor, and influence, and emolument. The world, the flesh, and Satan are ever on the alert to frame a bargain with a Christian professor for his religion. "What will you give me in return?" is the eager inquiry of many. Oh, awful state! oh, fearful deception! oh, fatal delusion! Reader! are you a professing Christian? Then guard against the least compromise of your principles, the least betrayal of Jesus, the first step in an inconsistency of walk; above all, pray and watch against a worldly Christianity—a Christianity that wears a fair exterior, so far as it is composed of attendance upon sanctuary services and sacraments and religious institutions, but which excludes from it the cross of the meek and lowly Lamb of God—a Christianity which loves the world and the things of the world, "makes a fair show in the flesh," speaks well of Christ, and yet betrays Him with a kiss. Let not this be the model of your religion. The world is the sworn enemy of your Savior; let it not be your friend. No; come out of it, and be you separate. ([MORNING THOUGHTS](#))

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**Octavius Winslow**...A canker into the very core of your spirituality! (Octavius Winslow "Evening Thoughts")

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."  
Romans 12:2

Heavenly-mindedness can only be maintained by the strictest vigilance. It is a delicate and fragile flower, susceptible of every variation of the spiritual atmosphere. Guard against that which checks its growth.

Many are not aware how much . . . great joviality, light conversation, foolish jesting, novel reading, carnal music, unfit the heart for communion with God, and lessen the tone of its spirituality.

Close communion with mere nominal religious professors is particularly to be avoided. Much more injury to spiritual-mindedness accrues from intimate friendship with such, than from those who assert no pretensions to a religious character; as with the one we are apt to be less on our guard than the other.

Avoid the world's amusements; they will eat as a canker into the very core of your spirituality!

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world" is a prohibition which should never be absent from the eye of a traveler to the heavenly city.

Are not heaven's attractions many and powerful?

How rich is heaven! Why, then, should not our thoughts be there? Oh! shall not our hearts be more where our most precious treasure is, where our holiest and dearest hopes center, and where we ourselves shall shortly be?

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**Andrew Murray** in his classic work "[Abide in Christ](#)" calls every believer a "**true altar life**" and to...

Be assured that there is still much of your **Lord's will** that you do not yet understand. Make Paul's prayer for the Colossians yours for yourself and all believers, "that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9-note); and that of wrestling Epaphras, "that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col 4:12-note) Remember that this is one of the great elements of spiritual growth--a deeper insight into the will of God concerning you. Imagine not that entire consecration is the end--it is only the beginning--of the truly holy life. See how Paul, after having (Ro 12:1-note) taught believers to lay themselves upon the altar, whole and holy burnt-offerings to their God, at once proceeds (Ro 12:2) to tell them what the **true--altar-life** is: being ever more and more "**renewed in their mind to prove what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God.**" The progressive renewal of the Holy Spirit leads to growing like-mindedness to Christ; then comes a delicate power of spiritual perception--a holy instinct--by which the soul "quick of understanding (marg. quick of scent) in the fear of the Lord," knows to recognise the meaning and the application of the Lord's commands to daily life in a way that remains hidden to the ordinary Christian. Keep them dwelling richly within you, hide them within your heart, and you shall taste the blessedness of the man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night." (Ps 1:2-note) Love will assimilate into your inmost being the commands as food from heaven. They will no longer come to you as a law standing outside and against you, but as the living power which has transformed your will into perfect harmony with all your Lord requires.

And keep them in the obedience of your life. It has been your solemn vow--has it not?--no longer to tolerate even a single sin: "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments." Labour earnestly in prayer to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Ask earnestly for the discovery of every

secret sin--of anything that is not in perfect harmony with the will of God. Walk up to the light you have faithfully and tenderly, yielding yourself in an unreserved surrender to obey all that the Lord has spoken. When Israel took that vow (Ex 19:8, 24:7), it was only to break it all too soon. The New Covenant gives the grace to make the vow and to keep it too (Jer 31:31, 32, 33, 34, cp Ezek 36:27). Be careful of disobedience even in little things.

