

Every Moment Holy

Romans

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Romans 12. I have a few announcements I need to share before we get into the sermon this morning. First, the wedding is going to be at 1 o'clock today and you're all invited, so plan to stay around for that and we'll have a light reception afterwards as well so it will be a great day to celebrate.

Another exciting piece of news that we have is that the Lord has brought to us a young man that we have, the elders have decided to extend a call to a young man to be in ministry internship here at Providence, and it's in family ministry, and the young man's name is Dalton Teal. The Lord worked through relationships at Southern Seminary where he has been a student, and through a church connection up there, and just really just made it really evident that the Lord wanted us to bring him on. So he begins a one-year internship on June 1, and so it's in family ministry. To quickly tell you what family ministry is, basically he's going to be coming alongside all of the other ministries in the church, the children's ministry, youth ministry, men's ministry, women's ministry, to try to figure out how to connect them because family ministry, there's two things and if you catch these two concepts, it's really helpful. Family ministry is aimed at helping each family see themselves as a church, each family doing what Ted was talking about in family worship, the family that shared with him the Psalms that we're singing today, to make each family a church, but it's also at the same time to be careful to make the church, to see the church as family. So to see family as church and church as family and you have a tendency to gravitate one way or the other and miss that both are key balancing perspectives. That means that we have to constantly think about how are we making intergenerational connections among our members. One of the things I think has been a really destructive force for young people in America recently is the disconnect from older generations and the wisdom and just the perspective that that gives. So that's part of what we're talking about.

And anyway, he's going to be joining us on June 1. Dalton, are you in the sanctuary? Oh, he's in the back. There he is waving. Stand up for a second, Dalton. So that's Dalton Teal, and you can welcome him, maybe just a little welcome. [applause] And you'll get to meet him well on May 30 because he's going to be preaching on Sunday, May 30. My family and I are taking off for some vacation for a couple of weeks. We're going to be out two Sundays so next Sunday, Ken Temple, one of our missionaries will be preaching for us,

and then on the 30th Dalton Teal. So we're excited about what the Lord is going to be doing at Providence in the area of family ministry and want to encourage you to encourage him, get to know him.

The other thing I want to announce is that we're going to do a new Wednesday evening teaching series. I finished Genesis 1 to 11 and, you know, if you haven't joined us, it's available online each week, Wednesday at 7, but better if you can come and be a part of the fellowship here at the church. We're going to start a new series on June 9 which is focused on renewing our minds and really thinking biblically which I think is so incredibly critical and it really bears the particular circumstances in which we live today, call for a renewed application of those principles to life because we live in some extraordinarily difficult times. It's always been difficult, we need to understand that. It's always been difficult to renew your mind. The culture has always exerted influence but today, think about, I was watching, we watched a video the other day called "The Social Dilemma," some of you may have seen it, it's about social media and the impact upon the mind of man, just the lives of people, and it shared how just the structure of our thinking is changing, the way, the development of our brains, the power of distraction. I was reading in a separate book recently that every four minutes the average is four minutes between checks of the smart phone, four minutes and 13 seconds. This was 2016, it's probably gone lower since then, but every four minutes and 13 seconds somebody checks their smartphone on average throughout the day.

So what's happening is we're being distracted, we're not learning to think through things carefully and so we need to really think about that, so we're going to be talking about that among other things, among also the issues of the day in a more practical way. June 9, and the idea is trying to think biblically to renew our minds, and with that, I wanted to kind of launch into that with a sermon today because since I'm going to be gone the next two weeks, Nehemiah 9 where we should be going is definitely more than a one-week sermon, and so I'd rather start it fresh when I get back in town so we can stay on the rhythm and momentum that we need, and also because I wanted to talk about this subject that's on my heart.

