

## Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

**1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

**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.**

I'd like to start this morning with some facts. I did a simple word count on some words used in scripture. I think you will see what I am getting at when I read the results. These are results from the New Testament in the New King James bible.

Think-46

Thinks- 8

Thought- 18

Thoughts- 13

Consider- 22

Mind- 55

Minds- 12

Regard- 10

Heart- 111 –in Greek it is the center of a man's thought, not feelings.

Remember- 29

Remind- 6

Reason- 45

Reasoning- 5

Understand- 44

Understanding- 24

I'm sure there are more words that I could have chosen, but these are words that refer to **that which is done with the mind**. As you can see the Bible has a lot to say about this topic. **Thinking** is evidently something that is crucial to **understanding** and **living** the Christian life.

I then looked up more experiential words, **feeling** words if you will. Again I am sure there are more I could have looked up. But I thought these might do to make the point.

Feel-0

Feeling- 1

Felt- 1

Emotion-0

Emotional-0

Sympathy-0

Compassion-20

Comfort- 20

Perceive- 12 To lay hold of with the mind- most often used in a negative sense. People did not perceive things that they should have.

Distress- 6

Distraught- 0

Can you see what I am getting at? The primary instructions in the New Testament about **how to live** are addressed **to the mind, not to the emotions**. The primary concern is not about **how we feel** but **how we think**. True Spirituality is not something that begins in **the emotions**, it begins **in the mind**. Growth in the Christian life is not something that is **experientially based** but **thinking based**, and then it carries into the experience. If Paul were here today, he would not be working hard to create an environment where people **experienced** a certain **experience**. He would be doing just what he did when he lived. He would be appealing **to the mind**. He would appeal to **reason**. He would be addressing Christians with the Word of God.

Paul knew that the real struggle in the Christian life is not in what we feel. He knew it was in what we think.

Now does this mean that we serve a God that is **uncaring**? Does this mean that God does not care about what we feel? No.

**1 Peter 5:6-7 tells us**

**6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,**

**7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.**

It is not that God doesn't care. But it is that **He knows us**. He knows how we are made. He knows how we function. And He knows that **first we think, then we feel**. Our feelings are the byproduct of our thoughts. I say this a lot, but then, so does scripture. I think it is important because we tend to be good at putting up resistance at this point. We have our defenses all prepared to stand up against this truth. We for some odd reason have the tendency to defend our misery. We want to give a reason for our groveling and depression and anxiety. For some odd reason we want to say that it is something **that we must live with**. I suppose in some cases it is, because if we were to let God's Word be true we would have to

re-label much of what we do as **rebellion**. We would have to call it sin. We would have to call it unbelief. And we are hesitant to do that.

Brothers and sisters, we need to take back this ground. I am sure that there are conditions that are **created by chemicals that we may be powerless against**. We sometimes feel things that we know we have no reason to feel. We know that we did not create those feelings by what we think. In those cases we must think true thoughts even while our feelings go against every thought. And it can't be denied that this happens.

But how can you know when this is happening to you? By asking- **when** does this happen? Is there something that **I begin thinking** that causes me to spiral into this condition? Is there something that **happens** in my life and this is my reaction to it. If that is the case, the problem is not physiological, the problem is not that our bodies are **doing** something to us. The problem is we are **doing something** to our bodies. We have a thinking problem and that thinking problem is often sinful. And odds are everybody around us can see it as clear as day. But we don't want to see it. Because if we admit it, we will need to get to work. We will need to confess our sin to those we have harmed. We will need to come clean with God. This is the place where we need to do business with God. We cannot think that to dedicate ourselves to **some other service** will bypass our need to do business at this most basic place. We can easily deceive ourselves but we cannot deceive God. Any acts of service we do in that defeated state will fall on deaf ears when the recipients know that the **real issues** in one's life **are not being dealt with**, when **cowardice** runs the day, not **courage**. When **defeat** is the position of the believer, not one of **overcoming**. When **faithlessness** is really what rules the day. Are you prone to having your life be run depression, by fits of self pity, by fits of anxiety, by periods of paranoia, by utter gloom and dismay? Whatever it is, that is the territory we must take back this morning. That is some of what is being dealt with in our text. Our text would not have us live **as victims**. It would have us live as **overcomers**. Christ said we will know the truth and the truth will **have us dismal**? No And the truth will make us **cynical**? No And the truth will make us **depressed**? No. The truth that he was talking about was the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. And that truth, brothers and sisters, will set you free from whatever you may be mentally habitually enslaved to!

Now to the text.

**be transformed by the renewing of your mind**

What does this mean? What are we supposed to **do**? Well let's look at it more closely.

Remember when we talked about the word **conformed** that it was an external word? It was a word that displayed a person carrying out a **scheme** that was **incongruent** with the person that they really are? Well **transform** is a completely **different** word. It is another one of those Greek words that really aids in our understanding.