**Disobedience dulls the conscience, darkens the soul, deadens our spiritual energies--therefore keep the commandments of Christ with implicit obedience.**

Be a soldier that asks for nothing but the orders of the commander.

And if even for a moment the commandments appear grievous, just remember whose they are. They are the commandments of Him who loves you (1Jn 5:3). They are all love, they come from His love, they lead to His love.

**Each new surrender to keep the commandments, each new sacrifice in keeping them, leads to deeper union with the will, the spirit, and the love of the Saviour.**

The double recompense of reward shall be yours--a fuller entrance into the mystery of His love--a fuller conformity to His own blessed life (**Ed**: And His "good and acceptable and perfect will"! ). And you shall learn to prize these words as among your choicest treasures: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, EVEN AS I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." (Jn 15:10KJV) (Andrew Murray. Abide in Christ)

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#### **J C Philpot - God's Perfect Will - "That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2**

God's will is "perfect." In it, there is no spot, no stain, no weakness, no error, no instability. It is and indeed must necessarily be as perfect as God Himself—for it emanates from Him who is all perfection, and is a discovery of His mind and character. But when God's perfect will sets itself against our flesh—thwarts our dearest hopes—overturns our fondest schemes—we cannot see that it is a perfect will, but rather, are much disposed to fret, murmur, and rebel against it.

God's perfect will may snatch a child from your bosom—strike down a dear husband—tear from your arms a beloved wife—strip you of all your worldly goods—put your feet into a path of suffering—lay you upon a bed of pain and languishing—cast you into hot furnaces or overwhelming floods—make your life almost a burden to yourself!

How can you, under circumstances so trying and distressing as these, acknowledge and submit to God's perfect will—and let it reign and rule in your heart without a murmur of resistance to it? Look back and see how God's perfect will has, in previous instances, reigned supreme in all points, for your good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amid a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to your injury—but all things have worked together for your good. Whatever we have lost, it was better for us that it was taken away. Whatever property, or comfort, or friends, or health, or earthly happiness we have been deprived of, it was better for us to lose, than to retain them.

Was your dear child taken away? It might be to teach you resignation to God's sacred will. Has a dear partner been snatched from your embrace? It was that God might be your better Partner and undying Friend. Was any portion of your worldly substance taken away? It was that you might be taught to live a life of faith in the providence of God. Have your fondest schemes been marred—your youthful hopes blighted—and you pierced in the warmest affections of your heart? It was to remove an idol, to dethrone a rival to Christ, to crucify the object of earthly love—so that a purer, holier, and more enduring affection might be enshrined in its stead. To tenderly embrace God's perfect will is the grand object of all gospel discipline. The ultimatum of gospel obedience is to lie passive in His hand, and know no will but His. "That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." ([RICHES OF PHILPOT](#))

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#### **J C Philpot - March 23**

How shall we find the will of God acceptable? Only as we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are transformed and conformed to the suffering image of the sorrowing Son of God. How fearful, then, how dangerous, and yet how ensnaring is that worldly conformity which sets us in deadly opposition to that good and perfect will of God which was, and is "acceptable" to his dear Son, to all the holy angels round the throne, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to his spiritually-minded people on earth, and hateful to none but devils

and carnal, ungodly men. And how truly blessed to be brought out of the power and prevailing influence of this worldly spirit, and to be cast into the gospel mold, where, being renewed in the spirit of our mind, we prove that the will of God is not only "good,"--pure goodness; and "perfect,"--worthy of all his glorious perfections; but "acceptable"--to our heart and affections, which therefore tenderly embrace it, and thus, as it were, incorporate it into our will, making the two wills one. To bring us to this point is the grand object of all gospel discipline; and one may say that the ultimatum of gospel obedience is, "to lie passive in his hand, and know no will but his."

Here then only can we fully enter into the beauty and blessedness of gospel truth; here only can we submit to the weight of a daily cross, glory in tribulation, patiently endure afflictions, feel the sweetness of the promises, walk in obedience to the precepts, and tread the path that leads to endless glory.