So the title of the message this morning, it's Romans 12:1 and 2, the title of the message is "Every Moment Holy." Every moment holy. I borrow the title from a book by Douglas McKelvey in which basically the agenda is to try to write liturgies for every circumstance in life. Liturgy, that is a plan of worship, a prayer for every kind of circumstance and situation. It's really an interesting book. I want to read you a couple of things. First of all, in the forward written by Andrew Peterson, he says this, he is actually quoting another gentleman but he says this, "There are no unsacred places. There are no unsacred places, there are only sacred places and desecrated places." Think about that. Every place is sacred before God and ought to be regarded as sacred by men. It's either sacred or desecrated. There's no secular places. "There are no unsacred places, there are only sacred places and desecrated places. In that spirit, this book reminds us that there are no unsacred moments. There are only sacred moments and moments we have forgotten are sacred. If that's true, then it is our duty to reclaim the sacredness of our lives." That's actually a very good summary of what we are called to in the Christian life. When God

causes us to be born again, made alive, we were dead to him, we were enemies of God and now he's made us his children, he's made us worshipers now of him and we're to live all of life in his presence. Every moment should be holy.

And so this is the focus of this passage that we look at this morning, Romans 12:1 and 2. This passage really is interesting in the structure of the book of Romans in that it turns the corner from theology to practice. The first 11 chapters of Romans are theological, doctrinal but the last five chapters, 12 to 16, are practical and application focused. So it's like the first 11 chapters are telling you all that God has done in Christ, look at the glory of the gospel, look at its implications. Now chapters 12 to 16, in light of this, how should you live? So the last five chapters focus on that, the practical application of the gospel, and so we need to look at how he turns the corner.

If I could get some water, that would be good. I'm getting a little...thank you.

So you have the doctrinal and you have the practical and what's interesting is Romans 12:1 and 2 serves like the hinge that connects the two. These two verses show you how to move from doctrine into practice. They show you how to live in light of all God has done. They show you how you're to connect your life and make it every moment holy, every moment sacred. So let's read this passage, Romans 12, verses 1 and 2.

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 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.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for Your precious word and we come asking that You might now apply it to our hearts, that Your Spirit might quicken it and Your Spirit might open our eyes to see and behold wonderful things from Your word, and that You might make us more faithful worshipers of Jesus Christ for He is worthy. And we pray this in His name. Amen.

Thank you, brother.

So every moment holy. Everything is sacred. Every activity, every mundane task, every casual conversation, every idle thought is an opportunity to live for the glory of God. Everything we do can be lived for his glory. Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God. So Paul is telling us here in this passage that's exactly what our calling is, and for us to be who we're supposed to be and particularly in a society that's becoming more and more confused and lives that are becoming more and more disjointed and distracted, this passage offers a great source of strength for us and focus. How do you live in whatever circumstances you find yourselves for the glory of God? Paul gives us the key here in this

passage and essentially it is to remember who you are, why you're here, and how you're to live.

So that's really our three points this morning. The first is you need to remember who you are. As a Christian, Paul makes very clear in verse 1 that as a Christian you now are among other things, you're a child of God but among other things you are a priest of the living God. He doesn't say it explicitly in that straightforward sentence but he says it implicitly and powerfully in what he says in Romans 12:1 when he calls us, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies." That word "present" is the language of the temple and the priesthood. Some translations say "offer." Present your bodies. There are basically five terms that are laden with temple and priestly imagery, five terms in that first verse. The word "present." The word "sacrifice." The word "service of worship," in Greek it's one word, in English it's three but that Greek word, "service of worship." And then the word "holy and acceptable." They all relate to temple worship. Paul essentially says, "Listen, in light of all that God has done for you, how are you to live? You're to see yourself as a priest. If you have been born again, if you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, if you've repented of your sins, you are a priest of the living God." That is your calling. That is your identity. That is the most fundamental responsibility that you have. It precedes every other calling, every other vocation is secondary to this one, you are a priest.

The idea of the priesthood of the believer comes from this concept. The New Testament sees us as a kingdom of priests. Priests are about worship. Priests are about the holy, about the sacred. The priest, everything he does is sacred. In fact, the Old Testament priesthood is quite instructive when you look at the regulations that God put down for the Old Testament priesthood which were types and shadows that would be fulfilled ultimately in Christ and then in his people, telling us what life is all about. The Old Testament priest, they had to be qualified. Just anybody couldn't do it, you had to be qualified, you had to be made a priest, called to the priesthood. And then what would happen is, it was the tribe of Levi, the descendants of Levi, among them the descendants of Aaron. So of all the Levites, the descendants of Aaron were the priests. To be a priest, to serve in the temple you had to be in that line. So you had to be a priest by birth. Well, if you have been born again, you are a priest by birth. You're called to this. This is what you were born for.

