

Romans 12:2

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Our Responsibilities Under Grace - Part 2

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

The first thing you do as a grateful bond-servant of the Lord Jesus, transformed by the message of grace, is present your body. But secondly, there has to be a renovation. Paul says in Ro 12:2-note,

And **do not be conformed** (present imperative + negative = stop doing this) to this world, but **be transformed** (present imperative = command calling for this to be a continual activity) by the renewing (anakainosis) of your mind, that you may prove (dokimazo) what the will (thelema) of God is, that which is good (agathos) and acceptable (euairestos) and perfect (teleios).

There is a lot in this verse. There has got to be a renovation.

You will notice immediately that I am picking up on the phrase, "renewing of your mind." Do you wonder why? He says, "Don't be conformed but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Why are you jumping from "conformed" and "transformed" over to "renewing of your mind"? There is a reason. The word "transformed" there is in the present passive. In other words, I can't really do this. I can initiate the process, but God has got to take care of the transforming. It is in the passive voice. Present tense means a constant thing. It is not a one-time thing. It is a constant, on-going thing, as we will see in a moment.

But you see, what causes this to happen is my renewing of my mind. That is the thing I can do. I can renew my mind. If I present my body, I begin by renewing my mind. The word for "mind" is the word nous. It is the organ that gives us the ability to perceive things. If you don't have this ability you are not able to communicate

in this world. It is the organ that causes us to be able to understand and to live intelligently on this earth. It is the organ that causes us to be able to discern and make choices. You have to have a mind. It is the basis of how we operate as intelligent human beings on this earth.

Now Paul says the mind has got to be renewed. That is interesting to me. You have to see what he is talking about here. If I present my body to Him, it starts by my renewing my mind. You see, when Adam sinned, we sinned in Adam. Romans 5:12-note tells us that. All men are born depraved, born into sin, born with minds that have to be renewed. Look at it this way. FM is what God requires. AM is what we are born with. We are born with AM playing, but there is an FM up here that God wants us to be tuned to. Therefore, once we are saved, we are switched to FM, but we have to daily have our minds renewed with that FM band of what God wants in our life. The Word of God is the FM band.

Look back in Romans 1:28-note. If you will follow the word "mind" through Romans, it will teach you quite a bit. In Ro 1:28-note you get a picture of how a depraved mind works and how God gave them over to a depraved mind. It is talking about the Gentile world, and it says, "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer [God had revealed Himself to all men but they refused Him in their knowledge, and it says], God gave them over to a depraved mind [Now watch how the depraved mind effects what you do] to do those things which are not proper."

Now let me explain some of those words. The word "depraved" is the word *adokimos*. It means unacceptable, unworthy mind. That is what they already had, but God gave them over to it. In other words, now they were totally controlled by it. And for generation after generation after generation, people have been born into this world, born on AM, born with minds that are unapproved by God and they will never be approved until that person submits himself to Christ, puts his faith into Christ. Then Christ switches him on to FM. When it comes to spiritual things, the mind of man is unapproved apart from putting his faith into Jesus Christ. So it effected what they did, "to do those things which are not proper."

You see, the mind always affects the conduct. Where your mind is directly reflects where you live and how you handle things and how you perceive things, how you discern things. How you make decisions in life depends on where your mind is, whether it is being affected by AM or whether it is being affected by the FM, the Word of God. God wants His Word to renew our minds.

Well, if you will look over in Ro 8:6, 7, 8-note, we find the word "mind" again, and you see how there are people whose mind is set on the flesh and people whose mind is set on the Spirit; the differentiation between those who are still in Adam and those who are in Christ. Romans 8:6-8 says,

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, [Now there are two kinds of minds here, the mind set on the flesh and the mind set on the Spirit.] because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Ro 8:9-note goes on,

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Now when he is says "the mind set on the flesh," he is obviously equating that person with the one who is in the flesh and the person who is in the flesh is a lost person. So a lost person has no real choice.

The word for "mind" here is a different word. It is not the word *nous*. It is the word *phronema*. It is the word that means a mind that has been framed into an attitude, a mind that has been shaped into thinking a certain way. People born in Adam think a certain way. They can't think the way God wants them to think. They do well in designing airplanes; they do well in open-heart surgery; they do well in all the things of this earth pertaining to physical life, but when it comes to spiritual wisdom, to spiritual knowledge, they cannot think a certain way. Their minds are fixed on the flesh. That is a lost person. The mind set on the flesh is a mind whose wisdom has been lowered to serve the desires of his flesh.

Now you see, when you are switched to FM you are different. Verse 6 also says, "the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." The moment you put your faith into Jesus Christ something happens to your mind. It is a process from that point on. But now you are switched on. Now you have that receiver.

