

9/10/2023

## EXPERIENCE

### Romans 12:2

**“Do not conform 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.”**

Special Music: “The Change in Me”

Casting Crowns

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8TCZiy5A2A>



*Autumn  
Fruit*

**EXPERIENCE**  
*“Do not conform 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.”*      **ROMANS 12:2**

## **EXPERIENCE**

I had a task  
I needed to do  
Something I had never done  
A task that to me was new  
So I dug right in  
My mouth set in a grin  
And saw the difficult task through.

Only problem was  
I didn't get it right  
I failed in the task  
For my lack of foresight  
Of ever doing the chore  
And I left it lacking for more.  
So, I put it away out of sight

And then on another day  
I had a similar project  
But I had a bit of a experience  
Though the task still defied logic  
But I set my hands to the chore  
Knowing I knew a little bit more  
And had a chance of getting it correct

But then, guess again  
I failed to complete  
The task as projected

**And felt totally replete.  
So, I hid the chore  
Near the one before  
Now knowing another defeat**

**When they came once again  
And ask me to try  
To make the world right  
I had a great alibi  
I had already failed twice  
Why make it thrice?  
There was no reason to try**

**But, in spite of it all  
I gave it a shot  
I looked at fail one and fail two  
And had a new thought  
If I change that or this  
And add a quick wish  
I just might complete the lot**

**And sure enough  
I met with success  
The approach was reborn  
And I avoided a mess  
It finally worked  
Where before I had failed  
And the projects derailed  
Experience was the key to the work.**

When I was in my second year of college at Oklahoma Baptist University, the chairman of the drama department gave me a summer project. That particular summer, there were no drama classes that required anyone to have anything than general lighting on the stage. It had been decades since the theatre lights had been thoroughly cleaned and updated. So that became my summer project. Now, I had hung lights and focused them and even done some elementary lighting design at the time, but I had never taken one of these lighting instruments completely apart. I had replaced a few broken lenes and adjusted a few mirrors, changed out the bulbs, but nothing major. And here the chairman of the department was wanting me to take each and every instrument completely apart, clean it thoroughly, replace broken parts, and bring each instrument up to code. There was no one to teach me how to do this. Even with the little experience I had, I still knew more about lighting instruments than most. But the task before me was so very daunting.

So, every day for three or four hours, I would sit and take those lighting instruments completely apart. I would blow out the dust, polish the mirrors, clean the lenses, check to be sure the right lamps were in each one and that they were focused properly. Most of the instruments had asbestos cable that needed to be replaced with Teflon cable, so that meant rewiring almost every one of the lights. There were fresnels, ellipsoidals, double ellipsoidals, scoops, work lights, and strip lights. The C-clamps that held the instruments to the pipes all had to be tested and adjusted. I built a device for testing the plugs and replaced all the bad plugs. If any instrument could not be fixed properly, I set it aside and scavenged

it for parts for other instruments. I checked and repaired every wire and connector on all extension cables.

By the end of that summer, I could take any one of those instruments apart and put them back together blind folded. There was a good side and a bad side to that. I was now the lighting expert in the department and anytime a lighting instrument broke or failed to deliver, it became my responsibility to fix it. I was also called upon to start teaching other students about the instruments. So, while it looked great on my resume', it also added a great deal of responsibility to my already overworked environment.

The same thing happened when an on-campus group borrowed the theatre and managed to burn a hole in one of the main curtains. Those curtains were horribly expensive, and we could not afford to replace them. We had no one in the department that knew how to repair them. So, Walt made the extra effort and learned about stage curtains and how to repair them. From then on I became what people in theatre refer to as a 'ragman', and anytime a curtain needed fixing, it fell on my shoulders. While it is great to be needed, it made it extremely difficult to keep up with my schoolwork at the same time.

Some people are very fortunate that they have a built-in ability to understand much of their chosen field of work. It just seems to come to them naturally. But most of us have to work really hard at learning how to do our jobs. My dad was an excellent aircraft mechanic. But he grew up on a farm where he had to keep the farm equipment running. He learned a great deal about being a mechanic the hard way, just like most farmers. Trial and error. If it doesn't work

**this way, then we will find another way. Always keep some baling wire and duct tape handy. This is where experience comes from. Doing something long enough and often enough that we can do it almost without thinking about it.**

**Have you ever known a mechanic that can tell you which spark plug is not firing just by listening to the engine? It takes a great deal of experience to be able to do that. I've worked with men and women on assembly lines that can tell when a machine is about to breakdown and why, just based on the sound of the motor or the bearings. That comes with experience.**

**There is an old story that has made the rounds in many different forms swapping out characters and occupations, but this is the way I first heard it.**

**There was a factory that came under new management and was due for a major upgrade. Much of the equipment was replaced and many employees lost their jobs as the company downsized to become more efficient. Some were forced into early retirement. One of those employees was a building engineer that had worked for the company since it first broke ground. But seeing how he was in his early seventies, they decided that he really didn't fit in with the company's new plans. So, the company let him go.**

**A few years later, the engineer got a call from the company. It seems that when the plant had been upgraded, the decision had been made not to replace the old boiler system, and for whatever the reason, the main boiler was not working. No one at the plant understood how the system worked or how to fix it.**

**They asked the engineer to come in and see what he could do, and the man agreed.**

**The man brought a small toolbox with him and followed a manager down into the boiler room of the plant. And there it was, a massive boiler in all its glory. A wonder of engineering for its time. Only it wasn't working.**

