

Transformed

Romans 12:1-2

By [Rev. Jay Shaw](#)

August 7, 2011 – Evening Sermon

We had a great impact weekend. We had around 230 people involved which is a record. We somehow fit all of them in the Mountain View building or should I say we crammed them in the Mountain View building. Some of them could barely hear. They couldn't see. The Lord really moved that weekend. I really feel like the Spirit was moving as we worshiped and studied His Word. We had a great year in the youth group. We had an incredible mission trip we took in June to Fairfield where we took 75 students to serve in missions. We led three VBSs and served the community. We partnered up with seven or eight girls from the Grace House ministry and they were a blessing on that trip. They also came to Impact weekend and stayed connected with us throughout the last couple of months. During the year we had over 30 small groups meeting on Sunday nights where students were digging in deep to God's Word.

One of my favorite stories was from our trip to Gatlinburg. Gatlinburg is our winter conference we have done for about 27 years now. This will be my 19th year in a row to go. I went three years as a student, four years as a college counselor, and this is my 12th year to go on staff. Every year we have a great speaker and a band and then when the evening rally is over we have a time for worship, prayer and praise and then we give students a chance to share their testimony.

This year we had a student who goes to Vestavia High School who shared her testimony. I'll just say her name is Hannah Grace. She shared her testimony and shared an experience she had where she really for the first time understood the Gospel and in the crowd there was another Vestavia student and I'll call her Sydney. Sydney and Hannah Grace were friends and Sydney heard her testimony. While Hannah Grace was giving her testimony Sydney ducked out of the room and went to a place where no one else was and spent some time with the Lord. She surrendered her life to Christ because she realized that she was not a believer. In her words she would say she was a faker Christian, faking being right with God. The neatest thing about that story was it wasn't only through the testimony of Hannah Grace because after we followed up with Sydney after Gatlinburg she said a lot of her conviction was when she would watch Hannah Grace at school on the track. She saw a girl that lived a transformed life. It was coupled with life style and her testimony that the Lord

used to draw Sydney to Himself. To me that is awesome and that is why we do youth ministry, so that students begin to share their faith and live out their faith. It's a testimony now that both of them are being transformed into the image of Christ.

In this study I want to talk about what it means to be transformed. What does it mean to be transformed? Romans 12:1-2 will be our text for this study and it's actually our mission statement we have for our youth group. I know most of you know those verses but I want to read them. Romans 12:1-2 says *1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father we thank You for this time together to study Your Word. I pray that You would give us insight. I pray that You would teach us what it means to have a transformed life, that we would not be Christians that are conformed to the patterns of this world but we would be transformed by the renewing of our mind that we would look different and be set apart. Teach us in this study, we pray this in Christ's Name, Amen.

I want to start by giving you some context to Romans 12. In Romans 1 we see the audience that Paul is speaking to in this book. Romans 1:7 says *7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* So he is writing this to all those in Rome but he is writing to the Christians. So we know right off that Romans is written to Christians. It is interesting because twelve chapters later as he is speaking to Christians he tells them to be transformed. Aren't you transformed when you become a Christian? Isn't that when the transformation happens? Isn't that what we are taught? When Sydney surrendered her life to Christ in Gatlinburg wasn't she transformed at that moment?

So what does it mean that we are to be transformed as well? When we come to Christ there is a transformation that takes place. We are given a new heart. We are made new. We have new desires. We are no longer in the bondage of sin. We are no longer slaves to sin. There is a transformation that takes place. Ezekiel 36:26 says *26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* We go from enemies of God to children of God. There is a transformation that takes place when we surrender our lives to Christ.

We're also called to be transformed. So when we become a Christian we're transformed and then we're called to be transformed. That's what we're going to

look at in this study. One other thing before we dig deeper into that text is that it is very important to know what those first eleven chapters talk about in Romans because Romans 12:1 starts out, "I urge you therefore..." So the question is always, what is the therefore, there for? He is basically saying, "in light of chapters 1 through 11 what I have just laid out in front of you, therefore do this in light of chapters 1 through 11." So what are chapters 1 through 11 about? It is basically where Paul explains the Gospel where man has a sin problem. The wages of sin is death for all of us fall short of the glory of God. There is a problem but there is also a solution in Jesus Christ and he lays out God's redemptive plan for fallen man.

When we get to Romans 12 he says "I urge you, I implore you, I beg you, therefore present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. Do not be conformed..." because Jesus Christ loved you so much He would die on the cross for you sins. "Therefore do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." So we are going to focus on that transformation. We are going to talk about the characteristics of a transformed life, how we become transformed and what the result is of a transformed life.

