**July 28, 2019**

**Session 18: Romans 12:2**

Having gone through the first part of the checkpoint in Romans 12:1, concerning those three issues of our sanctification and sonship, we now turn our attention to verse 2.

Last time I brought up three issues which needed to be in our thinking as we look at Romans 12:2.

1. The effectual working of God’s word is to conform us to the image of God’s Son
2. Our conforming to image of Christ is necessary if we are to be capable of laboring with God
3. The process whereby we are conformed is what makes us into the godly creatures we were made to be

In verse 2, Paul exhorts us to “be transformed.” And, as we talked about last week, we are being transformed from something and into something.

How are we to be transformed? What is the process by which that will take place? That process begins by “the renewing of our mind.”

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed **by the renewing of your mind**…

We talked about this issue of renewing before. There are a couple of ways to understand the word “renew.” Sometimes we “renew” in the sense that we “remind” ourselves of something we already knew; we renew our thinking.

But there is also a sense in which renew means “to revise; to change.” And that is the OED’s number one definition for “renew.”

OED: renew – 1) to revise, to do over

That is what our apostle is referring to when he says not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by “revising/changing” what is in our mind.

So the first way, the foundational issue whereby we are transformed is by revising…what; by renewing…what? By renewing what is in our mind. And another word for that would be our…what? Our thinking.

This renewed thinking is the catalyst for our transformation because that renewed thinking will not only manifest itself in what we think, but, if responded to properly, it will also manifest in our conduct.

Now look at the verse again.

Romans 12:2 And 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.

What does it mean to “prove” something? Again, this is one of those words which has multiple meanings.

OED: prove – 1a) to make trial of, to put to the test; 6) to give demonstration or proof of by action

To “prove” is to “demonstrate.” So what are we demonstrating? That last phrase that begins with, “that ye may prove…” is a purpose statement.

In other words, Paul is about to tell us the reason for being transformed. We are being transformed for the purpose of demonstrating … what? We are being transformed for the purpose of demonstrating three aspects of “the will of God.”

Don’t get confused about “the will of God” as though that pertains to some perfect plan of who you should marry, where you should go to school, what kind of work you should engage in, and things like that.

This is God’s will as it pertains to your sanctification, as it pertains to the cry of Abba, Father, as it pertains to your adoption, as it pertains to your education as a son. In other words, where is your sanctification headed, ultimately? What is the working of God’s word in our inner man all about? Why do we need to be edified; what is edification?

When we answer these questions, then we understand the particular way in which Paul is talking about “the will of God.” By the way, God’s will is identical for every saint.

In the old days, I misunderstood God’s will. I thought God had a will for me and one for you and that they were different. I even taught Romans 12:2 from that standpoint; that God’s “good” will was that which was revealed in His word for every saint…

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

…and God’s “perfect” will (not revealed in the Scripture, but revealed by impulses and circumstances) was the individualized will for specific life decisions we would make. But that is not the right way to understand God’s will.

Today, what believers often do is try to ascertain God’s will by God somehow telling them what His will is. They look for a “still, small voice” or some “inner prompting,” or they flip through their Bible unto they feel led to stop at a place and start reading, or they silently meditate unto they get some impression in their mind. None of that is how God is revealing His will.

The truth is, we are going to be able to tell God what His will is. We will determine, based on the education given to us in God’s word, God’s will in a situation or circumstance. That is adult sonship thinking and decision-making.

But since we do know these things, the idea here in vs. 2 is that we intelligently acknowledge our desire is to be transformed, to our Father

The question you should be able to answer is: Transformed into what?

If we are not being conformed to this world, then what are we expecting to be transformed into? We will be transformed from what into what?

We are going to be transformed from: a natural, ungodly man, with ungodly thinking, ungodly conduct and with no natural capacity to labor with God. Whether we realize it or not, the course of this world has done a lot of damage to our mind. We have been trained to think in an ungodly way. And by “ungodly,” I do not mean to say that our every thought is overtly evil, but it is a thinking that God does not have in His mind. All our lives, we are being educated by the world to think and behave in a way that is very different from the way our Father thinks and acts.

