

FROM MERCY TO HUMILITY TO SURRENDER TO WORSHIP

I. Romans 12:1-3

A. Romans 12:1-3 (NASB) is our opening text: *1 Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 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. 3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (The words of God.)*

B. The past few weeks we've walked a path through the gospels, primarily Luke, seeing the contrast between grace and works; between self-righteousness--where we try to earn our salvation by our own efforts vs a righteousness obtained by faith in Jesus and His finished work on the cross. This journey has distinguished the difference between placing our trust in what He's accomplished for us vs our vain efforts to labor for what we could never earn or achieve on our own. We've also seen how this shakes out in our pursuit of earthly wealth vs heavenly treasures, again with an emphasis on trusting God. The hope is that God's Word has made an impact. That a basecamp has been established in our minds with a direct inroad leading down into our hearts. The ultimate impact of all this being? Worship!

C. We live in a culture where everyone has an opinion and everyone believes they are entitled to spew it. In turn, we're obligated to hear it and expected to accept it. Many people voice their opinion as being truth, at least their truth, while real truth or absolute truth, is often deemed untrue. If I say gravity is fake, then please don't correct me with your old fashioned belief that it really exists. Or if I call something good that for thousands of years has been known to be evil or if I call something evil that since the beginning of time has been deemed as good, please don't correct me, or challenge me, or try to impose your truth because it's different than mine! Read anything online these days and then read the comment section that follows. You'll encounter some of the most vitriolic, nonsensical, bizarre, illogical, drivel and drool, that ever was penned or uttered. So what's the idol of our day? SELF!

D. When we consider we were born sinners, enemies of God, bound for hell, and incapable of saving ourselves. And then God, instead of destroying us, sends His Son to die in our place in order to make us His own, it should have a result that is life-altering from the inside out! It should reduce us to abject humility. The love that pours in, therefore should pour out! Rebellion should give way to obedience! Judgment give way to mercy! Bitterness give way to forgiveness! Stinginess give way to generosity! The tears of sorrow that flow down should be co-mingled with tears of epic joy! The name for surrender like this is: Worship!

E. So let's go back and unpack our text just a little bit more. Romans 12:1-3 (NASB):

1) V1: 1 Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies (Your whole selves) as a living and holy sacrifice (Yielded, life-laid-down, surrendered.), acceptable (i.e. Pleasing) to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (By

worship we're talking about far more than singing songs like we just did. Yes, singing and the accompanying gestures are an act of worship. But our whole lives--what we do and say, our work, our play, our day in and day out actions--these also are meant to be acceptable, pleasing, God-honoring acts of worship to our Lord!)

2) **V2: 2** *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove (Gk: dokimazō: **discover; discern**) what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (If my mind is not surrendered to God whereby He might transform and make new my thinking, how will I ever discover what His will is? Maturity comes with a changed mind.)*

3) **V3: 3** *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (Changed thinking leads to a changed mind.)*

F. Back-in-the-day, some of us went to *New Life Ministries*, a church that met in the Pataskala Town Hall. Our pastor was Kevin Metzler. A simple line from one of his sermons stuck, "*God's right, I'm wrong!*" Consider Job. Right after Job had lost everything he thought God needed some lecturing. After which God lectured Job. The Potter put the clay in his place. Then we hear this in **Job 40:1-5** (ESV): *1 And the LORD said to Job: 2 "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it." 3 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 4 "Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand on my mouth. 5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further."* (To paraphrase Job: "**God--You're right and I'm wrong!**")

G. Let's go to the Gospel. Remember Jesus' parable about the Pharisee and tax collector who went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee, thinking more highly of himself than he ought, went on and on and on about how righteous he was. But the tax collector, reduced to humility, just beat his chest and cried out, "*God have mercy on me, a sinner!*" (We never want to arrive at that place too late...)

