

Living a Dedicated Christian Life (Part 3)

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- [0 : 00] He will be protected when He comes. What a wonderful truth we live by. You can turn, if you want to, now in your Bibles to Romans chapter 12, where I'll be completing a three-part little series I've done on verses 1 and 2.
- For those of you who are visiting, I'll only do a very, very brief review. So I will, I will. Brian is incredulous up here on the front row. So, no, no, it'll be a brief. My introduction won't be brief, but my review will.
- True to form. Well, let's walk into this together. The title being Living a Dedicated Christian Life and a part three for us.
- When someone recognizes dedication or devotion in you, they are actually isolating and identifying a unique feature about your life.
- They're saying, in effect, that you are specially, uniquely set apart to a certain, maybe a pursuit or relationship, idea, way of thinking.
- [1 : 13] Nevertheless, they recognize a single-minded focus in your life towards something or someone. And we call that devotion or dedication. People can hear your dedication in the way that you talk about what's important to you.
- Typically, we spend a good bit of time talking about things that we value. That can be us. We can spend a lot of time talking about me.
- And that will give away, you know, where some of my value in my heart lies. We typically talk about what's important to us. People can see.
- They can see your dedication in the way that you live. As you prioritize your time. As you prioritize your money and other resources towards what you are most devoted to.
- And that's what we're talking about in this message. That's what we've been talking about the last couple of Lord's days as we've met together. Typically, friends, true dedication is most easily recognized by an unusually strong, faithful commitment to a certain thing.
- [2 : 28] Now, here's what I want to present to us and kind of get you walking into with me. The question I want to put out for you, how does your lifestyle, underscore lifestyle, how does your lifestyle demonstrate your devotion to Jesus Christ?
- If people were to follow me or follow you around all day for seven days and then step back and try to make some kind of an objective assessment of what they thought to be most important to you in your life, where would Jesus Christ fit into that reality?
- By what they see and hear about you. So it doesn't really matter what you say or what you profess you are loyal to. What does your life show you're loyal to?
- And it doesn't always have to do with the amount of time that you spend for something. I'm looking into the faces of many people in our congregation this morning who have to go out and work eight to ten hours a day making a living.
- And that's a thing that honors the Lord as you do it to the honor of the Lord. So it's not always about where we spend all of our time, but how we spend it. What's going on in our heart as we do it.

[3 : 40] So that brings me to say this to you, friends, and I hope that you'll key in on this very carefully. The most telling aspect of this devotion that we're talking about is your personal holiness.

Let me say it again. The most telling aspect of this devotion that we're describing is your personal holiness. In other words, your commitment to personal purity and to the pursuit of Christ-likeness in your life.

That is the most telling aspect revealing the devotion of your heart. Am I like Jesus when no one else is looking?

Now I'm going to put up several questions here. These questions are not designed to guilt you or to shame you or to cause you to feel like you're not measuring up.

Greg and I will form a line, as I've said to you before over here at the door, of all of those who are in some way behaviorally not measuring up to their Christian calling in Jesus Christ, and he and I will be first in line.

[4 : 51] So this is not your pastors putting you down or trying to cause you to think in terms of, wow, all the ways that I'm just not cutting the mustard with Jesus. No, these are designed to help you take measure of your heart's devotion.

To measure in some way, some degree, what is it like for you every day to get up, breathe God's air, and put your heart in motion, and where does Jesus fit into all of that?

Is he being squeezed into an otherwise very busy schedule? And if you can make time for him, then fine. One of the reasons this is important for us to evaluate is because that's a dangerous way for a Christian to live.

You might even go so far as to say that's really not a way for a Christian to live, but many Christians do. So that I wouldn't doubt their salvation, but I would doubt some of the devotion of their heart. I think they might be divided in it.

Very dangerous. So we want to carefully evaluate that, and we'll start with this question. Am I like Jesus when no one else is looking? All right, let's do a few more questions together.

[6 : 00] Now this is very important. Does sin break my heart? Because I know it breaks God's heart. Is the most difficult and challenging aspect of your knowledge of personal sin that your personal sin is personal to your God?

Is that the most troubling aspect of sin in your life to you? Some people say the most troubling aspect of sin in my life is that I got caught.

The most troubling aspect of sin in my life is it's inconvenient. It doesn't pay off the way that I want to a lot of times. But the most troubling aspect of sin in your life on a personal level ought to be that it breaks the heart of your God who gave his son to save you and purchase you away from sin.

To give you a life where you don't have to succumb to sin's power anymore. All right, let's move on to the next one and think about it.

Am I spiritually disciplined in things like Bible reading, Scripture memory, Scripture meditation, prayer, church attendance, church involvement? This is not an exhaustive list.

[7 : 15] And again, this is not legalism and us trying to put these rules out on you because it's not all about behavior, but behavior is important because it reveals the heart, right? These spiritual disciplines are important in our lives.

I'm going to show you why. Am I spiritually disciplined in things like Bible reading, Scripture memory, Scripture meditation, prayer, church attendance, church involvement?

Am I faithful to these activities because I realize these disciplines, these spiritual disciplines help me deepen my devotion to Jesus?

They do. From a heart that loves the Lord and wants to grow in the Lord and be faithful to the Lord, these disciplines are ways that God uses to grace our lives and grow us in that grace.

