

“Why Do You Live the Way You Live?”  
Romans 12:1-2  
Dr. Jerry Nelson

My father was about 30 years of age when he switched occupations and became a dairy farmer in Wisconsin.

He had been reared in a strong Christian home and had early in life responded to God’s grace and become a Christian.

But like many of us the significance of that relationship grew over time.

From childhood my father had been taught that Sunday was a special day - a day to honor the Lord by stepping out of the routines of the rest of the week, to stop the otherwise necessary making of money, and to worship God and spend time with God’s people.

In the early years of my life, my dad was a sharecropper.

That meant that in order to live on the farm, owned by someone else, he had to work the fields and pay the owner a portion, a share of the crop.

In those years there were no government subsidy programs, no savings accounts to fall back on. We lived right on the edge. Many of you know something about living with no financial margin.

Our family’s income, our livelihood, was dependent on the crops.

I’m certain it had happened before but I well remember one particular occasion - probably because by then I was old enough to understand the significance of my father’s decision.

It was early on a Sunday morning and the weather reports and the skies all said the same thing - a large crop-damaging storm was headed our way by nightfall.

Our fields were ready to be harvested and the storm that was forecast would likely destroy a significant percentage of the crop if they weren’t taken from the field immediately.

I was old enough to know that my father faced a dilemma.

The decision involved the home and livelihood of his family and the decision involved the worship of his Lord.

I'm certain it came down to the issue of trust - did he trust God.

My father didn't speak of the decision that morning.

He simply ignored the weather reports and got all of us in the car at the appointed time and we headed out for church.

I couldn't help but notice that every other farmer between our home and the town in which our church was located was out in the fields that morning.

As we drove down the highway I saw farmers racing against the weather as we raced for church.

My father must have felt the pressure to conform.

But years earlier his mind had been transformed by the Spirit of God through the Word of God.

Being a child, I wondered about my dad's wisdom in his decision.

I rationalized all kinds of scenarios besides the one he was following.

But our morning and our afternoon, that day, were given to the usual Sunday activities, not to working the fields.

**You see, my father was not first of all a farmer; he was first of all a Christ-follower.**

And he valued things not seen more than those that could be seen.

How you live, is determined by what most value; not just by what you say you value, but what you really value!

Every day and all of life we make decisions based on presuppositions or assumptions we have about what is real, what is most important.

We can adopt the secular philosophy around us and live as if this life is all there is.

It is about pleasure and acquisition and hanging onto enough of our wealth so that we can retire early and play golf in Arizona.

We can adopt the advertisers' propaganda and live as if it all about us getting whatever we want and think we "need."

It starts early in life and some of us never outgrow it.

My son thinks that National Basketball approved shoes and jerseys are essential for his emotional survival.

What is it for you? Is it a bigger house, a newer car, a trip to a more unique place?

Is life ultimately about you? You worked hard and you deserve it?

We can adopt the Christian-in-name-only thinking of millions of Americans, who assume heaven is taken care of, by them having made a profession of faith, and that life now is for us to live as we choose, as long as we don't hurt anybody and meet a few minimum religious expectations like attending church and giving a little of our money away to good causes.

The disconnect, for some of us, between what we say we value and what we do, is mind-boggling.

Ligon Duncan, who is the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, MS said a friend of his owns a store next to an abortion clinic.

"One of his (friend's) habits is to look at the bumper stickers on the cars that (drive) into the abortion clinic. You'll see bumper stickers like this as they pull in to the abortion clinic, "Take your children to Sunday school next Sunday, they need and deserve it." "Prayer changes things" or maybe even, "Come visit us at First \_\_\_\_\_ Church or what ever church they come from. In fact, he was telling me one day, that he sat with a man outside the abortion clinic who was a minister who was reading his Bible and who had brought his granddaughter to have an abortion. Where is the disconnect here?

<http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/romans/romansvol5to6/38aRomans.htm>

I offered a little boy in our church 50 cents to purchase a soda.

He said he only needed a quarter because all the kids know how to work the machine to get soda for a quarter.

Too many a professing Christian young man or woman of our church has asked me or others on our staff to officiate at their wedding only to find out they know their fiancé is not a Christian but it doesn't matter to them.

We put \$5 down in the office football pool or a dollar a hole on the golf course, we drink to excess on New Year's Eve, we fail to declare income on our taxes or we pad the expense account at the office.

In gossip we quietly destroy a person's reputation with our salacious innuendo.

We rob from the poor by our rationalized greed.

Isaiah 29:13 "The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."

I've been rather pointed, haven't I?

My only purpose is to ask if our walk matches our talk.

Because in Romans 12:1-2, the Apostle Paul says, in essence, if you believe what I have told you in chapters 1-11 of Romans, then there is only one response consistent with your belief:

Romans 12:1-2 "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. <sup>2</sup> 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."