You see, when you put your faith into Jesus Christ, it is only then that you are switched into the right frequency. It is only then that you have the right equipment to even understand what God thinks. You can't

understand it unless you have been saved. God doesn't just save your soul. He saves your mind and switches it to FM. The problem is, the AM band is not erased. So, therefore, daily as I have a body of sin which still has an AM band in its mind, I have to let the FM begin to control me. I have got to learn to let the Word of God dictate to me how am I to live. If I don't, there is a way that seems right to me but that way leads me to destruction.

I promise you, folks, this is about as practical as anything you can get. You say, "I am going through a problem right now." Then I would say back to you, "What does the Word of God say to you concerning that problem?" "But the Word doesn't mean anything to me anymore. I don't know how to apply it to my everyday life." That is the word "wisdom," and wisdom is that which God gives to those who fear Him and desire His knowledge. When you get into the Word of God and you have presented your body a living sacrifice, you are willing to renovate your mind, to renew your mind with what He has to say, then He gives you the wisdom on how to apply it in the given circumstances and situations of your life.

Ro 12:2 says,

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

The word for "renewing" is anakainosis. It is the word for "renovate." It is not really a verb, in that sense, as much as it is a project. It is a project that you set upon the day you are saved which is never really going to end. One day we will know as we are known, but I think there is still a tree of knowledge in heaven. I think it is just going to go on for millions of years, us understanding and knowing and praising Him for millions of years for all of eternity and God just revealing Himself and us. So it starts a process. The moment you get saved, God wants your mind and He begins to teach you how to think differently, to renew your mind.

Have you ever renovated anything? The word literally means to rip out the old and put in the new. The most scary thing that you and I have is all the old that is still left that we don't even realize. Our thinking and conscious decisions are not based on what God says, not based on His message of grace, but are based on that which has been programmed into us from the time we were born and even before we were born.

We have a certain mind-set and the mind is the dangerous part of us. In Proverbs 23 it says, "As a man thinks, so is he." If I am to present my body to Him, I must begin by submitting my mind to let His Word rebuild my way of thinking, to renew, to rip out the old.

Can you think of someone who knew you before and after you were saved? Can that person look at you and say, "You know, you are so different in the way you talk and in the way you think. I don't even recognize you anymore." That is the word renovate. We are to have a process going on. It is not something that happens in one class. You can't take a Bible Class and instantly get your mind renovated. That is not what it is talking about. It is every day of your life. In every circumstance that comes, you are going to think a certain way because your body is sinful.

Your mind is on AM. You must train your mind to think God's way and as you think God's way, you perceive your circumstances differently and you even discern things differently. Your will has completely changed. You will make decisions you wouldn't have made before. The idea is very simple. The FM band is the Word of God. If I need to know something about my family, I go to the Word of God. I don't go to a seminar on families. If I want to know something about finances, I go to the Word of God. I don't necessarily have to go to a seminar on finances or family.

You see, what we have done, folks, is we have come up with principles that sound great, but they just don't match with the Word of God. We have church growth conferences. Everybody wants to see a church grow. But the word "growth" in Scripture is that which only God can do. Man cannot measure what God does. God has to measure what He does. We can't get caught up in what anybody says other than what the Word of God is teaching us. We must erase what our minds have been thinking and put in what God has to say.

As a matter of fact, if you will look real quickly at chapter 12, there is your outline almost for the whole chapter. He starts off in verses 1 and 2 saying that. If you will look in verse 3 it tells you how you think about yourself. How do you think of yourself? Paul says in verse 3, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." How am I to think about myself? The Word of God tells me, "Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think." I could, by the way, go on for a long time explaining that one.

From Ro 12:4-note on down Paul talks about how to treat other believers in the church.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly:..."

Then Paul goes on and lists those gifts.

How do we treat one another while we are ministering to one another in our individual gifts? Verse 9 of chapter 12 reads, "Let love be without hypocrisy." The rest of that chapter shows you the "one another" commands of how we are to relate to one another in the body of Christ.

You know, he tells you something here. He tells us very clearly our perception of self is much too high. We must have our minds renewed. And when they are renewed, God will bring it down where it ought to be, low. Our perception of the church is an organization, like anything in the world. But he shows you that is wrong. Have your minds renewed. It is an organism. It is very different. It is a body. It is alive. Paul continues to go through and show you how our thinking has got to change.

I heard someone say one day, "The mind is a terrible thing and must be stopped in our lifetime before it kills somebody." That is about the way it is. A fellow got a little confused when he was talking about it. The mind is the key area. The mind is the target area.

Everybody wants to know, "Wayne, do you believe in warfare?" Do I? It takes place between your two ears. If you are so unwise as to not let the scripture renew your thinking towards every given circumstance of your life, you have just allowed your flesh to take over. Now you can be manipulated by the devil himself. He can't get in you—no way—but he can certainly use you by influencing you. He knows exactly what to do and when to do it. He senses the mind that has not been renewed by the Word of God.