But then back to the Old Testament priesthood, a priest by birth in the Old Testament, they would have rotations and they would go on a rotation where they would go to Jerusalem and spend a couple of weeks serving as a priest, then they would go back home and take care of their life, their livelihood. It was an agrarian society. They had to, you know, grow crops and care for livestock. There were other responsibilities but they set aside the time, but when they went to Jerusalem, when they were serving as a priest, everything was devoted to God. Every moment sacred. Every moment holy. They would prepare beforehand to make sure they were not unclean. They couldn't touch a dead body. If someone died in the family, they could not be involved in carrying the body or carrying the casket because they were now a priest. They were going to be a priest next week, they were scheduled and they couldn't do it. They were extra careful to monitor everything

about their lives and they went through ceremonial washings when they arrived at Jerusalem at the temple. Then when it was their time of service, after having been washed, in the morning from dawn until sunset, they were worshiping God and offering sacrifices continually.

I've shared this before that the Old Testament system was so amazing that the Lord wanted the day, the whole day to be devoted to worship, and so the priests were about doing that. So the moment that the sun crested the eastern horizon, the way they set this up when the temple became, you know, had the wall around it, was someone would sit on the eastern wall, the highest point they could, and they were the watchman to watch for the sun cresting over the horizon, and the moment the sun crested, just touch the horizon, light coming from the sun, the word was given and the word was passed down to a priest who was there with the first animal ready to be sacrificed and the sacrifice was, as soon as they got word was offered. Morning sacrifice, and then throughout the day all of the various sacrifices that are prescribed in Leviticus, the priests were offering upon the altar. The altar and the temple and the holy place were their domain and that's where they were continually until sunset, and the last offering was made right as the sun goes down, and then their job was done.

So their life from dawn to dusk was worship and that's a picture to us that we now, Paul says, though the temple is going to be done away with, when he writes the temple is still standing but it's going to be knocked down in a few years by the Romans because God's going to let them know, "Listen, that whole system is finished. A once for all sacrifice has happened. Jesus Christ has made obsolete the old temple system and now His people who know Him through justification by faith, that is, who trust in His work, who don't trust in their own righteousness because our righteousness is filthy rags, but we trust in His perfect righteousness, a man who was tempted in every way, in all things just as we are yet without sin, who felt the full weight of every temptation."

I was reading a quote this week by C. S. Lewis where he talked about how foolish it is for people to think that someone who's righteous doesn't understand temptation. You know, to understand sexual temptation, you have to be someone who's just struggling with it to help someone else who's struggling with it. Now listen, we can help one another and we all struggle with sin, yes, that's right, but you don't have to be someone who succumbs to temptation to help someone with the temptation because the fact that you don't succumb to temptation doesn't mean you don't understand temptation. And Lewis goes on and he says something like this, he says essentially the one who knows the power of temptation the most is the one who resists it the longest. He says the one who knows, Lewis writing in probably the '40s, the one who knows the power of the German army is the one who has fought against the German army. So the man who resists temptation knows that power and its fullness.

So Jesus experienced every temptation that we have, yet without sin. He experienced them to the full and therefore he is a faithful high priest who is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. He comes understanding your suffering. Isn't that amazing? He understands how hard it is. Now he never gave in but he's sympathetic. That's what

Hebrews 4:15 says. We don't have a high priest who does not sympathize or who cannot sympathize. I love that double negative. He could have said we have a high priest who can sympathize, but he makes it even more powerful by saying a double negative. We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize. We have one who wonderfully can.