I think the Bible is very consistent in teaching that there is only one kind of Christianity and that is the Christianity that follows Christ.

John 12:26 "Whoever serves me must follow me..."

It is being sold out to him.

Luke 18:22 “Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

It is putting the kingdom God first and letting all other things follow.

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well

True Christianity is so radical that Paul describes it as “offering our bodies as living sacrifices” to God.

Describing it as “offering our bodies” puts it most effectively because it is with our bodies that our intentions take action – this is walking the talk.

Romans 12:1-2 form the bridge between the two major sections of Paul’s letter to the Romans.

Everything before these two verses leads up to them and everything that follows, flows from them.

What will follow in chapters 12-15 are some of the practical implications of what has taught thus far.

But verses 1-2 capture all that and more in a powerful summary of **what we are to do** and **how we are to do it**.

- The **what** we are to do is stated so succinctly in verse 1 – “offer your bodies as living sacrifices.”
- The **how** we are to do it is likewise stated succinctly in verse 2 – “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Looking again briefly at the what, the offering our bodies as sacrifices to God, Paul describes that sacrifice in three ways: “living, holy and pleasing to God.”

“Living” is as opposed to dead – this is not like the sacrifices of the OT where the sacrifice is slain.

Neither is this martyrdom.

This is a willful decision to offer our very lives, body and soul, to God for as long as he allows us life on this earth.

It is “holy.”

Holy in the Bible means set apart for God's eternally important use as opposed to being used for things that don't matter in the long run.

Several years ago John Piper wrote an important little book entitled, *Don't Waste your Life*.

The point is the same – Give your life to what matters – God matters!

And Paul says, it is “pleasing to God.”

This is a sacrifice that honors God by accomplishing God's gracious purposes in this world.

The story of my father, with which I began this sermon, was intended to illustrate the practical outworking of a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Most of what it means is lived out in the common places and events of life.

But to give you an idea of the extent of this word “sacrifice” let me give you a more dramatic illustration.

Pastor Maximilian Kolbe was 45 years old when the Nazis invaded Poland - his home country.

Kolbe had begun a para-church ministry that had over 700 workers with a vision of global evangelization.

At that same time, another man was thinking expansionist thoughts - Adolf Hitler and his Nazis were invading Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Pastor Kolbe knew that trouble lay ahead and he was right: Poland was next on the Nazi invasion route.

And by September 19, the German army arrived at the headquarters of the mission and arrested Kolbe and the others.

They were loaded into trucks and then cattle wagons as they were taken to Amtitz - a prison camp.

There, amidst horrible conditions, Kolbe went from person to person praying for and encouraging them.

Within a few weeks the entire group was released and Kolbe was more determined than ever to carry on their work.

On a blackboard one day he wrote the formula  $w = W$ .

And he said the little  $w$  stands for my will and the capital  $W$  stands for God's will. Let your will be identified with the will of God.

To the Nazis, the Jews and the Slavic peoples were subhuman.

As for the pastors of the country the edict was this: "They will preach what we want them to preach. If any pastor acts differently we shall make short work of him. The task of the pastors is to keep the Poles quiet, stupid and dull-witted."

Pastor Kolbe couldn't obey that wish.

And on February 17, as he prayed over the globe of the world in his office, the Gestapo came.

He was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp where he was assigned to a timber detail - carrying loads much too heavy for his, by then, weakened body.

On one occasion when he fell under the load, he was kicked into a ditch and left for dead.

Other prisoners secretly got him to the prison hospital where he miraculously recovered.

When he was released from the hospital he was assigned to another work crew and there he did as before - he went from man to man during the nighttime hours to listen to them, pray for them, and hug them as he told them of Christ's love and his.

By the end of that year Auschwitz was working like a well-oiled killing machine with 8000 people being put to death each day.

The only problem for the guards was the occasional escape attempt.

And on one July night a man escaped from Barracks 14 where Kolbe was housed.

The next morning all the prisoners were lined up in the sun and made to wait all day in the sweltering heat while the escapee was hunted.

The camp rule was that 10 men would die for one who

escaped.

One man, who was selected to die, cried out “My poor wife, My poor children, what will they do?”

At that Pastor Kolbe broke out of the ranks and approached the Commandant - a thing unheard of.

Though he had a revolver in his hand, the Commandant didn't shoot but demanded, “What does that Polish pig want of me?”

The frail pastor spoke calmly that he wanted to die in the place of the man who had just been condemned.

Surprising everyone, the Commandant nodded OK.

And as the other prisoners were dismissed to return to the barracks the reprieved prisoner, who lived until 1995, passed by Kolbe with a look of astonishment that had not yet turned to gratitude.