H. In Matthew's account of the crucifixion, we learn that both thieves were hurling insults at Jesus. But Luke's account gives us the rest of the story. Perhaps it happened in the darkness that descended upon Golgotha. Or perhaps when the ground shook and the rocks split open. Or perhaps it was Jesus' manner of dying as the Spirit of God's was at work. But one thief who'd been hurling insults at Jesus, stopped. He even rebuked the other thief. It's like he came to his senses and said, "*Wait a minute--I'm wrong here--but the One next to me is right!*" Then he looks at Jesus and says, "*Remember me when You come into Your kingdom...*" And then Jesus fixes His eyes upon the thief and replies with His bloody arm stretched out in his direction, "*Today you will be with Me in Paradise.*"

I. The same Jesus who looked at that thief also looks at you with the same eyes of mercy! He not only died for the sins of that dying thief and that broken tax collector, He died for your sin too! Perhaps you already know that. Or maybe you're hearing that for the first time. (2 Cor. 5:21) This is the truth! This is more true than gravity! More true than life itself! Do you hear Him? "*Your sins are forgiven! Be mine!*"

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Romans 12:1-3 (NASB)

1 Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. **2** 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. **3** For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Job 40:1-5 (ESV)

1 And the LORD said to Job: **2** “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.” **3** Then Job answered the LORD and said: **4** “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand on my mouth. **5** I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.”

Bonus Rations for Further Nourishment

Pulling Weeds While People Are Dying - Amy Medina (Not Home Yet)

<https://amy-medina.com/pulling-weeds-while-they-are-dying-how-do-i-respond-to-the-worlds-suffering/>

Six Ways to Put Away Pride - John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNCpObSRbYY>

Rejection That Cuts Deep - Kath Thomas (The Ploughman's Rest)

https://ploughmansrest.com/blog/2021/8/14/rejection_that_cuts_deep

The Broken Church Light - Doug Eaton

<https://fightoffaithblog.com/2021/08/16/the-broken-church-light/>

Luke 18:9-14 (NLT)

9 Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: **10** “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. **11** The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people--cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector!’ **12** I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’ **13** “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ **14** I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Matthew 27:41-44 (ESV)

41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked Him, saying, **42** “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. **43** He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” **44** And the robbers who were crucified with Him also reviled Him in the same way.

Luke 23:39-43 (ESV)

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” **40** But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? **41** And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” **42** And he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” **43** And He said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

Titus 3:3-7 (ESV)

3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. **4** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** He 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, **6** whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, **7** so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Ephesians 4:17-24 (NIV)

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. **18** 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. **19** Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. **20** You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. **21** Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. **22** 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; **23** to be made new in the attitude of your minds; **24** and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:1-10 (AMP)

1 Therefore if you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, sharing in His resurrection from the dead], keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. **3** For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. **5** So put to death and deprive of power the evil longings of your earthly body [with its sensual, self-centered instincts] immorality, impurity, sinful passion, evil desire, and greed, which is [a kind of] idolatry [because it replaces your devotion to God]. **6** Because of these [sinful] things the [divine] wrath of God is coming on the sons of

disobedience [those who fail to listen and who routinely and obstinately disregard God's precepts], **7** and in these [sinful things] you also once walked, when you were habitually living in them [without the knowledge of Christ]. **8** But now rid yourselves [completely] of all these things: anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene (abusive, filthy, vulgar) language from your mouth. **9** Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old self with its evil practices, **10** and have put on the new [spiritual] self who is being continually renewed in true knowledge in the image of Him who created the new self...

Hebrews 13:15-16 (NKJV)

15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. **16** But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

1 Peter 2:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, **2** as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. **4** Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, **5** you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Psalm 101:5 (ESV)

5 Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.

Psalm 138:6 (AMP)

6 Though the LORD is exalted, He regards the lowly [and invites them into His fellowship]; but the proud and haughty He knows from a distance.

Proverbs 8:13 (NLT)

13 All who fear the LORD will hate evil. Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance, corruption and perverse speech.