That is what I am talking about when I say, we are going to be transformed from: a natural, ungodly man, with ungodly thinking, ungodly conduct and with no natural capacity to labor with God.

And what are being transformed into? If you say we are transformed into the image of God’s Son, that is a good answer. And if we are conformed to the image of God’s Son, then we will demonstrate that (prove that) in three particular ways.

Just remember, this transformation begins with the renewing of our mind; a change in our thinking. Our mind is the natural starting place for this transforming to take place because our thinking is the foundation upon which will be built our godly living and godly labor. Therefore, when the thinking is godly, in allows for godly living and godly labor to take place. In other words, the only way to be conformed to the image of God’s Son is by the sonship doctrine working in you. Nothing else can accomplish that.

All of man’s systems may educate and inform with data, but none of them can produce godly edifying.

1 Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is* our hope; 2 Unto Timothy, *my* own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. 3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they **teach no other doctrine**, 4 **Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies**, which minister questions, rather than **godly edifying** which is in faith: *so do*.

Godly edifying is the building up (edifying) of the components of godliness (godly describes the kind of edifying) in our inner man.

The only thing that renews our mind so that godliness in all its aspects can take place is the sonship education.

Going to church, being involved in various activities and having fellowship can be valuable in certain situations, but they are not the final goal.

Next, we will define each of the particular aspects of God’s will and show them each to be a purpose for which we are being transformed.

Romans 12:2 And 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.

As we said earlier, the “will of God” will be manifested in these three aspects: good, acceptable and perfect. Before we identify these, let us look at the issue of God’s will for a moment. We are going to “prove” or demonstrate God’s will.

Now, getting back to the question, “What are those three aspects of God’s will?” They are: good, acceptable and perfect.

Before we define those 3 descriptive terms, just remember what we talked about at the beginning of the session:

1. God’s word to us is an education curriculum that produces edification (unto godliness)
2. Godly Edifying takes place as God’s word effectually works in us
3. As we are edified, we are conformed to the image of God’s Son
4. That edification is the “transformed” that we are exhorted to be in Romans 12:2 (“be ye transformed”
5. The transformation process makes us into the godly creatures we were designed to be

To sum those up together, the purpose behind our creation, the reason we have been adopted is so that we might possess godliness; that we might be godly (like God) in our thinking, living and labor. And the accomplishment of that is what our sonship education is all about.

Romans 12:2 And 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.

Since we have come to know that God’s will is not about the details of our lives which differ one from another, such as who we should marry, what kind of work we should do, where we should go to college, etc. But when it comes to the issue of God’s will, His will is the same for every saint. It is His will for us to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is His will for us to be edified unto godliness. And therefore, it is God’s will for us to be “godly” in three particular ways; thinking, living and labor. And in order for that to take place, every saint is to be transformed by the renewing of [their] mind, and that is God’s will too.

The “good” will of God concerns our thinking. The “good” will of God concerns the start of our transformation process; the “renewing of your mind.” Renewing our mind is not all there is to our being transformed; it is the beginning of it.

As we read vs. 2, there is a tendency to see these three aspects as “adjectives” that describe God’s will. But I do not see it so much as a three-fold description of God’s will. Within the context of the verse, we are to expect the sonship curriculum to transform us, beginning with the renewing of our mind so that we might demonstrate the totality of godliness (thinking, living and labor) which are all God’s will for every saint.

The first aspect of God’s will as it concerns our being “godly” is for us to think like God thinks. The sonship education is what makes our mind “good.” And when we put godly thinking on display, that is God’s “good” will for every saint. This godly thinking is what replaces the corrupt, evil and worldly information that occupied it before. That is called “the renewing of our mind.” The good will of God is describing the effects of the education on our thinking.

Our education is comprised of “sound words” which formulate “sound doctrine” which produces a “sound mind.”

