

God's Love Changes Us

Westlake VBS 2017

“And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2).

Context: Divine love motivates us to present our bodies as sacrifices to God – Rom 12:1. (The dedication of our bodies contrasts with the transformation of our minds.)

1. The word *mercy* (Gr *oiktirmos*) in Rom 12:1 literally means “the viscera,” but metaphorically described the “deep feelings of pity for the difficulty or misfortune of others” – see Col 3:12.
2. God is merciful and, in the context of Romans, has demonstrated his grace and love to us by the sacrifice of Jesus, bringing us into fellowship with him – Rom 5:6–11.
3. Since Jesus sacrificed himself for us, it is right for us to reciprocate, thoughtfully offering our bodies as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God – 12:1.

(Dedication requires that we cleanse, cherish, and control ourselves – 2 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:28–29; 1 Cor 9:27.)

4. Yet, after we have determined that we will offer our bodies to God, we must avoid conformation to the world by allowing our minds to be transformed – Rom 12:1–2.
5. In this study, we will highlight the temptation to conform to the world, the need for transformation of the mind, and the connection to the love of God.

(It is significant that all the verbal elements of Rom 12:2 are in the present tense—indicating continuous, repeated, or habitual action—and that most are passive.)

Do Not Be Conformed: God's love demands that we not be conformed to the world (age) – Rom 12:2.

1. The word *conform* (Gr *syschematizo*) means “to form according to a pattern or mold” and is rarely used in the NT—always negatively – see Rom 12:2; 1 Pet 1:14.
2. The present age and its lusts offer a pattern that we (Christians) are not to imitate, especially since we understand the foolishness of it – 1 Cor 1:20; Eph 2:1–3.
3. Satan rules this world, and he is seeking to blind us to the realities and consequences of sin; yet Jesus came to rescue us from this age – 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4.
4. We must not love the world but live differently, learning from God's grace what to deny and what to embrace – 1 John 2:15–17; Titus 2:11–14; see 2 Tim 4:10.

Be Transformed: God's love demands that we be transformed by the renewal of the mind – Rom 12:2.

1. The verb *transform* (Gr *metamorphoo*) means “to change or transfigure,” and in the NT, this change can be either external or internal—the latter in this context – Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 12:2.

(The word in Rom 12:2 means “to change inwardly in fundamental character or condition” [BDAG].)

2. God is obviously the one who changes us (passive voice), but we still have the responsibility to allow him access (imperative mood) – Rom 12:2; Phil 2:12–13.

3. We are transformed by the renewal of the mind, which describes not only our initial conversion but also the ongoing change in our hearts – Rom 12:2; Titus 3:5.

(The word *renewal* [Gr *anakainosis*] is not found outside of Christian literature—unique to Paul—and has been defined as “complete change for the better” [Strong].)

4. Our transformation is spiritual, accomplished through a total change of the mind, patterned after the image of Jesus himself – see Rom 8:29; Eph 4:17–24.

Approve God’s Will: God’s love and non-conformity and transformation result in approval of his will – Rom 12:2.

1. The word *prove* (Gr *dokimazo*) has a range of meaning allowing for focus on the actual testing of something (“to put to the test”) or the result (“to accept as approved”).

2. The specific meaning in Rom 12:2 is difficult to determine, since both concepts fit the context; it can mean that we are able to truly discover God’s will when we allow our minds to be transformed, or that we approve God’s will – see 1 Cor 2:14–16.

3. Regardless, when we allow ourselves to be changed by God and his word, we will be able to better recognize and apply his will for us – Heb 5:12–14; Eph 5:6–14.

4. When we prove the will of God, we will intellectually and experientially acknowledge that it is good, acceptable,

and perfect—making us good, acceptable, and perfect.

(For more on the description *good*, see Rom 2:7, 10; 7:12–13, 18–19; Rom 12:9, 21; 13:3–4; 16:19. For *acceptable*, see Rom 12:1; 14:18; 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:10; Heb 13:21. For *perfect*, see Matt 5:48; 1 Cor 13:10; 14:20; Jas 1:25.)

Conclusion: God’s love motivates change. If we will abandon our old way of thinking and pursue the will of God, we will conform not to the world but to God—being good, acceptable, and perfect.

Purer in Heart, O God
Fannie E. Davison
G-4-Mi

1. Purer in heart, O God, help me to be;
May I devote my life wholly to Thee.
Watch Thou my wayward feet,
Guide me with counsel sweet;
Purer in heart, help me to be.
2. Purer in heart, O God, help me to be;
Teach me to do Thy will most lovingly.
Be Thou my Friend and Guide,
Let me with Thee abide;
Purer in heart, help me to be.
3. Purer in heart, O God, help me to be;
That I Thy holy face one day may see.
Keep me from secret sin,
Reign Thou my soul within;
Purer in heart, help me to be.