Amen? And so to neglect these disciplines in your life is a way of neglecting devotion to Jesus. I want you to see the tie and understand the tie between the devotion of your heart and the way that you actually live.

[8 : 28] Given time, we follow each other around long enough, how we live is going to reveal and betray the devotion of our heart for good or for bad in terms of our walk with the Lord.

Are we devoted to Christ? And does my life show that? Devotion to the Lord. These are questions that kind of help us get at some of that. Now, behind every expression of true dedication, as I've alluded to already, is a compelling motive.

That compelling motive acts as the fuel for visible actions of commitment. My desires are the gas helping to give motion and fuel to what I actually say and do in my life.

I don't do anything that I don't want to do. I might say, I don't want to do that. And I do it anyway. Well, I do it because I have a certain motive in my heart about it. Maybe the motive is if I don't do it, I'm going to suffer.

So I don't want to suffer. So I'm going to do it. So I really do want to do it because I don't want to suffer. You see what I'm saying? We are some messed up individuals, aren't we? We need Jesus.

[9 : 35] We need truth. We need grace in our lives. What fuels what you are dedicated to? What's the fuel of your life?

All right, your heart's desires determine your actions. We've been talking about that quite a bit in our Wednesday night studies.

We've been going over that now for a number of weeks, trying to help our folks understand biblically how that operates in a person's heart. Your heart's desires determine your actions. So what are your reasons for being committed and devoted to certain things in your life?

It would be good for you to sit down and take time to measure that out. Take each area of your life or each thing in your life, each activity of your life and ask yourself these kind of questions about them.

Are you willing to allow the Lord to show you if your dedication is misplaced or misapplied? Remember, folks, especially you Wednesday night folks, when Paul talks about the lusts of the flesh, he calls them deceitful lusts.

[10 : 43] These are deceitful desires that come in and act as God replacements in our life. These are desires or wants that I have that supplant the desire to be devoted to Jesus above all things, to please him in all things.

Every time you sin, every time I sin, in that moment, we have replaced our devotion to Jesus with some other devotion. Have we not? And we find ourselves being loyal to something that now I have sinned in.

So we can actually get to the point where I sin if I don't get it and I sin to get it. Whatever that it is, that desire in my heart, this is what we're dealing with.

When we talk about devotion and dedication, we're talking about the root issue of what your heart is loyal to, what you treasure most. That's what you're most dedicated to and it's going to show up in the way that you live.

This is why Paul's dealing with this after 11 chapters of sound doctrine where he is talking about salvation mercies over and over again. How God has in Christ Jesus purchased for us salvation mercy so that we can live for him and know him and be close to him.

[11 : 59] And now he shifts in chapter 12 and starts talking about how that process of spiritual renewal takes place in a believer. Then he's going to move through and give you some priorities, give you some profiles of how that looks as a Christian lives it out in chapter 12 and beyond.

This is what Paul's trying to deal with. So in Romans chapter 12, 1 and 2, Paul calls us to make our strongest and most faithful pursuit in life, the dedication of ourselves to God.

It's a spiritual act of worship to see the whole of our lives motivated by a deep-seated devotion to God, a growing deep-seated devotion to God, I should say.

So Paul gives us the answer to this question. How do I place myself on the altar of God's salvation mercies for God's exclusive use of my mind, my body, my desires in life?

In what ways am I presenting myself as a worship offering to God? Now again, for you visitors, the first two sermons dealt with that concept in full, I hope, at least as much as I could.

[13 : 17] Let's read the verses that we're going to look at next. Romans 12, 1 and 2. Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, I think that was sermon number one right there, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

That was sermon number two. And for today, 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 is that which is good and acceptable and perfect. These verses tell us that we're to dedicate our bodies, minds, and wills to the Lord.

That is an active, ongoing dedication process that we're in that God calls worship. Our motivation to do this is our love and gratitude toward God for His saving mercies.

So richly and lovingly applied to our lives. So what is the fuel? What is the motivation for you and I to offer ourselves in this kind of dedicated manner?

[14 : 33] Love and gratitude to God for the salvation that He's given us in Jesus Christ. Now, I hope that you'll begin to see how that formula for Christian living can move through and outlast any circumstances that you're in.

Because as we move through that kind of devotion to Jesus in difficult circumstances, God may ramp up the heat in the circumstance, but our love and devotion and gratitude to Jesus doesn't have to go up and down and fluctuate all over the place.

We can have a constant center on this faithful God who's doing a faithful and good work in our lives in and through the circumstances. And so that devotion doesn't have to wax and wane due to circumstances.

It can stay steady because the gratitude of our heart is fixed on what? The salvation mercies of God in my life. I don't deserve any of this. And yet God has ministered all of that to me in Jesus Christ.

Christ. So I'm living out of that salvation. That's the platform that I'm standing on. Here's how Paul says it in verse one. Therefore, I encourage you. I urgently urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, that is on the foundation of the salvation, mercies of God, present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to him.

[15 : 57] Apart from God's grace, you couldn't make a living, holy sacrifice offering to God of yourself, could you? No, neither could I. Your growing love for God, your never-ending, growing gratitude to God should be your motives for wholeheartedly serving the Lord.

