

Living Like a Christian In Our Relationship with God- Part 2

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[0 : 00] When you hear the word commitment, what comes to your mind? It may depend upon the situation. Some of you athletes in here, we have athletes of various kinds in this room right now.

You might describe your commitment to your sport or your team by saying things like, you've got to go to practice every day. You've got to give 100% effort every time you step on the field.

You've got to stay positive. And especially in today's sports world, you might say or should say, don't get into trouble off the field.

We've got a lot of married men in this room. If I ask you to describe commitment, you might say something like, I try to tell her and show her that I love her every day.

You might describe commitment in terms of, I am committed to always being faithful in thought as well as action. You might even say that your commitment involves, I will only speak nice things about her parents.

[1 : 18] Or you might even tell her that you like her casseroles. Now strike that last one. That's just going too far.

Let's just don't put that one in there. Now as a Christian, how would you describe what it means to be committed to God? How would you describe, how would you summarize what it means for you to be committed to Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord of your life?

Well, I'm going to help you here. I think one of the best descriptions of what it means to be committed to our Lord is found in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2.

I want to put it on the screen now, but I hope you'll open your Bibles to this because we're going to be looking at both 1 and 2 today, really for the entire time. We're going to look at only maybe a couple of other Scripture verses.

So turn in your Bible to Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. But here, look at it now on the screen. One of the best explanations of what it means to be committed to God.

[2 : 25] I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We looked at these verses last week as we started a new series of studies from Romans chapter 12. The goal is we're going to go through the book of Romans chapter 12 only now under the heading, Living Like a Christian.

Last week and today, we're talking about living like a Christian in our relationship with God. Next week, we're going to talk about living or thinking like a Christian in our understanding of ourselves. And then we'll move on throughout the rest of the chapter and think about what it means to live like a Christian as we relate to other people. Now, in that message last week, we began looking at what it means to live like a Christian in relationship with God and found that the first requirement is to make a wholehearted commitment to God.

[3 : 43] Not just a wholehearted commitment to doing good or to going to church or doing something like that, but the focus was commitment to God himself, which includes commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ as well.

I want us to go back to these verses and look more closely now at how God wants us to live in a relationship with him as his children. Number one is a review from last week.

We start by making a wholehearted commitment to God. If you are serious about wanting to live like a Christian in this world, I mean, if you're serious about who you are as a child of God and you really want to live and let everybody see, I'm a true believer, I'm a true follower of Jesus, then you must, as it says there, make a wholehearted commitment to God.

You'll never live that kind of life without a total wholehearted commitment. Look at verse one, the first phrase. You can see what he's talking about.

He says, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God. The word therefore recalls what he's been talking about up to this point. He summarizes all that he's been talking about as God's merciful actions toward us in sending his son into this world to die on a cross and pay the penalty for our sins, something we did not deserve.

[5 : 15] See, when God shows us mercy, he's showing us, granting to us that which we do not deserve. And that is salvation, forgiveness of sin, being made right with him through his son, Jesus.

Now, we also saw last week that wholehearted commitment requires a total life commitment. Notice the next phrase.

Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. God calls us to give ourselves completely and exclusively to him, who we are.

I mean, our mouth, the way we speak, our hands, what we do, our feet, where we go. You can't compartmentalize your Christian faith if you're a Christian. You can't be a Christian on Sunday or around certain people and then act a different way when you go to work, the way you do your job, or around your friends.

Real heartfelt commitment is whole life commitment. He tells us it is a holy sacrifice. It means we're set apart.

[6 : 27] We're consciously making this commitment, setting ourselves apart. And this kind of commitment is acceptable or pleasing to God. You know, we talked about last week, and for the benefit of those who were not here last week, sometimes when you think about making a commitment, or at least some people, they don't like that word.

Because to them, commitment means I've got to do something I don't really want to do to achieve the results that I really want, like maybe losing weight, especially for health reasons.

Well, we're not talking about a grit your teeth and bear it kind of commitment here. We're talking about a commitment that is based on having a real, loving relationship with God.

He has shown us His mercy. We're talking about a commitment. Because of that, we just give Him our lives. We don't hold anything back. That kind of commitment pleases God.

And so again, the motivation for making this kind of commitment, this wholehearted commitment, it's all positive. Do it because of what God's done for you. But do it, or when you do it, that will please God.

[7 : 38] He will be pleased with that kind of commitment in you. One other thing is found in verse 1 about wholehearted commitment. It makes sense. It just makes sense.

Look at the last phrase, which is your spiritual worship, or some translations will say it's your rational service. Or some translations say it's your reasonable service of worship.