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(In another devotional **Philpot** writes) In proportion as we are conformed to the spirit of this world our understanding becomes dull in the things of God, our affections cold and torpid, and our consciences less tender and sensitive. There is an eternal opposition between God and the world lying in wickedness. In order, then, that our spiritual experience of the truth of God should maintain its ground, it must not be dulled and deadened by conformity to the world. It is like the saber that the soldier carries into battle; it must not trail unsheathed upon the ground lest point and edge be dulled; both must be kept keen and sharp, that execution may be done upon the foe. So it is with our enlightened understanding, with our tender conscience, and our heavenly affections. If we let them fall upon the world, it is like a soldier trailing his saber upon the pavement; every step he takes dulls both edge and point.

If we are conformed to this world, we lose the sweet understanding that we had before of the precious truth of God; we lose that tender sensitiveness of conscience, whereby sin, any sin, becomes a grief and a burden to the soul. A Christian should be what was said of an ancient knight, "without fear and without reproach." So the Christian's shield should be without a stain, his reputation without a blot. His character should not only be free from blemish, but even from suspicion, as untarnished as the modesty of a woman, or the honor and bravery of a man.

Now, we often get into this worldly conformity, and run the risk of dulling the sword and sully the shield, by degrees. We give way in this and in that thing. We are hedged in, it is true, by the precepts of the gospel, the alarms of a tender conscience, and many powerful restraints, so many banks and dykes to keep out the sea of the world; but, as in Holland, if one breach be made in the dyke, the sea at once rushes in, so, if one gap be made in the conscience, then the sea of worldliness rushes through the breach, and but for God's grace would soon deluge the soul. But even apart from having any peculiar temptation to make a wide breach like this, our social ties, our daily occupation, the friends and relations whom we love in the flesh, all, through their power over our natural affections, draw us aside from time to time into this worldly conformity.

Here, then, is the point where we have to make our chief stand; for if we are conformed to the maxims, the principles, the customs, and the spirit of the world, we so far lose that spiritual position which is a believer's highest blessing and privilege. We descend from the mount of communion with the Lord, and fall into a cold, miserable spot, where the life of God, though not extinct, is reduced to its lowest ebb. (J. C. Philpot. Daily Words for Zion's Wayfarers - September 18)

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In our natural state (**Ed: flesh**), we are all the slaves of the world. What the world presents—we love. What the world offers—we delight in.

To please the world; to get as large a portion as we can of its goods; to provide amply for ourselves and our children; to obtain and maintain a respectable station in it—this is the grand bent of man's carnal heart. (J C Philpot)

## Devotional Illustrations

### Romans 12:2

**Turned Upside Down** - In G. K. Chesterton's biographical sketch of St. Francis of Assisi, he describes a time when Francis felt deep discouragement and a sense of failure. He emerged from that experience **looking** at the world

"as differently from other men as if he had come out of that dark hole walking on his hands."

"If a man saw the world upside down," Chesterton continues, "with all the trees and towers hanging head downward as in a pool, one effect would be to emphasize the idea of dependence. . . . for the very word dependence only means hanging."



Standing upright, we see a world rising on the foundations of our own achievements. Turned upside down, we see everything suspended precariously, dependent on God rather than being solid and secure.

**As we yield to Christ and turn from our self-sufficiency to depend fully on Him, we gain a new perspective The result is freedom, joy, and thankfulness for all the gifts of God.**

Romans 12:2 calls it being transformed **"by the renewing of your mind"**—becoming a new and different person with a fresh newness in all we do and think.

Being turned upside down isn't a pleasant experience, but it can lead us to a liberating new view of life. — David C. McCasland [Our Daily Bread](#)

Less of self and more of Jesus,  
More and more each day like Thee;  
Just to live in full surrender  
For my Lord who ransomed me. —Wonder

**You'll see life more clearly  
when you focus on God.**

**You won't stumble in the dark  
if you walk in the light of God's Word.**

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### **The Power To Change: Romans 12:1-8**

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

Educator and best-selling author Tony Wagner is a firm believer in “disruptive innovation” that changes the way the world thinks and works. In his book *Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change the World*, he says, “Innovation occurs in every aspect of human endeavor,” and “most people can become more creative and innovative—given the right environment and opportunities.”

