

Romans 12 2c

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Last week we discussed the command that we are **not to be conformed** to this world. I can't seem to get away from this concept.

I have a question for you this morning. And I would like you to think about it with me. **Where do your thoughts come from?**

Really- where do your thoughts **come from?**

There are not an unlimited number of sources. Every thought we have comes from somewhere.

Think about this. We tend to think that our thoughts arise from us. But the truth is many, if not most of them, don't.

For instance scripture talks in I Timothy of doctrines taught by demons. So we have the capacity to get what we think **from demons**.

Mary and others in scripture got some of their thoughts from Angels. So we have the capacity to get our ideas from Angels speaking to us. I would venture to guess that none of us have, but you never know.

We have the capacity to get some of our thoughts directly from God or the Holy Spirit. After all, that is what Divine Guidance is, isn't it. Paul gives us a few examples of that in his life. We also see it in the book of Acts.

Now while we have all have these examples from scripture, I don't think that these are **the most common sources** of our thoughts, at least not **direct** sources.

I think what we see in scripture is that most of the Christian life deals with handling thoughts from three sources.

Flesh, the world, and the Bible.

Let's start with Flesh-

Jesus said this:

Mark 7:18-23 (NKJV)

18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him,

19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"

20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

He tells us that from **out of the heart** of man proceeds evil thoughts. Some of the thoughts we think we can take credit for. Think about Cain. We never read that Satan made any suggestions directly to him. I am certain that his surroundings were not encouraging murder. What **was** communicated directly from God was that Cain should **not do** this evil thing. So where did this evil idea come from? It came from within Cain. It was his own idea. It was spawned by his fleshly desires and arose from his own immoral and corrupt heart.

James talks about the source of fights and conflicts. And where do they come from? James 4:1-10 (NKJV)

1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

Notice this. The ideas that get expressed come from a desire for pleasure. It comes from a simple fleshly desire. But the idea arises in us, in our desires.

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

We see here that this attitude of wanting something and allowing that thought to be our driving force is friendship with the world. It is borrowing their means and methods to fulfill our fleshly desires. It is cooperation with the world system.

Then it goes on to say:

5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Here James tracks back any **world centered** thought to the head of the world system. This desire that creeps up inside of you, it is in league with the Devil's desire for your life. And what are we to do with even the evil that comes from within us? Resist that evil. Resist the devil and anything he has anything to do with.

And what else?

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

We have resources to use against the **thoughts of our flesh** and the **purposes of the devil**. We can come close to God and we will be safe. There are ways we can win the struggle against these forces. A believer can always start from where he is and get back to a right relationship with Christ. That is always held out to us.

So we might get our thoughts from Demons, Angels, God, the Holy Spirit, they might even arise from ourselves and our fleshly desire. I believe also that some of the thoughts **that have their source in our own minds** come from the use of our imagination and our reason. We have the capacity to imagine things we have never seen or heard. We also have the capacity to expand thoughts into new territories where we have never thought before. These are all sources of our thoughts.

Now, About the world

How much of what we believe or assume about life has been taught to us by the world's system? What do Christians believe and act upon that is **directly from the world**? You might at first think, very little. You might say, "I don't believe what the world tells me." "I have learned not to trust the media." And we can go on. But this morning I want to talk about just a few examples. And these are truly just a few. There are many many more.

Let's start with this one.

Who says that the primary goal in marriage is **our own happiness**? Do you know a verse in scripture that says this? I don't. But how many of us act as if it is true? How many of us evaluate our marriages according to that standard on a regular basis? And where did that idea come from? The world.

But what if the goal of marriage is **to make us holy**? What if that is what God intends? What if God chose our spouse to be the person that would most inspire or challenge us to be holy? That seems to be what Paul says in Ephesians where the husband presents the bride, in this case it is Christ who is presenting the church, and it says

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

We know even from our text that this is God's goal for us, to be Holy. What would happen if we started evaluating our marriages based on that expectation?

You know, I have never heard a man or woman complain about their marriage that it just didn't make them Holy enough. I've never heard anyone say, Lord, I think I am too satisfied with this person. They meet my needs too well. I know that I would grow more spiritually if this person were more difficult and if I didn't get along with him or her so well. I know I could become a more loving person if I was treated a little worse. No. Almost all of our complaints are worldly ones based on worldly expectations. Why? Because we believe the world's thinking.

Another good one. Who says that a couple must be in love before they are qualified to get married? Do you know of a scripture verse that says this? I don't. Yet how often do we give advice according to those lines. And where did that idea come from? The world.

And how many Christians bail out of their marriages because these "in-love" feelings no longer exist for their spouse or they are much stronger for someone else. It is almost as if many Christians think this "in love" feeling carries higher authority than the word of God. Why? We believe the world.

