

Be Transformed 1983 Torrey Conference

By Earl Radmacher

Radmacher: When Mr. Hafer starts or stops using that Grecian formula, the truth will really come out as to how ancient he really is. I don't know of any man that I've ever met 44 years of age who looks as young as he does. That is amazing to me. It must be the youth around here that keeps you in good shape, Ron. I really appreciate, Cynthia that number because I could follow every word of it. Sometimes in singing, you get the music, but you can't hear the words, and the words were so meaningful. I really appreciated that. Thank you. And I've appreciated this week. I've grown this week under Bruce Wilkinson. Yesterday, I learned how to do my Bible study and my calisthenics at the same time, and that was very helpful.

On the heavier side, I have seen some specific ways in which I can go back and do my job in a better way. I've seen some things this week that I think will really impact my Ministry in the Northwest and maybe even broader than mine, maybe a way that Joe Aldridge and I will be able to do some things together that we have not seen the possibility of doing in the past. And that has been exciting this week. So not only have the speakers hopefully made a contribution to you, but you, by allowing them this opportunity and by being here and listening and interacting, have done something for them as well. And hopefully we will go away on higher ground in Christ Jesus than we came into the week.

And that's the exciting thing about the word of God. I just praise his name for all of the good things he does for us. Now I'd like you to turn back with me to Romans Twelve again, and I would like you to read with me Romans 11:33 to 36. And I realized that it might sound like a

cacophony of sound reading from various translations, but let's try it anyway, for there is really something beautiful to be seen and heard here in this piano of praise that Paul makes after rehearsing eleven chapters of the mercies of God. And why don't we stand and just read this together? Romans 11:33 to 36, verse 33. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out for who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become his counselor, or who has first given to him, and it shall be repaid to him, for of him, and through him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen. That wasn't too bad. Thank you. You may be seated.

He is the one that should receive the praise. He is that one who is truly great. And before Paul ever begins what we often call the practical section in Romans twelve. And following, he concludes this doctrinal treatise with this expression of the greatness of our God. And only then does he say, I beseech you, therefore, or I beg of you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.

His appeal to presentation is based upon his previous understanding of what God is really like. And thus, in our first session together that I had the opportunity of being with you, we sought to look at some of the thoughts that the world has of God, the world system around us, and to remind ourselves that it is the Devil's strategy to constantly be tearing down our understanding of what God is like. And it has blessed me to see how the messages in this week have woven together along that line. As Dr. Boyce came back with the self-existence and the self-sufficiency and the sovereignty, the Holiness, et cetera, of God, just filling in that arena of what God is really like.

I need to constantly be rehearsing that because I live in a world system that is saying the opposite thing to me. It is seeking to drag down my understanding of the nature of God. One passage of scripture that portrays that very vividly is 2 Corinthians 10. Don't turn there. I'm not going to stay there, but just to read it. When Paul says, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God, for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The Devil's strategy is to attack our understanding of what God is like, because he knows that if he can tear that down, he will tear down your life as well. Why? Because you can never walk higher in your life in Christ than your understanding of what God is like. In other words, you cannot trust a person any more than you know the person. To the extent that I know God truly, to that extent only will I be able to trust him. No religious gimmicks will help me beyond that. And the devil knows that. So he doesn't work on the externals particularly. He works on the internals and on the internals, he works particularly on my understanding of God.

And that's why Solomon said so clearly. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. With that in mind, I shared with you just a couple of mind renews from the scripture. The passage here says to stop being conformed and be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

And I see the Bible as Tim says, the Bible. I see this book as a book full of mind renewers. I don't have to look all over the landscape for mind renewers. They're right here. And the story of Joseph and his attitude toward God, Genesis 45, Genesis 50 is put there as a mind renewer.

So I go back and I read that and I see that I can believe that God is powerful. And I can believe that God is good in the midst of situations that may not seem good at a particular time. And I can go from Genesis 50 over to Daniel and I can look at three very real people, Shadrach, Mishak and Abednego. And I can see that they could in the midst of trial, not have to accept the thesis of the process theologians that God is loving but not powerful. They were fully aware of the fact that God is able, but they were not wise enough to say whether he would deliver them or not, but they would leave that up to him.

And I need to go back and just run that through my spiritual veins again and again. I need to read the story in Daniel, I need to read it in Genesis. These are mind renewers. They are cathartic agents that get the garbage out of my thought life that is constantly coming in there through the encounter I am having with a world that is unlike God, with a world that has no love for God. Let me give an illustration of that from my life and show how it has worked for me. And then I will move on to the other area of conformity transforming.

