TRANSFORMED NOT CONFORMED

ROMANS 12:1-2

- Perhaps no passage in the NT provides a better theological understanding of sanctification than Romans 12:1-2

Romans 12:1-2 ~ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- In these verses, Paul makes it clear that we are saved to be holy
- God has saved us, given us his holiness, and now wants us to live in light of what we already are
- Holiness embodies the very essence of Christianity…holiness ought to define who we are

- But Paul will make it clear in these verses that salvation requires hard work and diligence…no one drifts toward sanctification

- "People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated."[1]
- "Sanctification is not by surrender, but by divinely enabled toil and effort."[2]

Principle #1 – Sanctification Flows from the Gospel

Romans 12:1 ~ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- Paul makes it clear in this verse that growing in holiness and sanctification requires putting down deep roots into the soil of the Gospel
- The "therefore" at the beginning of v. 1 necessarily links the Gospel realities of chapters 1-11 with the Gospel implications in chapters 12-16
- Starting in chapter 12, Paul turns the corner from doctrine to practice and says, "Now this is how you ought to live…those mercies ought to impact your daily life…there ought to be an overflowing and heartfelt response to the many mercies that God has lavished on you through the Lord Jesus Christ"
- The "therefore" introduces the consequences of those great truths…Gospel truths have consequences!
- There are concrete practical applications and implications that should occur as a result of the Gospel
- If we take to heart the truths in Romans 1-11, then we will be affected in countless ways

- "…there is a kind of grammar we need to learn in order to live out (as well as articulate) the gospel coherently. This gospel grammar, employed in the New Testament, and coming to expression in our lives, always operates according to a basic rule:

[1] D.A. Carson
[2] Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness*

Divine indicatives (statements about what God has done, is doing, or will do) logically precede and ground *Divine imperatives* (statements about what we are to do in response)

This is true no matter the actual order in which the indicative and imperative statements appear in any given passage. Thus:

Who God is, what God has done, is doing, and will do for us (*indicative*) provides the foundation for Our response of faith and obedience (*imperative*).

Thus, his grace effects our faithfulness. This is the logic that explains the power of the gospel."[3]

- In other words, the truths of chapters 1-11 should impact how we live…because God's mercy demands a response
- In Romans 1-11, Paul explained the "mercies of God" (v. 1)
  - Chapters 1-3 = the great need for the mercies of God
  - Chapters 3-5 = the mercies of God in justification
  - Chapters 6-8 = the mercies of God in sanctification (we are freed from the power of sin by being put in union with Christ)
  - Chapters 9-11 = the mercies of God in God bringing salvation to the Gentiles through Israel's disobedience but not rejecting his people
- It has been 11 chapters of mercies…11 chapters of the grace of God toward undeserving sinners

- It is important to note that the word "mercies" (v. 1) is plural
- God has poured out multiple "mercies"…mercy upon mercy…God has not been skimpy with his mercy
- He lavished his mercy on undeserving sinners like us!

- Such mercies ought to dramatically affect how believers live
- The moral imperatives of Romans 12-16 are logically derived from the doctrinal indicatives of Romans 1-11
- In fact, within the 315 verses that comprise Romans 1-11 there are only 7 imperatives (Rom 6:12, 13, 19;10:4; 11:18, 20, 22)
- Only after clearly explaining what God has done does Paul let loose a flood of imperatives in chapter 12-16 (there are more than 20 of them in chapter 12)

- This indicative-imperative pattern is what Paul follows in many of his books (Ephesians, Colossians, etc.)

- "Paul's thinking is always: God has done this for you in Christ, therefore you should respond in the following ways. Sanctification – being devoted to God – is always the fruit of his setting us apart in and through Christ…the motivation, energy and drive for holiness are all found in the reality and power of God's grace in Christ. And so if I am to make any progress in sanctification, the place where I must always begin is the gospel of the mercy of God to me in Jesus Christ."[4]

- Thus, Paul begins this section with "therefore" meaning:
  - In view of all that God has done for you through Christ, you must not live for yourselves but rather give yourselves wholly to God...a life dedicated to God!
  - The greater your comprehension of what God has done for you, the greater your commitment should be

[3] Sinclair Ferguson, *Devoted to God,* 33.
[4] Ibid., 36.