Paul was a first-century innovator who traveled throughout Asia Minor telling people how they could be transformed by faith in Jesus Christ. To the Christians in Rome Paul wrote, “Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think” (Rom. 12:2 nlt). He urged them to give themselves fully to God (v.1). In a self-centered, greedy, and grasping world, Paul nurtured and mentored them in how to live a Christ-centered, giving life.

The world has changed dramatically since Paul's time. But the longings of people for love, forgiveness, and the power to change remain the same. Jesus, the Great Innovator, offers all of these and invites us to experience a new and different life in Him.

I'm thankful for the ways You're changing me,  
Lord. Help me to be open to You and to  
cooperate with Your work in me.  
Transform me to be like You.

God takes us as we are but never leaves us that way.

By David C. McCasland

INSIGHT: Familiar and frequently quoted, Romans 12:1-2 highlights the drastic and dramatic change that occurs when a person gives him or herself completely to God. In ideas similar to Jesus' command to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37), Paul encourages us to give ourselves completely—both body (Romans 12:1) and mind (Romans 12:2)—to God. Only by giving ourselves to God and being transformed can we know His will (Romans 12:2).

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### **THINKING CHRISTIANLY—Romans 12:2**

The mind is our only place of total personal privacy. It is that territory no other person can invade. As a result, we tend to be very much ourselves in our minds. We do not have to put up a facade to anyone. It is where immoral fantasies and schemes can play out in intimate detail. Thoughts of revenge, jealousy, lingering anger, and envy can have unchecked freedom. In contrast, our mind can be the place where we seek to enjoy the pleasures of purity and devise plans to serve, help, and heal. It is where we can embrace [memorized Scripture](#) and [meditate on His Word](#) and His ways. Our minds can pray and commune with the Lord on a constant basis.

Our thoughts can be a temple where we offer sacrifices of praise and worship to our Lord. Our minds are a powerful force for good or evil. It is no wonder God's Word teaches us that a changed life begins with a changed mind. Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." All of life begins and is defined by how we think, what we think about, and what we decide in the confines of our thoughts. God wants our minds. He calls us to think His thoughts after Him and to conform our thoughts to His will and His ways.

Paul is actually calling us to "think Christianly." To make a deliberate break from the decadent mind-set of a decaying society and reorient ourselves toward God. Brain first! Never have God's people needed this more than we do today. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8). As Proverbs says, ". . . as He thinks within himself so he is" (Proverbs 23:7). Start the discipline of thinking God's thoughts after Him. Ask yourself, "What would God think in a moment like this?"

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**Vance Havner** - It is never wise to use as a sermon text a verse that begins with **And**. If we confine ourselves to that text, we have not said all that God meant to say in that connection. For instance, we often hear sermons from the verse ". . . Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). But the first word in the verse is "**And**" which indicates that something has gone before. The preceding verse says, ". . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Then follows, "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Likewise, we hear sermons from Romans 12:2 about being not conformed to the world, but the preceding verse bids us present our bodies as living sacrifices. First, the positive, then the negative nonconformity to the world, and finally the positive again, "Be ye transformed." **We must have the whole passage-to give a complete message** Torn out of context, one verse does not say all that God has said on that matter. We must preach not only the truth and nothing but the truth, but the whole truth in a given passage.

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## Not At This Time

Read: Romans 11:33–12:2

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. —Romans 12:2

It can be quite discouraging for wanna-be writers to get their work rejected time after time. When they send in a manuscript to a publisher, they'll often hear back in a letter with these words: "Thank you. But your submission does not meet our needs at this time." Sometimes this really means "not at this time—or ever." So they try the next publisher and the next.

I've found that the phrase This does not meet our needs at this time—or ever can be a helpful saying in my Christian walk to renew my mind and refocus my thoughts on the Lord.

