

## "Practical Grace" Sermon Series

### Part 3: Chameleon or Butterfly?

#### (Romans 12:2)



community groups

### ❖ Review

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Chameleons often take on the color of their surroundings, camouflaging themselves in order to hide from other animals. Butterflies, on the other hand, are transformed from the inside out when they metamorphose from caterpillars into creatures that are radically new and beautiful. In Romans 12:2, the Apostle Paul calls believers to be more like butterflies than chameleons when it comes to the Christian life. In order to be "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1) who serve as vessels of God's mercies to a lost world (Romans 15:9), **Christians learn to think as God thinks and want what God wants**. This call to be renewed in our thinking can be a challenge, but it's part of our discipleship, and the success of Christ's mission on earth depends on it.

### ❖ Reflect

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1. Have you ever known a person who was losing touch with reality—perhaps through dementia or some other type of trauma? What begins happening to that person's mind? How does it affect others nearby? Can something similar happen to a person spiritually? Can an entire culture drift away from reality? If so, what are some ways you see that happening today?
2. Read Romans 12:2 in several translations as represented in the group. Then read J. B. Phillips' famous paraphrase, which is both faithful to the Greek and memorable in its conveyance of Paul's intention into English: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands, and moves towards the goal of true maturity." In your own words, what is the main thing Paul is trying to communicate in this passage? How does his message relate back to Romans 12:1?
3. Review again the purpose of the word "therefore" in Romans 12:1. What is Paul's message in Romans 1-11? What is his message in Romans 12-16? Why do you think he feels the need to move from foundation to application, from creed to conduct, from principle to practice, from theology to ethics, from orthodoxy (right belief) to orthopraxy (right behavior)? Why do you suppose Paul doesn't end his letter at the end of Romans 11?
4. Read Titus 2:11. What is grace? What does grace do? What happens when we *elevate* the grace of God, but we never *implement* the grace of God?

5. Why does Paul call for non-conformity with the world's way of thinking? And why does he simultaneously call for a transformation by the renewal of our minds? How does this renewal take place? What is wrong with our minds that they need to be renewed?
6. Describe the tension between the "indigenous principle" (= believers often needing to fit in with the world and live at peace with our neighbors) and the "pilgrim principle" (believers sometimes needing to buck the world system and be at odds with our neighbors). When do you think it's appropriate to emphasize the indigenous principle? When do you think it's appropriate to emphasize the pilgrim principle?
7. In the sermon, Pastor Tim said, "Some Christians are like chameleons. They blend in with the culture. They think and act like the world. They hide their faith. To hear them speak and see them act—it's hard to tell there's anything different about them at all. They cuss like everyone else. They cheat like everyone else. They lose their temper like everyone else. They're rude like everyone else. They get drunk like everyone else. They sleep around like everyone else." Why is this a problem? Who suffers because of it?
8. Where do people's identity, morality, and purpose come from? How do we know? Indeed, what kinds of worldview assumptions are wrapped up in the very question itself? How would different worldviews answer it? To what extent are believers sovereign over their identity, morality, and purpose?
9. What are the results of a renewed mind? (Refer back to Phillips' paraphrase for a sharper understanding of Romans 12:2b). How can these results be helpful when we're trying to be in the world but not of it?

## Respond

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1. In what areas of your life are you prone to engage in "stinkin' thinkin'" right now? How might you go about renewing your mind in these areas? Who might be able to help you with that endeavor?
2. Paul says that a mind that's in the process of being renewed enables you to demonstrate and treasure ("test and approve") that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands, and moves you to maturity ("good, pleasing, and perfect will"). Practically speaking, how might this understanding of Romans 12:2b help you as you seek to be *in* the world but not *of* it?
3. In Joachim Neander's hymn "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," he writes, "Hast thou not seen how thy desires all have been granted in what he ordaineth?" Try to answer Neander's question. Where have you seen this truth at work in your own life? How might that truth encourage you in your present and future struggles?
4. In the sermon, Pastor Tim shared a list of New Testament statements that are true of the believer's identity in Christ. Which ones might you need to focus on right now? How can the objectivity of these truths affect your subjective acceptance of them?

- I am alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:5).
- I am a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- I am a joint-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17).
- I am the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- I am redeemed from the curse of broken law (Galatians 3:13).
- I am free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).
- I am forgiven of all my sins and washed in the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7).
- I am delivered from the power of darkness and placed into the KOG (Colossians 1:13).
- I am a child of God (John 1:12).
- I am holy and blameless before God (Ephesians 1:4).
- I am justified freely by the grace of God (Romans 3:24).
- I am adopted into the family of God (Ephesians 1:5).
- I am born of God, and the evil one cannot destroy me (1 John 5:18).
- I am healed by the stripes of Jesus (1 Peter 2:24).
- I am strengthened with all might according to his glorious power (Colossians 1:11).
- I am born again by the incorruptible Word of God (1 Peter 1:23).
- I am the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- I am complete in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10).
- I am a partaker of God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4).
- I am God's workmanship, created in Christ to do good works (Ephesians 2:10).
- I am an ambassador of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- I am not I, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).
- I am part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9).
- I am joined to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:4).
- I am raised up with Christ and seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).
- I am more than a conqueror through him who loves me (Romans 8:37).
- I am an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony (Rev 12:11).

**What is God saying to you? What are you going  
to do about what God is saying to you?**



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