- This results in great earnestness on Paul's part for the Romans: "I urge you" (v. 1)
- The word (*parakaleo*) literally means "to call alongside to help"
- Paul is bringing the weight of his apostolic authority to bear on this issue…he is not offering a suggestion or a recommendation…this is not just good advice or a good idea
- No, this is mandatory…required…essential…there are necessary consequences

- This means we are to keep the Gospel central in our minds and hearts always, not just at conversion

Principle #2 – Sanctification is Expressed Physically

Romans 12:1 ~ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- The reason Paul urges believers to present their bodies to the Lord is because Christian holiness expresses itself bodily
- Our "bodies" are to be presented or offered to God
- This is one of the implications now of being a believer…your body belongs to God…the members of your body…the faculties of your body…the abilities and talents of your body…all belong to God
- The word "bodies" likely represents the totality of one's life and activities, of which his body is the vehicle of expression
- It's not just a reference to skin and bones…it's all of who we are

- This is important when we remember that our "bodies" used to be instruments of sin and wickedness and rebellion against God

Romans 3:10-18 ~ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; 11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; 12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." 13 "THEIR **THROAT** IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR **TONGUES** THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR **LIPS**"; 14 "WHOSE **MOUTH** IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; 15 "THEIR **FEET** ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, 16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, 17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN." 18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR **EYES**."

- That's a spiritual autopsy report of what we were like before God saved us by his mercies

- But that's not the case anymore

Romans 6:12-14 ~ Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal **body** so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on **presenting the members of your body** to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but **present yourselves to God** as those alive from the dead, and your **members** as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:15-18 ~ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you **present** yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you **presented your members** as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now **present your members** as slaves to righteousness, resulting in **sanctification.**

- Although not fully realized yet, our bodies have been redeemed in the sense that the power of sin has been broken
- Our bodies can now become vehicles for the demonstration of God's righteousness

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 ~ **<u>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?</u>** Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! 16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH." 17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 **<u>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.</u>**

- Just like the statement "Property of the US Air Force" signifies the item belongs to the US government, believers "Property of the Lord Jesus Christ" stamped on them indicating who they belong to
- Thus, our bodies and all its faculties are now owned by another
- We belong to him and we are to be a good steward of the body God has given us to accomplish his purposes

- "…we not only have a body; our body is part and parcel of who we are. True, we have more than a physical dimension; but we live with and through our bodies. We do not exist in our present condition apart from the body. We express ourselves only by means of our body. In that sense we are our bodies! Since this is so any real sanctification by necessity takes place in and through the body. There is no such thing as sanctification that does not involve us physically…There is, of course, another reason Paul insists on this. It is in our bodies that sin, and sinful tendencies, addictions, and habits have exercised their spiritually destructive influence on us. The effect of sin is felt in bodily ways, and manifests itself in what we do with our bodies – with our eyes, hands, ears, lips, feet, and every other part of us. They are the instruments of either sin or holiness. Through them we express what is in our heart. By them the core of our thinking, feeling, desiring, and willing comes to expression…You can see immediately why this is a key to living the Christian life. For each day, through what our forefathers called eye-gate, or ear-gate, mouth-gate, hand-gate, or foot-gate, we are confronted by temptation. But we can face it well-armed if the eye, or ear, or mouth, or hand, or foot has already been devoted as a living sacrifice to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are his and it is his. Indeed it is no longer ours but Christ's."[5]

- This is what Paul means in the next phrase: "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God" (v. 1)
- Paul uses the language of OT sacrifices here, something they would have been very familiar with
- They had stood by the altar and watched as an animal was identified as their own…as it was slain…as its blood was poured out…as its body was burned on the altar

- We do not offer animal sacrifices today because Christ was the perfect and final sacrifice for sin

Hebrews 9:11-12 ~ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

- But we are still to offer sacrifices today…not animal sacrifices but the entirety of ourselves as a sacrifice

Romans 12:1 ~ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- Three adjectives describe the kind of sacrifices we are to offer to the Lord today in our bodies:
  1. Living sacrifices – we give ourselves wholly and entirely as those who are alive physically and now spiritually…not taking a life, but giving our lives…he gave himself for us; we give ourselves to him
  2. Holy sacrifices – as OT sacrifices were to be animals without spot or blemish, so too are believers to offer themselves unto God without spot or blemish…to love what God loves and hate what God hates
  3. Acceptable sacrifices – pleasing to him

[5] Ibid., 40-42.