Here's what I mean. When starting to worry, we can remind ourselves: "Worry does not meet my needs at this time—or ever. My heart's need is to trust God. I will 'be anxious for nothing' " (Phil. 4:6).

When we envy what another person has or does, we can reinforce the truth: "Envy does not meet my needs at this time—or ever. My need is to give thanks to God. His Word says, 'Envy is rottenness to the bones' (Prov. 14:30), and 'In everything give thanks' " (1 Thess. 5:18).

We can't renew our minds by ourselves (Rom. 12:2); it's the transforming work of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Yet speaking the truth in our thoughts can help us to submit to the Spirit's work within.

For Further Thought

What are some areas you struggle with in your heart?

Ask God to renew your mind that it might think like His. Then keep reminding yourself of the truth.

The Spirit of God renews our minds when we review the Word of God.

By Anne Cetas

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## Knowing God's Will

Read: Ephesians 5:17-21

. . . that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. —Romans 12:2

A young man facing the future and unsure of what the next year would bring, concluded, "Nobody knows what God's will is." Is he right? Does a lack of certainty about the future translate into not knowing God's will?

The concept of knowing God's will is often limited to discerning what specific situation we will be in at some future time. Although seeking God's specific leading is part of it, another aspect that is just as vital is to follow the clearly defined elements of God's will each and every day.

For instance, it is God's will for us to be good citizens as a challenge to those opposed to Christ (1 Peter 2:15), to give God thanks no matter what (1 Thess. 5:18), to be sanctified sexually, avoiding immorality (1 Thess. 4:3), to live under the Holy Spirit's control (Eph. 5:18), to sing to Him (v.19), and to submit to other believers (v.21).

As we submit to God in these and other areas, we are more likely to live in what Romans 12:2 calls God's "good and acceptable and perfect will." Living with God's smile of approval leads to His guidance for the future.

As we seek to know God's will for the future, we must also act on what we already know now.

Knowing God's will for the future Comes when we follow today What He's revealed in the Scriptures As His commands to obey. —  
Sper

Love and obey the Lord every day, and He will unfold your future.

By Dave Branon

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## Shaping Your Thoughts

Read: Romans 12:1–8

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2

When Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase "the medium is the message" in 1964, personal computers were unknown, mobile phones were science fiction, and the Internet didn't exist. Today we understand what great foresight he had in predicting how our thinking is influenced in this digital age. In Nicholas Carr's book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, he writes, "[The media] supply the stuff of thought, but they also shape the process of thought. And what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. Whether I'm online or not, my mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles."

I like J. B. Phillips's paraphrase of Paul's message to the Christians in Rome: **"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity"** (Rom. 12:2). How relevant this is today as we find our thoughts and the way our minds process material affected by the world around us.

Let God's Spirit, not the world, shape your mind.

We cannot stem the tide of information that bombards us, but we can ask God each day to help us focus on Him and to shape our thinking through His presence in our lives.

Father in heaven, still and focus my mind, quiet my heart, and fill me with Your thoughts throughout this day.

Let God's Spirit, not the world, shape your mind.

By David C. McCasland

INSIGHT: Tradition has it that the apostle Peter brought the gospel to Rome. This is unlikely as there is no historical evidence that Peter was ever in Rome. The gospel was probably brought into Rome in two ways. First, among the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, there were "visitors from Rome" (Acts 2:10). These converted returnees could have brought the gospel back home. Second, because it was the capital city of the Roman Empire, thousands of other believers (visitors, tourists, soldiers, traders, businessmen, and migrants) would have come into Rome. These visiting believers would have brought the gospel with them.

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**Reverse Your Views** - A friend of mine likes to imitate the verbal mistakes of English minister William Archibald Spooner, who was famous for his unintentional reversal of word sounds. In Spooner's style, one fell swoop became "one swell foop" and a pouring rain became "a roaring pain."

