



Daily Verse and Comment

Romans 12:1-2

(1) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. (2) Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

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Paul refers to the new man in [Colossians 3:10](#) as a man "*renewed* in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." "Renewed," translated here in the passive voice, comes from the Greek verb *anakainoo*. It means "to make new" in the sense of "to make different." The new man is *different* from the old one in that he bears the [image of God](#)!

Paul uses a similar verb in [Ephesians 4:22-23](#), where he asks that "you . . . be *renewed* in the spirit of your mind." That Greek verb, *ananeoo*, again translated in the passive voice, means "to renew" or "to renovate." Through years of living Satan's way of life before conversion, our mind grows corrupt; even the best parts of it become "like filthy rags" ([Isaiah 64:6](#)).

The apostle provides more details about this renewal process in [Romans 12:1-2](#). Here, he uses the same phraseology—the renewal of a person's mind—in a context that makes his meaning crystal clear: "And do not be conformed to [this world](#), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of [God](#)."

The noun "renewing" (*anakainosis*) is related to the verb *anakainoo*. Like *anakainoo*, it carries the sense of renovation to a *different*, rather than a younger, state. This attests again that the new man is different from the old.

Paul uses the verb *renew* in the passive voice in [Colossians 3:10](#) and [Ephesians 4:22-23](#). In [Romans 12:2](#), the gerund *renewing* is also part of a passive structure, "be transformed." A "problem" of the passive voice is that it does not tell us the actor of a verb, except through the use of an optional prepositional phrase. For example, "The stone was thrown," although a complete sentence, does not tell us *who* threw the stone unless we tack on the phrase *by John*.

We know the renewed man is different from the old, but who is the actor? Who does the renewing Paul mentions so often? God? Humans? Angels? [Romans 12:1-2](#) tells us.

In verse 1, Paul issues a call for action: He pleads for us to present ourselves to God as holy. In verse 2, he tells how, in a general sense, we must do this. We become holy by transforming our mind through a renewal process. In saying this, Paul establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between our mind's renewal (cause) and our transformation (effect). Renewal causes transformation.

Notice something else about verse 2: In it, Paul is doing far more than just telling us *how* to be transformed; he is exhorting us to carry out that transformation. God does not renew our mind! If God, by fiat, simply caused us to be transformed by renewing our mind, we would need to take no action whatsoever. God would simply renew our minds, and as an effect of His action, we would be transformed. If that were how it worked, Paul's exhortation to us would be useless, senseless, and illogical.

No, *we* are to renew our mind. As we do so day by day, we invariably experience a transformation of character, such that we become less and less "conformed to this world." It comes as no surprise, of course, that growth to [holiness](#) requires effort on our part. The apostle Peter issues a call for holiness in [I Peter 1:16](#), "Be holy, for I am holy" (see [Leviticus 11:44](#)). Notice the context. Peter says we are to be "holy in all [our] conduct" ([I Peter 1:15](#)), that is, our way of life. How? "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts [those of the old man], as in your ignorance" (verses 13-14). Clearly, Peter exhorts us to become holy by changing our conduct. In following chapters, he specifically defines holy conduct for servants, wives, and husbands.

The relationship between holiness and conduct is not just a New Testament teaching. The [Old Testament](#) says the same thing. For example, Leviticus 19 clearly connects the holiness we are to seek (verse 2) with our conduct. The chapter outlines the moral and ethical conduct God requires of holy people in a number of areas, such as business and sexual matters.

Of course, all this does not deny or belittle the part God plays in our individual growth to holiness. Notice [Romans 12:1](#) again. We attain holiness "by the mercies of God." In reality, God has a huge role to play. As we showed before, God establishes the new man in the first place. We could never do that. In addition, He provides vital help on a day-by-day basis through His Holy Spirit, a vital role, as Paul makes clear when he reminds us that God "saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" ([Titus 3:5](#)).

The most basic way in which we renew our minds is by obeying God's law, the perfect reflection of His character and nature. Notice how consistently Paul describes the new man in terms of the behavior and conduct God expects from him. In fact, wherever Paul broaches the subject of the new man, a discussion of a Christian's proper moral and ethical conduct is never far away.

— Charles Whitaker

To learn more, see:

[Choosing the New Man \(Part One\)](#)

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