In the last couple of years, like many presidents of institutions, I have wrestled with the financial problem. And it seems like in my case I've had to wrestle more than some others and there have been others who have had real bonanzas happen to them. They have gotten big gifts. And I would sit back and say, Lord, have you forgotten something here? And then on a particular

occasion I was in a city where there is a very Liberal seminary and that seminary is very heavily endowed. In fact, it is said to be the most endowed seminary in America. They have no need for money, they just have need for students. And they made the statement there that they can afford to experiment with their theology, meaning that we don't have to depend on our constituency for money. Therefore we can do whatever we want to here, we can experiment with it. And that hit me the wrong way. It really irritated me that they had so much with all of their unbelief and I had so little with all of my belief.

And I thought that the one who owned the cattle on 1000 Hills would do well if he would assign the slaughtering task a little more equitably. And I found myself getting irritated with God. Lord, why do you bless the unbeliever? And why do you not reward those who have stood firmly for the integrity, the truthfulness, the inerrancy of Your Word? Why don't you give it to us? We could do so much better with those funds if we had them. And I let that settle down in my heart a little bit, and I thought on it until it grew and festered. And then when people would ask me, how are things? Instead of saying, oh, fine, I decided, I'm going to tell them what it's really like. And I said, they are bad, really bad. And I hadn't any more than said that when the Lord drove home a mind renewal to me about himself, and I found it back in Matthew the 7th chapter. You may want to flip back there for just a moment. In Matthew 7 and verse 11, the Lord brought ringing back into my head a mind renewer, and he showed me that I was becoming conformed to the world's idea about God, that God was doing bad things to me. God wasn't really good.

Now, I would not have signed that in a doctrinal statement, but I was acting that way. And in Matthew 7 and 11, it says, if you then being evil, and that's me know how to give good gifts to

your children, and I certainly seek to do that. I would not knowingly do evil to my children. I may by mistake do that which is not good for them, but I don't set out to do that. Even though I am evil, even though I have sin, I really try to do that which is good for my children.

And so he says, if you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him, have you had it happen that sometimes a verse that you've read over and over again all of a sudden takes on light and it just hits you, and that hit me strongly. God touched my button with that, and I thought, you are right, God. I have been accusing you of doing bad toward me, and you don't do bad. You are a good God and you do good toward me. And I had to find myself repenting and asking God for forgiveness and making a commitment.

Lord, I will never again call that which you have done to me bad. I may say I don't understand it, but I will not call it bad. I recall just a little bit ago our Minister of music here was sharing with me concerning a book on worship done by two of our professors, Ron Allen and Gordon Bohr. And Ron Allen is a professor of Hebrew that I just love very much. And he came back from a sabbatical some time ago in Taiwan only to find out after a year of very heavy teaching and giving of himself, his daughter at two years of age, had acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

And it was a real letdown. You'd think God, after a whole year of just really giving myself out there, that you surely could have protected Rachel from that. And Ron, of course, checked her into the hospital and his wife is a nurse, and she stayed there with Rachel around the clock, and Ron would go back and forth with the kids to the hospital, and he'd try to Cook the food at home

and teach his classes at school and keep everything going. And one day on his way home from the hospital, his son Bruce said, Daddy, what did that doctor mean when he said Rachel was terminal? And he said, what do you tell your child then?

And he said, at that moment I was tempted to say, Why, God? Why? When he said, I was hit by the fact that that was a blasphemous thought for the created one to have toward the Creator, the allwise, all loving, all mighty Creator, he said, for me to ask Him why bordered on blasphemy for me. They said, God gave me another question to ask instead of Why, Lord? It was, what now, Lord?

And that's the right question. Mine is not to question his wisdom. Mine is to accept his instruction, and in God's good Providence he has seen fit to heal Rachel. She's five years of age now, and even though she was in terminal stages, having had six of the eight weeks of chemotherapy and the doctor gave no hope of living, sent her home and told them to arrange her funeral and et cetera, he did not do that. Instead, he was moved to pray and God was moved to heal.

And that doctor who did not want to talk about Jesus Christ at all in any of this was the one who came back with this remark. He said, apparently your God has answered your prayer because in all of my years of practice and reading, I have never seen a baby with acute lymphoblastic leukemia advanced as far as yours had advanced who ever had a remission? And the psychiatric social worker at the hospital said to Ron and Bev, she said, I am paid to keep people happy while they are dying. And I lost my husband a month ago or two months ago, I can't remember which it

was now. And she said, Frankly, I can't handle it. But I've watched the way your family is interacting with this, and she said, Would you lead me to Christ? And she and three other nurses got their lives right with the Lord as a result of watching somebody's response to the God who is not questioning that God.