It makes sense to serve God this way. It makes sense to worship God as a way of life this way. This last phrase drives home the point of the entire verse.

Look at it. Summarize it one more time. In light of God's mercy, in light of God's grace and love as well, it is clearly reasonable and rational for us to make a wholehearted, total life commitment to serve and worship our Heavenly Father.

Now, living like a Christian in our relationship with God, that's how it begins. But if it's going to really grow and mature and develop, if it's going to make progress, we've got certain things we've got to do.

[8 : 49] Number two, we make progress by consistently choosing to adopt the worldview of God and reject all others. That's what he's talking about in verse 2, especially the first part.

Look at it with me. Paul is contrasting two ways to live. Verse 2 says, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Two ways you can conform to the pattern of the world. You can be like the world. You can adopt the world's mindset, philosophy, values. Or, you can look to God and cooperate with Him as He transforms you, as He renews your mind, makes you different from the way you think all the way out into the way that you live.

Paul is pointing out here to make progress in living like a Christian. We've got two choices to make every day. We've got two things we need to do.

One is negative. Do not be conformed to the world. But the other one is positive. Be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Let's look now at what each involves. First, the negative one.

[10 : 05] We must make a consistent effort to not allow the world to shape us. We must make a consistent effort to not allow the world to shape us.

He says it. Do not be conformed to this world. Or, probably the most well-known paraphrase of this phrase comes from the Phillips translation of the New Testament.

It says, Do not be conformed to this world. It says, Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold. Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold.

Another way to say that. Don't let the world pressure you into adopting its worldview. Everybody has a worldview. It's the way that you look at life.

Your worldview is the lens or the filter through which you look at life. I'm looking at life right now through these glasses that make some of you look clearer.

[11 : 10] Could be good. Could not be. It certainly makes what I'm trying to read look clearer. If you, some of you, when you walk out the door, you're going to put on sunglasses. That's going to, it's got a certain tint to it.

That's going to affect how you look at life literally. Our worldview is the lens or the filter through which we look at life.

It affects what we believe. And what we believe determines how we live. When Paul says do not be conformed to this world, he's saying don't look at life from the perspective of people who don't care about God.

You know, the word world is used in different ways in the New Testament. The word world sometimes talks about this big old world we live in. The world revolves around the sun. Sometimes the scripture uses the world in a negative way.

He uses it in terms of this age as opposed to the age to come. Temporal things. Just a temporary way of looking at life versus an eternal way of looking at life.

[12 : 20] But the world also, here's what we need to think about now. When Paul uses the world like he's using it here, he's describing a way of looking at life that leaves God out.

He's talking about a way of life that either hates God or doesn't care about God.

And both come out to the same thing. They're ignoring God. They're leaving Him out. They're leaving His ways, His will, His truth out of their thinking and as a result out of their living.

Paul tells us to not be conformed. Don't let the world teach you to look at life this way. Let me give you an example. Go home and turn on the TV today.

Go home and turn on the TV to any of your favorite shows, any of my favorite shows. And nine times out of ten, God will never be mentioned.

[13 : 22] No individual, no family, no group will ever mention mention God in any kind of real, personal, believing kind of way.

See, that's what the world has done. Some of the good shows, your favorite shows, nothing immoral, no trashy language. It's just all about life as we see it and feel it and taste it.

And it's as if God does not exist in that world of your show. And that's the way many people live life today. It's as if there was no God.

A lot of people live today as practical atheists. Now, this world mindset, this world view that leaves God out says that we can choose what we want to believe and how we want to live just like you can choose the food that you want as you go through the cafeteria line.

This world says you pick and choose because there's no real ultimate value. There's no absolute truth. The world tells us today there's no such thing as something being always right or always wrong.

[14 : 36] It's all relative. The world gives you the freedom. This world view, this mindset that we're talking about says you have the freedom to decide what you want to believe about God, about Jesus, about heaven and hell, about ethical issues like abortion, homosexuality, about marriage, about parenting.

See, the world's mindset, this world system, this way of looking at life says that you are to be the final judge for what you believe and how you live.

It's up to you because God is not, He's either not in the picture at all according to the way they think or God's got it all wrong. We've got to be hostile.

We've got to reject the teachings of His Word. Now this world view that I'm talking about is how most people in our country today think. And unfortunately, that means there's a lot of church members think that same way.

World Magazine pointed this out with a quote that they said was typical of how most people think today just in general in our country.

[15 : 55] Look at the quote. Sometimes my personal beliefs contradict those taught by the church. I make my decisions based on what I feel is right.

A lot of people in this world today, in this country today, my personal beliefs contradict those taught by the church and hopefully those taught by the church are found in Scripture.