My friend pulled out some Bible memory cards one day and announced that he was going to **"reverse his views"** instead of **"review his verses."** His spoonerized statement may have been closer to the truth of what can happen when we read and [meditate on God's Word](#).

I wonder if I have yet grasped the incredible process described in Romans 12:2,

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

J. B. Phillips translates it,

"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within."

This is nothing short of a mental revolution--taking my normal human way of seeing life and giving me a point of view I could not have without God.

Scripture memory is a powerful discipline that puts God's living Word into our minds and gives Him the opportunity to change our thinking and reverse our views. — David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread](#))

#### **Action Suggestions**

**Memorize one of the following Bible passages  
and ask God to change your thinking.**

(See related resource = **Memorizing His Word**)

**Repentance:** Psalm 32:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 [note](#)

**Love:** 1Cor 13:4, 5, 6, 7, 8 [note](#)

**Christlikeness:** Php 2:1-11 [note](#)

**The Bible is meant not merely to inform  
but to transform.**

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**Against The Flow** - Two university students in Moorhead, Minnesota, painted a mural on the wall outside their dormitory room. According to USA Today, it showed a school of fish all swimming in the same direction except for a single fish heading the opposite way.

The one fish was intended to be the age-old symbol for Christ. Printed on the picture were the words, "Go against the flow." University officials, arguing that the mural might offend non-Christians, ordered the students to paint over it.

In obedience to our Master, we must be willing to go against the flow of society. As we follow Jesus, our motives, **values**, and habits are bound to be different from those who are not Christians. That's the way it was in the first century when the pagans were puzzled and convicted by the lifestyle of Christians. Peter wrote, "They think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you" (1Pe 4:4-note).

When we are marching to the beat of a different drummer, of course we will be out of step with people around us. This takes conviction, courage, and courtesy. But by God's enabling grace we can be disturbingly different—and effectively different too. — Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread](#))

Some will hate you, some will love you;  
Some will flatter, some will slight;  
Cease from man and look above you,  
Trust in God and do the right. —Macleod

**When we walk with the Lord,  
we'll be out of step with the world.**

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**Don't Let It Get To You** - First, the bad news. Our society can have a terrible influence on us and our children. The entertainment media, for example, offer various forms of sinful behavior for our listening and viewing "pleasure." One music TV channel, for instance, was characterized in World magazine by film critic Michael Medved like this:

There is absolutely no excuse for MTV to be present in the home. It is 100-percent negative.

And now for the good news. None of society's negative influences have to bother you. They will affect you and your family only if you let them. They can infiltrate the minds of you and your children only if you refuse to use the discernment, power, and instruction God has provided to everyone who is redeemed by faith in His Son Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:20, 21, 22-note, Eph 4:23, 24-note).

In other words, our problem is not so much the evil in society as it is our lack of discernment and self-control.

We should find great comfort in knowing that the Lord has given us the resources to live above society's level of degradation. We can be in the world but not of it (Jn 17:14, 15,16, 17). If we are living in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ro 8:13-note, Eph 5:18-note, Gal 5:16-note) under the guidance of the Word of God (Jn 17:17, Ps 119:105-note, society's bad influences can't get to us. — Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread](#))

To live in the world but not of it  
Is the path that we should take;  
For to be in the world and live like it  
Brings nothing but sad heartache. --JDB

**Yield to the Spirit,  
and you won't be conformed to the world.**

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**Brain Games** - A saying among scientists who study the human brain is "Use it before you lose it." We have the power to help keep our brain fit and working well. Dr. Lawrence Katz, a neurologist at Duke University, urges people to perform daily mental exercises such as brushing your teeth with the non-dominant hand or taking a new route to work to help stimulate the brain and keep it healthy. The goal is to replace unthinking routine with fresh awareness and new focus.

There's a lesson here for us as followers of Jesus Christ. Even the most valuable spiritual disciplines of **Bible reading** (**Ed**: See also the discipline of **Meditating on the Word** and **Primer on Biblical Meditation**, cp the promised blessing in Ps 1:1-note, Ps 1:2-note, Ps 1:3-note) and **prayer** can become so habitual that our minds are not fully engaged.

