

Renewing of Our Minds

06/11/17

Romans 12:2

Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

At some point in our lives, we've wanted to change something about ourselves: our weight, or looks, personality, situations, our lives...

When I was younger, I took a class where personalities were discussed. The subject got around to quiet and shy people – and the idea that once they were rid of their inner demons they would open up and become more outgoing and less inhibited.

Although it was not a professional discussion, it made an impression on me. I really wanted to be more outgoing and friendly but it was so foreign to me. I started thinking that maybe I was introverted because I had inner problems. I knew I had problems, but I didn't think that anyone else knew it!

Well, of course as I have grown in knowledge, I now know that outgoing people are just as messed up as us introverts! It has nothing to do with inner demons or psychological problems; all sorts of personalities are perfectly natural across the vast spectrum of possibilities, and each is susceptible to psychosis.

All kidding aside, people often want to change themselves. I have observed a number of television programs that allude to this desire in people: dirty houses being made clean, people losing weight, clothing choices, shows about complete makeovers, and there are many I probably have no idea even exist. But they play on our human desires to be different than who we are now.

More than anything, we want to be accepted, approved of, and appreciated. So we want to be like those people, because we don't currently feel that way. There have been times in my life when I sought to align with particular standards dictated by our culture in hopes that through my conformity I would gain respect, acceptance, approval, and appreciation. There were times when I wore a stocking cap because that is what Bronson wore. I believed other people thought it was cool.

Did you know that some people are not bound to be cool, no matter what they do or wear? That was me. As far as I know, nobody that I have ever known has ever wanted to be like me. I am part of the un-cool.

So some people smoke, drink, do drugs, wear particular clothing and hairstyles in hopes of being accepted. They want to be admired and appreciated. They work particular jobs and pursue specific careers with the goal of gaining approval and being held in high approval. They behave in a particular way, use a particular vocabulary, and like particular things so that they can fit in to a specific crowd of their choosing.

Perhaps no one more dramatically demonstrated this desire to transform into something different than Michael Jackson. He endured skin treatments and numerous surgeries. This was a sad case of a man fraught with inner demons and desperately seeking to conform; to be someone he was not.

Other people do just the opposite: they seem to outwardly buck the establishment and tradition, being the non-conformist and rebel. Strangely, this radical and antiestablishmentarianistic behavior and thought pattern has a law of conformity of its own. So, all the free-spirits tend to wear the same type of hair, wear the same type of clothes, get tattoos, and piercings, that identify them as nonconformists. They become a large group of nonconformists all conforming to standards previously established by other nonconformists.

Some of us, when we want to conform to the general population but still want to express a little nonconformity, we get a little tattoo hidden away somewhere, or unconventional piercing. It makes us feel like we've taken a step on the wild side while still being accepted by the boring ordinary folk.

I do not mean to imply that this is everyone's motivation in their behavior. It is not. Most of us are simply trying to have a nice day. We go about our business unaware of these conformity issues - until we look in the mirror and see that we haven't shaved, or our hair is a little out of place, or we've put on a few extra pounds, or that our clothes are kind of 1980's. This is when we notice that we are no longer conforming with the

standards that we have established for ourselves, or... perhaps we have adopted these standards.... or our parents taught us....

Where do these standards come from, anyway?

The world, best I can figure out. They come from the world, the socioeconomic environment in which we live: what we see others do, hear others say. They come from our friends, parents, society, our culture, our schooling, and what we read and listen to. We call it ‘this world’. We each individualize our own set of standards, keep what works for us, feels right, makes sense, and gets the results we want, and abandon the rest. These sets of principles are different for each of us, yet are pulled from the same common pool of the world. Sadly, it is often the lowest common denominator of humanity that is our inspiration for behavior.

And from the perspective of ‘this world’ who is the ultimate decision maker for what is kept and what is discarded? By default, it is our ego. It is the small mind, small self, lower human part of us that determines our behavioral set and our thought patterns.

The Bible verse says “Patrick, do not conform to this world,” to this physical world. We cannot avoid it. We will experience it and know this world, but we do not have to embrace it and make it our source of guiding principles. So we try not to align ourselves with the lower standards encouraged by the ego. Those are the desires the ego wants fed: control, power and

dominance, lust, jealousy, greed, hate, and all the other dark and hurtful desires.

We are instructed not to conform to this world of lower desires, which implies that there is another world: a world of higher level thought and values; a world that is determined by our higher natures, our spiritual natures.

We are then told that we can be transformed from this common world to the other world by renewing our minds. I like the word used here – renew. For me this means to make new again, which means that it was new once, then it got used, dirtied up, shabby, and hindered, then is made new again. Renewed.

It is our ego that molds us, unless we deliberately seek out our higher self, by hitting ‘reset’ on our spiritual nature. “*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” This means to stop allowing the useless, detrimental, ego-based thoughts to shape our thinking, and allow our minds, hearts, and souls to ‘reset’ back to their original Christ-filled spiritual setting.

Colossians 3:8-12 ⁸*But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Part of allowing God to be present in our lives, hearts, and thoughts as compassion and patience is already an indicator that we have hit the reset button. By simply asking for God to come into our hearts and lives we are renewing our minds, we are re-establishing our God-connection and the transformation occurs.

I also believe this transformation from ego-based thinking and living to higher-self Christ-filled thinking is instantaneous. There's a good side to that and a bad. The good side is that it is immediate – we can instantly change our thinking and instantly be transformed into a new being.

The downside is that in the next moment we can revert back to ego-based degeneracy. Higher level living requires higher level thinking - where we stay in the moment with God; from one moment to the next we maintain a consistency of awareness through which God then reveals His good, acceptable and perfect will.

II Corinthians 4:16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Through the renewing of the mind, our attitude improves: the routine activities become sacred and meaningful; hurtful words and behaviors towards us in the past are forgiven and released

into a calm sea of peace. The half-empty glass becomes instantaneously half full.

Although our human nature quickly judges some people, events, and circumstances as bad, through the renewed mind we pause and see differently. When we set aside our ego, we look for and find God's good in all situations. We stop judging and comparing, and we simply observe and love. We look for commonality not differences; we build bridges, not walls.

Ephesians 4:23-24 tells us this: *Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

And as we are transformed, we affect others through our new nature. God will use us to open the minds of others for renewal. It happens as we put on our new self, renewing ourselves daily by bathing in the presence and awareness of Spirit. As we refrain from conforming to the ways of the world and realign ourselves with our inner Divine Will, we are guided to revise our goals, values, and intentions, and begin again to express in our lives the good, acceptable, and perfect Will of God.

Let us pray....