So the holiness of God is what we are called to and we have to remember that we are to be devoted to God. We are to offer our lives, our bodies. Everything, all of our desires, all of our activities are to be laid before him knowing that he's a good God, a gracious God, a merciful God who loves us and who only gives good things to us, but it's our joy to now worship him as priest. That's what we're called to do. Remember who you are. You are a priest if you belong to Jesus Christ. But secondly, to be what you're supposed to be and to do what you're supposed to do, you have to also not just remember who you are, you have to, secondly, remember what you're called to do. Remember who you are, you're a priest, but what are you called to do? You're called to worship. You're called to make every moment holy, every task sacred, every thought submitted to Christ. This can only happen by grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit and we're going to see he's going to tell us how to do it in verse 2, but it's so important to know what you're called to do, you're called to worship. Every moment is to be worship. This means that when good things happen, you're to worship God.

One of the things that's neat about this book I was telling you about, he takes these mundane tasks and he turns them into opportunities for worship. Let me just tell you, there's over 100 of these kind of things. He says like for the washing of windows there is a liturgy. For home repairs, that's one I need. I tend to sin a lot when I'm doing home repairs because things don't usually go well for me. For the ritual of morning coffee. I do sometimes worship the Lord for coffee, just about the coffee. I mean, that's usually the time we're getting ready to spend time with the Lord and that kind of thing but coffee, I mean, if you don't like coffee, pray for you. We have a problem among our elders, three of our five elders are not coffee drinkers. I mean, I say that as a confession and an earnest plea for prayer for us. For the morning of a medical procedure. For the loss of electricity, he has a liturgy. Before shopping. Before paying your bills. For one who has suffered a nightmare. For those facing the slow loss of memory. For those fearing failure. Upon tasting pleasurable food. Upon experiencing cheering laughter. Upon hearing the song of a bird. For the sound of sirens. For those experiencing road rage. For waiting in line.

There's just a number, that's just a selection of a few of those things but what, I just say it to illustrate every one of those moments can be caught up into worship of God. Waiting in line. When you're discouraged that you end up waiting in line. You know, you go somewhere and you're expecting, in your mind a reasonable expectation, normally you have to wait so long, right? We picked up some pastries a while back and I went to get them and I had in my mind, "Oh yeah, there's usually three or four people." I wasn't thinking about it because you don't have to think about it. Just going in, think about what we were going to order, that's what I was thinking about. And so I walk in and I'm looking around and looking at the various pastries, and then nobody's asking me to help me. Okay, maybe there's a number somewhere? This place is in another city. There's no number system or anything so I just kind of start surveying things and I look around and I

recognize there is a line that goes out of the room I'm in, all the way through the next room beside it, and all the way outside and down the street. So I had an opportunity to worship. I don't think I did so well at the beginning of that. Well, I wasn't super discouraged, I was just thinking, "Oh wow, this is something." And of course, I'm wondering are they going to have anything left when I get to the front of the line? But that could have been a moment that could have been captured for worship. Rejoice and give thanks in everything. Rejoice always. "Lord, You have a purpose for this. Maybe I'll be able to have a conversation with somebody that will be redemptive or helpful." Every circumstance can be caught up into worship and we are called to nothing less.

Now of course, we don't do these things to earn the favor of God, do we? That's the wonder of the gospel. What I'm telling you that we're called to do has nothing to do with you earning any favor from God or blessing from God, anything. It's not that at all. Everything that you need to receive blessing from God, Jesus has accomplished. He finished it. That's why he said, "It is finished." So nothing we do causes God to love us or bless us. On the contrary, we do what we do out of the wonder of knowing that we're already loved. That's exactly what he's talking about. When he says, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to offer, to present." You see, the reason you're to live your life as a priest is because of the mercies of God which you've already received and when you keep focusing on the mercies of God and what God has done for you and remembering where you were when he found you and acknowledging on a daily basis still how prone we are to be forgetful, how prone we are to be sinful, how much we need his grace, and yet to know that Jesus has purchased a perfect righteousness and when God looks at you he doesn't see your recent failure. He wants to deal with that. He wants you to confess it but he doesn't see you through that. He still sees you robed in the righteousness of his precious Son in whom he has complete delight. Nothing changes that for the believer and when that sweeps over your soul, worship wells up within you. What can I do to show my love? Not because he needs it, just as a privilege of expressing as a little child love for your daddy, love for your Savior. That's what God calls us to.

