

Be Not Conformed to this World!
Rom. 12:2

Intro: Someone asked, after my lesson last week on Romans 12:1, “Are you going to follow up with verse 2 next week?” Good idea!

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

Paul tells us in verse two how to accomplish what he said in verse 1: “present your bodies a living sacrifice”. How do you do that? Today let think about how it can’t be done; and next week we’ll talk about how it can be done!

Be not conformed to this world! What did Paul mean by that?

What is “the world”?

One NT term for the “world” is “cosmos” referring to the universe and then more particularly the domain of Satan. Here, however, Paul chooses instead a different word. It refers to a period of time and is often translated “age”. It is a period of time marked in the NT usage by spiritual or moral characteristics.

who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (Galatians 1:4)

in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Thus, our translation usages the word “world” because it may more clearly to us communicate the idea of the realm we are living in, the realm under Satan’s control.

What does it mean to be “conformed”?

Our English word means “to be or to become the same or similar”

The Greek term Paul uses suggests the idea of “fashioning or shape one thing like another” (Vine).

One part of the Greek word “schema” comes into our language is our word “scheme” or “schematic”, and might serve as an illustration of the idea. The “schematic” is the plan or the blue print by which something is made. The product “conforms” to the blue print! In this case, we must not allow “the world” to become the model or blue print for our lives!

And another feature of the word is its reference to what is transitory and changeable. Even our word “fashion” has that idea with it! And we speak of what is “in” and “out” of style. People talk about this year’s “fashions”.

“With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give Him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remold 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.” (Phillip’s Translation)

If we are to be living sacrifices for God, we must not mould, fashion, pattern our lives after the changing world or society about us, especially as it models the influence of Satan or evil.

In what ways do we need to apply this teaching?

As disciples of the Lord, we must not be fashioned according to this age in our:

Affections

In this age the world says, “Live for this world and all it can give you; for there is no certainty of another after this one!”

God 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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

Values

In this age the world says: “Whoever dies with the most toys wins”
Jesus says: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mt. 16:25-26)

Morals

In this age the world says, “It’s your body. Do what you want with it!”
Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Entertainment

The world says, “Pursue sinful pleasures like drinking, salacious movies, gambling”.
The Lord says, “For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.” (1 Peter 4:3-4)

Dress

The world says, “Be sexy!” Wear clothing that seduces and titillates.
This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:27)

Speech

The world says, "Talk with impact". Pepper your language with profanity, double entendre, irreverent use of God's name.
in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. (Titus 2:7-8)

Aspirations

In this age the world says: "You only go around once in life, so grab for all the gusto you can".
If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)

Use of time

Use your spare time for entertainment, recreation, and amusement.
Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Conclusion: In every age, the greatest threat to the people of God was conformity to the age they lived in! It is our greatest threat! What bothers me is the fact that we may be satisfied we are not worldly if we stay a few steps behind the world about us, not totally fashioned according to the world. But the truth is, we may readily do today what God's people would have thought unthinkable a generation ago. Let's all take a closer look at ourselves. We must find a fixed point of truth that will not allow us to drift with the world.