

Romans (12:2b)

Test and Approve

Part 60 - January 29, 2006

SIXTY SECOND SERMON

We're on Romans 12:2, a verse so rich it requires *two* sermons!

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. - *Romans 12:2 NIV*

Let's get ourselves back up to speed. I will attempt to deliver my entire last sermon in one minute. Time me; sixty seconds; go!



We're imitators (*conformers*) by design, and must *un-conform* from a cultural *pattern* of self-centeredness ... 50 Seconds!



We need a *mind*-METAMORPHOSIS so we can avoid imitating our culture without isolating ourselves from it ... 40 seconds!



The Lord's goal is to insulate us from the sea of sin we swim in. My uncle Joe had a shrimp boat ... 30 seconds!



Our "autopilots" are reset (*transformed*) as we read, study, memorize, meditate on, & apply God's Word ... 20 seconds!



But, even reset minds acclimatize to the "stink" of sin (as noses do to the stink of Brussels sprouts) ... 10 seconds!



So, *by* His Spirit and *through* His Word our Spiritual senses are refreshed and restored (*renewed*) ... 4 seconds!

Therefore, we must: Renuzit it or lose it!

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (12:2a)

And to those believers who are daily-renewed (to more and more think and see and feel the way *He* thinks and sees and feels) Paul adds this promise:

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will (12:2b)

WILL OF COMMAND

Q: How does a renewed mind (reset and refreshed through God's Word) help us to test and approve His will?

First, we need to clarify what Paul means by: "God's will"

- Paul is *not* talking about God's: Will of Control.

He just said (11:33) that God's sovereign control is "beyond tracing out". In other words, His: Restricted intelligence.

- What he *is* talking about is God's: Will of Command.

Scriptural directives to: worship Him above all else; grow in Godly habits; serve & support others; and share the gospel. In other words, His: Revealed instructions.

So, even though those who plotted evil against Jesus violated God's Will of Command (revealed instructions), they *unconsciously* carried out his Will of Control (restricted intelligence).

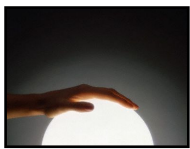
- To know God's "will of control" we'd need a crystal ball.
- But, to know His "will of command" we only need His Word.



How often do we *say* or *sing* that we want to hear His voice, while neglecting the source of His speaking?

When we open His Word, He opens His mouth.

There's a big difference between praying and working for a renewed mind (that applies his revealed will) ... and attempting to "divine" His voice through feelings and impressions.



Divination does not require transformation.

The reason many believers are confused about God's will is that they aren't familiar with His Word.

Whenever someone has a subjective impression of something God has "told" them, we must hold them accountable. We're commanded to test *anyone* who claims to be God's mouthpiece. (1 John 4:1)

God's will, will never contradict His word. Yet, I've heard many people speak with great conviction about what they "felt" God told them to do (even though it was out of step with scripture). A strong sensation should not be confused with revelation.

TEST AND APPROVE

Now we can understand how a “renewed mind” (one that is reset and refreshed by God’s Word) sets us up to “test and approve” God’s will (His revealed “will of command”).

Q: But, what does it mean to “test and approve”?

- “Testing” is about reason; “approval” is about passion.

When Keaton was about six, I gave him a way to earn money by picking dandelions for 5¢ each. But he told the neighbor boys he’d give ‘em each 25¢ to pick all the flowers in our yard! I lost about twenty bucks on that deal!

Like those neighbor boys, we can learn to recognize the traits of a treasure without comprehending its true value. The renewal Paul is talking about is deeper than reading enough scripture, and listening to enough sermons, so we can spot a good deed when we see it, and work up the discipline to do it.



The renewed mind that Paul is describing is able to not only analyze but to appreciate the truth as well.

It’s more than right thinking, it’s right valuing.

The problem is that our minds, by (fallen) nature, are not God-worshipping – they’re self-worshipping. This is why it takes so much effort to truly exalt Him in our lives. We must allow God’s Spirit to do a double work within us:

- From the outside-in through Christ-exalting truth.
- From the inside-out through truth-embracing humility.

We only become free in Christ when we are transformed through truth and humility, to love to do what we ought to do.

GOOD, PLEASING, & PERFECT

A mind bent on un-conforming itself from the self-indulgent pattern of this dying world, will ultimately analyze and appreciate God’s will (of command) for what it is:

“Good, pleasing, and perfect”

First of all, God’s will of command is: “Good”

Satan loves to whisper in our inner-ear, that if we find and follow God's will of command, we'll miss out on the "good life".

I did a study on what the NT teaches about tithing. I didn't know exactly what I was going to discover ... but I remember having to remind myself several times that it wouldn't be bad. God cannot ask us to do anything that's not for our good.

- When it comes to God's will of command: We must approach it with hope.

Secondly, it's: "Pleasing" (the word means: satisfying).

When God offered the Promised Land to the Israelites, they were afraid to take it because the enemy seemed too big. So instead, they spent 40 more years wandering in the desert. (*Num. 13-14*)

When we have a clear command, and we're equipped to carry it out, we must march forward or suffer unpleasant consequences.

- When it comes to God's will of command: We must accept it with trust.

I have chosen to consistently give 10% of my income (for well over thirty years now). And I can honestly say that there have been many times when I would rather have offered it to myself! But, I have tested His will - I have chosen to cherish Him - and I have found it to be *extremely* satisfying.

Not only is His will good & pleasing, it's: "Perfect" (complete)

- When it comes to God's will of command: We will appreciate it with hindsight.

I couldn't have comprehended it without marching forward.



Think about hiking all alone, on a treacherous trail.

You get hungry and you don't know what to do - but then you find that there are provisions just around the corner.

This happens time after time, until you wouldn't dare leave the clearly marked path.

And eventually your hunger pains (felt needs) would actually cause hope and expectancy for the provisions that lay just around the bend.

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