So we're called to worship. We're always called to be praising him. This is why the Bible says, "in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you," 1 Thessalonians 5:18. In everything give thanks. Ephesians 5:20 says and talks about being filled with the Spirit. One of the things that he says, "always giving thanks for all things." You see how the language is so instructive, it's always giving thanks for all things. How often? Always. For how much stuff, most of it, the good stuff? All things. Always giving thanks for all things. Or the verse I mentioned before that, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

So this means that we are to give thanks in all of the good things and giving thanks is worshiping. So when you have that cup of coffee, to discipline ourselves to thank God as we drink that cup of coffee. "Lord, thank You for coffee." Eat that pastry, "Lord, thank You for making our palate to be able to enjoy things like this." I think that's one of the things that's interesting about getting older. Most everything is bad, you know, you get to a certain age and you realize that. Up to a certain point you're thinking everything's good about getting older, and then you hit a point where now everything is bad about getting

older and it's at different places for different people. In reality, in Christ it's not bad to get older. Every day is getting closer to heaven. But there's one thing that I've noticed that seems to be better about getting older, at least to this point where I am, and that is that you seem to be able to taste things better and you have a more discerning palate the longer you live, and so food is more enjoyable as you get older than it was before. It's the same kind of thing with like music. You get a little more sensitized to certain things about the creation and you see things in the world that you took for granted younger and now you're able to savor them, especially if your heart is devoted to God. It gives you this ability to savor things. Well, so savor them but when you do it, worship, and all that is is basically saying, remembering who gave them. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights in whom there is no shadow of turning." Every single one. So everything, all of it, it's his idea. It's his idea to make food taste as wonderful as it does. It's his idea to make music and to make our souls stirred by it. It's his idea to make the power of human speech so that someone just saying a word to you at a moment can mean so much to bless you. It's God so give him thanks. Give him thanks for all the good things.

Then the other side of it is giving thanks for all the bad things too, or giving thanks in the bad things. One helpful thing to remember is what we think is bad we just don't really know, but we certainly can judge on a basis of right now, this looks bad, this was good, right? But we are to give thanks for the bad things too, not because we are giving thanks for the presence of evil because there are some really horrible things that are bad things, but we're to give thanks in those circumstances that God is on the throne reigning even over this calamity that has come. Lamentations 3:37 says, "Who can speak and it come to pass unless the Lord has commanded it?" Verse 38, "Is it not from the mouth of the Lord that both good and evil go forth?" God is not the author of evil. He cannot imagine doing evil, yet he is sovereign and he allows evil, and his sovereignty is so great that he can restrain and stop any evil. So when it comes, we should be like Job who said, remember what Satan did to Job, Job 1? Satan asked God for permission to take all of Job's stuff away and in one day he lost all of his camels, all of his sheep, all of his donkeys, all of his servants except one at each place, all of his children, and remember they come one after another. The servant that escapes comes in and says, "This is what happened, the Sabaeans came. This is what happened, the Chaldeans came and stole your camels. This is what happened, a great wind blew and the house fell in and all of your children were inside and they all died, and all the servants died, and I alone have escaped to tell you." And after all of that, just bam, bam, bam, Job, perfect timing by Satan to create the ultimate pressure point on Job's heart and Job says, he tears his clothes and he says, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." He says, "Naked I came into this world, naked I'm going to leave. I had nothing when I came in, I'm going to have nothing when I leave. God gave, God took away." And he worshiped.

That's what we're called to do and what a tremendous testimony that was and the reality is when we know that God's sovereign and Job, he had a little trouble. He passed the second test but then he spends about 34 chapters really struggling, but the Lord appears to him and in the end he's able to say, "It was good that You did what You did to me, for before I had heard of You in my ears, now I've seen You with my eyes." He knew God in

a way he never had before. We have the treasure of the book of Job. You see, God has a good purpose in everything so by faith the believer gives thanks for even the bad things. You worship even in the bad things.