“But Kolbe wasn't looking for gratitude.

If he was to lay down his life for another, the fulfillment had to be in the act of obedience itself. The joy must be found in submitting his small will to the will of the One more grand.”

The condemned men were placed in what was called the death box- a place of no food or water until they dried up and died.

As the hours and days passed, the camp became aware of a very unusual sound coming from the death box.

Instead of the usual screaming and attacking of one another, the sounds of hymns wafted from the box as Pastor Kolbe shepherded his flock through the valley of the shadow of death.

A prisoner named Bruno who survived Auschwitz had been ordered to clean out the death box and when he entered days later they found only three others and Pastor Kolbe alive.

The other three were unconscious and were quickly killed with an injection by a doctor.

Pastor Kolbe was sitting up against a wall with his head inclined a bit to the left, his eyes with a faraway vision in them and a faint smile on

his lips.

The doctor repeated his procedure and in a moment Pastor Kolbe was dead.

Why did the pastor volunteer to lay his life down for another prisoner?

What he did resulted from a decision he had made years earlier and a decision, which he ratified over and over again in the daily-ness of life right up to the end.

From The Body by Colson and Vaughn; Other details to be found at <http://www.auschwitz.dk/Kolbe.htm>

Though much less dramatic, my father's decision that Sunday morning, and your and my decisions every day of our lives are dictated by answering the same question: what do we most value?

Romans 12:1 "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."

But how do we do this?

Paul answers in verse 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."

There are two sides to this – a negative and a positive.

Don't go on being conformed to the pattern of this world.

Don't put yourself in the place where you are unnecessarily shaped by the values of the world.

Elsewhere we are taught that we **are** necessarily in the world, but we **are not** of the world.

2 Corinthians 6:17 "Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing." and 1 Corinthians 5:19 "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—**not at all** meaning the sexually immoral of *this world* . . . since then you would need to go out of the world..."

Paul doesn't give us a list of "don'ts" here (though he is not afraid to do so elsewhere).

Here, Paul simply tells us to, as J.B. Phillips put it, "stop letting the world around you squeeze you into its mold."

This is a warning to be aware of what is shaping our

values.

Nearly everyone will agree that we are a self-centered, sex-obsessed and greedy culture.

Foolish is the Christian who thinks he's not affected by that.

Advertisers and others who benefit financially are betting billions of dollars every year that they can influence you.

There are probably no more powerful influences in our culture today than music and movies.

And the message they send is not about holiness.

Let me give you just one current example.

"27 Dresses" is a very popular movie; grossing 22 million last weekend alone.

My concern is that many of our young people and their parents will see it.

PluggedinOnline describes the movie in part this way:

"It's Jane's friend, Casey, who is the movie's fount of sexual shockers. She says, for instance, that the only reason to put on one of those ghastly bridesmaid dresses is the thought that, later, a willing groomsman might "rip it to shreds with his teeth." When Jane receives flowers from a secret admirer, Casey says, "I spent two days in bed with a guy and *you* get flowers. Great." She jokingly encourages Jane to seduce her boss and have an "accidental pregnancy, a shotgun wedding and a lifetime of bliss."

And much more.

There are two dozen misuses of the Lord's name, and an assortment of extremely vulgar and crude remarks.

Drunkenness is treated as humorous.

I believe I have read several times that 90% of sexual encounters portrayed on television are between unmarried or not married to each other.

And worse than all of this, is the message of greed being perpetuated by the advertising.

What is most influencing you?

Is the world around squeezing you into its mold?

Are your decisions about relationships, recreation, job, money and the rest of life shaped by world?

Paul writes, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**”

Please notice that Paul does NOT simply give us a new list of dos and don'ts.

He is calling for a transformation – a change of character – a change of desires.

By the sinfulness of world and our own “sinful” nature, we have been pre-programmed to value what the world values.

The two primary words, “conformed” and “transformed,” are two different words but they have the same idea.

So here Paul is saying I don't want you shaped any longer by the world, but I do want you to be shaped, I want you molded, I want you wholly influenced, but I want it done by God in the very renewing of your mind.

God isn't interested in us just figuring out how to manage our sin.

He doesn't just want you to control yourself so that you don't do what you desire; He wants your desires to change.

He wants what you value most to change.

How does that happen?

It happens by the renewing of your mind.

One interesting way that Paul said this is with the verb he used.

He doesn't say you are to renew your own mind.

He says, in essence, you are to allow it to be renewed.

The renewing is done by God.

The teaching here and in the rest of the Bible is that the Spirit of God actively uses the Word of God to change us.

Conscious, dependent prayer to God asking him to change your mind and heart is where it starts.