- This is not radical Christianity…it is normal Christianity…the normal response all believers should have to the mercies of God
- This is not behavior modification where you live a list of dos and don'ts where you try to live a better life
- This is a presentation of yourself to the God of all mercy as a holy sacrifice in which you offer all of who you are to him and his purposes
- "We experience God's mercy as a power that exerts a total and all-encompassing claim upon us: grace now reigns over us. It is therefore entirely fitting that our response is to be one that is equally total and all-encompassing: the presentation of our entire persons as a sacrifice to God."[6]

- This is what constitutes genuine worship: v. 1 ~ which is your spiritual service of worship.
- Worship is what we are created for… it's why God made us, saved us, and will take us to heaven one day
- Worship is our ultimate priority…worship is the central issue in all of creation…worship is at the center of everything Scripture commands of us
- Worship is to be the defining characteristic of who we are as children of God
- Thus, worship is the defining mark of progressive sanctification

- But there is a lot of confusion today about worship:
  - Mystical experience – look to self, visions, inner voices
  - Musical performance – just great music and singing
  - Religious ritual – going to church, doing religious thing
  - Emotional exuberance – feelings and sensations
- We are even tempted to view worship as something that happens on Sunday mornings

- However, worship is what must encompass all our life as believers

- The worship Paul calls for here is "spiritual"…a word that could be translated "rational, reasonable, logical"
- Offering ourselves entirely and completely to God is the only logical response to what God has done for us
- Those who fully comprehend and understand the matchless love of God and his many mercies extended to them respond in worship and praise to God by offering themselves to him totally
- It should result in us giving the Lord our heart, affections, motivations, attitude, dependence, life
- This is the essence of true worship…offering all us to be used by him for his glory

- This means that half-hearted commitment to the Lord is illogical
- If full devotion to the Lord is the only logical response in light of his mercies, then anything less is illogical
- Indifference, apathy, and sinful compromises are irrational responses

- It is critical to understand this because our generation has become obsessed with the body

- "This manifests itself in various ways. A glance through the (many!) pages of advertising in even the 'reputable' glossy magazines proves the point. Many of them focus on, or employ as attractions, the elegance or beauty of the body in one way or another: what you put into it, onto it, and take off of it. Another striking expression of this is found by watching sporting occasions that involve physical prowess…Why this upsurge today? Because when secular humanism dominates a culture it abandons the biblical teaching that we have been made as the image of God. Under the appearance of exalting man to be the measure of all things, it actually demeans him, and destroys his true dignity. It reduces man to biological functions. Now the body is everything…We are surrounded by voices that are in essence saying: Worship

[6] Douglas Moo

your body; preserve it; beautify it. The sub-text is: Your body is all you have; it is yours; you own it and you can do anything you want with it. The gospel stands in stark contrast to this. It calls us to the thankful and joyful worship of the Lord in which we give our whole lives to him, including our bodies. In such worship, we discover self-forgetfulness and Christ-glorifying consecration. This is why, even although it is true that who we really are as Christians is not visible to non-Christians, holiness cannot remain hidden. It shows itself in how we use our bodies."[7]

Principle #3 – Sanctification Involves Resisting Conforming to the World

Romans 12:2 ~ And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- "conformed" (*suschematizo*) comes from the root word *schema* from which we get "scheme"
- It means "to form, to mold, to fashion or shape one thing like another"
- Paul's heart is that believers would not be pressed into the mold of the world

- Literally, we are not to be "conformed to this age"
- This "world/age" Paul is referring to here is not the physical world…it's referring to the way the world thinks…the mindset of the world…the worldview of the world
- The "world/age" is the outlook of mankind as it ignores God and does not recognize him as God…the outlook of those who have rebelled against God and turned their back on Him
- It is the system or worldview that is adopted by those who do not know or love God
- It is those who only think of this world and this life…the outlook of life that is exclusive of God
- It is an ethical and philosophical approach that is erected in opposition to God and his revelation