Remember what you're called to do. You're always called to worship. Now remember how you're to do that. How do you worship? How do you worship God in this world, in the craziness that can sometimes characterize our lives? I think verse 2 is telling us the answer to how. He's told us remember who you are, you're a priest, remember what you're called to do, you're called to worship. Now he answers the question, he says basically remember how you were called to do it. How are you called to worship? Verse 2, "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." Two key imperatives here in this verse that we need to understand to do what he's saying, to know how to worship. How can all of life be caught up into worship? You need to remember these two things. The two imperatives are do not be conformed, and the second one is be transformed.

Do not be conformed. I would make a subpoint under 3, remember how you are to do it. I would say A, consciously resist the conforming power of the world. Consciously resist the conforming power of the world. Do not be conformed to this world. Important point about that particular verb, "do not be conformed," it's a Greek present tense verb and the Greek present tense is unique or different from the English in that it's not about the time as much as the kind of action. Present tense in English is about the time of action, it's happening now, but in Greek it's more of the kind of action, and present tense Greek is continual ongoing action. So what this is basically saying, do not continue doing what you're doing. It really has the force of stop being conformed. There is an ongoing pressure and conforming power that is working on you and you must consciously resist it. Stop being conformed to this world.

It pictures actually in the Greek it says "this age" literally, and the idea is this time period, certainly "this world" is a good translation. The world system that is governed by the god of this age, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan himself. The values of this world, the priorities of this world, the truth values of this world, the things this world believes are right, and he says stop being conformed by this world, this pressure that is coming from the outside. Like, you know, a person molding clay and you shape it as you want to, he says this is what's happening to you. As someone who's called to be a priest, you're doing that in a world system that is exerting pressure upon you and it's trying to squeeze you into its mold, and this pressure is continual and it is relentless, and the only way that you can resist it and the only way, then, that you can be true to your calling, to remember that you're a priest and to live your life in worship every moment holy, is you must be consciously resisting that conforming power. You have to know it's there and you have to be conscious of it and resisting it.

It's not time for passivity or complacency. The Christian life, to be what God has called us to be is going to require great effort. This is the paradox. Salvation is by grace and even what God does in us even to make us a priest on a daily basis, must be done by

grace, by his power through our union with Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through his word. Nothing in us and yet we are called, though, to actively pursue that, and part of this at first is in the resisting and understanding. And one of the things that we forget is that we are constantly being bombarded by an enemy who wants to totally disrupt and defeat us. We are, the Bible says, like sheep.

You've seen that video with the sheep that's trapped. If you guys haven't seen it, you need to Google it even though that's another, that's one thing we're going to talk about this summer. But anyway, you may have seen the video of the sheep that is trapped in this little hole, it's kind of like a long trench, and you start watching it and this guy is pulling the sheep out of the trench and it's like, I mean, it's a tiny trench and this sheep is wedged in there and you can't tell how big it is until he pulls it out and you're like, it's a full-grown sheep. You know, all the wool and everything, he pulls it out by its back legs, gets it out, and that sheep is so glad to be out of that trench. Wouldn't you be? I mean, I'm kind of claustrophobic. That's like, man, just go ahead and kill me if I'm going to be in a trench like that. He pulls the sheep out and the sheep just goes off like running faster than I knew sheep could run, just bounding. It's so glad to be released, jumping and jumping and jumping, and within five seconds right back in the trench about 20 yards down the way. I mean, jumping, jumping, "I'm so happy I'm out! I'm so happy I'm out!" Bam, right back in.

God says we're like sheep. We need a shepherd. We need to stay close to our shepherd. We need to walk with our shepherd. We need to trust in our shepherd continually. And you see, if we forget who we are, that conforming power puts us back in its mold and we find ourselves wedged in a trench not being or doing anything like what we're supposed to be or do. We have to resist it. We have to be aware that we're in hostile enemy territory. The values of this world are not the values of our King and Master Jesus. Those values are not evident in the world system. They never will be. They never have been, they never will be until Jesus comes back and makes a new heaven and a new earth.