Proverbs 10:8 (AMP)

8 The wise in heart [are willing to learn so they] will accept and obey commands (instruction), but the babbling fool [who is arrogant and thinks himself wise] will come to ruin.

Proverbs 16:5 (AMP)

5 Everyone who is proud and arrogant in heart is disgusting and exceedingly offensive to the LORD; be assured he will not go unpunished.

Proverbs 16:18 (AMP)

18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 18:12 (NIV)

12 Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.

Proverbs 21:4 (AMP)

4 Haughty and arrogant eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked [their self-centered pride], is sin [in the eyes of God].

Proverbs 21:24 (ESV)

24 "Scoffer" is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.

Proverbs 26:12 (ESV)

12 Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 27:2 (ESV)

2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

Proverbs 29:21 (AMP)

23 A man's pride and sense of self-importance will bring him down, but he who has a humble spirit will obtain honor.

Proverbs 30:32 (AMP)

32 If you have foolishly exalted yourself, or if you have plotted evil, put your hand on your mouth.

Quote by A.W. Tozer

"What is worship? Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that Majesty which philosophers call the First Cause, but which we call Our Father Which Are in Heaven."

Quote by William Temple

"For worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose -- and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin."

J.I. Packer on Worship

To worship God is to recognize his worth or worthiness; to look God-ward, and to acknowledge in all appropriate ways the value of what we see. The Bible calls this activity "glorifying God" or "giving glory to God," and views it as the ultimate end, and from one point of view, the whole duty of man (Ps. 29:2; 96:6; 1 Cor. 10:31).

Scripture views the glorifying of God as a sixfold activity: praising God for all that he is and all his achievements; thanking him for his gifts and his goodness to us; asking him to meet our own and others' needs; offering him our gifts, our service, and ourselves; learning of him from his word, read and preached, and obeying his voice; telling others of his worth, both by public confession and testimony to what he has done for us. Thus we might say that the basic formulas of worship are these: "Lord, you are wonderful"; "Thank you, Lord"; "Please Lord"; "Take this, Lord"; "Yes, Lord"; "Listen everybody!"

This then is worship in its largest sense: petition as well as praise, preaching as well as prayer, hearing as well as speaking, actions as well as words, obeying as well as offering, loving people as well as loving God. However, the primary acts of worship are those which focus on God directly -- and we must not imagine that work for God in the world is a substitute for direct fellowship with him in praise and prayer and devotion.

- James Packer, *Your Father Loves You*, Harold Shaw Publishers, P. 15.

Quote by Augustine

"It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels."

Quote by Francois Fenelon

"So long as we are full of self we are shocked at the faults of others. Let us think often of our own sin, and we shall be lenient to the sins of others."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"None are more unjust in their judgments of others than those who have a high opinion of themselves."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"No matter how dear you are to God, if pride is harbored in your spirit, He will whip it out of you. They that go up in their own estimation must come down again by His discipline."

Quote by Phillips Brooks

"Call your opinions your creed, and you will change them every week. Make your creed simply and broadly out of the revelation of God, and you will keep it to the end. "

Quote by Thomas Adams

"Self-righteousness is the devil's masterpiece to make us think well of ourselves."

Renewing Your Mind

By Lee Webb - Ligonier Ministries

In July, *Renewing Your Mind* with Dr. R.C. Sproul celebrated its twenty-fourth anniversary. The name of the program, which I have the privilege of hosting, is taken from Romans 12:2: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the*

renewal of your mind.” Paul's brief exhortation provides us with the key to living as followers of Christ.

Conformity means going with the flow. So, in effect, Christians are swimming upstream by not conforming to the world. And that requires work. We're not talking about working our way into heaven. In this passage, Paul is addressing believers, those who have already been justified. And we're reminded that *“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion” (Phil 1:6)*. We're talking about our sanctification, which involves effort.

