

Not Conformed; But Transformed
Romans 12:2

Paul has just stated that this presenting of our whole selves to God as a living sacrifice is a reasonable service. In other words it makes sense to serve God. The reason men do not serve God is because Satan, the god of this world, has blinded their eyes. He has deceived mankind even as he deceived Eve in the Garden. I can assure you this morning that the greatest of joys are found in serving God. The greatest peace and comfort is found in serving God. The greatest of rewards are found in serving God. There is absolutely no reason why men should not desire to serve the only True and Living God above all else. It is our reasonable service. And I would remind you that here the Greek "latreia" which in the New Testament speaks of the service of a priest, a worshipper, not a slave. It is a worshipful or spiritual service. It is a most pleasant service, truly the fool has said in his heart there is no God. Truly it is most foolish and without reason to say, "Who is the Lord that I should serve Him?"

How privileged and blessed are we, who have been granted the gift of faith, by God's electing grace whereby He has placed in us the desire to serve Him. The question now is "How shall we best serve our Lord?"

Now the Apostle begins with a negative. Do not be conformed to this world. Scripture is filled with "do not's". I have heard some say that we need to be positive, it is not good to be negative. If we are negative we will drive men away. But there are many 'do not's' in life that are most necessary and most beneficial. I am sure there are some 'do not's' in your life that as you look back you wish you had abided by them. In a fallen world, we need some 'do not's' and by the way, they are not really negatives at all but are of great value and therefore are in fact most positive and helpful. So let us look at this first command this morning; "Do not be conformed to this world". This is an excellent starting point if one desires to carefully serve their Lord.

A. Paul's instruction to the church is simply; *"Do not be conformed to this world"*.

1. This is necessary for the church as a whole and each one of us as individuals.
2. Paul is not talking about a list of do's and don'ts, rules made up by men.
 - a. We have to be different for the sake of being different
 - b. The culture of the day is to dress stylish, so I will dress in drab outdated dress.
3. Paul is talking about a godly non-conformity.
 - a. We are not pressured from without, but by principle within
 - b. We are not pressured from without, but by the principles laid down in Holy Scripture.
 - c. It is not the prevailing social norms, but God's will as revealed in Holy Scripture.
 - d. In contrast to the above dress code just because it's in style versus if the culture is to dress in an immodest manner, then as a Christian we cannot and will not abide by the culture of the day.

1 Tim 2:9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation.

- e. For instance it is clear the world no longer sees marriage as necessary.
- f. Whereas we in the church must require marriage not as a custom of the world but as a creation ordinance of God.

1 Cor 7:2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

4. Sadly, conformity to this world and to its way of thinking and behaving has become a great problem of nominal Christianity today.
 - a. God carefully instructed Israel not to engage in the worship or the lifestyles of the pagans around them.

*Deut 18:9 "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, **you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations.***

- b. But I fear that we see this conforming to the world's standards even in the church itself.
 - c. Many in the church today want to make the church "acceptable" to the world.
 - d. We want the world to be comfortable when they come to church.
 - e. Therefore even the worship service is designed around such thinking.
 - f. The world wants entertainment we will give them entertainment.
 - g. It does not matter that God desires spiritual and biblically sound worship.
 - h. The world wants entertaining stories and funny stories, God in His word instructs us to "preach the Word".
 - i. I would remind you that God warned Israel not to let the world determine their worship.
5. We need to be mindful that we, the church, is a new creation, we have been created in God's image, and it is nothing short of idolatry to desire to be in the world's image.
6. What is Paul talking about when he instructs us not be conformed to this world?
- a. When he speaks of the world he is speaking of this present age. (aion)
 - b. The mindset of those that have been blinded by the god of this world.
 - c. Ever be mindful that the god of this world is Satan.

2 Cor 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded.

- d. Paul is saying don't let Satan tell you what's right or wrong.
 - e. That Deceiver in the Garden is still active today.
7. In other words, we do not decide what is right or wrong by the norms of this present world.
- a. The question before us must always be does this glorify God, or please self?
 - b. The question before us must always be does this glorify God, or does it please the world?
 - c. Is this lifestyle in agreement with the Law of God, or the rules or desires of men?

B. What is it to be "conformed to this world"?

- 1. It is to have a governing principle in our life that is occupied with the temporal, the mercenary, the material and the earthly?
- 2. It is to have a governing principle that asks, "what's in it for me".
- 3. When by our life styles the world cannot tell us apart from them we've conformed.
- 4. When ones belief system is no different from the world's belief system.
- 5. When the church desires to make its belief system, its world view, palatable with the worlds belief system with the sinners world view. That's being conformed to this age.

(I think a real example of that is when the church in the mid 1800's changed its interpretation of Genesis chapter one trying to make it fit the atheistic Darwinian interpretation of natural revelation.)

- 6. When the world does not want to hear about judgment, righteousness and sin and so the church shies away from such language.
 - a. In contrast the very purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit was to convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgement.

John 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

- b. And that is what the world needs to hear in order to be saved.
- c. Conformity to this age is a serious and damning sin in the church.

CONCLUSION: What then is the consequences when the church engages in such conformity?

The Spirit is grieved

The distinction between the church and the world is obliterated.

Therefore the witness of the church is lost.

And what is most serious God is blasphemed - *Rom 2:23-24 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,"*

Let us then by God's grace determine not to be conformed to this world that we may indeed shine as lights before the world.