And reading and listening to his Word preached, taught and discussed by God's people is what the Spirit uses to change our minds.

The Word and Prayer.

We are being influenced at all times.

The only question is who will have most access to our souls?

Don't fool yourself, thinking you are a Christian, if you aren't engaging the Spirit of God in his word.

**Now I want to show you five words by Paul that make this all possible.**

I want to go back to the beginning of these verses where Paul write, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, **in view of God's mercy**, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices..."

As I have said a couple of times already in this sermon, Paul didn't finish the first 11 chapters of his letter and then in chapter 12 say, "Alright, now I want you to go out and try harder to live like Christians."

No, Paul tied his instruction to act to the greatest motivation imaginable – "in view of God's mercy."

Who was sinful and deserving of God's wrath?

Who was damned and unable to help himself?

Who was so lost he didn't even want God and life?

Who did God send his own son to die for?

Whose sins has God himself paid for?

Who did God send his Spirit to make alive?

Who did God give faith to, to trust Jesus?

Who has received the very righteousness of Jesus?

Who has been granted life eternal?

Who has been given the very Spirit of God to encourage and enable them?

Who has been placed into the family of God with brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Listen to Paul back in Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

Listen to the Apostle Peter 2 Peter 1:3-4 “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

In the early 1800s, English preacher, Thomas Chalmers wrote an outstanding article entitled, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.”

I have referred to it on other occasions because he articulates such an important concept.

Chalmers writes, “The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness.”

But that is exactly what we try to do.

- We try to convince young people that smoking is harmful, that premarital sex is hurtful, and that greed is destructive.
- We try to persuade people that the things of the world that seem so attractive are actually empty and ruinous to their souls. But that is like telling a dog not to bark!

Because the desire for those things is so powerful that all our talking is in vain.

Shame or fear may get a kind of compliance but never a change of desire.

But give a person a new desire and it changes everything.

- The boy's desire to sleep is so strong until he remembers that today he is going fishing.
- The young man's love of sports consumes his life until he meets that certain girl.

Again from Chalmers, “the only way to dispossess (our hearts) of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one.”

It is when we know that we are deserving of God's wrath but in his mercy he saved us;

It is when we know that our relationship with God was not our doing, but solely his;

It is when we know that we are saved by grace, free grace, and grace alone;

It is when we hear Jesus in his mercy calling to us, willing to call us his own, willing to be with us for eternity;

It is then that we are compelled from a new desire to be done with the old ones.

They no longer hold the same allure.

And yet again from Chalmers, "We know of no other way by which to keep the love of the world **out** of our heart, than to keep **in** our hearts the love of God - and no other way by which to keep our hearts in the love of God, than building ourselves up on our most holy faith."

"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. <sup>2</sup> 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

Oh Christian, plead for the Spirit of God to change your mind as you avail yourself of the Word of God.

Brief Commentary on the verses  
By Jerry Nelson

NIV 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. <sup>2</sup> 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

KJV “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

“Therefore” = in light of all Paul has written thus far.

This marks a major change in the book. Paul set forth the case for a relationship with God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Now he will pick up again on the themes he began in Romans 6-8 – living out this new relationship we have with God.

Theology is highly practical! What you believe determines how you live.

Chapters 1-11 tell us what God did.

Chapters 12-16 tell us what God wants us to do because of what God did.

“in view of God's mercies”

Mercy is not God's response to our right living;

Right living is our response to God's mercy.

Orthodoxy (correct thinking) is driven by Grace

Orthopraxy (correct action) is driven by Gratitude

Theology is grace, Christian living is gratitude (for that grace).

Grace and gratitude, in the Greek language come from the same root.

“I urge you”

Not merely a request and not quite a command.

Not a request because that is too weak – a response is called for; not responding is unimaginable.

Not quite a command because what is called for is to be from the heart, not forced.

“Offer your bodies”

The response is not a private religion but a public department derived from a heart relationship with God.

It is how our faith is lived out in speech, action and reaction.

This is a choice we make and it usually is made somewhere in our teens or early 20s but is also a choice we ratify every day of our lives – usually more consciously when other offers are made to us.

God doesn't just want your heart (invite Jesus into your heart); God wants all of you, including your body!

Give Jesus your heart and keep the rest of your body for yourself?

Not your body as beautiful and meriting his favor but your body offered freely, willingly to him, to use for his purposes and glory.

Romans 6:13 "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Romans 6:19 "I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

### "sacrifices"

No longer literal bloody sacrifices as in the OT. But now 1 Peter 2:5 "offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ And Hebrews 13:15 "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name

### Living

This is not martyrdom but healthy, living bodies offered to God's service for as long as he gives us physical life here on this earth.

### Holy,

"Set apart" for God's effective and productive use rather than for profane, irrelevant uses that have no value but in fact devalue the human life.

