

## Romans: Verse-by-Verse

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### Romans 12:2-3 (B)

#### Study Notes:

The transfiguration Paul urges us to undergo, must have a process. For our lives to be transfigured: “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” - 2 Corinthians 3:18

The only way we can experience a “Mount of Transfiguration” change in our lives is through two things: 1. The Word of God. 2. The Work of the Holy Spirit.

Why this process needs to take place: “Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

That’s the goal of a transformed mind; to equip us to determine and approve what is God’s Will – his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

John Piper: *“We are perfectly useless as Christ-exalting Christians if all we do is conform to the world around us. And the key to not wasting our lives with this kind of success and prosperity, Paul says, is being transformed. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed.”*

- **The “Spirit of your minds”:**

21<sup>st</sup>-century “Progressive Educators” have convinced much of academia that education is all humans need to throw off the darkness of their nature and emerge into a new race of global citizens.

The Bible has a much deeper explanation for the evil in our world: “The spirit of your minds.” -- Ephesians 4:22-23: “You were taught, with

regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds..."

Paul says the Gentiles operate in what he calls the "futility" of their minds: "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts." - Ephesians 4:18 (See: Romans 1:21-22)

Paul tells his Ephesian audience, "Be renewed in the spirit of your minds." So what is the "spirit of your mind"? It can be described as a "mindset". It can be described as an overall "attitude" of our minds.

Paul's description speaks of something that active; something that is directing our thoughts and attitudes.

- **The Problems With "The Spirit of Your Minds":**

Our minds are not just extremely complex computers, capable of making millions of connections in short bursts of time. The problem is, our minds are fallen. They have been corrupted.

As Paul put it in Romans 1, "Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

If there is a part of us that wants to walk with God, that wants to obey the instruction to "present our bodies as living sacrifices", it's the fact that we are still struggling with an unregenerated mind. That's the struggle every Christian faces.

It is the "spirit of our minds" that is the problem. Because of the effects of sin, our minds are not "God worshipping minds". They are darkened; they are futile; they are self-seeking.

The real problem with our minds is not education. It's not a problem of information; it is a problem of unregenerated minds that are much

more likely to adopt the darkness of this world than the light of God's revelation.

- **Back To Verse 3:**

“Do not conform 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.”

To renew means to bring something back to its original condition. Paul chose that word because he realized that our original mind was completely capable of discerning the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Before humans rebelled against the one and only negative law God established, (not to eat from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil), their minds were not darkened. Their thinking was not futile. They had not given themselves over to worship images of birds, and reptiles, and humans. The “spirit of their minds” was not antagonistic towards God. Just the opposite was true.

Over 6,000 years of human history has shown what a mistake it was to break God's clearly defined will and pursue self-development. History is replete with acts of violence, treachery, war, debasement, and more.

Paul says, “Stop behaving like the pagans around you. Instead, be transfigured in your minds so you can carry out God's good, pleasing, and perfect will.”

What is the remedy? How do we break the cycle of darkened thinking, of futile minds lending themselves to the very things that deny and oppose God?

Is it an austere lifestyle, devoid of joy? Is it the adoption of strict life-measures?

Paul has a better answer: The “renewal of the mind”. How does that happen? It requires a combination of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. That’s the only true way forward.

The word “renewal” Paul uses in Romans 12:2 can only be found in one other place in the Bible: Titus 3:5. Paul writes, “[God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”

The Greek word Paul uses for renewal is “anakainōsis”. The Greeks used this word to mean a complete renovation, as in renovating a home.

So, there we have it. Paul uses this special Greek word, “renewal” in reference to transforming our minds, and the work of the Holy Spirit in making that transformation possible.

It’s a double work. We must be immersed in the word of God, but the Holy Spirit must renew us as well. I don’t think it’s a stretch to say that the Spirit renews our minds. In fact, we cannot even legitimately call Jesus Lord without the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:3: “Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. – 1 Corinthians 12:3

We are to renew our minds through the Word of God, but the Holy Spirit must be part of that process. Didn’t Jesus promise that would be the case in John 16:13? He said,

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

What does the Spirit do? He enables us to “behold the glory of the Lord.” As we do this, we change from one level of Christ’s glory in our

lives to another. That is an indispensable part of spiritual growth – and it involves the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

It is not effortless! If we are going to go from one level of God's Glory to another, the Holy Spirit will have to do a renovation work.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5:

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience to Messiah.”

The renewing of the mind is an internal battle. The Holy Spirit must work from the inside out, not the outside in. He must help us see the transforming truths of God's Word, no matter what the medium of that information is ... reading the Bible, meditating, listening to teaching, etc.

His goal is that this transformation will allow us to discern and put into practice what he calls the will of God.