**Well, the old engineer circled around the boiler, stepping over pipes, examining connections and valves, checking switches, and reading meters. After about an hour of inspection, the man reached into his toolbox and pulled out a small hammer. He pressed his hands on the boiler and followed the rivets with his fingers until he came to a particularly unremarkable plate near the input valves. Taking his hammer, he gently tapped the connection several times and after a few seconds the boiler roared to life. Everyone was impressed.**

**The man put the hammer back into his toolbox, walked back up the stairs. The manager told him to just send them the invoice and he would make sure that it got paid.**

**A few weeks went by and the manager received the invoice. It totaled \$100,000. The manager was in shock. The old engineer had just hit the boiler with his hammer. But the engineer had been kind enough to itemize the invoice. There were only two line item entries. The first line item said "Cleared input valve obstruction by striking with hammer - \$1.00." The second line simply said "knowing where to strike the input valve connection on the boiler - \$99,999.00."**

Experience can be so very underrated. Experience can make hard work look easy. Experience can be mistaken for simplicity. Sometimes when we see experienced people working, we can become overconfident in our own abilities, thinking that we can accomplish the same things with the same ease.

**“Do not conform 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 believers among us that make living the Christian life seem almost easy, that coming into a personal relationship with Christ fixes us so that we can easily live a life that is pleasing to God. New believers often don’t realize the transformation into this new life of abundance through Jesus Christ takes work. We are all works in progress and none of us comes close to meeting the ideal example of Jesus Christ. So how do those Christians who make it look so easy do that? Make it look so easy? Well, it is right there in our scripture today. “by the renewing of your mind.” It does not say “renewed mind.” It says, “renewing of your mind.” That is an action verb. Ongoing renewal. Work that is never finished. It’s not like we just slap on a little paint and check the tires. No. It is a never ending, always learning, always reaching, always studying, always praying, constantly turning over the soil of our minds and hearts as we lean into the perfection that is Jesus Christ.

Christians who make living a Christian life look easy have just as difficult time as all the rest of us. The difference is that they spend time gaining



**experience as Christ Followers. Most of us just get stuck and wonder why we struggle so much following the path that Jesus wants us to follow.**

**So, how do we get unstuck? How do we get the experience we need? Here's a few important suggestions.**

- 1. Spend time praying - Start each day with prayer. End each day with prayer. Pray throughout the day. By doing so, you will come to the realization the Jesus is walking beside you every minute of every day. It's difficult to not appreciate the presence of Jesus if you spend all day talking to him. "But people will think I'm crazy, Pastor!" Welcome to the Christian life. Non-Christians WILL think you are crazy, eccentric, a lost cause. But God did not put you on this earth to please people and find acceptance among them. By joining in fellowship with Christ, by agreeing to follow him, you are held to a different standard and a non-Christian cannot understand that relationship. Talk to God about everything going on around you and around the world, good and bad. Make sure that God is a part of every conversation that you have.**
- 2. Spend time reading the Bible – Growing up, I carried my Bible everywhere. I'm not sure when I stopped. Probably when I added it to my phone. I have several Bibles on my phone. But that is just not the same as taking time to read the Bible every day. It doesn't have to be a lot. I have found that when I am traveling, I can open one of the Bible apps on my phone and have it read to me. It does give the words a different perspective. But doing so, also keeps me involved in God's**

love letter to us. We all need to consciously spend more time engaging with the Bible. It is there that we find answers, questions, truth, and inspiration in our daily lives. A Christian who does not spend time in with the Bible is missing a vital link in their relationship with their Creator. Find the time to read it, examine it, study it, study its history and its authors. If you can't find the time, make the time. You will be the better for it.

3. **Service** – Okay, this one is a little tougher. Many of us just can't get around physically like we used to. I get it. And the older we get, the more difficult it can become. For several years now I have told myself I didn't need a handicap placard for the truck. I could manage. But on the advice of friends and family, I finally broke down last week and got one. Admitting that we are just not as strong physically as we once were, is hard for us. Especially those of us who are hard-headed and dogmatically independent. I truly get it. But there are many ways to serve, and God does not expect you to do things that are beyond your physical means. We all have talents, skills, and abilities that we are still able to do. And if we are able, God expects us to use them. If we can pray, then pray. If we can sing, sing. If we can serve, then serve. If we can teach, then we should teach. If we can give, then give.

Paul tells us in Romans 7:3-8:

**3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself**

**with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.**

**4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,**

**5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.**

**6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;**

**7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;**

**8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.**

**There is no limit to what we can accomplish together if we will all do what we are capable of doing. But we must keep in mind that doing so is something that we need to find in ourselves and it is never up to us to expect those things of someone else. We are never to be critical of someone else's service. This focus is for us alone. Our service is between ourselves and God whom we are listening to.**

**These three things (Prayer, Study, and Service), are where we gain the experience that we need to live a fulfilling Christian life. Without this experience, we are just kicking up dust and moving it around. There is a place for each one of these things in every one of our lives.**

**This week, I want us all to reflect and see if we have truly embraced each one of these aspects in our Christians lives. Are we living our lives in prayer? Are we taking time to study the Bible? Are we finding a place where we can serve our church and our community? If we aren't, how can we step up our game as Christians. Are we looking for reasons not to serve?**

**Living a fruitful Christian life is so fulfilling. There is joy in embracing the relationship that God wants to share with us.**

**“Do not conform 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.”**

**God bless you all,**

**AMEN**

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