### Pleasing to God

A living and holy sacrifice is pleasing to God – it honors God and aids in accomplishing God's gracious purposes in this world.

**This is your spiritual act of worship.**

Not just reasonable as in logical but spiritual as from the heart and true to God. And it is this, rather than hollow ritual, that worships God.

Bears do what bears do. Sparrows do what sparrows do.  
Humans were made to imitate and worship God.

**How do we get to the place where we think and act like verse 1 (offering our bodies as living sacrifices)? Answer: Verse 2**

**“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world”**

Our “world” is schizophrenic in that it is made up of the best and worst.

The heavens declare the glory of God. (Psalm 19)

We are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139)

Every good and perfect gift is from above (James 1)

There is much we are privileged to enjoy and use for the benefit of others.

BUT this world has also been devastated by sin – sin and death dominate as a result of the Fall and our sins.

The world now has a bias, which is against God.

Romans 6 emphasized our need to be sanctified – changed from what was our natural bent.

**“but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”**

Present tense – go on being transformed – a continuing process.

There are two primary forces that shape your thinking and life – the world and God. Which is the most powerful in you?

**“mind”** is your moral consciousness. Adjust your way of thinking.

Our minds have a mind of their own; captured and captivated by sin.

Our minds must be changed.

Do you evaluate actions and ideas based on a Christian worldview or a secular worldview?

How is our mind renewed?

The Spirit of God using the Word of God in the context of the People of God. The Word is the objective authority and the Spirit is the active applier. Not every situation in life is specifically addressed in the

Bible; we need the Spirit and his people to help us understand its application in each situation. God now entrusts his people to his Spirit and Word. **We aren't just rule followers**; we are active responders to the Spirit living within us.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will

So instead of being conformed to the pattern of this world, you will be able to live out God's will.

“test and approve” - understanding and agreeing with God about what is the right thing to do and then doing it.

“good, pleasing and perfect will”

“perfect” not without imperfection but wholly for God.

Excerpts from “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection”  
Thomas Chalmers

Find the full document at: <http://www.monergism.com/directory/category.php?action=top Rated>

It is not enough, then, that we dissipate the charm, by a moral, and eloquent, and affecting exposure of its illusiveness. We must address to the eye of his mind another object, with a charm powerful enough to dispossess the first of its influences, and to engage him in some other prosecution as full of interest, and hope, and congenial activity, as the former...

It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction. At least, it is very seldom, that this is done through the instrumentality of reasoning. It may be done by excessive pampering - but it is almost never done by the mere force of mental determination. But what cannot be destroyed, may be dispossessed and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its, power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind. It is thus, that the boy ceases, at length, to be the slave of his appetite, but it is because a manlier taste has now brought it into subordination - and that the youth ceases to idolize pleasure, but it is because the

idol of wealth has become the stronger and gotten the ascendancy and that even the love of money ceases to have the mastery over the heart of many a thriving citizen, but it is because drawn into, the whirl of city politics, another affection has been wrought into his moral system, and he is now lorded over by the love of power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or other, this is unconquerable...

**The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness.** But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world, by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit into its preference another, who shall subordinate the world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendancy?...

This, we trust, will explain the operation of that charm which accompanies the effectual preaching of the gospel. The love of God and the love of the world, are two affections, not merely in a state of rivalry, but in a state of enmity - and that so irreconcilable, that they cannot dwell together in the same bosom. We have already affirmed how impossible it were for the heart, by any innate elasticity of its own, to cast the world away from it; and thus reduce itself to a wilderness. The heart is not so constituted; and **the only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one.** Nothing can exceed the magnitude of the required change in a man's character - when bidden as he is in the New Testament, to love not the world; no, nor any of the things that are in the world for this so comprehends all that is dear to him in existence, as to be equivalent to a command of self-annihilation.

But the same revelation, which dictates so mighty an obedience, places within our reach as mighty an instrument of obedience. It brings for admittance to the very door of our heart, an affection which once seated upon its throne, will either subordinate every previous inmate, or bid it away. Beside the world, it places before the eye of the mind Him who made the world and with this peculiarity, which is all its own - that in the Gospel do we so behold God, as that we may