Now, we can and we should express our loving and grateful hearts to the Lord by dedicating our physical bodies to him. This is an amazing concept to me that I can bring the body that God made and the body that God is living in and working and I can bring all of who I am and lay it on the altar of his salvation, mercies as an offering to him and it's acceptable to him.

That astounds me, folks. It should astound every one of us and fill us with awe before this wonderful, saving, gracious king. It's the truth.

Here, here is what we are after, here's what we're after in terms of giving our bodies, dedicating our bodies to Christ. Here, here's what we want to look at. How do I get Jesus in front of you?

That's the issue that I'm concerned with. How do I get Jesus in front of you? How do I use me to help you see the truth that, quoting from Paul, I have been crucified with Christ.

[17 : 24] It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I live now, I live, I live, what? By faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me.

That's Paul. So, Christian, it begins with your body because that's where Jesus has taken up residence in relationship to you. And so, Paul calls on you to dedicate your body to the Lord.

Because it is no longer you who live, it's Christ living in you that gives you life, spiritual life. Isn't that wonderful? So, the issue that I'm concerned with is how do I get Jesus Christ in front of you in this body that you look at and recognize as Jeff?

And yet, it's Jesus in me that I'm most concerned that you relate to. Not so much Jeff, right? I want you to see Jesus. I want you to see the difference in my life is this person, Jesus Christ, living in me.

Isn't that what you want? I want that for my wife. I want my wife to see Jesus living in me more than anything else. Any respect that Suzanne might have for me and love that Suzanne might have for me is me.

[18 : 40] That's wonderful, but I hope that it's all based in who she sees Jesus being in me. Christ, the Lord, the Savior, working a gracious work in my life, working a gracious work in your life.

So dedicate your body to the Lord. This is what we've covered so far. We're to be a living, holy, acceptable sacrifice unto the Lord. We used Abraham and Isaac as a biblical example of this model for us, that Isaac was being offered up by his father as a sacrifice, one, more second and that knife would have plunged into his son and he would have been a corpse.

But God stayed his hand, provided the ram and now Isaac was raised up as a sacrifice, not a dead one, but a living one. He was still a sacrifice because Abraham went through with all of it and God said, I've rewarded you because now I see that you would not withhold your only son from me.

Does that sound familiar? That language? And so he was rewarded in faith. So Isaac got up off of the altar as a living sacrifice, but a sacrifice nonetheless.

And that's the example that you and I have. Living sacrifices under the Lord. If you turn to 1 Corinthians with me, I'd like for you to see this. 1 Corinthians chapter 6.

[20 : 06] Now I want to read this because it's just got such a rich, rich, powerful line-by-line effect as Paul just unveils this before us.

In my Bible, in the New American Standard, it's laid out here from 12 to 20 with a heading that says the body is the Lord's. That's exactly what we're talking about here.

All things, in verse 12 of chapter 6, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet, the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

That's good. Now, God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through his power. Hallelujah. Do you not know then, based on this, based on this resurrection power and reality, do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?

[21 : 20] Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Well, of course, may it never be. He's just making a point. Should I join my body to immorality as if Christ were not living in me?

May it never be. What a horrid thought. Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute to immorality is one body with her? For he says the two shall become one flesh.

But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body.

But the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body, here it is, the summation, 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.

For you have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body. That's the issue. Therefore, based on all of that, glorify God in your body.

[22 : 27] The question is, are you doing that? The question is, do you even give any conscious thought to glorifying God in your body? There are so many things we can do with our bodies.

We need to be spiritually conscious of the fact that if we are truly Christians, we take Jesus everywhere we go, into every context and situation of life, every relationship.

Now that should be an encouraging thing. The power of God lives within us because God lives within us. Now another way that you and I are called on to express our dedication to God is to offer our hearts slash minds to God.

I want you to hold on to that reality. Hearts slash minds. So whenever we see here, and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, I want you to see hearts slash mind.

The Wednesday night people will immediately attain to that reference and we'll do more with it as we go. dedicate your heart mind to the Lord. So we're moving on into verse two now.

[23 : 37] Now if you're going to be successful in this, you must understand that there's something that has to be shunned and something that has to be done according to Paul's testimony in verse two, according to his instruction.

The negative command that we see here is do not be conformed. Nevertheless, it's a command. It might be a negative one, but it's a command.

The negative command is do not be conformed. Conformed. The idea here is to allow yourself to be shaped. That is, your mind, your behavior, and your character to another person's pattern.

Allowing yourself to be shaped to another person's pattern. The Greek usage of the word meant this. It meant to fit or fashion or form something by using a mold or a pre-formed container.

When I thought about this, the first thing that came to my mind for some reason was a cookie cutter shaping Christmas cookies. Some of them are shaped as snowmen, some of them are shaped as Christmas trees or whatever.

[24 : 47] That's the idea of a pre-formed mold and you're being pressed into that mold so that you take its shape. It becomes the more hardened and influential issue than anything else and so you conform to it.

That's the idea of what we're dealing with in this, a cookie cutter type of conformity. What is it that we are to shun? That's the idea of being conformable.

What is it that we're to shun? What is it that we're not to be fashioned and shaped to by? What's the answer according to verse two? Do not be conformed to what?

This world. Now the question then is do we understand what he means by world? Because I think most of us sitting in here who want to be here sitting under the word would say, but you know, I think on the whole I'm not being shaped by the world.