Paul described conformity to the world as *“living in the flesh,”* and he warned, *“To set the mind on the flesh is death” (Rom. 8:6)*. Charles Spurgeon was equally blunt when he said: *“If a Christian can, by possibility, be saved while he conforms to this world, at any rate it must be so as by fire. Such a bare salvation is almost as much to be dreaded as desired.”* This transformed life involves a new way of thinking. And a good place to start is a candid assessment of what dominates our current thought life. You've probably heard the expression *“you are what you eat.”* I think it's also safe to say you are what you think. Let me be the first to admit that I focus many of my thoughts on things that provide little nourishment for the soul. The psalmist reminds us:

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.” (Ps. 1:1-3)

Dr. Sproul said, *“A renewed mind results from diligently pursuing the knowledge of God.”* He explained where we find this knowledge:

God gives us the revelation of sacred Scripture in order for us to have our minds changed so we begin to think like Jesus. Sanctification and spiritual growth is all about this. If you just have it in your mind and you don't have it in your heart, you don't have it. But you can't have it in your heart without first having it in your mind. We want to have a mind informed by the Word of God.

What Transformation Looks Like

Such a clear admonition brings to mind a man we featured on *Renewing Your Mind* a few months ago. Lowell Ivey was sentenced to seventeen years in prison for armed robbery. He believed the only way he could survive behind bars was to join a white supremacist gang. Lowell conformed in every way to the group. He immersed himself in hateful, racist literature and began covering his upper body with tattoos that reflected his new identity and his hatred for people of other races. To prove his loyalty to the gang, Lowell tried to attack an African American prisoner with a homemade knife, an offense that landed him in solitary confinement.

But, one Sunday evening, while listening to a sermon on a local radio station, Lowell reached a moment of despair about the direction of his life and became convinced he was going to hell. He said: *"The tears were streaming and I simply fell on my knees before Him and I said, 'Lord, make me a Christian. Change my heart. Take this away and help me to follow You.' And He did it."*

Lowell would remain in solitary confinement seven more years, but he said that time was vital to his growth as a new believer. *"I used the time to read, study, and meditate on God's Word, and to pray. The Lord was growing me in my fellowship with Him. It wasn't wasted time."*

Providentially, Lowell discovered *Renewing Your Mind* on the radio and says Dr. Sproul's teaching was key to his growth. *"I became more theologically mature mainly from listening to that program,"* he said. He also obtained a copy of the Reformation Study Bible, the same Bible he uses today to prepare sermons as the pastor of a church in Virginia. He is also a husband and the father of three children.

Lowell's transformation is so profound that, as I interviewed him, I could not believe that the person before me was the same one that he described before his conversion. Notice how he describes the transformation from his white supremacist identity in prison:

"The Lord has delivered me so profoundly from the sin of racism. As I read His Word, and as my thinking and my affection are shaped by the Word of God, there I is no way I could harbor any animosity toward anyone."

The Motivation for Living A Transformed Life

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were reminded time and again of God's mercy in liberating them from slavery. *"For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy"* (Lev. 11:45).

Likewise, Paul bases his appeal in Romans 12 on *"the mercies of God"* (v. 1), which he detailed in chapters 3-11. He even reminds us of our liberation from slavery to sin (6:20-23). Lowell describes God's mercy in setting him free from sin: *"He has been so gracious. He has lifted me up out of the ash heap and the pit that I had dug for myself. And He's delivered me into the glorious kingdom of His Son, Jesus Christ."*

It is tempting to think Lowell's conversion is more amazing than ours. We do well to remember that, like Lowell, we were just as *dead in our trespasses and sins* (Eph. 2:1). But, like Lowell, God has shown us mercy. As Isaac Watts wrote in his famous hymn *"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"*: *"Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."*

- Lee Webb is vice president of broadcasting at Ligonier Ministries and host of *Renewing Your Mind*. This article is from the September 2018 edition of *Tabletalk Magazine*, Ligonier Ministries, 421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771. To subscribe or read other articles online, go to: <https://www.ligonier.org/>