love God. It is there, and there only, where God stands revealed as an object of confidence to sinners and where our desire after Him is not chilled into apathy, by that barrier of human guilt, which intercepts every approach that is not made to Him through the appointed Mediator. It is the bringing in of this better hope, whereby we draw nigh unto God - and to live without hope, is to live without God; and if the heart be without God, the world will then have all the ascendancy. It is God apprehended by the believer as God in Christ, who alone can dispost it from this ascendancy. **It is when He stands dismantled of the terrors which belong to Him as an offended lawgiver and when we are enabled by faith, which is His own gift, to see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and to hear His beseeching voice, as it protests good will to men, and entreats the return of all who will to a full pardon and a gracious acceptance of it is then, that a love paramount to the love of the world, and at length expulsive of it, first arises in the regenerated bosom.** It is when released from the spirit of bondage with which love cannot dwell, and when admitted into the number of God's children through the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the spirit of adoption is poured upon us - it is then that the heart, brought under the mastery of one great and predominant affection, is delivered from the tyranny of its former desires, in the only way in which deliverance is possible. And that faith which is revealed to us from heaven, as indispensable to a sinner's justification in the sight of God, is also the instrument of the greatest of all moral and spiritual achievements on a nature dead to the influence, and beyond the reach of every other application...

Salvation by grace - salvation by free grace - salvation not of works, but according to the mercy of God - salvation on such a footing is not more indispensable to the deliverance of our persons from the hand of justice, than it is to the deliverance of our hearts from the chill and the weight of ungodliness. Retain a single shred or fragment of legality with the Gospel, and we raise a topic of distrust between man and God. We take away from the power of the Gospel to melt and to conciliate. For this purpose, the freer it is, the better it is. That very peculiarity which so many dread as the germ of antinomianism, is, in fact, the germ of a new spirit, and a new inclination against it. Along with the light of a free Gospel, does there enter the love of the Gospel, which, in proportion as we impair the freeness, we are sure

to chase away. **And never does the sinner find within himself so mighty a moral transformation, as when under the belief that he is saved by grace, he feels constrained thereby to offer his heart a devoted thing, and to deny ungodliness.** To do any work in the best manner, we should make use of the fittest tools for it. And we trust, that what has been said may serve in some degree, for the practical guidance of those who would like to reach the great moral achievement of our text - but feel that the tendencies and desires of Nature are too strong for them. **We know of no other way by which to keep the love of the world out of our heart, than to keep in our hearts the love of God - and no other way by which to keep our hearts in the love of God, than building ourselves up on our most holy faith.** That denial of the world which is not possible to him that dissents from the Gospel testimony, is possible even as all things are possible, to him that believeth. **To try this without faith, is to work without the right tool of the right instrument. But faith worketh by love; and the way of expelling from the heart the love which transgresseth the law, is to admit into its receptacles the love which fulfilleth the law.**

“27 Dresses” movie, reviewed by PluggedIn Online

<http://www.pluggedinonline.com/movies/movies/a0003600.cfm>

#### **SEXUAL CONTENT**

Kevin and Jane have an apparent sexual encounter in a Volvo when they get stuck in a rainstorm. They kiss passionately and try to take off one another's clothes as they tumble into the back seat. They kiss at other times during the film, too, as do George and Jane.

When Tess comes back from her first date with George, she suggests to Jane that it wasn't all just drinks and smiles. We later see Tess and George making out in Jane's apartment.

Tess, Jane and other women wear clothing that exposes lots of leg and/or cleavage. Jane changes clothes several times in the back of a cab and, while audiences don't see anything below her bare shoulders, the cab driver takes a peek every now and then. (Jane tells the man that each look'll cost him \$20.)

A boy who's about 11 years old tells George that Tess looks "hot." But it's Jane's friend, Casey, who is the movie's fount of sexual shockers. She says, for instance, that the only reason to put on one of those ghastly bridesmaid dresses is the thought that, later, a willing groomsman might "rip it to shreds with his teeth." When Jane receives flowers from a secret admirer, Casey says, "I spent two days in bed with a guy and *you* get flowers. Great." She jokingly encourages Jane to

seduce her boss and have an "accidental pregnancy, a shotgun wedding and a lifetime of bliss." And about being appreciated, she quips, "What good is it if no one is naked?"

A colleague wonders why Kevin isn't "getting laid," what with all the romantic copy he writes. Jane sarcastically tells someone she's OK with not getting married before her little sister because that allows her to have "hate sex" with random men. And there are other scattered crudities revolving around sexual anatomy and predicaments.

### **VIOLENT CONTENT**

*Three Stooges* style, Casey slaps Jane to knock her out of a twitterpated reverie over George. Jane slaps Kevin for being a jerk. Tess throws cleaning sponges at Jane for embarrassing her. Jane and Kevin hydroplane off a wet road in a Volvo.

Tess, as a girl, is shown in a slideshow tormenting a cat by holding it upside down. Kevin tells Jane that she's repressing her emotions and is just one party away from shooting herself.

### **CRUDE OR PROFANE LANGUAGE**

There are two might-as-well-go-ahead-and-say-it near-uses of the f-word. Jane pairs the obscenity with "mother" (and we hear pretty much everything but the "k"). In another, a bride *starts* saying the word.

