

Be Transformed By the Renewing of Your Mind

Rom. 12:1-2

Introduction:

1. These two verses constitute the transition point in the Book of Romans.
 - a. In the preceding chapters Paul has developed his thesis that God through Jesus Christ saves those who believe.
 - b. In the following chapters he shows us what this obedience of faith looks like behaviorally.
2. There are definite moral and ethical implications associated with salvation by faith.
3. These stem from a transformation that occurs by the renewing of the mind. But why should we need to be transformed? How does this transformation occur? How are our minds renewed?

Discussion:

I. While we are created in the image of God and have a high level of mental functioning and capacity, that capacity pales in comparison to the capacity of God.

- A. Isa. 55:6-9 calls on us to seek the Lord in light of the fact that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.
- B. The very fact that we are created and therefore time limited limits our understanding (Isa. 46:9-10).
- C. Jeremiah said, "I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps" (10:23).
- D. Additionally, the mar of sin affects our thinking. Rom. 1:21-22, 28 refers to those who have become futile in their speculations and whose heart is darkened. Professing to be wise they became fools and God gave them over to a depraved mind.
 1. This does not mean that we are without capacity.
 2. But it does mean that our thinking is marred.
- E. Why do we need a renewing of our mind? Because our thinking is not what it should be. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor?" (Rom. 11:33-34).

II. God transforms us, but it is in harmony with our will.

- A. The text says, "Be transformed." This translation is reflective of the passive imperative in the Greek.
 1. It implies that we are being acted upon.
 2. But it also implies that we must be acted upon.

3. The idea is expressed in Eph. 2:10 when it says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

B. It is not against our will, but in harmony with our will, which means that the transformation is not all of us.

1. The idea that we sit idly by and wait for God to transform us is not true.
2. But neither is it true that God just tells us what to do and we on our own power just go and do it, and somehow by our doing we are transformed. Such an idea may lead to asceticism and rule keeping, but it is not the transformation of Rom. 12:2 (Col. 2:18ff).
3. Such an idea does not do justice to God's activity in the transformation.

C. God transforms us.

1. In Ezekiel 11:19-20 God said, "I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God."
2. Ezek. 36:25-27 says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.
3. Ezek. 37:14 says, "I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life . . . Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it."

D. Paul's point is that God has effected this transformation by means of what He has done in Christ (Romans 1-8).

1. Having now raised us from the dead the transformation continues through the renewing of the mind.
2. He began renewing our minds through the preaching of the gospel.
3. He continues to renew our minds as He instructs us in His way.

III. He is in the process of restoring our thinking so that it is not conformed to the world but transformed to that which is pleasing to God.

A. Paul prayed for the Colossians to be filled with the knowledge of God's will (1:9-10).

B. God has given us understanding (1 Jn. 5:20).

C. We are not in the darkness that characterizes the uninformed (1 Thess. 5:2-11).

D. Therefore we do not practice the things that lead to corruption, decay and death.

Instead, we practice those things that lead to new creation, resurrection and life (Col. 3:1ff). It is a different mind-set (Col. 3:2).

E. It is not about merely putting to death earthly appetites but about a completely different orientation (Phil. 3:18-20).

1. Whereas we were being conformed to the world
2. Now we are being transformed. What we think is being changed. Our direction is different.
3. The direction is revealed behaviorally (1 Pet. 4:1-3; Gal. 5:16-26). That is what Rom. 12:3-15:13 is about.
4. Such behaviors are not produced “naturally” by the world’s mindset. They seem “unnatural.”
 - a. Who sees giving a blessing to someone who deserves cursing as “natural”? Cf. Rom. 12:14.
 - b. It would be natural to love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But we are to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors (Matt. 5:43ff). That’s unnatural!
 - c. That’s why we have to be taught and admonished (Col. 3:16).
 - d. It is an on-going process (Col. 3:5-14).

Conclusion:

1. “Do not be conformed to this world!”
2. “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”