

Romans 12:2

Staying on the altar

- In Romans 12 Paul directs our attention to the practical outworking of justification by faith which is a life of obedience reflecting Jesus Christ.
- Romans 12:1-2 present three challenges to believers as they seek to live authentic Christian lives. They are to:
 1. - present our bodies as a living sacrifice.
 2. - not be conformed to the world.
 3. - be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

Review of Rom.12:1: A living-sacrifice is a reasonable response to the Grace of God. Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God.

² And 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.

<p><i>The world's way</i></p> <p>² And do not be conformed to this world,</p>	<p>but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,</p>	<p><i>God's will</i></p> <p>that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.</p>
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1. A living-sacrifice is sustained by a renewed mind. Don't think that you can stay on the altar without the Spirit renewing your perceptions of reality.

- Jesus indicated that the way we see ourselves, God and the world will determine how we behave.
- **Matt.6** “²² The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴ No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will love one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”
- A healthy church will give attention to renewing the mind so as to walk in the power and wisdom of the Spirit.
 1. A healthy church will help people gain an enlightened perspective on life, God, others, and self. An unhealthy church will ignore perspective issues.
 2. A healthy church realizes that living the Christian life requires more than dedication to doing the right thing. It also involves a way of thinking that supports commitment to obey. An unhealthy church keeps asking for deeper commitment without building an enlightened perspective.

3. A healthy church will move people beyond a technical understanding of Scripture to a vision or knowledge of Christ. An unhealthy church will equate a renewed mind with a technical knowledge of the Bible.
4. A healthy church will insist on the integration of head, heart, and hands. An unhealthy church will tend to live in either the head (intellectual doctrine), the heart (experience), or the hands (behavior).

- These verses challenge “mindless” Christianity that concentrates on looking good without being good.
- Paul sees the means as important as the ends in Christian living. The fruit of the Spirit is not achieved without a walk in the Spirit. The transformed body starts with a renewed mind.
- Paul want us to know that there is a battle for our minds and that it is vital to our service of worship. The outward posture of service and sacrifice will not glorify God unless it emerges from and renewed mind
- **It is not enough to just try harder**, we must also be trained to think correctly. It is not enough to desire to do the right thing, we must also be disciplined to think in a Godly way.
- **It is not enough to just do the right thing.**
 1. With respect to the Fruit of the Spirit, it is “the Spirit” that is key, not just the fruit.
 2. With respect to the Kingdom of God, it is “of God ” that is key, not just the Kingdom.
 3. We must not conclude, as many have, that God is just concerned with the fruit and the Kingdom.
- “Be transformed” is in the passive voice. It is what happens to us when we renew our mind as a result of offering our bodies a living sacrifice.

2. A renewed mind resists the self-centered strategies of the world. We must say “NO” to the world in order to follow Christ.

- **A renewed mind resists the old nature.**

Eph.4 “¹⁷ This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. ²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in {the likeness of} God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Old self	New self
<p>The source</p> <p>“futile mind”</p>	<p>The source</p> <p>“renewed mind”</p>
<p>The root</p> <p>“¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;”</p>	<p>The root</p> <p>“²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self;”</p>
<p>The fruit</p> <p>“¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”</p>	<p>The fruit</p> <p>“in {the likeness of} God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”</p>

- Satan is described as the god of this age.

II Cor.4:4 “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

- We cannot be true to both of our “selves” or “natures.” We will be hypocritical to one of the other.
- There will be resistance and withdrawal pain as we say “NO” to either of our natures. **Gal.5:17** “For the flesh sets its desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”

- **A renewed mind will recognize and reject the world's perspective.**

Matt.4 “¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, '*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.*'" ⁵ Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, '*He will give His angels charge concerning You*'; and '*On {their} hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.*'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, '*You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.*'" ⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus *said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, '*You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.*'" ¹¹ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and {began} to minister to Him.

	<i>The world's response</i>	<i>The Renewed Mind</i>
When we face pain	Preoccupied with temporal comfort.	Sensitive to spiritual priorities.
When we get in trouble	Expect God to serve me.	Expect to serve God.
When we face opportunity	Let the ends justify the means.	See the ends and means as a part of God's will.

- Note that in **Gen.3**, the serpent tempted Eve (in similar ways) to:
 - 1) See that life was about her happiness above all else.
 - 2) Seek her fulfillment in life by taking control of her destiny through the wisdom of her senses with the distorted perception that God's Word is not in her best interest.
- Wisdom is saying "NO" to the author of conflict, pride, and selfish ambition.

James 3:13-4:10 ¹³ Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have **bitter jealousy and selfish ambition** in your heart, do not be **arrogant** and {so} lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then **peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy**. ¹⁸ And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. ¹ What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ² You lust and do not have; {so} you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; {so} you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend {it} on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? ⁶ But He gives a greater grace. Therefore {it} says, "*God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*" ⁷ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."

<i>Wisdom from below</i>	<i>Wisdom from above</i>
<p>The source "natural, demonic"</p> <p>The root "bitter jealousy, selfish, arrogance"</p> <p>The fruit "war, conflict"</p>	<p>The source "submit to God, resist the devil"</p> <p>The root "humility"</p> <p>The fruit "peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy"</p>

3. A commitment of self-sacrifice provides as stronghold against the flesh.

- The tension between the flesh and the Spirit in the believer's life becomes clearer when we have a stronghold commitment as a point of reference in our conscience.
- We are better able to know God's will through the leading of the Spirit when we have made a commitment to die to self. Without this commitment we are adrift without clear points of reference or leverage for the Spirit to convict us.

4. A renewed mind knows the ways of God. Let the perspective of a renewed mind guide you.

- Paul teaches us that the Law of Moses is no longer a sufficient guide to knowing the will or mind of God (Rom.5:20; 6:14-15; 7:4). We now serve under the "law of Christ" (Gal.6:2; I Cor.9:19).

Heb.7:12 "For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also."

Heb.7:18 "For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God."

I Cor.9:20-21 "And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ,"

- The eternal ethic of God's Character and Kingdom are revealed progressively through His law.

Natural law	Mosaic Law	Law of Christ
Subtle ethic	Superficial ethic	Supreme ethic
Eternal	Eternal (as an ethic) Temporary (as a covenant)	Eternal
Creation & Conscience	The Ten Commandments	The life of Jesus
to know that God is there	to know that I need salvation	to know the heart of God
Observing nature	Following the rules that are spelled out in the Law	The renewed mind that is lead by the Spirit

- The wisdom of the Spirit is seen in the behavior of the one who has it.

Gal.5 "16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 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. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness,

self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”

Questions for discussion

1. How do we get *Godly* wisdom?
2. What are the common themes that characterize Biblical wisdom?
3. How can the mind be a hindrance to Spirit and how can it be a channel for the Spirit?