And now Rachel Allen is the Red Cross Advertisement in the Northwest, for she received more blood than anybody they've ever given blood to in that kind of a situation. And they require their Red Cross workers to purchase Ron Allen's book on the Psalms called Praise A Matter of Life and Breath, because in that he has a chapter entitled Rachel God's Lamb, and they have to read that chapter on Rachel God's Lamb all of the Red Cross workers in the Northwest, and they've put Rachel on the TV for a 32nd spot on the Advertisement of Red Cross. He's been invited to school assemblies all over the Northwest to talk about it.

And I remember the first one he went to, they asked him if he would come and talk about Rachel, and he said, Why, no, I wouldn't be able to do that. He said, this is not a story just about Rachel. This is a story of God and his glory. And so I would have to talk about God if I were going to do that. And they said, oh, you misunderstand us, Doctor Allen. That's what we want you to do. We want you to talk about God. It would not be fair to give Rachel's story without talking about God. So all over the Northwest, he talks about God because of a right understanding of what God is like. You see, those kinds of opportunities are there for the one who understands God.

Now, if I allow the devil and his world system to steal that concept of God through their process, theology, or whatever other kind of demeaning of God, then I will lose some of the greatest opportunities I would have to magnify what God is like. So God is doing something in the present situation. Through my difficult experiences, I come back to the words of that him again. He will sanctify to thee thy deepest distress. And God, who is all wise and all loving and all powerful, knows how to blend those things together so that he will only give you that which by his Grace you will be able to accept.

He will never give you more than you can bear. And thus, no matter what my problem is, there will never be a time when I will honestly be able to say, Lord, the test is greater than I can bear. That is an impossibility, because God doesn't do that, and therefore my perception of God is wrong. If I think that is happening to me now, when by God's Grace I come to understand that the experiences will just Mount up and fill me to overflowing, but I've got to refuse to be conformed to the world system in their thinking about what God is like. Now turn back to Romans Twelve again for a moment.

And Paul says in the second verse, after he has told me to present myself to this kind of God, he says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. I've said, use the word conformed here quite a bit in my last session and this one, let's take just a moment now to define it in contrast to its Antonym right there in the same passage. You don't have synonyms here. You have Antonyms in verse two when he says, Stop being conformed and be transformed. To be conformed very literally means to put the mask on or to masquerade, and

you could render this stop masquerading. In other words, stop acting in a way that is not true to what you really are.

Some time ago, Halloween came on Sunday and I was trying to think of a good Halloween message. And the one that came to me was right here. When we go out, when the kids go out in the trick or treating situations, they wear all different kinds of masks and somebody wears a Popeye mask and they present themselves as really stronger than they are. They may be actually a weakling, but they wear a Popeye mask and then somebody else wears a Mickey Mouse mask and maybe somebody else a mini mouse mask. There are all kinds of masks, a pirate mask that people might wear. And so we present ourselves as that which we really aren't. Now, we do that spiritually. We present ourselves out of character. God says that when I came to him through these mercies of God, right at the core of my being, I was radically transformed from the inside out. He uses such heavy terminology as Born Again.

Please turn the tape two side two for the continuation of this session.

sees the of God right at the core of my being, I was radically transformed from the inside out. He uses such heavy terminology as Born again as a new creation. I have been changed at the very core. Now he says, therefore, stop putting a mask on the outside. Stop conforming to this world system which effectively covers over what you really are. But instead of that, let the real you come forth.

There used to be a program. I don't know if it's still there or not. Will the real so and so please stand up? And that's what he's really saying here.

Now, let the real you stand up, stop masquerading by imbibing the world system and acting that way. Rather, strip off the masks and let the real you come out be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Now, not only is there a difference to observe between being conformed and being transformed, but there is a model for each of those being conformed has its model in Satan, and being transformed has its model in Christ.

For example, if you look at 2 Corinthians, chapter 11 and verse 13 to 15, it is describing the Devil's workers and the devil. And he says of the Devil's workers, for such are false Apostles, deceitful workers. And my translation here says transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ. If your translation says transforming there, that'd be a good place to draw a line through it, because that is an inappropriate translation. The word translated transformed in two Corinthians 11:13 is the same word translated conform in Romans twelve two. It is the word metaskematizo. It is the word for the mask on the outside.

The devil cannot be transformed. He can conform to our system and he does that. So how does he conform? He masquerades and his Apostles do they are false Apostles and deceitful workers. Who masquerade or conform themselves into Apostles of Christ. And no wonder, he says, for Satan himself conforms masquerades as an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also conform or masquerade themselves into ministers of righteousness whose end will be according to their works. The devil then, is the master masquerader. He conforms and his

workers conform or masquerade as Angels of light and ministers of righteousness. And that's why we need to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, as the scripture would put it.