The Greek verb (metamorphoō) creates a picture of change in outward appearance. It is the term from which we get the English word **metamorphosis**. This is the same word that Matthew used to describe Jesus' transfiguration. Matthew said in Chapter 17 vs 2 that Christ was **transfigured** [metamorphōtheē] (essentially the same word as in our text) **before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light"**

Do you see what was happening here? Who Christ **really was** was made evident. Christ walked around as merely a man. He had nothing about him naturally that would give you a clue as to his being different than all other humans. But on this day something happened. Christ's divine nature, **Christ's glory** were, for just a short period of time shown to those who were around him. Suddenly Christ was seen for what He truly was.

Do you see the significance of the contrasting words used? Conform is to **pretend to be something outwardly** that you really aren't. But **transformed** is to portray outwardly what you **truly are**. Remember the illustration of the ancient artifact? Is it a little clearer now? Our job as a Christian is not to pretend to be something that we are not, but to strip away that which we are not to portray that which God has truly made us.

Let's look at some other uses of the word transformed.

### **2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)**

**18 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 by the Spirit of the Lord.**

Here Paul was talking to the Corinthians. He was saying that Moses had to put a veil over himself so that the people could not see the fading glory from the encounter that Moses had had with God. Then he talked about how the Jewish people **still** have a veil when they read the law. They cannot see the glory. They cannot perceive the true meaning. They just can't get the gist of it.

But Christians on the other hand are a different animal. It is like we are looking at a mirror and **we see** the glory of God. It isn't like the humanist model where we are just such wonderful creatures that we have this glory **in ourselves**. No. We see the glory of what **God** is doing. He is **transforming** us into the image of Christ.

He is **giving us glory**. And He is doing it by the Holy Spirit. And how is He doing it by the Holy Spirit. Our text tells us, **by the renewing of our minds**.

Now there are two other places that the word transform is used. And it is very interesting. As I was studying this I thought I found something that was going to tell me I was barking up the wrong tree. I had said that the transformation we go through is **to reveal what is true**. Then I read this.

### **2 Corinthians 11:14-15 (NKJV)**

**14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.**

**15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.**

This really concerned me. I thought maybe I had misunderstood. But then I looked up the Greek word used for transform. Because surely Satan could not show himself **to truly be** an angel of light. No. That could never be. So when I looked up the Greek word I found out that the root of the word was not the root from the word in our Romans text. In fact it was the root word of the word Conformed. It was metaschematizo. Remember the word "scheme". That is the root of this word. So the Devil **carries out a scheme** where he looks like an angel of light but he is not **truly** an angel of light.

Then there is another place transformed is used and it uses the **same** Greek word.

### **Philippians 3:20-21 (NKJV)**

**20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,**

**21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**

God is going to transform our lowly body. Now, is our lowly body something that truly has glory but it is hidden by the world? No. That is true **of us** but that is not true of our bodies. Our bodies need a scheme. Our bodies need a change. We do not want to eternally display what our bodies are. We need new ones. And that is the plan that God will carry out. It will be an **external change** that is not congruent with the **original material**.

Isn't it wonderful how the Bible is written. In English it can sometimes get confusing. But in the language it was written it was perfect.

Now there is more to this word **Transformed**, just like there was more to the word **Conformed**.

First, just like the word "conformed", "transformed" is **passive**. It means it is something **being done** to us. Just like the II Cor passage we can see that **it is God**

who is transforming us. We can never take credit for the changes that take place in us. Yes our wills are involved. Yes we are giving maximum effort. But that effort would accomplish nothing without the Spirit of God enabling the change. So, just so we don't get too cocky, we have got to fully understand that **it is God** who accomplishes every significant change in our lives.

We see also that this word transformed is an **imperative**. Just like not being conformed to the world, this isn't open to our interpretation. It isn't open to our convenience. It is not a matter of opinion. It is God's command. It is God's will for our lives. If we resist it, we are rebelling. It is that simple.

I had said before that what we are studying in verses 1 and 2 are repeated all through the new testament in various ways using various illustrations. There are a couple of those passages I would like to bring out this morning.

Here in Ephesians we will see the same concepts. In verses 17-22 we will see how we are to remove the old, how we are to **not conform to the world**. In verses 23 and 24 we will see how we are to **be transformed**, how we are to put on the new, how we are to live according to our new natures.

#### **Ephesians 4:17-24 (NKJV)**

**17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,**

So how do unbelievers walk? In the futility of their mind. They think their thoughts will provide them something they want, but it never really does. The more they get, the more they want. Their desires, whatever they may be, are insatiable and never met. They think, but their thoughts are useless.

**18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;**

**19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.**

We see here the root problem. They have no understanding. Their thinking is clouded. It is wrong. They cannot and will not see the truth. And as a result the only paths that are open to them are the lies of the enemy. They chase those things that promise pleasure but they are fleeting. They are temporary. They are cheap. And they always leave them wanting more. So they chase those things with a vengeance. Because after all, they believe they only go around once in life. How sad that is.

