

“How Can I Change My Old Ways and Sinful Habits”
Romans 12:2

Every Christian knows what it means to struggle with sin. David, the prince of all Biblical poets asked the Lord to keep him from “hidden sins,” and also that willful sins would not “rule over him.” (Psalm 19:12-13) *“Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.”*

Today we are going to speak about the most important principle to maintain a victorious Christian Life.

(Romans 12:2) *“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.”*

In today’s study, we will examine the **three key words**. These three words from Romans 12:2 demonstrate clearly that the battle is a battle for our mind. To ensure that wilful sins do not “rule over us,” we must win the battle for our minds. We will close our message with practical help on **how to put this into practice**.

Conformed

First, we are instructed, *“do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.”* The word in focus is Conformed. It comes from a combination of two Greek words. The first is “**sys**,” normally meaning “with.” The second is the word “**schema**,” which is the foundation for our word “scheme,” and here means “to be made in the likeness of something else.” The lexicon defines the word as meaning “To form or mold after something.” (BAGD)

To help us understand it’s meaning, we can look to the only other NT usage, (1 Peter 1:14) *“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.”*

The idea of not conforming to the world is expressed in several different English translation:

And be not fashioned according to this world (American Standard Version)

Do not be shaped by this world (New Century Version)

Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world (New Living Translation)

Perhaps the most memorable translation, and also the closest to the original idea of this word is found in J. B. Philips NT paraphrase, *“Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold”* (JBP).

This phrase reminds me of the process of creating a ceramic item from a mold. Clay is “pressed into” the mold, either liquid clay or soft clay. It completely takes on the form of the mold.

Christians are to beware of the danger of being squeezed into the *thinking* of the world. As I mentioned above, it is a battle for the mind.

How do we Avoid the Pressure of the World System?

We cannot escape the world. In Christ’s prayer, he made it clear that we his followers would remain *in the world*. (John 17:14-16) *"I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it."*

BUT we are not to be DRAWN INTO the THINKING or BEHAVIOR of this WORLD system. Simply put, "Worldliness is a system of values and goals from which God is excluded" (Zane Hodges). It is a system ruled by Satan.

- (John 12:31) *"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out."*
- (John 14:30) *"I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me,"*
- (Ephesians 2:2) *"in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."*

Christian, you were delivered from this way of living!

- (Ephesians 4:17) *" 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."*
- (Ephesians 5:8) *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light"*
- (Colossians 3:7) *"You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived."*
- (1 Peter 4:3) *"For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry."*

So, do not be **conformed**. Christ has called us to a new life, a life different from our former lives. A life that does not behave like the world.

Our **second key word is TRANSFORMED** (*but be transformed*)

This world describes “a transformation that is outwardly visible” (BAGD). It is Used in only 3 NT references. *One of them is* - Mark 9:2, where Jesus was *transformed*. During this moment Jesus revealed his pre-incarnate glory to three of his disciples. They were privileged to see what was really truly on the inside. His glory was allowed to shine

through! The reason for this *transformation* is that the glory was already there. It was within and allowed to shine! You are the same way. The glory of Christ resides within you if you are born again. The transformation occurs when we allow His glory to radiate through our lives. It's not that we change into something we are not. It is that the reality of who Christ made us is allowed to shine through.

A butterfly does not emerge from a caterpillar for any other reason than that the DNA for butterflies is already present in the caterpillar!

- A WORM will not turn into a Butterfly
- A SLUG will not turn into a Butterfly

Neither will an unbeliever turn into a transformed creation. A new DNA must be planted in our lives. The DNA of the person of Christ! Consider this teaching: (1 Cor 2:16) "*For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?*" *But we have the mind of Christ.*" In Romans 8:9-12 we learn that the Spirit lives in us!

Other uses of this word reveal a similar thought. (2 Corinthians 3:18) "*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*"

Our final word helps us understand how this process takes place. The word is **RENEWED** (*by the renewing of your mind*). It means "made new."

Our mind needs to be made new. The potential is there, but we must allow it to be activated by the Word of God.

Our SINFUL MIND is corrupt. Without a Christ generated change, we cannot hope to fix our moral problems, The problem is not only a lack of desire but also a lack of ability. "The problem is not that our minds are FINITE, the problem is that our minds are FALLEN" (Piper "The Renewed Mind and How to Have .")

Paul explains this in Romans "*Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a **depraved mind**, to do what ought not to be done.*"

We read in (1 Timothy 6:5) "*and constant friction between men of **corrupt mind**, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*"

We can learn from Peter's remarks. (1 Peter 1:13-14) "*Therefore, **prepare your minds for action**; ...As obedient children, do not conform to the **evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.***" Without a regenerated mind from Christ, all that we have is the mind of the world. A fallen, corrupt, hopeless mind. It is a mind of ignorance, meaning that it does not know how to please God. This is our problem. This is why all of our efforts to reform our own behavior eventually fall short. It is in our nature to act against

God's commands, and only a change in our nature can prompt us to do anything else.

(Titus 1:15) *"To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are **corrupted and do not believe**, nothing is pure. In fact, both their **minds and consciences** are corrupted."*

Our NATURAL MIND cannot accept spiritual truth. **(1 Cor 2:14-16)** (2 Corinthians 4:4) *"The god of this age has **blinded the minds** of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*

So, there is a BATTLE for our MIND. We need to constantly *renew our minds* so that they think like Jesus would have us to think, and not the way we think without his life changing transformation.

Salvation RELEASES us from the control of Satan. Sanctification STRENGTHENS us so we do not return to his control.

So, How do we RENEW our MIND?

It is not a NEW APPEARANCE, such as clothing or styles. There is no "Christian" way to dress, unless you are speaking about the need to dress modestly and within our financial means. What I am saying is that God is not as concerned with our outward conformity as he is with our inward reality.

Victory over our "willful sins" (Psalm 19:13) cannot be achieved in following a NEW LIST OF RULES. Christians have always attempted to compress Christian living into rules that can be forced on others.

The change, and the hope to overcome difficult sinful thoughts and habits comes from the indwelling Christ.

To allow this in our lives, the following three things must take place:

His WAY (Hebrews 10:20) *"by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,"*

His WALK (Ephesians 5:8) *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light"*

His WORD (1 Peter 2:2) *"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,"* (Colossians 3:16) *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."*

ONLY the WORD of GOD can make a CORRUPT MIND into a NEW MIND.

(James 1:18) *"He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."*

SATAN attempts to get us BACK TO THE OLD WAYS of thinking!

ONLY the WORD of GOD can keep us from returning to the our former ways.
(Ephesians 4:20-23) *"You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were **taught** in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. **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;**"*

Victory over old ways and sinful habits

- is **possible**. (You have been given the mind of Christ - the promise of victory!)
- is **gradual**. (It is a lifetime pursuit!)
- Requires discipline (1 Corinthians 9:25) *"Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training."*

Some of the habits that promote a changed mind are habits like:

- Daily Quiet time
- Scripture memorization
- "saying no" to things that corrupt our minds
- Godly Christian Reading and Music

When we start to live this way, our minds will be transformed. The reality that is already there will begin to show (the reality of the mind of Christ). We cannot hope to achieve power over our old ways and sinful habits by simply trying harder. The hope for victory has already been established. It has been written on the "tablets of our hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:3). It is up to us to allow this transformation to shine through. How? By an immersion in the Word of God. Study it. Read it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. It will allow the change to shine through!