I hear so many people today, they will see some particular system in which they see some good, and they will say, but look at the good in that. And they fail to understand that the devil obviously is going to present a lot of good looking things in that system to make it attractive. But they do not have the good sense to analyze the system and to see at root the system is alive.

After my earlier message, one of the ladies approached me about someone having given to her friend the book that I mentioned by the Jewish Rabbi Harold Kushner. His book, Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People? And she was recommending it, saying, this is really good. This has really helped me. And what she was having happened was being sucked into a system that would ultimately destroy her through the apparently good things that were there.

Every evil system is going to have good things, attractive things. And that's exactly what he's talking about here. The Devil's workers appear as Angels of light. That's not bad. Ministers of righteousness, righteousness isn't bad. But the fact is, at heart the system is evil. And if I'm not wise, I will be sucked into it. The devil then, is the master masquerader, and he will seek through his army, his host of followers, to get me to buy up his system. And I need to think through the system to its bottom line.

Now, contrary to that, Jesus Christ is the model of transformation. In fact, the same word used in Matthew 17 on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus was utterly transparent. It came through the

real Christ could be seen. He did not Masquerade. He did not conform to the world system. Therefore, he becomes a model for me. And that's why when I look at a passage like two Corinthians 3 and verse 18, we all with unveiled face, beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are metamorphosed, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus Christ, then, is the model of transformation. The devil is the model of conformation, of masculinity.

Now let's put that into a couple of examples with regard to our own life. Paul says, in the light of what you know about what God is like and a true understanding of God, I want you to present your bodies, a living sacrifice. In other words, do your service properly in the light of what you know about what God is like. And so I know that God is a good God. God is a powerful God. God is one who gives and gives and gives.

He is a loving God. And if I am going to be after his model, then that needs to be my lifestyle. In order for me to speak most pertinently to that, I have to use some personal illustrations. So let me do that. I earlier talked about the financial hassle that I was going through. In the middle of that, I decided to go to one of our pastors and whose Church gives a substantial sum to the seminary and to give him a rather creative idea as to how they could give us even more. I thought if they were doing so well already, they probably would have a heart to a good idea. So I arranged for lunch. And I said, I'd like to take you out to lunch. And he was very willing. And so I took him to a very nice place to lunch. And I began to lay on him my proposal for creative financing. And I had laid it all out. And his response was, have you heard of the financial struggles of such and

such an institution? And he began to portray to me this other institution that was having all of these financial problems.

And I thought to myself, now he must not have heard me. I mean, I was talking about our problem. And he comes back with this other school that was about to go under if it didn't get some help. And we may go under here in a moment, too. Very good.

And so he portrayed the school to me and its needs. And as he was portraying it, God hit me with another mind renewer from the word of God. And it was in Philippians, and it almost looked like God was being a traitor here to me. But in Philippians chapter 2, it says, Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, let nothing be done through selfish, ambition, or conceit. Now the heart of it, but in lowliness of mine, let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. And God just really hit me with that. And he went on talking about what he and I and another person could do to really put this other school back on its feet. And he talked about a letter that we ought to send out to a large group of people. And he said, Would you be willing to join this particular group that is giving to this school monthly?

And I said, Well, I did that for five years, and I fulfilled my pledge. He said, well, would you do it again? And I thought, Wait a minute, now I'm needing money, and he's asking me to do this for them. I said, well, while you've been talking, God's been speaking to me through Philippians

2. And I guess that's what he's been saying, that I ought to sign up and give to them, and we ought to write that letter. And he didn't say any more about what I asked him. We got through with lunch and we went out on the sidewalk to get in the car. He said, oh, by the way, I guess you think you've really been taken today, don't you? And I said, well, no, not really. God has given me peace about it. From Philippians, chapter 2.

And, you know, I was able to exert my influence, and he was and some others were, so that a lot of help came in to that school and some major gifts came in, and they have pulled out of it at this point. But you know what? We pulled out of it too. And two men in whose lives I have had a Ministry at the seminary were constrained to designate \$300,000 to pay off our deficit.

Now, you know, I could have raised that through \$10 gifts from thousands of people. That would have taken quite a bit of effort. But God decided to bring that into us after we had been carrying that deficit for a long time.

Now remember where I started? I started with being somewhat irritated with God as it related to that financial problem. And I finally got that straightened out in my attitude of what God is like. Though I didn't see a solution to my problem, the problem was still real, and at times it was embarrassing. But then there came another opportunity where on the horizontal level as well as the vertical level, I could get my thinking straight. And by taking that further step now, God has seen fit to take care of my problem as well as their problem with an attitude that is right toward God. You see, I've got to stop being conformed to the world's idea of God, and I've got to stop being conformed to the world's idea of how you do business.

