

# Romans 12:2

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-12/romans-122/>

*This verse shows that we live out God's will when we change our thoughts to God's thoughts. We live life to please God, rather than living as the world dictates and seeking its rewards. The world will always pressure us to live sinfully and selfishly, but to live the good life God wants from us requires changing how we behave—by changing our thoughts.*

A life of righteousness is a life where we live according to God's (good) design, so it does not look like a life of sin, which is living apart from God's (good) design. That's why Paul tells us to *not be conformed* (resemble, follow) *to this world* (v 2).

The word *conformed* as a picture looks like taking the shape of something else. Water conforms to the shape of the glass it is in. Believers are admonished not to be shaped by the forces in the world, which has its own ideas of what is honorable and what is shameful—forces that are opposed to the righteousness of God.

Rather, believers are admonished to *be transformed by the renewing of your mind* (v 2), to live a life that is transformed from the ways of the world to the ways of God. This is possible when our minds have been changed to think after the ways of God.

The book of Romans is an excellent example of what sort of change of mind is called for. Paul has argued in Romans that sin is self-destructive. The world most certainly does not preach that. The world says sin is fun and desirable. The world says we have the right to do whatever we want to do and deserve to be happy as a result. This is sinful because it is living apart from the reality of the cause-effect world God designed.

Paul has admonished us to realize how counterproductive and undesirable a life of sin is; a life that is self-seeking, self-justifying, and driven by satisfying appetites is a life that leads to death. The world says the more appetites we can satisfy the happier we will be. But even logic tells us this is not reality. If we are always pursuing the satisfaction of a new appetite, we cannot be happy with what we are currently experiencing, so we will spend most of our time unhappy.

Paul asserted in Chapter 1 that sin has a progression. It goes from lust to addiction to a loss of mental health (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). We can gain the opposite of this self-destruction by following God's ways.

When we have transformed minds, we *prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect* (v 2).

We can see how God wants us to live. And when we see how God wants us to live, and follow that path, we do the will of God, and we follow the design God has for us. We prove the *perfect* will of God.

The word *perfect* is a translation of the Greek word "teleios," which is used in the Bible to refer to a destination, such as the finish line in a race. The word here indicates that by living a

transformed life with a renewed mind, we become all God intended us to be. We live according to the way God designed us, therefore we are fulfilled.

Whatever our goals in life, they should include this idea, that we become who God intends us to be by changing our thoughts to God's thoughts and living in a manner in which God directs us to live. All other paths will lead to futility and loss. All other paths separate us from God's (good) design for us. This separation is death (Romans 6:23).

In a great irony, by trying to live a life apart from God and God's way, we will lose who we were designed to be, and therefore lose our true selves.

The lifestyle of Christians who are pursuing righteousness through faith will not look like the lifestyles of the rest of the world. This is because the world is not pursuing God's righteousness; the world pursues sinful desires. Sin is living apart from God's ways; apart from His (good) design for us.

If it were inevitable for Christians to pursue the righteousness of faith, it would not make sense for Paul to admonish these Roman believers to pursue a renewed mind. He has already commended them for how their faith is famous throughout the world (Romans 1:8). Yet here he is still admonishing them to pursue the renewing of their minds. Becoming transformed is a journey, and it requires a lot of effort on our part. That journey has everything to do with whether our lives on earth reflect the reality of our righteousness before God in heaven.

We, as believers, are set apart from the rest of the world in Christ, so it makes sense that Paul would tell us to be transformed and made new by the renewing of our minds. By renewing our minds, we can live the reality of Christ's redemption in our daily lives. We are no longer slaves to sin and death, so we must begin to renew and change our minds in order to live apart from our sinful past through faith. The primary faith we must adopt is to believe that following God's way of setting aside self is actually in our best interest.

The primary faith we need is to believe what God tells us is true and to act on it. We saw this in Romans 10, that the righteousness of faith is accomplished by acknowledging what is true in our hearts, speaking that truth, and then living it (Romans 10:6–10).

By doing this, we will be accomplishing God's will for us. It is common for believers to think that seeking God's will requires discovering a particular circumstance. But the Bible indicates that what God really cares about is us serving Him obediently, sacrificially, no matter what the circumstances. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 states this quite plainly: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification."

"Sanctification" simply means being "set apart" for special service. By living a life as a living sacrifice to God, we are living in a way that pleases Him, and are clearly set apart for special service. This is God's will for our lives.

In renewing our minds, we can better understand what is good and what God wants us to do. We can shift our mindset from trying to gain the rewards of the world through exploiting or defeating others. Instead we can focus on serving others, and seeking their best. As Jesus showed us, sometimes pursuing the best for others includes telling them things they do not want to hear

(Matthew 23). But in each case, by seeking to please God rather than men we are sowing to the spirit which will reap life and benefit (Galatians 6:8).

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**