First of all, what are some characteristics of a transformed life? Transformation involves saying 'no' to the world. Romans 12:2 starts out by saying "Do not be conformed or fashioned or in line with or similar to the world." When I think about being conformed, which is probably the youth pastor inside of me dealing with students, I think of a restaurant called Pete's Famous Hotdogs. Those of you who have been there know that it's not just a restaurant but it's an experience. It's one of my favorite places to take students to because I usually build it up as we are driving there in the car that we're going to the biggest hotdog place in America. We're going to try and get in to eat there. There are hundreds of people there. It's huge but in reality when you drive up you see a door about three feet wide and when you open it the restaurant is really about three feet wide also. The guy that owns it and works there is named Gus. He is behind this grill and you literally have about two inches to stand and eat your hotdog. He is always grumpy and always yelling. As I'm explaining this to you I'm not sure why we enjoy it but we love going there because they have great hotdogs.

Gus has worked there for over 70 years. Right behind him is a shelf about five feet tall and he is about six feet tall. On it he has hamburger and hotdog buns and because that shelf was positioned in the wrong place it caused him to kind of hunch over. The combination of him cooking hotdogs and this shelf being right at his shoulder he literally couldn't have stood up because the shelf was right there causing him to hunch over. When you would see him outside the restaurant he was hunched over because he had adapted to his environment. He literally conformed to the environment around him.

That's the picture in a sense that Paul is giving us. He is saying "You are Christians and you are in this world but you're not to conform to this world or

adapt to an environment that you're in. You are not to conform to the sin of the world." Do not let Satan pour you into the mold of this world because the pattern of this world is sin – worship of self, seeking of pleasure, sexual immorality, fame, fortune, and all those things that the world says is your identity and will make you happy. The world is saying pour yourself into this mold and you'll be happy and Paul is saying do not do that. As Christian you are to be set apart, holy, you're not to look like the world. You are to look completely different from the world. Remember Paul is talking to Christians here so as Christians we can get wrapped up in the things of the world and you can't tell us apart.

So my question is, is that you? Is that me at times? We can get wrapped up in the world and those around us can't tell us apart because we fit into the mold of this world. It is especially challenging for high school students because it's an age of so much pressure – peer pressure, pressure to conform, Hollywood is bombarding these young people. The audience of Hollywood is teenagers and they are being bombarded with this message that all these things will make them happy – sex, body image, life style and this is what you should look like. It tells them that this will fulfill them and bring them joy. It's a lie because it will bring destruction yet we're so tempted to believe it, to allow Satan to pour us into that mold and conform to the image of this world but a transformed life is not conformed to the image of the world. A transformed life is a life that looks like Christ. We want to be transformed to the image of Christ.

Another characteristic of transformation is transformation is drastic. It's a drastic process. The Greek word for transformed in this text is *metamorphu* and that's what we get metamorphosis from. When you think of metamorphosis what do you think of? I think of the caterpillar to the butterfly and that's what most of us think of when we think of the process of metamorphosis. I think of a caterpillar with lots of legs crawling up a tree and gets into this cocoon. It's this very gentle process where something happens in this weird little cocoon and in a couple of days he turns into this beautiful butterfly. Really it's not a gentle process at all. There is a stage in metamorphosis called histolysis where the caterpillar literally dies to itself. It has a drastic transformation. Its body is broken down and it literally dies. It's literally transformed.

That's the picture that Paul is giving us. It's not this gentle process. When we become Christians we are to be transformed and become more like Christ but that is a drastic process. It's not that these little areas in our life change and these stay the same. It's not this gentle process where part of us changes. No, it's a drastic process. We are called to die to ourselves and live for Christ. Galatians 2:20a says *20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.* When we are transformed we are called to die to ourselves and live for Christ. That's why in Romans 12:1 says to present your bodies as a *living* sacrifice. You are living physically but sacrifice implying some sort of death where we die to our old self, to sin and live for Christ. So we go

from loving the world and hating Christ to loving Christ and hating the world. That's the process of transformation.

Transformation is a drastic process of dying to ourselves but it's also a daily process. We don't like that very much because we want a quick fix. We want to become Christians and be just like Jesus and have no problems. We want to have a perfect desire for Him and a perfect obedience to Him. We want that perfect knowledge and be completely transformed immediately after becoming a Christian. That would cause us to use very little faith if that were the case.

Transformation is a daily process. Jesus told His disciples to take up their cross daily and follow Him. It's not a quick fix. It's us waking up every single day and saying 'no' to sin and 'yes' to Christ. Even as Christians we like sin and there are certain things that draw us in. There are certain things that give us pleasure that we want and that we know are not pleasing to the Lord. We are to say 'no' to those things every day and 'yes' to Christ.

Transformation is a daily process. Philippians 1:6 says *6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* It's a daily and lifelong process. So back to the butterfly analogy, in a sense we are in this cocoon stage where we are being transformed. Our old self is dying every day and we're becoming more and more like Christ. It's not until heaven that we'll be perfect, perfectly transformed.