The scriptural idea is quite different. Do you have a need? Do you want to get it taken care of? Maybe one of the best things is to try then fulfilling somebody else's need. You see, we could all fulfill our own need if we had a sharp enough strategy. But if we did it in the world's way, it would simply be the epitome of selfishness. And God's way is the way of love. So God has a way in which one another's needs can be fulfilled by looking out for each other rather than looking out for myself. And you have something much greater than just the financial solution. You have a love that binds you together and gives a testimony to all of those around of the greatness of God.

Some time ago, I was reading a book by a professor of Christian education at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Dr. Finley Edge. He had taught at that time Christian education for 25 years there. And he really got disenchanted with Christianity in America. And what he saw happening, it bothered him. He wrote a book on the Greening of the Church. And in that book, he gave a little story, a little scenario that captured my attention, and I haven't been able to let go of it. He said, have you noticed in the Christian world how much we seek to get discounts? And we will go to a store and maybe we're looking for a car and they will give us a price and we'll say, no, that's too much. And we will dicker and Dicker and Dicker until we get him down to the place where he really squeaks. And when he's given his bottom dollar, then we will say, hey, you got to take off another \$100. And he says, look, I can't even afford to do the service on the car for what I have offered it to you now. Well, that's too bad. Well, wait a minute. Don't leave. I mean, I need to sell cars here. And so finally, after we have gotten him down to the bottom and he agrees, we buy the car. And he says, Finley Edge in his book, what would happen if when we went down to he gave

us the price. And we said after he gave us the price, we decided, no, I don't guess I'll do that. And he said, well, wait a minute. Maybe we can talk about this and get that down a little lower. And he comes down and down and down and I say, no. And finally he says, Look, I can't come any lower. Suppose my response at that point were, friend, the question is not whether you need to come lower. The only question is whether I can afford the car. Frankly, I could not buy that car at what you're offering it to me for.

My Bible teaches me that every person has a right to a decent living. Every worker has a right to wages. What you have offered me the car for would not even give you the ability to service it. It would not give you a profit of any kind. That would be wrong for me to take a car from you at that price. If I'm to buy that car, I would have to buy it at a higher price. And frankly, right at this point, I can't afford that.

The man after you had scraped him up off the floor would probably never have heard anything like that before. You see, suppose I really cared about that person and their right to make a profit, their right to make a decent wage rather than just carrying about how much I can screw them down so that I can get the cheapest price possible. A missionary friend came back from South America with a beautiful piece of hand work that he had purchased down there, and he told me how much he got it for, and I couldn't believe it. There were many, many hours put into that piece of work. And I said to him, I don't understand how you could get it for that price. And he says, Well, I'll tell you what, they didn't make a dime off of me. In the light of James, does a man have a right to make a dime?

You see, that's Christianity, and we oftentimes fail to see that. In very subtle ways we are conformed to the world's way of doing it, rather than being transformed by the principles of the word of God. So that Paul is not talking about a superficial exercise when he says, Stop being poured into the mold of this world system, stop masquerading, stop being conformed, stop being bulldozed by the way they think, but rather let the thinking of Jesus Christ penetrate your thought structure. Be thinking this way on your part, which was the way he thought. How did he think he gave up the privileges of existence in a manner equal with God and took upon himself a manner of existence of a servant, a slave among men, and was obedient, obedient even unto death, unto the death of a common criminal's cross. Stop being conformed to this world system, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, and then God will really be seen as powerful through you.

Let me just in closing refresh your mind with a series of verses from the Old Testament. 2 Chronicles 16: 9. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to him. God is looking for people in whom he can show himself strong if those people are willing to pay the price. Isaiah 26:3, you will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you too. Daniel 11:32, But the people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits.

And then finally in Jeremiah 9:23 and 24, a beautiful passage that I want to read in conclusion. Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches. But let him who glories glory in this that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness judgment and

righteousness in the Earth. For in these things I delight, says the Lord. I trust that the eyes of the Lord that go to and fro throughout the Earth will find many, many people here loyal to him and to his words, so that in them he may do great exploits let's pray, father oh how I pray that I might be less and less conformed to this world system, to its ideas of what you are like, to its ideas of the proper way of doing things. And oh God that I may be transformed from the inside out. That what I really am and what my brothers and sisters in Christ here really are may come shining through because of the mind renewers that we have found in your precious word. I pray it in Jesus name Amen.