

Romans 12:1-2

Intro. KSBC exists to glorify God by leading people in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Stated another way, the wonders and ways of God are seen, reflected in our lives as we both grow and change to live like Christ and as we point others to know and love him. As we begin a new year, let's take advantage of our increased awareness of time, assessment and reflection by taking a prayerful look at our individual growth and development in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Before we make any resolutions, let's ask God by his Spirit and word to show us the 'state of our souls.' Have you grown in your relationship with Jesus Christ in the past year? Are you on track to continue to grow in your faith, love and hope in the coming year?

Over the next four Sundays as we study Romans 12, it would be helpful for you to keep two factors in mind as you assess your personal development in Christ and then establish a plan toward continued growth. First, keep in mind how long you have been saved by God. How long have your eyes been opened to the truth and your heart made alive by the power of the Spirit? The scriptures support the notion that time is an important aspect of spiritual development. People who have known Christ for many years are expected to score high on the basics of spiritual development.

A second factor in addition to how long your relationship with Christ has been, is to have a solid, biblical set of metrics or measurements to use in your assessment. If we become careless, we find ourselves evaluating ourselves with ourselves and the well-accepted standards that we have become accustomed to honoring.

Romans 12 provides 4 metrics for our assessment and obedience that define essential characteristics of the growing follower of Christ. We hope to address these through the next few weeks together.

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| 1. Personal transformation. | 12:1-2 |
| 2. Community participation. | 12:3-8 |
| 3. Love for people. | 12:9-13 |
| 4. Conflict management. | 12:14-21 |

As we study these sections of scripture together, the Holy Spirit will help us understand how the glory of God is at stake as we live our lives in this profane and dark world.

The first metric that we consider is that of personal transformation as taught in 12:1-2. These verses are some of the most beloved and valued in the Bible and rightly so. These statements summarize the essential message of the gospel in the form of a changed life. Are you a Christian? Then you have to be able to talk about your life in terms of change and transformation. Do you believe the gospel of Jesus Christ? Then you must have some pretty cool personal transformation stories. Since you can be called a 'brother' in the Lord, you should welcome assessment in both how you are different now than you used to be as well as different from the spirit that dominates this age in which we live.

As we might expect, when the scriptures address life transformation it is not simply cosmetic, superficial or accomplished by human effort or discipline. We are drawn to life and heart change that can only be attributed to the power of God through the power of the gospel. That act of God described in R1:16-17.

Personal transformation . . . how has the gospel of God powerfully transformed your life . . . should be evident in your life in three foundational ways. Rather than describing transformation in terms of what you do, how often you do it and how much you don't do, God's love and mercy are demonstrated in your life by reprogramming you and empowering you to live as if you have a brand new heart and mind.

Verses 1-2 teach us to assess and define transformation in three foundational ways:

1. Does the gospel move you? 12:1a

The simple and obvious assumption of this first verse is that someone who is a child of God can be appealed to on the basis of the merciful acts of God done in their life. Can you be moved to think and behave differently by simply mentioning or appealing to the truth claims of gospel mercies you have received?

The components to look for as you assess this area of your walk with God include:

The appeal . . . exhortation, command, request . . . has how you receive instruction changed?

The source . . . 'therefore', 'the mercies of God' . . . has how you appreciate God's mercies changed?

The message of the gospel in Romans is that deliverance from sin's penalty is inseparable from deliverance from its power. Thus there is in the genuine believer an increasing awareness of the beauty and glory of Christ that generates a response of obedience in everyday life and circumstances.

What moves you currently to action or response? Habit, belief in God, fear of consequences, preferences, the way you were taught, self righteousness, not very much?

Verse one essentially says that the mercies of God are exhorting and commanding you to live this way and think that way. Do you hear and respond well to the gospel? Refresh your thinking by reviewing 3 passages in Romans that set up and explain the 'mercies of God' in 12:1.

Consider what you used to be . . . 1:25-28; 2:1

Consider your union with Christ . . . 6:1-6, 13, 19

Consider the amazing ways of God . . . 11:33-36

Obedience to all of the commands and exhortations of chapters 12-15 comes from an intelligent understanding of the mercies of God as taught in Romans 1-11.