Nearly 10 s-words and an unhealthy smattering of milder cusswords, including "a--" and "b--ch," are stirred into the stew. And God's name is misused nearly two-dozen times. (After listening to one bride swearing up a storm, Jane—as a little girl—assures her it's OK. "We have cable," she says confidently.)

### **DRUG AND ALCOHOL CONTENT**

Kevin and Jane get good and drunk one rainy night and belt out a rollicking version of Elton John's "Bennie and the Jets" while standing on top of the bar. Jane and Casey are shown drinking, presumably, mixed beverages at a nightclub. Jane says she gives couples memberships to a "Wine of the Month Club" as wedding presents, adding that she occasionally gets free Gewürztraminer out of the deal.

## From *The Purity Principle* by Randy Alcorn

<http://afajournal.org/2003/september/903purity.asp>

Suppose I said, "There's a great-looking girl down the street. Let's go look through her window and watch her undress, then pose for us naked, from the waist up. Then this girl and her boyfriend will get in a car and have sex – let's listen and watch the windows steam up!"

You'd be shocked. You'd think, What a pervert!

But suppose instead I said, "Hey, come on over. Let's watch **Titanic**."

Christians recommend this movie, church youth groups view it together, and many have shown it in their homes. Yet the movie contains precisely the scenes I described.

So, as our young men lust after bare breasts on the screen, our young women are trained in how to get a man's attention.

How does something shocking and shameful somehow become acceptable because we watch it through a television instead of a window?

In terms of the lasting effects on our minds and morals, what's the difference?

Yet many think, **Titanic?** *Wonderful! It wasn't even rated R!*

Every day Christians across the country, including many church leaders, watch people undress through the window of television. We peek on people committing fornication and adultery, which our God calls an abomination.

We've become voyeurs, Peeping Toms, entertained by sin.

### **Normalizing evil**

The enemy's strategy is to normalize evil. Consider young people struggling with homosexual temptation. How does it affect them when they watch popular television dramas where homosexual partners live together in apparent normality?

Parents who wouldn't dream of letting a dirty-minded adult baby-sit their children do it every time they let their kids surf the channels. Not only we, but our children become desensitized to immorality. Why are we surprised when our son gets a girl pregnant if we've allowed him to watch hundreds of immoral acts and hear thousands of jokes with sexual innuendos?

*But it's just one little sex scene.*

Suppose I offered you a cookie, saying, "A few mouse droppings fell in the batter, but for the most part it's a great cookie –you won't even notice."

"To fear the LORD is to hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13). When we're being entertained by evil, how can we hate it? How can we be pure when we amuse ourselves with impurity?

God warns us not to talk about sex inappropriately:

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity... because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place" (Ephesians 5:3-4).

How do our favorite dramas and sitcoms stand up to these verses? How about **Seinfeld** and other nightly reruns? Do they contain "even a hint of sexual immorality" or "coarse

joking”? If we can listen to late night comedians’ monologues riddled with immoral references, are we really fearing God and hating evil?

### **Jesus, the radical**

Consider Christ’s words:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matthew 5:27-30).

Why does Jesus paint this shocking picture? I believe He wants us to take radical steps, to do whatever is necessary to deal with sexual temptation.

Now, the hand and eye are not the causes of sin. A blind man can still lust and a man without a hand can still steal. But the eye is a means of access for both godly and ungodly input. And the hand is a means of performing righteous or sinful acts. We must therefore govern what the eye looks at and the hand does.

If we take Jesus seriously, we need to think far more radically about sexual purity.

### **Doing what it takes**

The battle is too intense, and the stakes are too high to approach purity casually or gradually.

So ... if you can’t keep your eyes away from those explicit images, don’t ever go to a video rental store. *Come on. Everybody goes into those stores.*

No. If it causes you to sin, you shouldn’t. Period.

Do your thoughts trip you up when you’re with certain persons? Stop hanging out with them. Does a certain kind of music charge you up erotically? Stop listening to it. Do you make phone calls you shouldn’t? Block 900 phone sex numbers so you can’t call them from your home.

If these things seem like crutches, fine. Use whatever crutches you need to help you walk.

Some men fall into mental adultery through lingerie ads, billboards, women joggers in tight pants, women with low cut blouses or short skirts, cheerleaders or dancers, movies, TV shows, and commercials of the beer-and-bikini variety. Some men’s weakness is the Sunday newspaper’s ad inserts or nearly any magazine.

So, *stop looking*. And then *stop putting yourself in the position to look!*

If you have to get rid of your TV to guard your purity, do it.

If it means you can’t go to games because of how dancers or cheerleaders dress and

perform, so be it. If it means you have to lower your head and close your eyes, so be it. If you're embarrassed to do that, stay home.