Well, you say, "My Christian life is boring." Well, if it is boring, friend, you need to wake up and understand what it is. The moment you got saved and put your faith into Jesus, the journey began. Now you have a project that is going to go on forever, that is, letting your mind be renewed to think like the Word of God teaches you to think.

Well, let's look at the verse from the beginning. Let's show you the opposite of this. He says in Ro 12:2, "And **do not be conformed** to this world." You say, "Now, I am not letting the Word of God renew my mind. I am not doing those things." Well, let me show you what you are doing. You are being conformed to this world. The verb **be conformed** (**suschematizo [word study]**) means to fashion together with. It is conformed to the same pattern, to be fashioned into a mold. In other words, don't let the world press you into its mold. How would it do that? It influences your mind first. If you are not going to listen to the word of God, you are going to listen to something. You are a slave, remember, either way you go. When you are conformed into the image of this world you are living on the AM band.

Many times people join churches and bring in all their baggage of how they thought and how the world thinks. But that is not what we are to be about. We are to be about what God thinks and only what God thinks. Anything else conforms us into the image of this world. The word for "world" is not world. It is the word for "age." The word aion, which means age, implies the fact that within every age there are ages. In other words, from ages 1-5, I was at home. That was the preschool years age in my life. Certain things went on during those days that didn't go on when I got into the first grade.

The first day of the first grade I went home with a friend of mine and forgot to tell my parents. They were in such a panic. They called the police, and they found me at 10:00 that night. I was playing games at a friend's house.

From first grade to sixth grade, it was a different age of my life. Things were different. I could even walk to school and walk home.

When I was in Junior High (grades 7-9) it was a different time. I could ride my bike. I mean, things changed during that age that influenced me. But when I got into High School, 10-12, it was even different from then. Then I went through college.

So from the time I was born until the time I die, it is an age, but within that age there are many ages and different things apply to those ages. Paul is saying every age has its own way of thinking. This was as relevant in Paul's day as it is in our day. Don't let the thinking of this age conform you into its mold. Don't do that.

What is the converse of that? That means I am going to let my mind be renewed by the Word of God. There

is a presentation, but as soon as there is a presentation, there is a renovation. I have to let my mind be affected by what God says and only what God says. I tell you what, that is easy to preach, but that is not as easy to live. It is so easy, because of the bent of our sinful bodies to drift, to want to hear what others say and what the world thinks rather than to rest yourself upon what God says. But to be a vessel God can use, I have got to have my mind renovated.

There is a presentation, there is a renovation and therefore, there is a transformation. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The word "transformed" is metamorphoo. It comes from two words. It comes from the word denoting change of condition, meta, and morphe, which means to form, to transfigure, to change one's form. It is the word used of the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. What a beautiful principle is brought out there. The flesh was peeled back just enough so that who He really was in His glory was able to be shown through that flesh. He was transformed. He didn't need to be transformed on the inside. He was certainly transformed on the outside to where people could see through Him the glory that had been hidden because He emptied Himself of His glory.

For the believer to **be transformed (metamorphoo [word study])** is for him to be changed from within and without. We are constantly being changed and it is showing up on the outside. We get the word "metamorphosis" from that word. It is like a little caterpillar who is crawling around on the ground when one day it begins to secrete a material out of its own body and forms a cocoon in which it is hidden. No one sees it and it stays in that cocoon for such a period of time. Then one day it breaks out of that cocoon with wings and is brand new, totally different.

Once I am willing to let my mind be renewed by the Word of God, there is a transformation in my behavior, in my character, in the way that I live. The word is present passive imperative. In other words, it is a command. I have no choice. So daily I take this sinful body and present it to God and let God renew my mind. And as my mind is renewed according to the circumstances of my life, my whole behavior changes because I am living according to His Word and according to His power to change me. As a result of that, it is a constant process.

This is something that is every day. It is in the crucible of living. It is going through circumstances and saying, "God, I don't know what to do, but I know that my body is sinful and will lead me astray. If I let my mind stay idle from the Word of God, it is going to cause me destruction. God, I am going to turn to You. God, will You take your Word and renew my mind? Will You show me what I am to do in this given circumstance of my life?"

The result is tremendous. It says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, [Why?] that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

If nothing else excites you, this ought to. It is saying you get to test the very perfect will of God for yourself. When I first started the ministry, I had to use everybody else's illustrations. I had no real experiences. I didn't really know how to walk in the Lord, as I should have known. When I would share, I would always quote from some book or somebody else's life. Then one day it was like God said, "Son, I want you to test for yourself what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." When you learn to submit and give up and give in and let His Word begin to take over, you get to prove it out. You get to test it for yourself.