**20 But you have not so learned Christ,**

Isn't this true? This isn't how we learned about Christ. We didn't come to Christ to make our earthly lives more pleasurable. We came to Christ because He is the Way the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through Him.

**21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:**

**22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,**

Do you see it here? This is the “**don't be conformed**” part. Put off the old man. Put off the incongruent man. Put off the man that no longer fits you. Oh, for sure this will take faith. We **do** know ourselves to some degree. We know what **we are capable of**. We know the hideousness of what we could do, that part that we are slow to tell any other human because it is so revolting. There is no sense denying it. There is no sense pretending. We know the evil that we could be. But we have God's word that says that **He has changed us**. We might sometimes **feel** the same. We might sometimes be tempted to think that this regeneration is really a lie. But we must call **ourselves** liars and trust God that what **He** says is true. We must believe **His** promises. We must believe **His** word. The old man is no longer us. The deceitful lusts are no longer our master. We are free by the power of God's Spirit to live new lives. That is the transformation that will be visible over time in a believer's life.

**23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,**

**24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.**

Here is the renewal. And see the word mind? Of course. How could it be otherwise. The word of God is consistent. It says the same thing from beginning to end.

So what is the transformation that God is doing? We are being renewed in our thinking. We are very actively involved in this process. And by doing that **we are believing** what God says about us. We have stopped believing **what we feel**. We have stopped believing **just what we see**. We have stopped believing **what we perceive**. And we have begun to believe **what God says**.

By doing that we are acting more and more consistent with that which God says is true. We are putting on, on the **outside**, what God says He has done on the **inside**. God says that He has made us a new creation. Now we are putting on **in behavior and belief** that man which God says we are. What a miracle this is. How amazing is this? This new man was created according to God, according to

His plan, according to His design. And it is perfect. We are recreated in true holiness. We are reborn in true righteousness. That is what God says.

Let's look at another passage.

**Colossians 1:9-11 (NKJV)**

**9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;**

**10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

**11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**

Look what Paul prays for. He is sitting at a distance. He wants these believers to thrive. He wants them to live for Christ. And what does he ask God for?

He wants them to be filled with the **knowledge** of God's will. He wants them to have the right stuff **in their heads**. He wants excellent content in their brains.

And what does this information pertain to?

Wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Wisdom is putting knowledge into action. And spiritual understanding is discerning one's situation accurately from a spiritual perspective.

We need to get this. This was the believers at Colossae's **greatest need**. And it is **our greatest need** too. Without it we are powerless to live the Christian life. But **with it** we can see what it accomplishes.

Look at verse 10 and 11

**10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

**11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**

Do you see how significant this is? If we have the right knowledge, if we see things from God's perspective, if we know **what it is that God wants** in wisdom and spiritual understanding, **then** we can live lives that are worthy of the Lord. First we have to know that information. But knowing it is **for a purpose**. Knowing it is **for doing it**. We **know it** so we can **walk** worthy of the Lord.

Do you see how important the mind is in this process? That is where it all starts.

**Living starts with thinking.** And **as we understand, we can then do.**

And as we know **what to do**, we can live in a way that fully pleases Christ. We have said this before, but there are plenty of people who never seem to be pleased with our behavior. That is ok. God's word tells us here that we can

**please Jesus.** All we need to do is put the information into motion. We need to do those things we know to be right.

**, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

See that? As we do God's will we will increase in knowing and understanding **who God is** and **what He wants**. It all starts in the mind. Then it moves to the life.

And it recycles back to the mind.

**11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**

Look at this. Where does the strength come from? It comes from **knowing and doing**. Many people would say that we must wait for that power to mysteriously come to us. We are powerless but we must just mystically wait. That is not what this passage tells us. This passage tells us the might comes **as we move on the truth of what God has already said**. Paul prayed for his listeners to get the right knowledge. That knowledge was the springboard to move them to the next level of what they were to do. And growth in spirituality, growth in might, growth in power would be a supernatural byproduct.

We will stop here and take up next week with more on the being transformed by the renewing of the mind.

A very good question this week would be, what am I filling my mind with.

I avoid dingy looking gas stations with gas brands that I don't recognize. I do that because I have bought gas that had water in it. My car would miss and sputter as I went down the road. And eventually it wouldn't start. Why? The fuel was no good.

Well our text is essentially telling us our thoughts are the fuel for our spiritual transformation. Our Christian lives are run on what is in our heads. Is your Christian life sputtering around? Is it not as consistent and fruitful as you want it to be? What did you feed it this week? How much did you feed it with what God says? How much did you feed it with the world's entertainment? What we need here isn't legalism. What we need is wisdom. How can we possibly grow if our fuel is bad? Would you fill your car with one tank of good gas and then say, well I had one good tank, I guess I can put a bad tank in now? None of us would do that. But we do that with our minds all the time. We need to do business this week with what is going into our minds. Now is the time to change. And there is no reason not to. God is transforming us by what we think. What will we think this week?