To avoid slipping into a spiritual rut, why not add Scripture memory to your daily devotional time? It's a mental effort designed to produce spiritual change. The psalmist wrote, "Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11-note). Paul said, "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" (Romans 12:2).

It's more than a brain game to memorize and meditate on the powerful Word of God. — David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread](#))

We must read Scripture every day  
And meditate on what God said  
To fight temptation from the world  
And live a life that's Spirit-led. —Sper

**Let God's Word fill your memory,  
rule your heart, and guide your feet.**  
(cp Col 3:16-note)

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## **Square Watermelons?**

Read: Romans 12:1-5

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

Farmers in Zentsuji, Japan, are preparing full-grown watermelons for shipment—only these are no ordinary melons, they're square! They were placed in tempered-glass cubes while they were still growing. Why would anyone want a square watermelon? They're much easier to store in a refrigerator!

It's amusing to think of how a naturally round watermelon can become square because of the shape of the container in which it's grown. This reminds me of the forces in the world that exert their influence on us and attempt to shape us. That's why in Romans 12:2 we are told not to be "conformed to this world," but to be "transformed by the renewing of [our] mind." The idea is rather simple: We are to allow the transforming Word of God to work within us and produce outward results, instead of permitting external pressures to shape us.

If we [meditate on God's Word daily](#), it will influence our thoughts and help us grow to be more like Jesus Christ (2Cor 3:18). Then we will act in a manner that pleases Him. Pressures of the world will continue to try to shape our character, but they will not succeed if God's Word is changing us from within. —Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread](#))

The Savior can satisfy fully  
The heart that the world cannot fill;  
His presence will sanctify wholly  
The soul that is yielded and still. —Smith

**If we are being transformed by the Word,  
we won't be conformed to the world.**

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## End Of Construction

Read: Philippians 1:1-7

He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. —Philippians 1:6

One day Billy and Ruth Graham were driving through a long stretch of road construction. They had numerous slowdowns, detours, and stops along the way. Finally they reached the end of all that difficulty, and smooth pavement stretched out before them. This sign caught Ruth's attention: "End of construction. Thanks for your patience." She commented that those words would be a fitting inscription on her tombstone someday.

As a matter of fact, those words fit all of us as believers, because in this life we are "under construction." When we accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we begin the lifelong process of spiritual growth. The Holy Spirit works in us to remove our selfishness (Philippians 2:4), to renew our thinking (Romans 12:2), and to develop qualities in us that are more and more Christlike (Colossians 3:5-14). Paul described this process as a work of God. He said, "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

As we travel heavenward, let's cooperate with God's construction of our lives. When His work in us is complete, "we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2), perfectly conformed to our Savior's likeness. —VCG

More about Jesus let me learn,  
More of His holy will discern;  
Spirit of God, my teacher be,  
Showing the things of Christ to me. —Hewitt

God loves us too much to let us stay as we are.

By Vernon Grounds

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**Maintaining Character** - News reporting is a tough business that tends to make reporters hard and unfeeling. That's what Barbara Bradley, a correspondent for National Public Radio, tells aspiring journalists. But she also believes it doesn't have to be that way. "I made a strategic decision when I first fell in love with journalism," Bradley says, "that if I found myself beginning to get tough I would leave the business. It's just a career, and why mortgage your character for a career? Maintaining your character counts for something and you can do it; it's just a decision you have to make."

In every high-pressure situation, we can react like most people or we can choose to be different. J. B. Phillips translates Romans 12:2 this way:

"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands, and moves toward the goal of true maturity" (The New Testament in Modern English).

When we feel pressure to conform, character can stand firm on the bedrock of conviction, saying, "This is God's way and it is best." Maintaining our character begins and continues with a decision. Let's make it today.— David C. McCasland

O Lord, You see what's in my heart—  
There's nothing hid from You;  
So help me live the kind of life  
That's loving, kind, and true. —D. De Haan

**Beautiful character begins in the heart.**