I mean I'm not being pressed into the way the world thinks and prioritizes and values and treasures and acts. I think most of us would probably.

[25 : 58] That's why I started out the way I did in my intro. You asking yourself those questions to probe to allow yourself to be a little uncomfortable. See how the Holy Spirit would use these truths from the scriptures this morning to search your heart.

So we have to ask the question at this point. What is meant by the world? What does Paul mean by the world? All right. World is from aeon or ion.

It means age. The age that they're living in. In this case, it refers to an evil age.

You'll see that contextually. The prevailing dominant sinful ways of thinking and living in our society. It refers to the way any given period in history is defined by its values, beliefs, and morals.

Catch this. In distinction to God's. That's the key element in this. It's the way the world values, believes, the way that it defines right and wrong in distinction to God's ways.

[27 : 06] All right. That's what we're talking about. Paul's point here is that Christians are not to allow themselves to be, catch this word, remodeled, remodeled by the evil inclinations, the values, the priorities, beliefs, and behaviors of the world around them.

And we say, you know what? I think I'm doing pretty good there. And I hope you are. But understand that deceitful lusts are just that. They're deceitful.

These desires, you and I both know, we go out into the world and the world just sticks to us everywhere, doesn't it? We also have a flesh, that unredeemed part of us that just craves the things of the world and gravitates towards the things of the world so that there's spiritual struggle.

You know Galatians 5, the spirit wars against the flesh and the flesh wars against the spirit so that you end up doing the things that you don't want to do. Now, I want to give you something. If you were to ask me over the years that Suzanne and I have been in ministry, I've seen this many, many times across many areas.

I raised three children and launched three children and I'll tell you one of the toughest things that Suzanne and I faced in our married life as we went through this together and the way that this worldliness shows up in your life.

[28 : 28] And folks, I'm going to tell you because I'm pastorally concerned for you and I want you to see this. This is rampant in our world and it's rampant in the church and we need to do something about it. And here it is.

Now, please receive this from me in love. I love you. I want to warn you and admonish you in this and help you understand we've got to face off with this in our lives. This is a way that the church is patterning itself after the world.

When Suzanne and I were raising our three kids, we made many mistakes because we're human beings. We loved our kids very dearly. We made many mistakes. Some of those things from time to time I've told you as I've just put it out there and let you see that, hey, look, we're just like you.

We're struggling to do the right thing and love the Lord. But one of the things that we communicated to our kids, not always verbally or anything like that, every once in a while, tongue in cheek, I might say something like this to them, but they knew that behind it what the priority was because we taught it to them.

And here's the idea. Kids, your mom and I, we were a thing before you were ever thought about. Your mom and I, we were moving on in life and having a great time together before you ever hit this earth.

[29 : 46] And guess what? When you launch, your mom and I will be having a great time together and we'll be moving on in our life together because we're raising you to launch.

Because that's what God tells us to do. We're raising you to leave and cleave. So guess what? Mom and I are not living our lives around you.

Now we didn't sit down and have this big speech and put this guilt trip on them and tell them you're not worth anything and you're not a private. It's nothing like that. They knew how much we loved them. Here's what I would tell them.

Me and mom, we're living this kind of life before you came. We're hoping to be living this life after you leave. And so you know what? You being a part of this is because we've invited you into the party.

You get to come along with me and mom as me and mom do our thing in this thing called marriage. Now what am I trying to do there? I'm trying to teach my kids that the priority that they see in our life is our marital relationship.

[30 : 47] And that's going to need to be the priority for them when they leave and cleave. Not the children. Don't make the mistake of living your lives around your kids. Love your kids.

Raise your kids to love you. Raise your kids to see you loving Jesus well and putting the priority on what Jesus puts the priority on. But don't make the mistake of living your lives around your children.

You will regret it deeply because you will teach your children compromise. You will model it for them and not even mean to do it. Let your kids see the priority of your marital life as you and your wife, you and your husband, follow the Lord Jesus in all ways that you can let them see that devotion just oozing out of you.

I see it. I've watched it. I made the mistakes at times in my own life with that. And it was a course correction along the way.

So let me encourage you in that as well. Making course corrections along the way is what the Christian life is all about, isn't it? We are constantly having to come to the word of the Lord.

[31 : 59] That's why I put those questions up here and said, please don't be afraid to allow the Lord to examine your heart and ask yourself, am I leading a life that that shows an example of this devotion to God in every area of my life where I'm adopting his value and priority for my life?

That's just one way that I have seen the world and the deceit of the world creep in to Christian families. And they mimic the world in that.

And folks, I'm telling you that is a very, very dangerous thing. And my pastoral heart bleeds for you in it. So please, please take it to heart and please give it careful consideration. If you have questions about that, you're uncertain about it.

Absolutely. Greg, Marie, Suzanne, myself, we would be happy to sit down with you and give you the benefit of the best of what we can know about this. But please give it some consideration.

Paul's point here then, back to what I'm saying, Paul's point here is that Christians are not to allow themselves to be remodeled by the world's priorities. Building on this idea, J.B.

[33 : 10] Phillips expressed the idea of the phrase this way, don't, don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.

Another commentator that I appreciated the quote from, and I wanted to share this with you, stop assuming an outward expression which is patterned after this world, an expression which does not come from nor is representative of what you are in your inner being as a regenerated child of God.