So to remember how we do it, we have to actively, consciously resist the conforming power of this age, but the second imperative, this is 3B, is actively pursue the transforming power of the word. He says stop being conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So we're to actively and, again, the verb "be transformed" is in the present tense. It's now stop being conformed, start being or continue being transformed. That's actively pursuing your transformation by the renewing of your mind. The way that God transforms you more and more into the image of Christ, the way that God grows you into the likeness of his Son is through, first of all, the mind. It's not merely the mind, it's the affections, it's the heart, but it starts with your thinking. There are things that this world system it gives lies. How does Satan kill? He's a murderer from the beginning, what is his modus operandi? What's his weapon? It is the lie. He lies to you and me continually. And so what's the answer? The antidote is the truth but what happens is we start believing lies and these lies start entangling us and we find ourselves trapped in the ditch, and the only way out is through the truth, the word of God.

This idea of renewing your mind means you take out beliefs that do not comport with what God says and you remove them and you replace them with what God says, literally change the way you think, change what you believe, change by God's grace what you value, and it's always asking for the Holy Spirit to do it because we can't. He must do it, but we actively pursue that. We get in the word. We read the Bible. We memorize Scripture. We meditate upon Scripture. It's such an important thing.

Meditation, Christian meditation is different than worldly meditation. Worldly meditation will mess you up. Worldly meditation says empty your mind, empty your mind of everything. This is what Eastern meditation is about. It's really gotten a big hold in our country, even. Empty your mind, you know, just get all your thoughts out, try to focus on something obscure and just empty yourself. That's not biblical meditation, that's evil and that's foolish. A person whose mind is darkened by sin does not need to empty his mind, what he needs is to fill his mind with the word of God. That's what biblical meditation is. Biblical meditation and the word meditation is used a lot in the Old Testament, you know, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly." You see, this is a real parallel to this passage, Psalm 1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly nor stand in the way of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful." Think about that. You walk in the counsel of the ungodly. You listen to what the world says, you listen to what ungodly people say, you let their way of thinking, what they believe about life, what they value, you let that start impacting the way you think. That's walking in the counsel of the ungodly. You see there's a progression there, though. How blessed is the man who does not do three things, he doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly nor stand in the way of sinners. What happens is if you walk in the counsel of the ungodly, do you see how there's this movement from an active movement to kind of a settling down in evil. If you walk in the counsel of the ungodly, the next thing you know you're standing in the way of sinners. You've taken kind of your place among sinners, and if you do that, the next thing you know, you're sitting with scoffers. You're at home with those who scoff and scorn the things of God.

So how blessed is the man who does not let that happen. How does he not let it happen? "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." He fills his mind with the word of God and he does it continually. He looks for opportunities to meditate on the word. When he has an idle moment, he tries to bring a Scripture to mind. "What is the passage I'm trying to memorize? What is a passage that relates to what I'm doing right now? What is a verse that I can apply to this situation?" And the person who does that, the Psalm goes on to say, "How blessed is a man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night and he shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water which yields its fruit in its season, its leaf also does not wither and whatsoever he does he prospers." That's the path of life. He goes on to say, "The wicked are not so, they're like the chaff which the wind drives away." You can live your life according to the thought patterns of this world and you go from walking to being seated among the scoffers and your life becomes less and less tangible and real, less and less human, less and less joy, less and less peace, more and more

misery, and more and more vapidness and levity. There's nothing to it. You're chaff. What a horrible thing.

But if you will just delight in the word of God and start letting the Lord by his Spirit change you in your thinking, humbly submitting to him, your roots began to grow down and you are stabilized and solid, and even in times of drought when the rest of the world around you is feeling the heat, the dryness, you will be nourished, you will bear fruit. Think about that. In a really dry arid time, you know, we haven't had one of these in a while but we have those droughts from time to time where you can't burn anything for a while because it's been so dry, and those really go on to where you start seeing the effects in the trees and the grass, and yet you see a tree that's healthy in the midst of that, it's because it's somehow connected to water. Somebody is watering that tree or it's connected close to a stream. It's got a taproot running down. It's being nourished. God says, "I want all of My people to look like that." Oaks of righteousness, that's what he wants us to be and there's no reason not to be. Jesus has done everything necessary for us to be that way, we just need to heed his word and fill our minds with his word.