And another. Who says that there should be **any** physical intimacy that is sexual in nature between people who are not married? Yet popular so called "Christian" books advise such behavior. But **do we see that** anywhere in scripture? No. Paul basically said in Timothy that it is good for a man **not to touch a woman**, and what he meant was the kind of touch that **inflames her desires**, but if a man decides that this kind of activity is **something he wants**, marriage is the only option in which to do so. But where did these current ideas about how to pick a future mate come from? The world. Where did this idea about **intimacy by degree** come from? The world. We won't find them in the pages of scripture. How about another? How about our kids? What is our goal in raising them? Do we believe that our primary job is to raise them to have good self esteem? Is it our primary job to make them feel good about themselves? I don't find that in a single verse of scripture. Where did that idea come from? The world. Everything **scripture** tells us is to do our best **to cause them to love, fear and obey God**. And

sometimes feeling awful about themselves and their state before God is the best thing that could ever happen to them.

Here's another good one. Mental illness. You know where that term came from? The world. It did not come from any biblical principal. There are certainly emotional conditions that come from the chemistry in our bodies that we can't control. But one thing is for sure. If what **we think** is what **creates** the condition, it is not an illness. It is unbelief. Or it is believing badly or wrongly. But it is much easier to avoid responsibility. That is why the Mental Health industry came up with the term. Mental illness seems to be something that happens to you, not something you choose. It is like catching a cold. It is beyond your control. But Proverbs says **as a man thinks in his heart so is he**. Christ said, **you shall know the truth and it shall set you free**. Jay Adams wrote a book years ago called Competent to Counsel. And in it he laid out hope to people because, if mental illness is an illness there is little hope. But if you are **responsible** for how you feel, you can change it by how you think, by how you believe. And there is **great hope**. That is exactly the hope that the world would strip from us by believing their lie about mental illness.

Now let's move to how churches function. How has the church conformed to the world? There are very popular books on bookshelves at Christian bookstores telling churches how to grow. And what is their source? Worldly marketing principles. Many churches tend to see themselves as a community service center. They have stopped seeing themselves as rescue centers for people going to hell and a true family for those who are going to heaven. In fact, even the gospel message gets changed to fit what the world is **willing to accept**. Mention of sin and hell are carefully avoided while all those things that will make your fleshly lives pleasurable are included. This is not to say that every church is headed in that direction. But many are.

What I have presented this morning is a little unusual. But I think it is very important. We as the people of God have **GOT** to examine what we think. There is a book out there that is called Lies Women Believe that has been very helpful spiritually to some of you. And all it does is show how what we believe goes against what God says. That is all we are talking about this morning. Except our text should be called "**lies Christians believe**". And the focus is everything that the world tells us about that they say is important in life. Those are the lies that we sometimes believe. And those are the lies we must stop believing.

Our **lives** are not for what the world says our **lives** are for.

Our **bodies** are not for what the world says our **bodies** are for.

Our **minds** are not for what the world says our **bodies** are for.
The things they say are **worth** living for are **not worth** living for.
The things that they say are **right and wrong** are **not right and wrong**.
Their secrets do not contain the answers for our lives.
Their guidance does not lead where we want to go.

My goal this morning was to show us all just how easy it is to pick up what the world tells us and begin living our lives accordingly. These are **just a few** of the ways the world is desperately trying to squeeze you into its mold. We must examine what we think continually.

We all have a bunch of “should”s. These are things we think ought to be done by us or others. And we need to be relentless here. We have got to look at each “should” and ask the question, **“Who says so?”**

I should have a new car.

My kids should go to college.

I should have a job I like.

I should read the Bible more.

I should spend more time with other believers.

I should get some new clothes.

I should be more liked by my associates.

I should make more money.

Do you see what I mean? **Who says so?** There are **shoulds** in our lives that are legitimate. They are a result of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives based on the Word of God that we heard or read. There are some **shoulds** that are based on principles we have read in scripture. We have thought about them and we are led to these conclusions. And then there are **shoulds** that come straight from the world. They are attempts of the world system to squeeze us into their mold. They are attempts to get us to look like them, think like them, speak like them and live like them. Those are the places we must replace what they say with what God says. This doesn’t come easy. It doesn’t happen in busy lifestyles that refuse to spend time with God. It doesn’t happen without Christian fellowship, reading God’s Word, prayer, and examining our thoughts carefully. We are very tricky people.

I had said earlier that the three greatest sources of our thinking are probably the flesh, the world and the Word. I have talked a little about the flesh and more about the danger of the world’s influence on us. Now let’s look at what scripture says about **the Word**.

It is easy to see that God's word should be **that which fills our minds** and replaces all those lies that we have learned from the world. First let's look at its power regarding our thoughts.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

We see that the Word of God is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Do you want to know who you are and why you do what you do? Come honestly to the Word of God. Where there are **fleshly motives**, where there are **worldly thoughts**, the Word of God is **powerful to root them out** and expose them. So it starts with showing us where our problem spots are.

But there is so much more that the Word of God does in a believer's life.

Let's look at some selected verses from Ps 119

Psalm 119:1-176 (NKJV)

9 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

10 With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!

Do you see what this is telling us? Here is how we live. Here is how we ferret out the world and the flesh in our lives. Here is how we turn the corner in our lives. We do it by paying careful attention to what God says. What will the **effect** be? Our ways will be cleansed. We will learn how not to sin against God. It will enlighten us into the paths that God **wants us to take** as opposed to those paths that **we would naturally take**.