Boy, I thought that was good. That's a helpful quote. In other words, you and I are not to allow the world, this age, this present age, to define life for us.

But more specifically, we're not to allow the world to define, hear this now, sorry. We're not to allow the world to define what we want and what we pursue in life.

What we want and what we pursue in life. Don't let the world do that with you. You and I are to shun the world's constant pressure. And boy, it is out there, isn't it?

[34 : 25] Just a constant, unrelenting pressure to conform us to treasure in our hearts what it treasures. So that we can avoid being devoted to evil and instead being devoted to Jesus.

Another example. Boy, you just don't have to sit down very long to watch anything on TV. I mean, you've got to be careful what you pipe in. But heavens, all over the place today, what is, what did I walk into?

Yeah, it must be a cobweb, but it's getting in my eyes and, okay, hold on, wait a minute, I'll get it back. Thank you. You turn on anywhere and you see today depictions of homosexuality that would lead you and I to think that nine out of ten people in the world are homosexual.

Their relationships are just displayed everywhere where it's more and more mainstream for us to see that and think that is just one of the most normal things going on in our modern world. That there's actually a majority of that going on and we're in the minority to be heterosexual.

Well, that's not true. That's an ungodly lie that's being put across to people all over the world so that it's normalized. But that's a lie and we know that.

[35 : 44] It's another way that the world wants to press us into its mold and desensitize us in the way of what's right and true and worth pursuing. So again, I say we're not to treasure in our hearts what the world treasures.

Now, listen to this, please. Two realities and pursuits. Two realities and pursuits come into focus here. One, the fact that the Lord tells us not to allow this to happen means that it is possible for Christians to be shaped by and squeezed into the mold of the world.

Yes. All right. And two, the fact that we're commanded not to allow this to happen to us means that God himself has made a way for us to be faithful by being shaped by godly desires to please him.

Yes. The world wants to squeeze us in and it's potentially possible for us to experience that. On the other hand, God has commanded for us not to allow this to happen and he has made a way for us to escape it.

And I want to spend a little bit of time showing you this. F.F. Bruce, commentator F.F. Bruce has a really insightful little treatise on this and his commentary that I dug out and I want to share it with you.

[37 : 08] I just want to give you a quick view what we're talking about when we talk about these ions, these these ages that each generation moves through.

And these ages, these times that we live in constantly press down on us because it's ungodly. We live in an ungodly system.

The air we breathe is an ungodly, unnatural system of fallenness, isn't it? So you and I as Christians are constantly swimming upstream against that, trying to evangelize, trying to live a winsome life in the Lord Jesus.

So F.F. Bruce has an insightful treatise on this dealing with these ions. So I want to show you this. First Corinthians one twenty to start with.

I'll put the verses up here in just a minute for you. Let me just take you through them first. In each one of these passages, we're dealing with this Greek word *I own*. Where is the wise man?

[38 : 12] Paul asks. Where is the scribe? He's evaluating. Where is all this worldly wisdom? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the *I own* world?

I own world. System. Age. The prevailing mindset that dominates the way the world thinks about the things that we are called to think about as God's people and discern and evaluate by truth and love and devotion to the Lord.

Let me show you another one. Chapter two, verse six. First Corinthians two, six. Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature, saved in the Lord.

A wisdom, however, not of this. *I own* age, nor of the rulers of this. *I own* age who are passing away.

That's the thing that happens. We go through these systems, these ages, and the people who are proponents of these ideals and ideas, these paradigms that they want to live by, they come and they go.

[39 : 23] They take on new names, a little bit of a different face. But who is the author behind all of the world's systems? What does scripture tell us? Satan.

Absolutely. All right, let's look at another one. Chapter three, verse 18 of first Corinthians three, 18. Let no man deceive himself. There you go.

Boy, that's the calling. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he's wise in this. *I own*, he must become foolish so that he may become wise.

That is, he must become like Christ. They thought Christ very foolish, didn't they? Then let me give you one other before I turn to a different one and we sum it up.

2 Corinthians 4, 4. Go to the book of 2 Corinthians, chapter 4. And here it is. This is where we see the answer to the question I asked a moment ago.

[40 : 21] Who's behind all this in terms of people being deceived in these ages, age to age? In whose case, 2 Corinthians 4, 4.

In whose case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

The God of this *Ion*. The God of this age. Satan. Now this emphasis on living as part of the evil age is countered for you and I.

We would ask, where's the hope? Because we have, God has left us in the world, not to be of the world, but to be in the world. We have to live here. This is where we do our spiritual business until heaven.

So where's the hope? Where's the hope of us living in this world and not letting the age conform us and define us so that we adopt its priorities, its rules, its manner of life and treasure what it treasures?

[41 : 28] Where's the hope? All right. Galatians chapter 1, verse 4. I'll actually start reading in verse 3. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins so that he might rescue us from this present evil I own according to the will of our God and Father.

Who has rescued us? Jesus, the rescue work is to rescue us from this constant pressure to be conformed to the thinking and treasuring and devotion of this world.

And it's going to be pumped and piped into every aspect of your life for as long as you live. That is going to be a test and a temptation for each of us.

So friends, through Jesus, people living temporarily in this age can experience present renewal and future resurrection.

