

Renewing Your Mind Romans 12:1, 2

Introduction

Our family once visited the Newport Aquarium on the Ohio River – in Newport KY
One of the exhibits there was somewhat memorable - - - it was an 800 lb alligator – around 15 feet long - - - the record for alligator size is that of 1000 lbs and 15 feet long

This one was close - - - we watched a feeding – a guy throwing a chicken into his chompers

Many safety precautions were taken – but the most essential was a 2-inch thick plexi-glass barrier between us and the alligator whom they named – ‘Mighty Mike’

Clearly, he was dangerous – yet – here we were taking a casual stroll past him – just a few feet away! - - - with our kids in tow – one in a stroller - - - with no real fear

Now – if Mike had started thrashing about with his tail - - perhaps cracking the glass - - - or if he would’ve grabbed one of the feeders - - - we would have gotten out of there!

When we come to Romans 12 – Paul tells us about another danger – one we face every day in the Christian life

And – there is no barrier between us and this danger - it is that of the world

The world seeks to pull us into its grasp - - - and tempt us with its sin - - - seduce us with its pleasures - - - invite us to join it in ignoring God and His ways

The world is particularly dangerous because there is no place we can go to escape its reach

We breathe its air / we hear its messages / we see its images / we walk by its clubs and its stores / the world tries to squeeze us into its mold

How do we confront this ever-present danger?

Romans 12:2 - 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.'

R.C. Sproul began a radio broadcast back in 1994 – titled – ‘Renewing Your Mind’ – it’s also now a podcast put out by Ligonier Ministries

The name: *Renewing Your Mind* is based off of Romans 12:2:

R.C. Sproul: "God gives us the revelation of sacred Scripture in order for us to have our minds changed so we begin to think like Jesus. Sanctification and spiritual

growth is all about this. If you just have it in your mind and you don't have it in your heart, you don't have it. But you can't have it in your heart without first having it in your mind. We want to have a mind informed by the Word of God."

The key to living in this world – is not to leave the world - - - but to have our minds renewed thru Scripture - -- so that we do not fall prey to ways of the world

Jesus once prayed for the disciples

John 17:15 - 'I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.'

The problem with the world – is that outside of faith in Christ - - - every individual is in the sphere of Satan's influence

I John 5:19 - 'We know that we are of God and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.'

This morning we begin a new section in the book of Romans

The question that Paul now begins to address is – 'How shall we respond to these great truths that we have seen in Chapters 1-11?'

If you and I have believed this gospel message of Paul's – 'How shall we then live?' - in this world – with this life God has given to us?

Ultimately - - -The Christian is to march to the beat of a different drummer

He is not to follow the world in its ways of sin – but to embark upon a path of discipleship and fidelity to the Lord Jesus

I. A Living Sacrifice - v. 1

Ch. 12 marks a turning point in Paul's letter to the Romans

Paul moves forward from what we are to *believe* to how we are to *behave*
From doctrine to duty
Creed to conduct

The one is foundational to the other

No one can just run out and live the Christian life – it is a life that flows from our faith – grounded in the truths of the gospel / empowered by the Holy Spirit who dwells within

Paul begins with the word – 'therefore'

That signals us to the fact that this exhortation is related to what he has just taught

In light of God's mercy – In light of the cross – live this way

In light of all that God has done to save you [He foreknew / predestined / called / justified / Christ died for you] – now do this

Offer up your bodies a living sacrifice unto God

*** This is where Christian teaching is to lead us in our lives

Paul calls us to consecrate ourselves to God – offer up our lives/ bodies as a living sacrifice

The gospel is to create true worshipers of God

Where do we make this sacrifice?

In the church?

No [not exclusively] – everywhere – in the home / the marketplace / school / work / on the ball field /etc.

We are talking about living for Jesus - letting Christ have His way in our lives

Before salvation – our bodies were instruments of sin

Now – as Christians – our bodies are to be instruments of righteousness

If we recognize the full implications of the cross and the gospel - this is a natural progression: 'I now belong to God – I am not my own – I have been bought with a price'

I Corinthians 6:19, 20 - 'Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? for you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.'

Our bodies belong to God!

The world says, 'My body is my own – what I do with it is my business' – it's my life / etc.

No – the Christian position: I belong to God

When we confess Jesus as Lord – we are saying - - - Jesus – you are my Lord – I belong to you - - - you have the right to tell me how to live – and I want to do what you say

This presenting of ourselves to God as living sacrifices - - - not a one-time thing – but a daily / moment by moment – ongoing action

Under the Old Covenant - - - worshipers brought an animal to be offered up to God

Now that Christ has died once for all - - - we no longer bring animal sacrifices - - - but we offer up our **lives** as living sacrifices

This offering of our lives has nothing to do with satisfying the wrath of God – Christ alone does that

This is an offering of consecration

The Christian is not physically killed in this sacrifice – we're living sacrifices

How do I offer up my body a living sacrifice?

Chrysostom: 'And how is the body it may be said to become a sacrifice? Let the eye look on no evil thing, and it hath become a sacrifice; let thy tongue speak nothing filthy, and it hath become an offering, let thine hand do no lawless deed, and it hath become a whole burnt offering.'

Does your speech reflect the fact that you are consecrated unto God? [speak nothing filthy]

The Psalmist once prayed:

Psalm 19:14 - 'Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.'

Do your eyes reflect the ownership of Jesus?

Do you turn your eyes away from evil - - - away from screens it should not be looking at?

Job once said: 'I have made a covenant with my eyes – how then could I gaze upon a maid?'

