

Doing Good: God's Will – Romans 12:1-2 (Romans 12:21)

I listened this week to a man tell his story of forgiveness. He told of a time when his grandmother was taken to the hospital in his small community in Indiana. He would visit her on his way to work each day. He remembers the day when he stopped by the hospital, and after a brief visit was asked by the nurse to leave, as he needed to care for his patient. The man understood and made his way to work. He no sooner got into his office when he got a call: his grandmother was dead.

The story unfolds that that nurse was systematically killing patients, and may have been responsible for between 100 and 150 deaths in that hospital. How would you respond as the grandson? Of course, the first reactions were shock and disbelief, then anger and bitterness, but finally he came to the place of forgiveness.

Why would anyone forgive the man who killed your grandmother? Why would he forgive a serial killer responsible for the death of dozens of people? Certainly he would be justified to carry anger and a desire for revenge for the rest of his life, or so most people would say. But he chose to forgive, and forgiveness is always a choice. Why would he do that?

The answer is simple: because he is a Christian.

There is no doubt that this murder is evil. How do you overcome such evil? By doing what Jesus commanded his disciples to do: forgive. This good act takes away the power of that evil in the life of the grandson.

Today we wrap up our focus on the command in Romans 12:21 to “not be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good.”

We saw how we cannot do good until we are made good by Jesus. We must repent of our sin and put our faith in the mercy God offered to us through Jesus' death and resurrection, committing ourselves fully to God as a living sacrifice. Then we are to live our lives as an act of worship to God in all we do.

This takes us to verse 2 of Romans 12:1-2, our focus for today.

Let me read this verse to you again:

²Do 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.¹

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#). (1984). (Ro 12:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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.² (KJV)

Once again we hear a command in this verse: not a suggestion for God's people, but a command. And what is the command saying? Simply put, the Christian must live a different kind of life than those who do not know Christ, and as we do, we will discover that God's ways are best!

Walk with me through this verse:

The first part says, "Be not conformed to this world." The NIV translation, "do not conform any longer" misses the point. The Greek verb here suggests that the pressure to conform is not a decision from within, but a pressure from without. That is why the KJV, "be not conformed" or the ESV, "Do not be conformed" gives a better translation. There is a pressure trying to make us look like the world, but we should be children of God. Resist that pressure, Paul is saying.

J.B. Philips translates this, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould."

Every day there is pressure put on you to live like the world, to like the things the world likes, to do things the way the world does, to think like the world thinks. The pressure is unrelenting, and will be until Jesus comes to rescue us from this present age.

Constant pressure on a person can certainly make a difference. American Astronaut Scott Kelly spent almost a year in space. There he did not experience the constant pressure of the earth's gravity on his body. So without that pressure, guess what? He was two inches taller when he returned home than he was when he left the earth!

Constant pressure on us does affect us spiritually. A survey by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Society said that 60% of American citizens claimed to be Christians. Though the study is nearly 15 years old now, it still leaves one asking, "So why is that nation not more Christian?" it appears the 60% who claimed to be Christian were squeezed into the mould of the 40%.

Survey Christians in Canada today and you discover that the values of Christians are almost the same as those who do not claim to be Christian. From the issue of abortion, to euthanasia; from beliefs on money management to marriage or gender issues, Christians seem to have taken on the values of the world instead of passing the values of Christ on to the world.

There is constant pressure to see things from the world's perspective. Many spend more time on their retirement plans than eternal plans. Some people spend more on the latest trend in clothes than they give to support the ministry of the church. Many think winning the lottery will solve their financial problems. Some are upset at new taxes on vacation homes while ignoring

² [*The Holy Bible: King James Version*](#). (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Ro 12:2). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

the people starving in our world today. And sadly, many of these folk are Christians, squeezed into the world's mould.

In Colossians 3:5-9 Paul writes: **5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices. (NIV)**

This idea of taking off the old self and putting on a new self is picked up in what the Apostle says next.

“Be transformed,” the Apostle says. The word he uses here is metamorphouste, from which we get our English word, metamorphosis. We recognize this word from the transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly. We know that the caterpillar looks nothing like the beautiful butterfly that comes out of the cocoon. The change from worm to butterfly is called metamorphosis.

Christians are not to simply try to be better people – for as we noted, sin always gets in the way. It is not about trying harder. We are to become brand new people by the grace of God. We are to be people who reflect the very character of Christ.