We're going to hope that's what it is. But I make my decisions based on what I feel is right. What about you? Could that be something you think never would say but as you actually live your life in your home with your family members as you carry out the role that you have as a husband or wife or child or parent when it comes to making hard decisions in relationships with people when it comes to making hard choices?

What prevails? What you've been taught as being the actual Word of God because it's clear black and white or what you prefer?

Your personal opinion? You know, what this guy says, that's an example of someone who has adopted the worldview of the world.

[17 : 34] That's an example of someone who's become a friend of the world and the book of James in the New Testament. It warns us that's a scary, dangerous place to be.

I want you to look at what it says. James is writing to church members. James is writing to professing Christians. And evidently he has heard that some of them are living more like people of the world, people who don't know God, than they are people who are followers of Jesus.

And here's what he says to them. You adulterous people. He considers their being unfaithful to God as spiritual adultery. You adulterous people. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity?

It's hostility with God. Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. It can't be any clearer than that, can it?

We cannot, you cannot be a friend of the world, a man of the world, a woman of the world, and be a friend or woman or man of God. They are polar opposites.

[18 : 40] You may want to be both, but you can't be both. James says, Jesus talked about the same thing. We can only be a friend of God if we reject the influence of the world that opposes God.

So this is the first choice that we're called to make every day if we're serious about living the Christian life. Now I'm talking to you, if you're serious about living the Christian life, if you're in elementary school, middle school, high school, college, if you're a young adult, middle adult, or an old adult like Grace out there, you've got to make this choice every day.

I am not, with the help that God gives me, I am not going to allow the world to squeeze me into its mold.

But there's another choice. Equally, we've got to choose every day, and that is we must make a consistent effort to allow God to shape us. Look at the phrase.

Next phrase, be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Transform means to be changed into another form. How many people in here have played with transformers at some point in your life?

[19 : 53] Lots of people. You know what it's like to be transformed from maybe a car to an action figure. You know what it's like. You've studied about how a caterpillar turns into a butterfly.

Transformation. Notice that it says be transformed. That means that this transformation is something that's got to be done to us.

What it's doing is referring to the way God works in the life of every person who is His child. God works through His Spirit to change us gradually throughout our life here on earth once we become a Christian.

I mean, God puts His Spirit in us. He works to shape and mold our character to be that like Jesus's. What we've got to do to be transformed like this, we've got to learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's presence. He lives within us. The Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God.

[21 : 02] We need to be sensitive to His presence and we need to learn to be obedient to His leadership. For an example, you're a Christian.

You're serious about living the Christian life. The Spirit of God prompts you to say an encouraging word to somebody that you're in class with or that you work with.

You don't know what's going on in their life, but you know God is prompting you to do that. Well, to be obedient to Him, you need to do that. You need to offer that word of encouragement. You need

to be seen as that encouraging Christian who's there to make a difference, a positive difference in someone's life like that.

The Holy Spirit will convict us along the same line of talking. Haven't you as a Christian felt you wanted to say something negative about somebody?

You just wanted to blast them. You just wanted to make fun of them. Not to their face. You just wanted to talk about them at home or to your friend. But before you got it out of your mouth, the Holy Spirit convicted you and sort of like saying, don't say it.

[22 : 11] Don't let it come out. And you've got to make a choice. Are you going to be obedient to His leadership? Because gossip and slander, that's contrary to God's word, isn't it? We've got to be sensitive to His presence and obedient to His leadership, submissive to His power.

We're dependent upon Him. We can't do this on our own. We can't change ourselves. He can change us. But we've got to cooperate with Him and it'll be a lifelong process.

The next phrase in verse 2 tells us how this transformation takes place. By the renewal of your mind. The primary battleground in what all we're talking about.

The primary battleground in spiritual warfare, we'll call it, is in our minds. We need to be careful of what we allow to enter into our minds.

Now, what we're talking about here is what we dwell on. We're supposed to live in the world. We're supposed to, as Christians, be in this world, this world system that leaves God out, that hates God.

[23 : 13] We're supposed to be out here not allowing the world to influence us. We're supposed to be influencers, influencing the world, influencing people. Jesus said we're to be salt and light.

And as we're out in the world, as we interact with people, as we do a lot of different things, all kinds of thoughts come into our mind.

As we read, as we observe, as we study, as we do what all, all kinds of thoughts come into our mind and you can't help that. If in the course of doing what you need to do to live your life as a faithful Christian, things come into your mind, don't worry about that.

We're talking about what you dwell on, what you sort of mull over in your mind, what you think about. Because what we think is what determines what we do.

That's why we've got to guard against what comes to our minds. we've got to learn to think like a Christian. We've got to learn to think like God wants us to think as revealed in His Word.

