

God's Solution for Revival #1—Romans 12

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1–2 KJV 1900)

I chose four specific sins as examples of contemporary attitudes and conduct that shall likely require repentance before the Lord sends revival to His people. I have also chosen four passages that contain comprehensive lists of attitudes and conduct that the Lord commands, blesses, and so likely go hand in hand with revival and refreshed blessings.

When we read a passage such as Romans 12 that gives us a list of attitudes and conduct which the Lord commands, and which, according to the passage, also contains the objective that God intends by our obedience to His teachings in the list, we should view these passages, these lists, as both inclusive and exclusive. They are inclusive in that they contain every action the Lord intended for us to practice to realize the stated blessing. They do not omit a single action the Lord intended for us to practice. We have no Biblical and therefore no “Faith” authority to ignore any part of the list. Likewise they are exclusive; we have no Biblical or “Faith” basis to add any personal habit which we might like to the list. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 underscores these two points. God’s written Word is not under construction, to be completed by us and our preferred habits and beliefs. He completed it and gave it to us, His thorough furnisher “...**unto all good works.**”

We teach our children to resist “Peer pressure” from their friends to do bad or dangerous things. But the Christian community needs, desperately so in our time, to take its own advice. How do we react to the political or COVID pressures of our time? How do we treat people who disagree with us? Choose the topic. How much of the Romans 12 model of godly Christian living focuses specifically on how we treat other people? How much of it doesn’t address this question? Not much, right? God measures our authentic faith in large part by how we treat each other. John reminds us that our attitude and conduct toward our brother or sister mirrors precisely our attitude and conduct toward God.

In the Old Testament Levitical priesthood, worshippers were commanded to bring their sacrifices, including both sin offerings and thanksgiving offerings, to the priest who would offer them to the Lord on behalf of the worshipper. Paul used this act of sacrificial worship to introduce us to the core issue in our own worship of the Lord. However, in the New Testament form of worship, Paul reminded the Romans and us. We don’t give an animal to the priest for our worship. **We give ourselves.** It is our own body that is laid on the altar of sacrifice. How many animals were offered to the Lord in the Levitical worship that retained their life? Not one! So the very notion of presenting our bodies on the altar of worship to the Lord means we give up self, “Me first,” and all our ambitions for personal gain or “My way” if we hope to truly give God our acceptable worship. What? You say the price is too high? What price did Jesus pay for your salvation? He gave His life literally for you. Is it at all unreasonable for you and me to give our lives symbolically for—and to—Him?

In our broken human lifestyle, we do things primarily for self. What is the cliché? “God helps those who help themselves.” A pastor once told me about his counseling with a member of the church he served.

This member was indulging a habit that would destroy his faith and godly light. In self-defense, this member countered the pastor's Biblical admonitions. "God wants me to be happy, and I can't be happy unless I..." The member was wrong. We read in Scripture that God commands us to be holy, and we read that He promises to bless the seeds of holiness in our lives with joyful contentment, "Happiness" in a far deeper form than human perceptions of the word, but He never commands us to "Be happy." That blessing comes as a secondary effect of our godly faith-walk. How enticing to our carnality. Has just such a manner of thinking invaded your mind? You can almost hear the serpent hissing similar words to Eve. (Genesis 3)

...which is your reasonable service. "Reasonable" in this verse was translated from the Greek root for our English word "Logical." To serve God in the manner Paul taught in this chapter is both reasonable and logical. A right-thinking believer would consider no other way of worship.

"reasonable service" (AV) means that the sacrifice should be thoughtful and deliberate. The animals in Jewish sacrifices could not offer themselves this way because they were animals. There are many ways in which we can worship God, but this is the most fundamental and important way. This service of worship should precede all other service of worship or else worship and service are superficial. (Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible. Romans 12:1)

As Constable's thought reminds us, our only rational worship of the Lord must begin with self, with giving ourselves to Him on the altar of self-denial. If we fail in that act of worship, all others that we attempt will be rejected.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Look at the prevalent attitudes and conduct of our nation's political leaders in Washington, DC. Basic civility has been abandoned for hate and verbal warfare. And that mindset has proved to be far more contagious than any invisible virus, and potentially far more deadly. I was talking with a friend recently about our present social climate, and he observed a frightening point. The Christian community in our country is one of the loudest voices in this uncivilized hate-filled war of words. The very people who are, by their profession, to be a gracious light, a model of Jesus' "Golden Rule" of kind gracious treatment toward others, have abandoned their own faith, increasingly "conformed to this world." You can't conform to this world and also be "...transformed by the renewing of your mind." The two mindsets are mutually exclusive.

