



Introduction

I have long loved Romans 12:2. I even imagine for most of us that this verse is the most well known one in the whole chapter. We've heard it, or read it many times. However, now that we've decided to put it to memory, some parts of it may be seen in a new way. That is what has happened to me this week. As I have replayed verses 1-2 around in my head and heart again and again, the Lord has pointed out some fresh things to me and I am anxious to share them with you.

Last week, in verse 1, we talked about Paul urging us. Even though we have moved on to verse 2, we must remember that His prodding has not stopped. He has moved on to the next thing, but he is still urging us. Paul has learned the value of a transformed life and so he jumps right into encouraging us to live one too.

Looking at the Verse

This week I would like to look at verse 2 phrase by phrase, so follow along with me in that way. Paul's first statement says,

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world" (NIV)

"And do not be conformed to this world" (NASV)

"Do not be shaped by this world" (NCV)

"Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking" (Message)

It seems Paul is implying that conformity has already taken place. I know he was talking to the church at that time but I have to think, is he talking to me? Yikes, he probably is! I must admit there are moments where I take a hard look at myself and realize I have become so well adjusted to my culture. That is humbling. I especially can connect to the NIV translation when it mentions a pattern. A pattern is an original design from which exact copies can be made. The world has a definite pattern and over the years it has made many copies that look just like it. The world's pattern is a focus on self. Think about it, most people are consumed with "self". So...most people are exact copies of the world's pattern. It is scary, but even as Christians our lives can be shaped just like the world without even thinking about it.

The Greek word that Paul used for conform is "suschematizo" and it is referring specifically to our mind and character. In other words when someone views our thoughts and character we should not look like the world, pressed into the mold or the pattern of the world. So...our character should not be focused on self and our thoughts should not be driven by self. In other words we shouldn't live according to what we want, think or feel. Our character and thoughts should be shaped by a different design. Paul is speaking to Christians here, saying don't be shaped after the pattern of this world.

There is a term that I have heard often and I shudder when I hear it, praying it will not be indicative of my life. The term is "carnal Christian". Some would say "worldly Christian". This would refer to the person who has come into a saving relationship with Jesus but still lives like the world, still thinks like the world and still acts like the world. The world lives focused on self. If we are living that way, Paul is urging us to stop conforming. God has a better way for us to live!

So... If we shouldn't follow the pattern of the world, what pattern should we follow? That takes us right to the next phrase.

"but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (NIV and NASV)

"instead be changed within by a new way of thinking" (NCV)

"instead, fix your attention on God and you will be transformed from the inside out" (Message)

Here is the Truth. There is a definite difference between conformity and transformation. I love how Paul changes the word. He doesn't say "don't be conformed to the world but be conformed to Christ." Why? Because, conformity doesn't describe the fullness that can be experienced in the Christian life. Conformity is what happens on the outside. We live in the world and so we become conformed to it. In the same way, many people get saved and then start trying to follow the "rules" of Christianity, trying to

conform then to a new pattern. We can all try and follow the “rules of Christian living” forcing our wills into the mold of Christian lifestyle. It might look good for a time but you won’t experience the fullness of living for Christ.

Paul says instead “be transformed”. Transformation happens on the inside and eventually it shows itself on the outside. The Greek word that Paul used for transformation is “metamorphoo” which is the word from which we receive our English word “metamorphosis”. This is defined as a complete or marked change of physical form, structure or substance that is caused by supernatural powers. You see we can’t be transformed on our own. It is the work of God and we cooperate with Him. You can try to conform to the Christian way of living and can even fake it for a time, but the real work of Christ takes place within you. He changes your substance as He comes to live within you and then He wants to change the substance of your mind by replacing your thoughts with His. So how does Paul say we should be transformed? Look at those phrases again:

“by the renewing of your mind” (NIV and NASV)

“by a new way of thinking” (NCV)

“fix your attention on God” (Message)

Our minds were originally created by God to have our thoughts lined up with His. After sin, man’s thoughts started on a downward spiral. I wish I didn’t personally have knowledge of that, but I must admit I do. There are times that my thought life has been camped right outside the doors of hell and I am ashamed to say it. Paul is telling us, you will see this transformation come to life in you as you allow your mind to be renewed, as you allow God to take over your thought life.

So how do we renew our minds? I like one definition of renew that describes it as “getting a new supply”. It is a literal renovation of the mind that will bring the transformation to the surface of our lives. I give up my self centered thoughts, one by one, and get a new supply of God’s thoughts, one by one. It is a process and it takes time. The provision of God’s thoughts is His Word. Being in His Word is what will bring the transformation to the surface in my life so that it is visible.

Over the last 12 years God has transformed me as I have allowed Him to renew my mind. It is a process that is still taking place but God has made real progress in me! In my eagerness to see this transformation come to the surface, I have long been keeping my eyes open for people who stand out as real and genuine followers of Jesus Christ, not conformed to the pattern of this world but living way above it! In my search I have seen a new pattern and it has spurred me on. Here is the pattern. People that live transformed lives are people who highly value God’s Word, they use His Word in daily living, they talk about His Word in daily life, they embrace God’s Word as the source of all Truth, they know God’s Word and they line their lives up alongside it. This immersion in His Word has only done one thing, renewed their minds. Renewed minds and transformed lives seem to go together and it is no wonder. Romans 12:2 says that exact thing, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” God longs to give us a transformed life. He gives it through His Word.

And So...

Here is what God has shown me, if I do not purpose myself for transformation, I will experience conformity. We naturally gravitate toward conformity. We don’t have to work at it. Exist for even a short time in the world and you will become just like it. You will focus on self. There is only one way to be rescued from conformity and it is transformation! And that comes by renewing your mind with a supply of His Word. So guess what you are doing when you are memorizing Romans 12. Imagine that this huge delivery truck has stopped at your address and is delivering a new supply of God’s Word. Each week a new box is being unloaded, full of a new supply of thoughts for your life! Romans 12:2 goes on to say that as we renew our minds, we will be able to live understanding God’s will. That is awesome! I would like to close with the way the Message Bible says it. *“...instead fix your attention on God. You will be changed from the inside out, readily recognizing what He wants from you and quickly responding to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings out the best of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.”* A transformed life, it sounds like a great way to live!

Consider:

Is there any place where you have been shaped according to the pattern of this world?

What is something about your mind and character that is distinctively different than the world?
Is there anyone you know that would call you a carnal Christian? Why or why not?
Identify places in your own mind that have been renewed by the Word of God? Celebrate that and press on!

Pray

Romans 12:2 ["Dear God, I don't want to conform, I want to be transformed! Help me renew my mind in Your Word!"](#)

Something extra this week!

Last week I was exposed to a statement made by A.W.Tozer. If you are not familiar with him, he was a pastor and writer who had a way of exposing the truths of God's Word with great clarity. He died in 1963. All week I have been considering his statement and in light of our verse this week thought it would be good to share with you as well. It is profound as we consider the outcome of renewing our minds with His Word, that outcome being a transformed life.

**Whatever keeps me from the Bible is my enemy,
however harmless it may appear to be.**

**Whatever engages my attention when I should be meditating on God and things eternal,
does injury to my soul.**

**Let the cares of life crowd out the Scriptures from my mind,
and I have suffered loss where I can least afford it.**

**Let me accept anything else instead of the Scriptures,
and I have been cheated and robbed to my eternal confusion**