[24 : 27] How discerning are you about what you are allowing to enter your mind that you dwell on, that you think about, that really is having an effect on what you think and how you live?

How discerning are you if you have children at home? How discerning are you of what you allow your children to be exposed to? TV, movies, internet, music, whatever.

What are you doing to try to filter out as best you can the garbage from this world from your mind and from the minds of your children?

This is part of our commitment to God. Don't be conformed to the world. This is one way. Be transformed by the renewing of our mind. If we're going to be able to resist the pressure to conform, if we're going to resist the influences of this world, we've got to go on the offensive.

We've got to fill our minds with the kinds of things the Holy Spirit can use to renew us, to transform our thinking. And the place begins with the truth of God's Word.

[25 : 39] You know that. We cannot, no matter what passage of Scripture you come to, when it comes to application, the final word is if we're serious about living the Christian life in this world, we have got to be people who know the Word of God.

We've got to know how God thinks, how God feels, how God has acted and promises to act. We've got to know how we can live our lives in a way that pleases Him and the way that will serve His purpose for why we are here in this world.

We need to learn to read the Bible just so we understand God's mind, God's heart, God's ways so that that can become our mind and our heart and our ways.

And then as we come to know God's Word, we need to filter everything that comes into our minds with that truth. Everything that comes into our minds, is, you know, how should I go about being a committed husband, a committed wife?

What does the Scripture say? Well, it has very specific things in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, 1 Peter 3. There's a lot of just general characteristics of what it means to be a Christian and live and interact with people in the right kind of way.

[26 : 57] Look just for an example, verse 9, and we're here in Romans chapter 12, let love be genuine. Our love for people needs to be genuine.

We don't need to be phony and fake, put up fronts. We need to learn to filter everything that comes into our mind with the truth of God's Word, every temptation, every idle thought.

That's how we develop a Christian worldview. Now, let's look at one more thing, the benefits of living like a committed Christian in our relationship with God.

That's the last part of verse 2. We are rewarded with a positive experience and desirable benefits of doing God's will. If we are faithful to the Lord, committed to Him like we've been talking about, we're going to be rewarded with positive experiences and desirable benefits of doing God's will.

Look at verse 2, the last part. That by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. As we obey God's call to be totally committed, as we cooperate with the Spirit of God who works in us, we're going to find that we get a lot of joy and pleasure from doing God's will.

[28 : 21] It's going to mean something to us. We're going to find satisfaction in living God's way as God's people if we do the kind of things Paul is talking about here, cooperating with the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

Paul is talking about, not talking about finding God's will about such things as, such things as, who should I marry? Where should I work? That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about God's desired will which He reveals to us in His Word.

The Bible reveals God's will in a general way in terms of what we should believe and how we should live. We test God's will.

That's what it says there in the latter part of verse 2. That by testing, you may discern what is the will of God. We test God's will by doing it. If you bought a car, new or used, what did you do?

Did you do a test drive to see if it was what you thought it was going to be? Going to prove this is really what I want to have, to drive? That's how we discover a lot of things.

[29 : 26] Some of you are into one sport in particular where you probably tested various sports before you decided that's the one that I'm going to really focus on.

If we'll seek to know and do God's will from experience, we'll find that's the best way to live. Our experience will say, will prove to ourselves that God's will is good, it says.

God's will is just good. It's the right thing and it leads to good in our lives. God's will is acceptable or some translations will say pleasing. Think about it.

Knowing that you're pleasing God, isn't that one of the greatest feelings that you can possibly have? Knowing that I'm not just right with God, I'm pleasing to him. I'm bringing a smile to his face by the way that I am living.

Honoring him, loving him, serving him. And then God's will is perfect. You can't improve on it. We'll find from experience by living it that it's the best life we can possibly live.

[30 : 33] Now one way to know if you totally, if you, we, if we're totally committed to God this morning, I want you to ask yourself, do I desire to know and do the will of God as revealed in Scripture in the details of my life?

I mean, just as you do what you do Monday through Saturday, are you conscious of, do you pray about, do you seek to know and do God's will because you want to please him, you want to live life the way that he designed?

Or are you more concerned about just doing what you want to do, the way you want to do it? Or are you really and truly just, you don't care.

You're just sort of out there, just doing what comes naturally with not much thought about who gets pleased. A missionary by the name of Jim Elliott was killed by the very Indian tribe in South America.

he was trying to build a relationship with and be able to share the gospel with. But he made a memorable statement about Christian commitment that you've probably seen that is so powerful.

[31 : 53] He says, he is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

You are no fool by turning your back on this world and the things that this world offers in place of God and his will and his ways.