Kevin De Young – once found that – along his route home – there was often a young woman out washing her car in her swim suit - - - and it got his attention in the wrong way

So – he decided to take a different route home – and reflected upon Scripture

What was he doing? He was saying: 'I belong to the Lord Jesus'

My eyes are consecrated to God – I will not look upon others lustfully

There are so many snares in this category - - - from movies / videos / pornography

The revenue made in the porn industry is staggering

40 million Americans say they view pornography regularly

Mobile devices / phones are the medium of choice

Scripture says to the believer: Consecrate your eyes unto the Lord – lay your eyes on the altar – turn off the computer / turn away from that image

You might recall the children's song:

Be careful little eyes what you see [for the Father up above is looking down in love]
Be careful little tongue what you say
Be careful little hands what you do
Be careful little feet where you go

Nothing is hidden from God

Hebrews 4:13 - 'And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.'

J.C. Ryle: "Do nothing that you would not like God to see. Say nothing you would not like God to hear. Write nothing you would not like God to read. Go no place where you would not like God to find you. Read no book of which you would not like God to say, "Show it to Me." Never spend your time in such a way that you would not like to have God say, "What are you doing?"

We might add: 'Look at nothing on your phone you wouldn't show to Jesus!'

The problem with living sacrifices is that they can crawl back off the altar – put them right back up there!

Day by day – we offer up our lives!

Men and women of God fight the battle against the world / the flesh and the devil

II. Be Transformed - v. 2

When we come to the Scriptures – we find that you and I are in close proximity to something that is very hazardous to Christian living: the world

It tempts us with its pleasures / it invites to its parties / it encourages us to walk its paths / it seeks to dull our powers of discernment with drugs or alcohol / it offers cheap thrills to the unwary

And the vital detail of significance: there is no physical barrier between us and the world

We live in this world – with all its dangers and temptations / and hazardous pitfalls

The Scriptures come to us and tell us that to navigate safely thru this world – we are called to a certain position in the Christian faith

'Do not be conformed to the world - but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.' [12:2]

Be in the world – but not of the world

This is the great obstacle to holy living

We live in an evil world

We pray to the Father

Matthew 6:13 - 'deliver us from evil.'

That is a Christian prayer

Matthew Henry: 'The world is apt to spot and blemish the soul, and it is hard to live in it, and have to do with it, and not be defiled; but this must be our constant endeavor.'

***The world does not want us to consecrate our lives to Jesus

It wants us to be conformed to its mold

Believers are those who allow God to transform their minds by the Scriptures

As our minds are renewed by God's Word – we discern His will for our behavior

If we are to make headway against the current of the world – the Scripture will play a dominant role in our lives

John MacArthur: 'The primary instrument of our spiritual growth is Scripture. It is the truth that saves. It is the truth that sanctifies. It is the truth that makes us wise unto salvation. And it is the truth that refines and purifies us, thoroughly equipping us for all good works. All spiritual work is the work of God's Word in the power of God's Spirit.'

Psalm 119:11 - 'Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee.' [KJV]

To have God's Word in our heart – in the memory – in the mind – so that the Holy Spirit can bring up a verse when it is needed

Be transformed – metamorphosis – a change from one form to another - like a caterpillar to a butterfly or tadpole to a frog

This word was used of the transfiguration of Jesus before the 3 disciples [Matt. 17:2]

How do we become transformed into what God wants us to be?

The key is the renewing of the mind

We renew the mind - by thinking on that which is true and revealed in the Word of God

We set our mind on biblical truth – we breathe a different air

We see this all over the Scripture

Colossians 3:2 - 'Set your mind on things above . . .'

Philippians 4:8 - 'finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.'

The Christian life is marked by transformation – from the inside out

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil

I John 3:8 - 'The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil.'

How does He do that – He saves us – calls us to begin living to the glory of God – rooting out sinful practice in our lives – consecrating our lives to God

C.S. Lewis: "Enemy-occupied territory - that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going." [Mere Christianity, p. 36]

We are living in Satan's realm – if we do not see that – we will not understand all this teaching about not being conformed to the world

Any way we can expose ourself to reality and truth strengthens our faith – going to church / meditating on Scripture / prayer / etc.

Christians have always been something of a counter-cultural force - - - the closer we follow Jesus

As we follow Jesus – we recognize certain aspects of the world which we should not participate in

We have this as part of our doctrinal statement for the church

10. 'We believe in separation from all worldly practices and associations and in a whole-hearted devotion to the person of Jesus Christ as the only Scriptural basis for a happy and useful Christian life.'

We need wisdom and discernment to know how to live this out

The Amish reject automobiles and electricity – trying not be worldly

The monks use this idea to take a vow of celibacy or poverty

Some people in the past have rejected card playing or blue jeans or make-up or movies or Taylor Swift

Ephesians 5:17 - 'So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.'

Bottom line: The evidence of worldliness will be in the practice of sin – deeds of the flesh / being ruled by the senses - - - lovers of money / lovers of pleasure / haters of good / lying / stealing / profanity / impurities

Galatians 5:19-21 - 'Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.'

When we are swimming in the pond of the world - - - our senses are dulled to the things of God / eternity

The world works in subtle ways at times – slowly

Like the frog in the kettle – turn the temperature up slowly – he doesn't jump out

I went to Jr. High with a kid who is in prison for life - - - got involved with drinking and drugs - - - then it was breaking and entering - - - then it was rape and murder

Satan got him / the world got him

C. S. Lewis: "Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts." Your affectionate uncle, Screwtape."

Whatever takes our eyes off of Jesus – whatever makes righteousness seem strange - - - that is worldliness

When we are walking by the Spirit – [and not being conformed to the world] – this is the result:

Galatians 5:22-23 - 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.'

Conclusion

John Phillips: 'In the OT when a body was offered the animal was slain. Now, when the believer offers his body, he begins to really live!'

This is the abundant life – life as it was meant to be lived - - - walking in fellowship with our God

John 15:11 - 'These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.'