- In short, it is the mindset that accompanies those who think only horizontally rather than vertically
- This is evident because of the contrast in the rest of v. 2 ~ but be transformed by the renewing of your mind
- The alternative to being "conformed to this world" is being "transformed by the renewing of your mind"
- This means that Paul is concerned about a way of thinking rather than merely behaving…he has more in mind than just actions and conduct
- He is concerned that we as believers not allow ourselves to think like the world thinks…to not allow ourselves to adopt a worldly outlook on life…to not allow ourselves to become secular in our thinking…to not allow the evil world system to infect our thinking
- Paul says that we are to be nonconformists when it comes to the world
- We must not allow ourselves to be patterned after the spirit of the age

- "This worldliness may impact us in sudden and violent ways. But characteristically it does so by insistent, prolonged, constant pressure. This present age, this fallen world (and its citizens) gradually, imperceptibly squeeze us into their mould."[8]

- "We are not to be like a chameleon which takes its color from its surroundings."[9]

- Instead, we are to be like the fish in the ocean who is immersed in the salt, but does not taste salty
- As believers, we live in the sphere of the world, but we do not live according to the precepts and principles of this passing age…we do not allow ourselves to be squeezed into the ungodly thinking of the world
- We must not live by the drumbeat of the world…we must not be in step with the way the world thinks

[7] Ferguson, *Devoted to God*, 44-45.
[8] Ibid., 45.
[9] William Barclay

Principle #4 – Sanctification Requires a Transformed Mind

Romans 12:2 ~ And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- The way to resist conformity to the world is by letting God re-mold our minds from within
- We become non-conformists when we are shaped by the renewing of our minds
- This demonstrates the priority of the mind in sanctification

- Literally, Paul says: "be being transformed by the renewing of your mind"
  - "be" = imperative mood
  - "being" = present tense
  - "transformed" (*metamorphoo*) = passive voice

- Since "transformed" is a passive verb, it means that we must allow it to happen to ourselves…we must put ourselves in a position where we let it happen
- We must allow ourselves to be to be changed inwardly so that there is a corresponding outward transformation
- This points to the fact that it must be done by Someone else, the Holy Spirit
- We must aspire for this changed mind…but it can only be accomplished by the Spirit working in us…it can only occur when he has free reign in our lives…when his ministry is not quenched or hindered

- The kind of transformation that avoids conformity with the world's way of thinking happens through mind renewal…through a continual reprogramming of the mind…through a life-long process of habitually putting worldly thoughts to death and replacing them with righteous thoughts, godly thoughts, truthful thoughts
- There must be an ongoing, continual, constant "renewing of the mind"
- Our mind needs constant renewal…it needs to be continually renovated by the truth such that we think God's thoughts after him

- In one sense, this happened at conversion…we have a new mind
- We repented…the Greek word for "repent" is *metanoia*: *meta* = "change"…*noia/nous* = "mind"
- Repentance is literally a "change of mind"…prior to our initial repentance we thought according to the world…we thought just like our secular neighbors and secular relatives and secular friends
- But when the Spirit awakened us to our absolute need for a Savior, our minds were radically changed
- We began to think differently…our desires changed…our attitudes changed…our outlook changed…our convictions changed…our longings changed…because suddenly we had the mind of Christ

1 Corinthians 2:16 ~ For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the **mind** of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6 ~ For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the **knowledge** of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Titus 3:5 ~ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and **renewing** by the Holy Spirit

- So, the Christian life is one that first depends on a renewed mind

- But the world still exerts its pressure and wants to force us into its way of thinking

- Thus, we must battle **against** ungodly thoughts and **for** godly thoughts

- To live a holy life we must think holy thoughts….because the renewal of our life (sanctification) can progress no further than the renewal of the mind that informs and guides it
- We are to adjust our way of thinking so that it is in accordance with the newness of our life in the Spirit
- The antidote to the world's influence is thinking holy thoughts by allowing God through his Word and his Spirit to redirect our thinking

2 Corinthians 10:1-5 ~ Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! 2 I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying **speculations** and every lofty thing raised up against the **knowledge** of God, and we are taking every **thought** captive to the obedience of Christ

Ephesians 4:17-24 ~ So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their **mind**, 18 being darkened in their **understanding**, excluded from the life of God because of the **ignorance** that is in them, because of the **hardness of their heart**; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not **learn Christ** in this way, 21 if indeed you have **heard Him** and have been **taught in Him**, just as **truth is in Jesus**, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be **renewed in the spirit of your mind**, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness **of the truth**.