Cmp/illus Gal. 2:20 . . . moved by the cross . . . loved me, gave himself for me.

2. Does worship consume you? 12:1b

Describe your devotion to God and the gospel to someone. As you do, have them jot down the key, definitive terms you use. The intent and power of God through the gospel in your life is to produce a joyful satisfying devotion to the God who mercifully saved you from sins penalty and power.

12:1 uses two concepts to help us understand the appropriate personal life response to God's mercies. See if you would describe your devotion to God in these terms.

- Offering yourself as a sacrifice to God.

You are pictured as a priest offering a sacrifice back to God of your life, your entire person.

You give your life in submission and gratitude to God . . .

Continually and completely 'living sacrifice'

Set apart and clean 'holy'

Pleasing to God 'acceptable'

Cmp. 2Cor. 8:5

Luke 9:23-24

Col. 3:5

- Being completely real with God.

Spiritual or reasonable or rational worship simply means true, honest worship. It involves both your heart and mind in a way that reflects the restoration of a real appreciation for God as contrasted with just going through the motions. This is the kind of worship that intelligent and rational beings should offer to God. This is an extension of worship, presenting yourself to God, that permeates every dimension of life.

Contrast/compare the use of your bodies/life in conscious, intelligent, consecrated devotion to God with what we often struggle within our experience . . .

A mechanical externalism

A wishful sentimentalism

A reliable pragmatism

Describe your devotion to God again . . . has it changed over the years?

3. Does thinking right challenge you? 12:2

The means or way we present ourselves to God is taught in verse two through the concepts of conforming and transforming. Note the clear command regarding the world we live in.

Do not be fashioned according to this world. Do not let this world squeeze you into its mold and the behavior patterns that typifies it.

- Negative command – first evidence of saving faith is turning from sin
- World view – this age dominated by sin and Satan, producing death, limited by God/time
- Conform – pick up the fashion of, squeezed, pressured, molded; contrast with age to come

Note the negative command is supported with a positive contrast of transformation. Too often we are left with the unsatisfying sense that the gospel is limited to producing a one dimensional kind of existence built around all the stuff we can't or shouldn't do even though these things bring pleasure and comfort to our lives for a while. Our minds need to be changed, our thinking made new and our approach to life transformed from what it was.

Bottom line . . . how has your thinking changed? Your mind, how you reason, put things together, determine what is right, make choices, make sense of things . . . described in 1:28-32 as debased and against God . . . needs reprogramming. How you think about everything needs adjusting by the gospel. Before grace and gospel your mind was given over to what was worthless regarding God and unqualified to assess the truth about God in our world.

Note two components of transformation by mind renewal . . .

- Changing the way you think is a process. It includes the Spirit of God using the scriptures, divinely appointed circumstances of life, the church family, personal discipline and prayer to actually change the way you process things . . . for the glory of God.

Illus. new gospel thinking with worry, anger cmp. Romans 8:4ff 2Cor. 3:18

- Changing the way you think is productive. Two satisfying evidences of mind renewal in your life . . .

Joyful obedience – 1:5; 15:18; 16:26 The ultimate power of the gospel is seen in the obedience of faith.

Satisfaction in God – you find in the experiences (testings) of life that God's direction, plans, instructions, ways and will are really good when they seem bad, acceptable when they seem unpleasant and perfect when you would of done things differently if you were him.

Joyful obedience and satisfaction in God are not and never can be produced by your performance, faithfulness or believing the right things. Only the gospel is powerful enough to change the mind of a person.

Personal transformation:

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| 1. Does the gospel move you? | 12:1a |
| 2. Does worship consume you? | 12:1b |
| 3. Does thinking right challenge you? | 12:2 |

Take Aways

1. Repent of your small appreciation for the gospel mercies given you by God.
2. Present yourself to God right now. Devote yourself to complete and real worship.
3. Make mind renewal your focus for the New Year.