

January 9, 2014

Conforming and Transforming

Romans 12:2 (NASB), ***“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”***

I have shared before that our youngest son is a United States Marine and one of the things that the Marine Corps demands of a Marine is conformity. When Preston graduated from Boot Camp we attended the graduation ceremony and one thing that stands out is that even though each Marine is an individual they all conform to the standards of the United States Marine Corps that in a sense is what Boot Camp is about.

As Christ followers we are called not be ***“conformed to this world”*** which means that as Christians we are to be different from the world and culture around us. In our previous look at Romans 12 we learned that our lives are not our own anymore in fact the life that I now live is to be a ***“living and holy sacrifice”*** to the Lord. In Romans 12:2 Paul offers some practical instruction on just how to begin living that life.

First of all as I already mentioned we are not to be ***“conformed to this world.”*** The word ***“conformed”*** is translated to mean “form or molded.” This means that we are not to be molded or formed into the ways of this world. The word ***“world”*** as it is used here is can also be translated to mean “age” and it refers to the system of beliefs and values that our world espouses and treasures. Those beliefs and values often run contrary to the values and beliefs of Biblical Christianity. When we conform to the world we often drift away from God. Matthew 13:22 says, ***“And to the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”*** 1 John 2:15 says, ***“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*** Do you love the world and the things of the world more that God?

How does one avoid being ***“conformed to this world?”*** Paul gives us the prescription in the next phrase of verse 2: ***“but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”*** The word that is used here for ***“transformed”*** is the Greek word *metamorphoo* from which we get our English word *metamorphosis* which means “to be changed in form.” We are changed in form by the ***“renewing”*** of our minds and this happens through the intervention of the Holy Spirit and the disciplined study of God’s word.

Ephesians 4:22-23 says, ***“that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”*** In Titus 3:5 Paul wrote, ***“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”*** The renewed mind is one that is saturated with and controlled by the word of God.

Psalms 119:11 says, ***“Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.”*** Philippians 4:8 says, ***“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any***

excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” Friends ultimately *“these things”* are found in the Word of God.

As a pastor I often get asked the question: “What is God’s will for my life?” Most likely we have all wondered that at one time or another. The good news is that God has revealed His will to us in His word. Paul writes in the next part of verse 12, *“so that you may prove what the will of God is...”* Ephesians 5:10 says, *“trying to learn what is pleasing to God...”* Then in Ephesians 5:17 it says, *“So then don’t be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”* We learn God’s will by opening and studying His word and then through the power of the Holy Spirit applying that word to our daily lives.

Paul ends verse 2 with an explanation of what God’s will is: *“that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”* The word *“good”* is translated here to mean “beneficial” and the word *“acceptable”* is translated to mean “well-pleasing.” God’s will for our lives is holy living of which God approves.

As Christ followers we are to live lives that are conformed not to this world but rather to the will of God. We do this by the *“transforming”* of our minds through the disciplined study and application of His word. I want to encourage all of us to make the daily study and application of His word a vital and necessary part of our lives so that we can be conformed to God instead of the world.