When we do that, he says, "You bear your fruit in your season, your leaf does not wither and whatever you do you prosper." That is whatever comes, there's a sense in which the believer prospers. This is not like, this is something much more wonderful than the sugarcoated candy that is offered by so much preaching of health and wealth. It says to be a Christian is you're to be wealthy, you can just name it. You're going to be blessed. Your life is, you know, look at whatever circumstance and declare, I remember hearing somebody say one time, just look at your empty wallet and say, "You are gonna have money in you," and it's going to make money in your wallet. The guy actually preached that in a sermon but it's missing the point. I mean, God could do that. He's not going to, I can just tell you that. Don't do that. But the Lord has so much better for us than that nonsense.

You can't control your circumstances with your own will either. You can't make your cancer go away. You can't make, you know, a thunderstorm turn away from you or a hurricane or a tornado not affect your life. You cannot do that. God can do whatever he wants to do but you and I have no power with our spoken word to do any of that, but if we fill our minds with his word, what he means is, in whatever circumstances you go through, you will prosper. God will make even that which seems to be bad and painful, he will turn it into that which blesses and prospers you. It will be like, you know, somebody who knows their horticultural well, they know their plants, and they trim and they prune back a bush and it looks terrible at the time and you're like, "Oh wow, look at that, it's a nub." Then you watch what happens over the months to come and the next years and you see increased fruit. That's what God loves to do with his people. The world comes and it attacks and God is with us in the midst of it and he says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you. I'm with you. I'm with you always." His Spirit is with us, he's with us. He's a compassionate high priest who knows what it's like to go what we're going through. He wants us to draw from him, to follow him, to trust him just like a sheep in Psalm 23, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil." Why? Because you're going to claim that you're going to be a victorious sheep over

whatever you're coming against? No. "For You are with me." I don't have to be afraid because you're with me. Even though I fear about what man can do to me, man can kill me but he can't take away my soul.

So we become more than conquerors in affliction through the power of the word, and it starts to happen when we stop being conformed and we start being transformed. The transforming power of the word makes you a worshiper. It reminds you that you're a worshiper, it reminds you that you're a priest, and it makes you start to look like a priest to those around you and people start to see. When Moses went up on the mountain with the Lord those 40 days and he came down and when he would talk to the Lord, the Bible says that God talked to Moses like a man talks to his friend. And when Moses would come out from the times with the Lord, his face shone, the glory of God reflecting off his face. There's something of that that the Lord can have in us. Not a visible actual light glowing, no, but something even more wonderful, a spiritual joy and peace and love emanating from your life that people look at and recognize and say, "I've never seen anything like that in my life and I want that." When you do that, you've been a really effective priest because a priest is someone who not only worships God but they help other people worship God. That's what the Old Testament priest did. They helped other Jews, the other 11 tribes, who would bring their sacrifices, they would take their sacrifice and offer it so that this person could now be reconciled to God. And when you and I love God and worship him and he becomes our treasure, we are signposts that are pointing other people to him. That's what he wants for us but we have to be serious about fighting the conforming power of the world and we have to be serious about actively transforming our thinking by the power of the gospel. That's what the Lord wants for you and me and he's able to do it.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, how grateful we are for Your precious word, that it is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, that in the same way it can divide joint and marrow, it divides soul and spirit and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Lord, use Your word on us. For those that are here that have not truly repented and placed their faith in Christ, may today, You give them grace. Lord, help them believe even now to trust in Jesus and trust in Him alone. How wonderful it is to know that we can come to You completely as we are and You take us and accept us based on what Jesus did and You start to then change us little by little to look more and more like our Savior. Father, for those of us who are Yours and who need to be reminded that we have a high calling and our calling is to see every moment as holy and sacred and we've been challenged to think that, Lord, so often that that's just not the case, help us mourn over our sin, help us mourn over our hard heartedness, our complacency, our distractedness, and yet in our mourning let us find comfort at the cross, that Jesus has died for this too, that His sacrifice takes in this evil that we still struggle with and that His righteousness still robes us, and You look at us as if we had never sinned because You look at us the way you look at Jesus. And Lord, let the joy of that motivate us and may we be faithful priests of the living God. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.