Tell your wife about your struggles. Or if you're single, tell a godly friend. If you need to drop the newspaper because of those ads, fine. If you need your wife to go through it first and pull out the offending inserts, ask her.

Romans 13:14 instructs us to "make no provision for the flesh" (NASB). It's a sin to deliberately put ourselves in a position where we'll likely commit sin. Whether it's the lingerie department, the swimming pool, or the workout room at an athletic club, if it trips you up, stay away from it.

Proverbs describes the loose woman meeting up with the foolish man after dark (see Proverbs 7:8-9). We must stay away from people, places, and contexts that make sin more likely.

If it's certain bookstores or hangouts, *stay away from them*. If cable or satellite TV or network TV, old friends from high school, the Internet, or computers are your problem, *get rid of them*.

Just say no to whatever is pulling you away from Jesus. Remember, if you want a different outcome, you must make different choices.

If you can't be around women wearing swimsuits without looking and lusting, then don't go on vacation where women wear swimsuits. If that means not going water-skiing or to a favorite resort, fine. If it means being unable to go on a church-sponsored retreat, don't go.

Sound drastic? Compare it to gouging out an eye or cutting off a hand!

**"But..."**

*But there are hardly any decent TV shows anymore.* Then stop watching TV. Read books. Have conversations.

*But all the newer novels have sex scenes.* Then read the old novels. Read fiction from Christian publishers.

*But I've subscribed to Sports Illustrated for thirty years, back before they had the swimsuit issue.* They have it now. So drop your subscription. And tell them why.

*But it's almost impossible to rent a movie without sex and offensive language.* There are Christian movie review sites that can help you make good selections for family viewing. There are also services which offer edited movies, television adaptors which edit profanity, and DVD software that cuts offensive scenes from movies.

But suppose there were no decent movies – what then? I enjoy good movies, but the

Bible never commands us, “Watch movies.” It does command us, “Guard your heart.”

It’s a battle – battles get bloody. Do whatever it takes to walk in purity!

A friend wrote a daily contract that asks these questions: “Are you willing to do whatever’s necessary to protect your sexual sobriety? Ask God for help? Call on others? Go to meetings? Read literature? Set boundaries and not cross them? Be brutally honest?”

### **Too radical?**

*But you’re talking about withdrawing from the culture. What you’re saying is too radical.*

No, what I’m saying is nothing. Jesus said, “If it would keep you from sexual temptation, you’d be better off poking out your eye and cutting off your hand.” Now that’s radical.

Many claim they’re serious about purity, but then they say, “No way; I’m not going to give up cable TV,” or “I’m not going to have my wife hold the computer password.”

Followers of Jesus have endured torture and given their lives in obedience to Him. And we’re whining about giving up cable?

When Jesus called us to take up our crosses and follow Him (see Matthew 10:38), didn’t that imply sacrifices greater than forgoing Internet access?

How sold out are you to the battle for purity? How desperate are you to have victory over sin? How radical are you willing to get for your Lord? How much do you want the joy and peace that can be found only in Him? Purity comes only to those who truly want it.

### **Controlling the Internet**

- Use family-friendly Internet service providers. Install a pornography-filtering program on your computer, realizing it can’t screen out everything. Ask someone else to hold the password. Ask someone to regularly check your Internet usage history.
- Use family-friendly Internet service providers. Install a pornography-filtering program on your computer, realizing it can’t screen out everything. Ask someone else to hold the password. Ask someone to regularly check your Internet usage history.
- Move computers to high-traffic areas. Unless you have a proven history of going on-line safely, don’t log on to the Internet if you’re alone. Be sure the monitor always faces an open door, where others can see what you’re looking at (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- If you’re still losing the battle, disconnect the Internet — or get rid of the computer.

### **Taking charge of the TV**

- Consult a schedule to choose appropriate programs. Channel-surfing

invites temptation.

- Keep your television unplugged, store it in a closet, or put it in the garage to prevent mindless flip-on.
- Use the “off” switch freely. Use the remote quickly when temptation comes. Have a safe channel ready to turn to.
- Don’t allow young children to choose their own programs. As they get older they can choose, but parents have veto power. Avoid multiple TVs that split the family and leave children unsupervised. Don’t use television as a babysitter.
- Spend an hour reading Scripture, a Christian book, or participating in a ministry for each hour you watch TV. Even when television isn’t bad, it often keeps us from what’s better.
- Drop cable, HBO, your satellite dish, or your TV if it is promoting ungodliness in your home. (This isn’t legalism — it’s discipleship.)
- Periodically “fast” from television for a week or a month. Watch what happens; see if you like what you can do with all that time (including feeding your passion for Christ).

January 27, 2008