Philippians 4:8 ~ Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **dwell** on these things.

Colossians 3:1-2 ~ Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth.

Colossians 3:10 ~ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true **knowledge** according to the image of the One who created him—

2 Peter 1:2-4 ~ Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true **knowledge** of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, **having escaped the corruption that is in the world** by lust.

2 Peter 3:17-18 ~ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and **knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity.

- The battle against worldliness is primarily won by focusing on the knowledge of Christ
- Since God has given us incredible minds to know him, they must be used in service to him
- This means that **Christianity is primarily cognitive and rational…it begins in the mind!**
- It is not primarily experiential where we are more guided by feelings than by convictions
- God intended the mind – fully informed by the truth of God and his Word – to drive the Christian life

- "The instrument that God uses is the word of the gospel. The truth of the gospel informs and illumines our thinking. It thus begins to permeate our mindset and influence our dispositions. This in turn, recalibrates our affections to love what we have now come to understand, and to bow our wills in a new desire for conformity with God's will. This is how the gospel works. This is why Paul preached and wrote letters: be believed that God's word has power to renew minds and transform lives. As the greatness of the gospel begins to fill and to expand our minds, as we come to know God's Son, through God's word, by God's Spirit, a process of change takes place in our thinking, feeling, desiring, willing, and living. God's word and Spirit work together and actively and powerfully change us."[10]

[10] Ferguson, *Devoted to God*, 48.

- It is critical that we understand this because we are living in a culture that has primarily lost the ability to think critically
- We have gone from books as the primary medium of communicating information to articles….to blogs…to Facebook…to tweets…to pictures
- Social media itself is an illustration of the fact that we live in a society that doesn't have to think
- We just take it in…we look at pictures…we watch the videos…we listen to the sound bytes
- That teaches people to not think because there are no critical thinking skills necessary

- "What makes holy people holy? What makes unholy people unholy? To a large degree it is what fills their minds and their hearts. This is why the battle for holiness is first a battle to flood your mind and heart with the right things, the best things, and why it's equally a battle to avoid flooding your mind and heart with the wrong things, the worst things. So let me ask you, when it comes to what you see, what you watch, what you read, what you ponder, what you enjoy, what you find entertaining, what fills your mind and thrills your heart—what is your standard? What do you invite into your mind, your heart, your life? What do you deliberately keep out? What is your standard?"[11]

- All of this demonstrates the great need to take in a steady diet of the Word…to sit under sound preaching

Principle #5 – Sanctification is Demonstrated in Approval of God's Will

Romans 12:2 ~ And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Having a transformed mind enables us to know God's will, to affirm it as true, and to live it
- Approving the will of God means to understand it and to agree with God that he wants us to live this way and blesses us when we do
- Approving the will of God contains the idea of "testing with a view toward demonstrating its reliability and trustworthiness"
- Only when we are living as a holy sacrifice, resisting the world, and having our minds continually renewed by his truth are we able to approve God's will and do it

- The will of God here is not his sovereign/decretive will as that is unknown until it happens
- This is only known through providence, the secret circumstantial working out of his will of decree
- It's his sovereign orchestrating of all events and people
- We are never out of God's sovereign will

- The will of God here is his moral will
- This is also known as the "preceptive will" or "will of command" or "will of desire"
- God's moral will is that which is revealed to us in the Word…it's what he wants us to know and do
- It is His will that is revealed through direct commands and through precepts and principles

- When we live according to the will of God as revealed in his Word, we approve that his will is best for us…it is "good and acceptable and perfect"…the only true way to live
- When you live according to vv. 1-2, you conclude that it is a better way to live than any other way

[11] https://www.challies.com/articles/whatever-is-false-whatever-is-dishonorable-whatever-is-unjust%e2%80%a6/