12 Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes!

Here is a wonderful prayer. David prays God, **this is what I want**. Teach me your truths, your statutes, your ways. That is what I need to know. That will make the difference in my life. That will fill my mind with the good stuff.

15 I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways.

16 I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

If you do not want to be conformed to the world's thoughts, this is what it will take. We need to meditate on what God says. When our minds are free to think about whatever they want, this is what should fill them. We need to be asking questions like, "How does God's word apply to my life?" "What have I learned about God and who He is?" And then we delight in them. We think about how they are better than what the world would offer us. And as we contemplate it, we remember it. It fills our thoughts. We find that in the places where the world's responses would fill our minds and mouths, now what comes to our mind and lips is what God says is true.

17 Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word.

Do you see here how David had come to see the reason **for his life**? The world would say that you should live for your pleasure. But David says, no I want to live **to keep your Word**. That is how David saw his life.

18 Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

19 I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me.

See here how the draw of the Word of God grows in his life. He asks that God would open his eyes, not to ways of making money, not to ways of gaining the world. No, David wants to see into God's word **in ways he never saw before**. He wanted a continually deeper understanding of who God is and what He wants. And as he does that he becomes stranger and stranger to this world. In fact, it is a noticeable thing to David. He recognizes that he just does not fit in at all in the day to day activities of the world's normal functioning.

That is what we experience as we are **transformed by the renewing of our minds**. We become more and more misfits to the world and its cronies.

22 Remove from me reproach and contempt, For I have kept Your testimonies.

23 Princes also sit and speak against me, But Your servant meditates on Your statutes.

And what will the results of faithfulness be? What happens when we will not allow ourselves to be conformed to the world? We will find the same thing as David. The world will reproach us and treat us contemptuously. This is saying that the princes will make us a target. Brad has some direct experience with that this week. Brad can tell you how the people in power can speak against you. Yet that makes no difference to a person like David. Why? Because the **servant's**

mind is filled with the Word of God. The approval of politicians is nothing compared to the approval of God.

24 Your testimonies also are my delight And my counselors.

Isn't this great? Doesn't it perfectly describe what Romans 12:2 is saying. David is not allowing the world to be his counselor. He is not allowing the world to give him his "should"s. No David is learning to get his delight **from what God says**. He isn't drinking from the world's fountain. And who does he go to for counsel? Where does he get his "should's?" Where does he get the direction for his life? From God's word.

But what about when he hits rock bottom and feels like dirt? What about those times that he feels simply awful? Does he change counselors then? Does he rely on some trick of the world to help him feel better? Does he abandon His trust in God? Absolutely not?

He says

25 My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.

Brothers and sisters, THERE IS NEVER A GOOD TIME TO RUN TO THE WORLD FOR THE DEEPEST ANSWERS IN YOUR LIFE. Call out to God that He will revive you. And how will he do it? **According to His Word**. It will be **His word** that brings you out of the pit of despondency. It will be **His Word** that will be used to revive you, to bring life back to you.

26 I have declared my ways, and You answered me; Teach me Your statutes.

Here we see it. David laid out his life honestly to God. He asked God to revive Him. And God did just that. But David wasn't content at that point to run to the world for his pleasure and fulfillment, now that he is feeling better. No he ends the verse by saying, **Teach me more. Teach me your statutes. Fill me in on what you think.**

Look at what we see here. Doesn't the transforming of David's life here look like what we see in Romans 12:2

He says

32 I will run the course of Your commandments, For You shall enlarge my heart.

David's heart is getting enlarged. David's capacity for the things of God is growing. David is being transformed into God's image. And it is God that is doing it. But it is David who is **refusing to believe the world's garbage and choosing to believe only what God says.**

And skipping ahead- we see just how deep an affect this process of transformation has had on him. Look how David measures things that happen to him now.

The world would say- **it is always bad to be afflicted and good to be blessed**, because **our pleasure** is what matters. But look what David says

71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

72 The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

Wow. That is nothing short of transformation thinking.

We could go on and on but I think we got the point. Our thoughts come from somewhere. And I can assure you that **many of our thoughts, expectations, evaluations, and even our intuitions** have come directly from the world and its propaganda. I wanted to take a week to drive home the point just how incessant that influence is on us. And the great need we have to fight it. We cannot allow it to have sway in our lives.

Then we went to the example of David, who showed us how fighting it is done. He showed us what transformation by the renewal of the mind looks like. Will this be a **relentless task** to a believer? Of course it is. But look at what the greatest commandment God ever gave is.

Mark 12:30 (NKJV)

30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

We are commanded to love the Lord **with all our minds**. Did we really think that would be easy? Did we really think we would get that in a couple of seminars or sermons. Surely we know better than that. Remember who we are dealing with. This is the God who says:

Isaiah 55:8,9 (NKJV)

8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Psalm 139:17 (NKJV)

17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!

1 Chronicles 28:9 (NKJV)

9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.