The word "prove" is dokimazo, to prove a thing as to whether it is worthy or not. It is present active infinitive, on a constant basis, on a consistent basis. Listen, until you have submitted yourself to Christ, until you have allowed His Word to transform your thinking, you can't know anything about the will of God, how good it is. But when you are willing to do that, you get to test it for yourself. You find out whether or not it is worthy by submitting and letting His Word renew you.

"That you may prove what the will of God is." I had a new appreciation for the word "will" as I studied it this time. It was a little different than what I had seen the last time I studied the word thelema. It does not so much signify His demand but His gracious disposition towards something. It is used to designate what God Himself does of His own good pleasure. In other words, when I am willing to submit my mind to be renewed in its thinking, according to the Word of God, then my behavior will be so effected that I get to enjoy what God wills in each given situation. It will bring me great joy to realize what God out of His good pleasure wants to do in that circumstance that I am facing.

The more I studied this, it is like God is saying, "Son, if you are not going to come to me and if you are not going to let my Word completely renovate your thinking, you are short-changing yourself of all that I want to do in your life that is good. You are missing something that is good, acceptable and perfect. You are missing it."

Those words, "good, acceptable and perfect" speak for themselves. The word "good" is agathos. It is something that you and I cannot produce, by the way. It is something that God alone can. It is that which is good and benevolent. It is profitable. It is useful. It is good that is totally distinguishable as being good. In other words, it is not as if you just try it to see if you like it. Oh, no. When you are overcome by God's grace and you turn and present yourself to Him, the good that you experience by doing what God says He wants you to do in that given situation is so distinguishably good that you will never want anything else. It is distinguishably good, profitable, useful in your life.

What are you facing right now? What are you going through? What are you up against and are not willing to let God change your thinking about? That is the whole thing. God has a pleasurable will for you if you are just willing to prove it for yourself.

The word "acceptable" is the word that means well-pleasing, euarestos. You know sometimes the best way to know a word is to look at its opposite. The antonym for this word, which means well-pleasing and is translated "acceptable," is the word that means hard to bear and oppressive. In other words, when I test out the will of God, "God, what is it You want? What is it You want to do? What is it You want me to think? How do You want me to think?" And when I begin to enter into what God, out of His pleasure, wants to do in my life, then I begin to realize how well-pleasing this is and how easy to bear it really is when I have discovered what God really wants.

What are you struggling with? One of the things that we have discovered is when we are striving to do something, striving to make something happen, we need to back off and realize that is nothing but flesh because the will of God is easy to bear. It is not oppressive. It is well-pleasing, folks. You say, "I don't know that." Well, that's because you haven't tested it yet. You haven't presented your body. You are still living on AM. Get up on FM and find out for yourself. You get to test it for yourself.

The word "perfect" is the word teleios. It means that which has reached its end, therefore, it is complete in itself, lacking nothing. You will never want to add a thing to God's will once you discover it. Once He reveals it to you, you will not want to add a thing. The idea is, it is complete in itself. You don't need anything else. This is why you are able to be fully satisfied. Talk about being fully satisfied!

This is the person who walks through that valley and comes to the Word of God as a human being, knowing that their body of sin is going to mislead them, is going to cause them all kinds of perverted thoughts. They say, "God, I recognize that. I present my mind. I want your Word to renew my mind." God begins to turn your whole perception, change your whole way of thinking and you discover, "This is the most well-pleasing thing I have ever experienced and I am so complete in it. I don't need anything else. I don't even want anything else. I just want to test it out for myself and live consistently in it." That is what it is all about. That is what Christianity is.

Sometimes God creates circumstances in our body, in our churches. That is where we have to remember the first thing you do is die to self. The second thing you do is present yourself to the Word of God. Then remember the giftedness of others and how we can flow together. Sometimes it is through a teaching, but it becomes environmental. It begins to govern everything that we do because the whole joy of the Christian life is found in walking in complete surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what the circumstances are that we face. We are fully satisfied because we have tested and proved that His will is good and we are willing to drop anchor. We are willing to realize that God has demonstrated His love for us and He can be trusted. We are willing to come to the place that we are so overcome by His goodness and grace that we are willing to renew our minds. In every circumstance we face in life we are going to be filled with the sweetest, non-oppressive direction that we have ever had. We are never ever going to want to depart from it.

I have a choice to make. I am a slave either way I go. It is ridiculous for me to go back and be a slave to what God saved me out of, the mind-set of the flesh. Who wants to go back and live like that again? But when you turn around and present your body and have your minds renewed, God gives you a taste of something that will take you the rest of your life. You will never want anything else. It is well-pleasing. It is non-oppressive. It is what God does out of His sweet, loving good pleasure in our life. That is the Christian life right there. Anything else is church. That is the Christian life.