*A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and **my people love to have it so:** and what will ye do in the end thereof?* (Jeremiah 5:30-31 KJV)

What was the state of God's people when Jeremiah served as prophet? They were held captive in Babylon because of their sins. This is the frightening future of professing believers who choose to ignore the Lord and His words in favor of their own opinions and ideas.

No one can predict the future. However, God's word contains faithful warnings to His people. When we choose to "**have it so**," to do our lives and our faith our own way, God in His word warns of certain captivity, our own Babylon lies ahead. When we choose the true way of faith, the Romans 12 "**Transformed**" way over the "*Conformed to this world*" way, He promises deliverance, blessings, and even revival. So when we make decisions that set our course toward one or the other of these lifestyles, we unwittingly also set the course for our future relationship with the Lord, revival and spiritual vitality or captivity and spiritual isolation.

What does it mean to be "*...transformed by the renewing of your mind*"? We've likely heard the magnetic description of the butterfly's "Metamorphosis" in relation to this verse. Rightly so, the Greek word translated "transformed" is the Greek root for "Metamorphosis." Ponder this amazing thought. Would you rather live the remainder of your life as a caterpillar or as a butterfly? We are not mindless caterpillars. Paul charges us to initiate this transforming process. If we fail, we must look in the mirror. No one else is responsible.

However, I want to turn our thoughts to another point that Paul makes in the verse.

...be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Paul wrote this letter to believers in Rome. Though he did not specifically address a "Church" in his opening greeting, it is generally believed that he did write to a church, possibly to several churches, all located in the city of Rome. Despite using the KJV plural form of the second person pronoun ("Ye" rather than "Thee"), Paul used the singular "mind." A faithful, godly church is taught in this whole chapter, beginning with this point, to be a united collective body with only one "Mind." How does Acts record that first church body?

*These all continued **with one accord** in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. (Acts 1:14 KJV)*

This description continues through several chapters in Acts. Later in Romans Paul will underscore this admonition with emphasis.

*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be **likeminded one toward another** according to Christ Jesus: That ye may **with one mind and one mouth** glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6 KJV; emphasis added)*

I've talked with pastors in our fellowship across the country during the last two years. No exception, every one of the men who described his assessment of the spiritual health of the church he served gave a similar description. They all have lost sleep over deep concerns they observed in the membership of their churches. The "**One mind and one accord**" mindset had faded, increasingly replaced with a "My way or the highway" attitude of strife that mirrors this world, not the "Romans 12" transformed believer's way.

Folks, the Lord gave us a detailed, easy to read and understand list of behaviors in this chapter. Are we working to practice it or to rationalize why we need not do so? And our study brings us back to the sobering question. Do we truly long for the Lord's revival in our lives and in His churches? What are we doing to ensure that outcome in His churches? To bring His revival in our own life?

Summary

I mentioned thinking of four New Testament passages that contain lists of admonitions for godly faith-living and potential blessing and revival. The remaining three Bible "Lists" of godly faith living are

1. Galatians 5:16, 22-26.
2. Philippians 4:8-9.
3. And 2 Peter 1:5-9.

I will forgo writing on them for the present time. However, I encourage you to spend a large block of time in coming days and weeks with these four (Romans 12 included) passages. Why not make a written list of every attitude or conduct admonished in all four lists? Think of this comprehensive and all-inclusive (As well as all-exclusive; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) list as your personal roadmap from the Lord for revival. As I ponder historical revivals, as well as revivals in Scripture, it occurs to me that true Biblical revival begins with personal revival which spreads to churches. Can we each pray daily, "**Lord, please send revival, and let it begin with me.**"

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