

Transformed, Not Conformed

Romans 12:2

Many Christians interpret this verse through lenses of behavior and conduct --- *"I am not to conform myself to this world by doing the things the world does."* I remember hearing this verse preached as the basis for no Christian ever attending an R-rated movie. But we must never remove a statement from its context, for then it simply becomes a pretext.

I. We are to transform the way we *think*.

Paul tells us that we are to renew "*our mind*" (v.2). He uses the word "think" three times in (v.3). It is obvious that we are not to conform with how the world thinks.

(A). The world thinks in terms of performance.

You must earn what you get. Success is achieved. Only the worthy are praised. By nature people are extremely prideful of who they are and what they have.

(B). The world thinks in terms of appearance.

How one looks in the eyes of others becomes the essence of how one feels. The important things in life are not reality and facts but the opinion of others.

II. We are to transform the way we think about *ourselves*.

Instead of *seeking to become holy and acceptable through what we do*, we must remind ourselves that *we are holy and acceptable because of His mercy and grace*.

(A). We are free to live life resting in God's mercy

Dr. Stam had a friend ready to fly on an unreliable foreign airline who said, *"I'm making sure I'm prayed up 'cause I don't want the plane to go down."* John said, "I believe you are in God's will even if the plane goes down."

(B). We are free to live life unencumbered by the opinion of others.

The world thrives on what others think. Do not be conformed to their thinking. We are called to be polite, loving and hospitable, but we do not need others to approve of us. We can do what is right regardless of what others say.

How do we get to this point?

(1). We receive the truth of His mercy, (2). We repeat the truth of His mercy.

III. We are to transform the way we think about ourselves for *good reasons*.

Why does Paul go to such lengths to convince us of the mercy of God in our lives? Without being transformed by an understanding of God's mercy for us we have no inward motivation or strength to live the way God outlines for us to live in this text.

(A). We are to *prove* the perfect and acceptable will of God.

The word prove means "*to experience for yourself*" that God's revealed will is best. In the following chapter's God tells His people how they are to live. Notice the parallelism. The perfect and acceptable people of God are to prove *to themselves* the perfect and acceptable will of God. The inner motivation for obeying God's commandments is to experience "*packaged blessings.*"

(B). The pleasure from doing arises from the pleasure of being.

The accepted accept. The forgiven forgive. The graced show grace. This list of do's and don'ts in chapters 12-16 are a wonderful way to experience life.