And that brings us back to Romans 12 where he is saying do not be conformed to this I own but be transformed by the renewal, the renewing process of your heart-mind.

[42 : 57] and then the hope, the certain hope that you and I have that as we go through that process in this life we are looking for that resurrection hope, aren't we?

When we'll get a new glorified body and live with the Lord and be in a new heaven and a new earth. Glorified in our rescuing from all of this. The unsaved world does not see Christ through the similarities between itself and the church.

Do you hear me? The unsaved world, your unsaved friends and family members and co-workers, they do not see Jesus Christ through the similarities between themselves and you and the church.

No. They see it through the differences between itself and the church. They see Christ in the difference that Jesus makes in your life.

Not the similarities to their life. So this takes us and jettisons us right out of the idea that we have to become like the world to win it. No.

[44 : 05] We maintain the distinction of Jesus living us who is teaching us to treasure the priorities of heaven which this age hates. They are enemies of the cross of Christ and so we winsomely try to win them to the truth.

Jesus saves, Jesus saves. But as long as they turn their rebellious hearts against the Lord they remain enemies of the cross of Christ. They remain children of the age.

You live in the world but you're not of it. And so you are being renewed. Friends, let me say it this way.

We are to shun conformity to the world. Why? Light exposes what is in the darkness and pushes it back. Light does not imitate darkness.

You with me? Now, Paul tells us what must be done. What must be done. Not shunned, but done in order for us to dedicate our hearts and minds to God.

[45 : 12] He says, but be transformed. That's also a command. It's an imperative in the Greek. It's a command. Be transformed. Transformed, interestingly enough, some of you will know this, transformed, metamorpho, to change into another form, to transfigure, in English, metamorphosis.

We are to continually undergo a transformation. That is, and hear this word carefully, my dear friends, a process of being changed from one form into another form.

A process. Thank God we're in a process. We haven't arrived and we won't arrive on this earth. We will arrive as we're glorified as Jesus comes to take us back.

2 Corinthians 3.18 speaks to this reality. I'm going to go there. This is a great, great verse. But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being, see the process?

Are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as from the Lord, the Spirit. As we behold God's glory in Jesus Christ, we are being transformed by one degree after another.

[46 : 35] The more that we take in the Lord Jesus, the more that we relate to Jesus, submit to Jesus, come to know Jesus and walk with Jesus and be obedient to Jesus, the more we are transformed from one degree to the other into His likeness.

We become more and more like Him in the way that we think, treasure, prioritize, speak, behave, relate. because Jesus is becoming more and more important, more and more sweet, more and more precious to us.

We see Jesus in the Scriptures, we meet Him in the Scriptures, we get to know Him in the Scriptures, we become closer and closer to Him in Christ's likeness as we walk with Him.

It's informative that this is not a change in our context, but in our character. Your context might stay the same. You might be in a tough situation and God might use that situation to conform you to the likeness of Jesus.

The emphasis here is on your transformation of character. We, in other words, we are transformed, not our situation. How do you pray?

[47 : 48] How do you pray? How have I been tempted to pray? Oh Lord, if you could just change the circumstances, if you could just change the way this is happening, Lord, if you could just, this has been really, really hard, instead of Jeff saying, Lord, if you can help me to get into obedience before you as you change me into Christ's likeness in this situation, help me to be more concerned that I'm submitting to you, that I'm going to the Scriptures and trying to discern in truth what it is that you're doing in these circumstances to change me and grow me instead of change the circumstance.

I'm not saying it's always wrong to pray about the circumstance. We saw David do that, didn't he, throughout the Psalms. David prayed that God would change that up, that he would deal with the evil people that were oppressing him.

But David was also very aware of how God was using that to transform him. So note the difference, friends, before we move on. Note the difference between the ideas of being conformed and being transformed.

That's the hinge. The emphasis in the Christian life is never on conformity or likeness to the world. We're not going to win the world by being like the world.

Grace Church is not going to be a church of influence for Christ by going out here and surveying these unbelievers and asking them what they want in the church and then us trying to be that for them so that they'll come and sit in here with us.

[49 : 25] They need, if they're going to come, let them come in and see the difference and say, what in the world is going on here? We want them to come in and see what's going on here and not get it. We want that. How could they get it?

They don't have the spirit. They don't know Christ. They don't understand spiritual things. Why would they get it? What we need to be concerned about is if a rank pagan comes in here and sits down and goes, this is pretty cool.

Greg and I are going to be like, what are we doing wrong? What are we doing wrong? Where did we miss it? Where did we miss it? Alright.

Don't be concerned about busying ourselves with fitting into the world. We don't want to look like, talk like, think like, and act like the world for any reason. In terms of our relationship with the world, you and I are to be transformed, not conformed.

Now, the question is, how are we to be, how are we to be transformed? The answer comes by the renewing of our hearts' minds. Renewing has the idea of renovation, remodeling, or a complete change for the better.

[50 : 31] Complete change for the better. Our minds are not to be shaped by or to the thinking of the world, but transformed, renovated. our minds will either be conformed to the world or transformed by the word.

That's it. We just need to be really, really clear how scripture presents this. You and I are being conformed to the world or we're being conformed or transformed by the word.