2 Timothy 1:13 Hold fast the form of **sound words**, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Titus 2:1 But speak thou the things which become **sound doctrine**:

2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a **sound mind**.

The next aspect of “acceptable.”

Romans 12:2 And 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.

OED: acceptable – capable, worthy, gladly received…

Acceptable focuses on the part of our education which allows us to demonstrate our godly thinking in our conduct and behavior. This is the way we live; godly living. This kind of living is acceptable unto God.

The last one, of course, has to do with godly labor.

Before we get into that, do you understand the difference between godly living and godly labor? The “labor” has to do with a particular thing that God is working to accomplish in this world through His sons and daughters. The godly living has to do with any and every way that we can incorporate the godly thinking into our conduct.

Beyond that, there is something in particular that God desires to have done in this world. Only a son who has godly thinking and godly living working in him will be able to labor with God in this particular job.

Romans 12:2 And 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.

Then, based upon the godly thinking and living, the son can labor with God in a way that has “perfection” to it. And what do I mean by “perfection?” When a son is able to emulate the Father in all that he (the son) does, that godly labor is said to be “perfect.” That is what it means to “come unto a perfect man.”

2 Timothy 3:17 That the man of God may be **perfect**, throughly furnished unto all good works.

There are three words to look at here: 1) perfect 2) throughly and 3) furnished. Let’s start with “perfect.” This is not talking about sinless perfection or never failing.

OED: perfect – 2) fully accomplished; thoroughly versed, trained, skilled or conversant.

Now we come to the word, “thoroughly.”

OED: thoroughly – in all respects; fully, completely, wholly, entirely, perfectly.

So the first part of the verse is saying that the man of God may be “completely and entirely trained and skilled.” That is the goal. The goal of what? Well, just look at the verse that comes before.

2 Timothy 3:16 **All scripture** *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 **That the man of God may be** perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

It is the goal of the scriptures to completely (thoroughly) train the man of God…

The goal of that training is given the second half of the verse:

2 Timothy 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, **throughly furnished unto all good works.**

OED: furnished – 2) Generally preceded by a qualifying adverb

2a) provided or stocked with something material or immaterial

2c) equipped, informed, instructed, prepared

With this much definition, we would say the man of God who has been thoroughly versed, trained and skilled is “stocked with information which equips, informs, instructs and prepares” him unto every good work.

So, “throughly” would be describing how the man is equipped, informed, instructed and prepared.

Therefore, the correct word to describe “furnished” would be “throughly” ‘and not “thoroughly” as he is furnished according to the definition:

OED: throughly –through, from beginning to end

Let me give you an example of the proper use of “throughly” instead of thoroughly.”

* If the toothpick comes out clean, the cake is **throughly** baked.
* Use a meat thermometer to ensure that meat, poultry and fish products are **throughly** cooked.

Throughly is the correct word because it is describing the completeness of the process from beginning to end, not the detail within the process, which would be thoroughly.

By definition, from Romans 12, “good” works would be works that emanate from “godly thinking.”

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto **a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

2 Timothy 3:17 That **the man of God may be perfect**, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Colossians 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may **present every man perfect** in Christ Jesus:

Paul is teaching every man in all wisdom so that they will be “perfect.” That is to say, that they will be finished, complete, wanting nothing.

Therefore, the “perfect” will of God is when a man takes that renewed (good) thinking and the resultant (acceptable) behavior, and utilize them in some aspect of God’s business (labor!) This is the clue that in the book of Romans, our education is going to follow this pattern: thinking, living and labor. That is the order of the doctrine throughout.

In each form of doctrine we will be taught things designed to change the way we think. Next, we are taught something about how to incorporate that renewed thinking into our everyday conduct and behavior. Finally, once those are up and running in us, we will be given the opportunity to put that form of doctrine to work in one of God’s operations.

And that is what it means for us to “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” That is the entirety of the package of godliness.

This second aspect of the checkpoint is to acknowledge to God that you understand that His will is not be conformed to this world: but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (put on display) every aspect of godliness; or “what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”