Paul would go on to write to the Colossian Christians what the new person in Christ should look like:

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Again we must notice that Paul does not say “transform yourself.” He says, “be transformed.” Something or someone must do this for you.

We already saw that we must confess our sins and surrender ourselves to God. In that moment we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit works in our lives, He does the transformation. He is the one who keeps us from being squeezed into the mould of the world, and he is the one who transforms our lives so they reflect the character of Christ back to our world.

This is Paul's call to sanctification. This is the work of God in every believer to transform us into the people we were created to be. Again, as we said two weeks ago, a person cannot be sanctified until they are justified. In other words, the Holy Spirit cannot produce good fruit in your life if you have not been saved from sin. This is the starting point.

And notice where the Holy Spirit does His work – in your mind: “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

The enemy will constantly plant lies and half truths in your mind so that you will continue to live like the world. The enemy wants to keep the focus on “me”, on how “I feel,” whether I am “happy or not.” He does not want you to think about whether something is right or not, or if it is God honouring or not, or even if it is a good witness to others. Satan simply wants you to think about your happiness and you getting your own way.

Satan feeds us the lie that if we focus on our own happiness, then we will truly be happy. Yet we see all around us countless people who are very unhappy, yet they have dedicated their lives to finding happiness. The pursuit of happiness is a fruitless journey. Happiness is not something you find out there waiting for you to discover all by itself. We have tried the tropical vacations and cruises, the new cars and motorhomes, the bigger house and nicer furniture, the new wardrobe and better electronic devices, we have tried a new job and a new town, we have tried new diets and new exercise routines... and still we find we are not happy. These bring a moment of happiness but it soon vanishes.

Jesus says, “I am come that you might have life, and life more abundant!”

Jesus offers something that outlasts happiness – it is called joy! He gives us a sense of purpose and hope that lasts for all this life and beyond! Yes, there will be happiness as well, but not because we sought after it, but because it was a by-product of doing things God’s way. (We will talk more about that in a moment)

Satan says if you surrender everything to Jesus and let Him have control, if you let Jesus guide your life through His Word and the voice of the Holy Spirit, you will have a boring, joyless, sad life. The truth is, life with Jesus is just the opposite.

So Paul says, let the Holy Spirit renew your mind. Every day there is a fresh start with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Every day there is a fresh surrender to the One who gave His life for us. Every day starts with a “yes, Lord, what do you want me to do?” We will look at life – and even death – differently when our minds are renewed by the Holy Spirit!

This morning I can tell you over and over how wonderful it is to know Jesus, and the amazing difference He can make in your life. But maybe it is best to hear it from other Christians. So this morning we have two people ready to share their testimony of what it means to walk with Jesus.

- invite Margie Longille and Evelyn Loh to come and share their testimony

Conclusion:

Thank you for those testimonies. Scripture says in Revelation 12:21 that Satan is overcome by the blood of Jesus and the testimonies of God's people. So keep sharing your faith!

We heard the Lord say through the Apostle Paul,

- do not be conformed to this world
- but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

He has just a few more words to add, which we need to hear. He says when we live a life surrendered to Jesus, living as a child of God and not a child of this world, we will discover something.

We will discover that God's will, his purpose for your life, the plan He has for you, is

- good
- pleasing
- and perfect!

God's will is good. There is never a hint of evil or bad in it. If someone says he/she knows something is God's will but it hurts someone else, then you can be sure he has not heard correctly. The husband that says God told him to leave his wife for his true soul mate has certainly not heard from God.

Good does not always mean easy, nor without a price. Ask any missionary who gave up everything to follow the call of God. It was not easy, but it was good.

If we are in the will of God, living in His good will, guess what? We will do good things as an overflow of that relationship with Jesus. Evil will be overcome...

God's will is pleasing. When we say "Yes" to God and do as He says, we will look back and say, that was good! There will be nothing more satisfying than doing what God wants you to do. Working at kid's camp is exhausting, yet you will keep going back because it is pleasing.

This word also has the sense that it is acceptable. No one will say this is a bad thing you have done – at least no one who knows Jesus. The world may scoff and tease, but God's will is always acceptable, first and most importantly, to God.

And God's will is perfect. The word used here is *teleos*, which speaks of accomplishing the purpose for which something was made. We will know our lives matter, and we may even be tempted to say now and then, "I was born for this!" because you were. You will never find more satisfaction in what you are doing than doing what God calls you to do.

The world promises happiness but never delivers. Don't be squeezed into its mold. Instead, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you!