So, is your way of thinking about life more conformed or more transformed? Paul says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, heart slash mind.

Our minds will either be conformed to the world or transformed by the word. So, friends, pick an area of your life, pick an area of your life and ask yourself, do I share in God's mind or God's perspective about this?

Pick an area. Do a quick survey. Am I certain that I'm sharing in God's mind about this area of my life and how I'm living it and how I'm pursuing it?

[51 : 47] Am I absolutely, confidently certain that I'm standing on the truth of God's word, can I go to chapters and verses and stand in the foundation of truth and say, I, in this way, am trying to stand and live out the truth of what I know God's word tells me about this priority in my life and the way that I'm pursuing it.

Folks, this is a good spiritual exercise, is it not? This is something that you and I need to do fairly often in our lives. We need to be convinced that we're living by the priorities of heaven.

This is what we mean when we talk about being heavenly minded. Again, be encouraged, dear believers. You're going to find ways that you need to change. You're in a process.

Rejoice. Rejoice, first of all, that God shows you. Rejoice, second of all, that God, through Christ Jesus has made a way for you to obey out of joy and know the blessings of His peace in it.

Trust Him. Trust Him. Here's what I don't want you to do. Don't go by feeling. Don't go, it doesn't feel right. No, no, here's what I want to ask you.

[53 : 00] Does it say right? Is it written right? Are you standing on what's written? Are you standing on what God has said and declared?

Do you understand the context of what He's saying here? Why it's important? That's what you and I want to talk about. Again, we're trying to safeguard ourselves here from some kind of a legalistic, rule-bashing kind of thing that we do with each other.

No, that's why we're talking about devotion to Jesus. We do what we do out of a heart of love and gratitude to Christ. It's this, I want to do this.

I want to make sure that my life is standing on these promises, these truths, and I want Jesus to reveal to me in any shade, fashion, or form how I'm not being transformed by the renewing of my mind and the truth of the Lord because I want the life that I live to prove what the will of God is.

I want my life to show what is good and acceptable and perfect in the sight of God. That's where we're going next. That's what all of this means. Now, here is the one great truth about how you can consistently devote yourself to honor God.

[54 : 23] Here's the one great truth. Here's how I would sum it up before I do the last point real quick. Here it is. When you learn to value God above all, His views and desires on the issues of life will shape your views and desires on the issues of life.

Amen? When you and I are devoting ourselves to love and value God above all, then God's views and desires on the issues of life will shape our views and desires on the issues of life.

That's a good place to be. A biblically renewed and renovated mind leads to a spiritually remodeled lifestyle and to holy desires.

Our feelings follow our thought life. That's why I said don't go on your feelings. Go on what the truth tells you and stand there and trust the Lord in it.

our feelings can aid, our feelings can support, and our feelings can even help give expression to what we treasure in our hearts and minds.

[55 : 32] But we don't lead with our feelings. We lead with truth. We stand on what is not fickle. Alright? Final point. Dedicate your will to the Lord that you may prove what the will of God is.

So as we focus on the will of God, we're automatically brought into a position where it's like, well, if the greatest concern is the will of God, then that must not be about my will.

So I need to get my will in conformity to the will of God. That's what I mean. Dedicate your will to God. Follow the will of the Lord and be ready to recognize that you can be deceived.

Now let me explain what we're talking about here because this is what Paul tells us. But be transformed, metamorpho, by the renewing, the remodeling, the reclaiming, the reeducating of your heart-mind so that you may prove what the will of God is.

All right? Now this is very important. I want to try to make sure that I cover this carefully for you. Your will is the choice center of your heart-mind.

[56 : 45] Your will is the choice center. It's where you determine your choices and put that choice into action with your body. When you are in the active process of being transformed into Christ-likeness by the renewing of your mind, you are gladly surrendering your choices to the will of Almighty God.

Do you hear me say gladly? You're gladly surrendering your choices to the will of God. Now in that spiritual surrender that we're talking about, that surrender to God and His will, you do not live, you do not live according to your way of thinking about something or to your agenda about something.

All of that, you do your thinking, you do your planning, but you bring all of that into submission to whose will? God's will.

God's will. That's what you're seeking to do. God's will. God's will. God's will. Your choices then, your choices then, are grounded in God's truth for life.

A mind that is actively renewed with the truth of the word can then control, guide, inform, and instruct the will. I'm going to say that again because that order is so important.

[58 : 04] Here's how I want you to understand it. A mind that is actively renewed with the truth of the word of the living God can then control, guide, inform, and instruct the will.

This is why we put God's word in our heart, isn't it? Because we need our will and the choices that we make to be informed and guided and instructed by God's truth.

So what God is teaching you becomes what you choose to do. You put your will into motion by what God is revealing to you, teaching you in the scriptures.

You bring your body into the activity of acting on what your will has been informed by, the truth. So you choose truth over feelings, over convenience, whatever.

You're looking at me now and I'm going to tell you I let the cat out of the bag. This is a lot of what we do in biblical counseling. We take people to passages like this and we minister these truths to people's hearts.

[59 : 23] And we begin to help them assess and discern ways in their life that their life is not lining up with this kind of truth, this kind of priority, and we help them grow in discernment and deal with whatever issue it is that's hammering that issue, that situation in their life, presenting them with that problem in their life.