So how are we to be transformed? Paul says when you become a Christian you are transformed and you have a new heart but then he says not to be conformed to the world but be transformed. So we are called to be transformed, so how do we do that? We do that by the renewing of your mind. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. I'd like to take a look at Ephesians 4:17-24. Here Paul uses the same language of renewing your mind but he adds a word in there. This goes along with Romans 12:1-2 and transformation. Ephesians 4:17-24 says

17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self (that drastic transformation of dying to self), which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Romans 12:2 says to be transformed by the renewal of your mind and Ephesians says to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. So it is important to understand

what the Christian mind is. When we think of the mind we often think of the brain and that is the thinking center where we pour a bunch of facts and that's all the brain does. It's more than that. This passage refers to the spirit of the mind. I think John Piper says it best when he says "The mind is more than a center where a bunch of facts and data are poured in. The mind has a mindset. The mind doesn't just view things, it has a viewpoint." The mind doesn't just deceive and protect. It has a posture. It has a demeanor. It has a barring. It has an attitude. It has a vent and that's what has to be changed. That's what has to be renewed. It's not just the data that goes in there.

The reason it has to be changed or renewed is because we are fallen and we want to be God. We are saved sinners but we are still sinners. We still have this desire to control our lives and to be God. So the spirit of the mind is this mindset. It's this posture that we have. Paul tells us that we have to renew that. You have to change that. When we become Christians we want a new mindset, a new posture, a new demeanor, a viewpoint that is Biblically centered and not world centered.

The word 'renew' literally means to renovate. So that's even a better picture. I know where my wife and I bought house about five years ago we bought a fixer upper, so it was a disaster. When we bought it we knew we were going to have to renovate the kitchen. The kitchen has these old appliances with red countertops that were hideous. It has really old cabinets. We knew it didn't just need a touch up. It needed to be renovated. So we took everything out and gutted it completely. We put in all new appliances, countertops and painted the cabinets to look brand new. That's the picture we have here. We are to renew, renovate, and gut what is in our minds. We are to gut out the old man and put in Christ. We are to have new mindset. That's what it means to renew the spirit of our mind.

This takes effort on our part and I think this is where we fall short. I often find myself praying to the Lord "Lord, please give me more of a desire for You. I want to serve You more. Help me to feel and experience You more. Help me to love others more. Help me to want to read Your Word." I pray this often and then sit idly by and wait on the Lord to do something. Guess what? Nothing happens. Does that mean He could have given me more of a desire for Him? Absolutely. Could He give me more of a desire to read His Word? Absolutely, but He has also given us the ingredients to cultivate a new mind, to cultivate a heart for Him. He has given us His Word, prayer and the Holy Spirit that we rely on. He has given us community groups here at the church where we experience community with other Christians. He has given us small groups where we can get with other Christians and have accountability.

He has given us the tools to renew our minds and we have our part. So it's not just by prayer that we renew our minds but it's through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit as He uses the tools that God has given us of the Word,

fellowship, and others that we're going to renew our minds. So the way to renew your mind is by the power of the Holy Spirit as He works in prayer through His Word.

We will close with this. What is a result of a transformed life? Romans 12:2 says *2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* As Christians don't we want to be in the will of God? Don't we want to be walking in the will of God? I can't tell you how many times I have prayed that. "Lord, I want to be in Your will. I want to know what You want for my life. I want to know what Your will is for me, how I can serve Your Kingdom." That's what we want and the result of renewing your mind is that you will have a transformed life. The end result is that you will know God's will, you will be walking in His will, you will know and be able to discern the will of God, the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Think about 'the perfect will of God.' It's not just what is best for us but it's what is perfect for us. His will isn't always easy but it's always the perfect plan for us. It's only in His will that we will find our true joy.

I want to close using Hannah Grace and Sydney. Sydney became a Christian and there was this transformation but I have really been able to observe her and Hannah Grace become more and more like Christ, even in these last six months. They came up to me a couple of months ago really excited and said "Hey, we have a non Christian friend that goes to Vestavia High with us and we went to lunch with her building a friendship. The other day when we were having lunch we pulled out a napkin and drew out the Bridge to Life. We explained the Gospel to her and the girl said she had never heard the Gospel presented that clearly." Two fifteen year olds at a restaurant with a non believer, pulling out a napkin writing out the Bridge to Life and the response was I've never heard it presented so clearly. It wasn't these girls necessarily speaking to her but it was the Holy Spirit working through them as they sought to renew their mind and become transformed. The girl ended up praying to receive Christ.

We have two lives that are transformed, being transformed and now the Lord is using them to transform others. It's an unbelievable testimony. So do not be conformed to the image of the world. Do not let Satan pour you into the mold of this world. To the Youth Group I would say "Stand strong in the Lord. The Holy Spirit will give you power to say 'no' to sin and 'yes' to Christ." Do not be conformed to this world. The world will tell you a bunch of lies and that road will lead to destruction but Christ has a perfect will for your life. Only in His will, will you have full joy.

I want to do something a little different in closing this study. If you are able to get the name of a student and what grade they are in, pray for them that they would not conform to the pattern of this world and that they would be transformed by the renewing of their mind. I ask you to commit to praying that for them for this

coming school year and I think the Lord will really bless that in their lives. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could study Your Word. Renew our minds daily to be more like You in all we do and say. Help us to use the tools You have given us – Your Word, prayer and the Spirit – to be transformed in our mind and not to conform to this world, to say 'no' to sin and 'yes' to You. Thank You for Your grace, mercy and patience with us. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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