What God begins to teach you becomes what you choose to do. You put truth in action as you make the choice to obey, to surrender, to give yourself to truth.

And trust the Lord to work that truth in your life. And when your will is surrendered to living out God's will in obedience to the scriptures, your lifestyle, your lifestyle becomes the proof and the example of that which is good and acceptable and perfect, says Paul.

Good, acceptable, and perfect are defined by truth. I don't get to make up what I think is good. There's all kinds of things that I could be deceived in and thinking, well, this is probably good.

Have you ever gotten down the road and thought this was good and then stopped and went, oh boy, that was not so good. This is not working out like I thought. And it wasn't just because you zigged instead of zagged and all that kind of thing.

[60 : 50] You didn't base your decision on the truth. And you found yourself at a place where truth could have kept you from it. You're not guilty. So we want to learn and grow from those times.

That which is good, acceptable, and perfect becomes something that you're living out as an example of the wisdom and the wonder of Almighty God at work in your life.

What a great, great ministry. All right, so let me put this up here. Your heart, your mind is your processing center where you determine what is shaping you and what will shape you.

So listen, I told you your will is the choice center of your life, but your will is part of how your heart operates. So you might understand your heart as your mind, your will, your emotions.

Your heart operates in terms of its desires, its plans, feelings, emotions, all of that. But within the desires of your heart and the operation of your heart, you make choices in your life out of who you are, not divorced from who you are.

[62 : 03] We've said this stuff like this, and this is psychology getting in and messing it up. We say things like, well, you made me do it. If you hadn't, nobody makes you choose what you choose.

You choose what you choose out of your own will. You activate your own choice center and you move out in what you want and you choose it. Don't put that off on your spouse or your kids or your employer or whatever.

This is Wednesday night people. Can I, can I get it? Thank you. Thank you. Amen. This is what we're studying on Wednesday nights. On Wednesday nights, we're trying to take what we're learning and put it into a very practical theology for daily life.

And this is what we've been talking about. So I say again, your heart, your mind is your processing center of which your will is a part because that's your choice center.

You choose out of your will. Your feelings and desires attach to what your heart, mind values and holds to. And then your desires fuel the direction of your will.

[63 : 08] Again, you don't do anything you don't want to do. You end up doing it one reason or another because that's what you chose to do and wanted to do. What you choose to put your body in motion and say and do is according to what you desire in your will.

What you choose in your will. So make no mistake now, friends, God is not pleased with ungodly thinking and behavior. And I'm certainly not saying that.

God never looks on our sinful attitudes, our sinful thoughts, our sinful behaviors, our sinful desires and says, oh, well, that's good and acceptable and perfect.

Well, he never does that, does he? Absolutely not. Listen, when your mind, when your will and your body are acting in glad surrender to what God has taught you in his word, you then are living holy and well-pleasing spiritual sacrifices before the Lord.

And you are, according to Paul, living in a way that proves and demonstrates that God's will for life for any life is truly good, acceptable and perfect.

[64 : 19] That's how we get there. We get to the good, acceptable and perfect all the way back over here where we find these foundational salvation mercies that we just prize and treasure and we can't get over what God's done.

And so we have this great love and devotion and gratitude to God. And we're living out of that. And as we seek to live that, we live according to the truth that he's given us. And it brings us all the way over to here.

And we have good, acceptable and perfect. But where did it start? It started with your love for Christ and you will never, ever get past that reality.

If you try to bypass step one, it turns into legalism. Or it's opposite license. And you and I can find all kinds of ways to justify things that we do that are not good, acceptable and perfect in the sight of God.

Be careful, dear friends. Travel the road of the mercies of God as you offer yourself on the altar of those mercies out of love and gratitude to the Lord.

[65 : 25] Let that be the foundation of why you do all that you do. God will bring you to the place of living a life that is good, acceptable and perfect in him. Remember that you're in a process.

One final quote before I pray. Our lives can prove what the will of God is only by doing those things that are good and acceptable and perfect to him.

To him. To God be the glory. Please be encouraged, dear friends. And let God challenge your life as I allow God to challenge my life.

And we'll follow him faithfully together. And draw on his love and mercy. Let me pray for us, please. Bow your heads with me if you would. Father, we just want to offer a prayer of thanksgiving.

That you have made us spiritual offerings who can give to you good, acceptable and perfect gifts of worship through our devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[66 : 27] God bless you. Thank you, Father, that as we consider how we parent our children, how we're married to our spouse, how we go about doing our jobs and the kind of employee that we are or employer that we are, how we relate to our relatives, our friends, our coworkers, how we relate to people that we see every day in the sphere of our influence as we go about grocery shopping and putting gas in our car and doing all the different errands that we do.

We're living life on this planet, Lord, but we want to live that life as living sacrifices to you, holy and acceptable unto God. We want to prove what your wonderful, perfect, acceptable and goodwill is as people surrender themselves to you.

The Christian life is not a substandard life of marginal happiness at best. It is the glorious reality of the joy and peace of knowing your forgiveness and living to a greater purpose and a higher calling for the God of the universe who has made all things.

Let us be astounded and awed with this great and mighty God and help us to love you with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourself.

May you be glorified as we give ourselves to you as holy offerings unto Christ. We pray in his name and for his glory. Amen. Amen.

[68 : 07] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.