

October 27, 2019

“Do Not Be Conformed To This World”

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And **do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,”* (Rom. 12:1-2).

These verses begin with the words **“I beseech you *therefore, brethren.*”** To **“beseech”** is to exhort, to urge, to admonish, to encourage. **“Therefore”** infers a link or a connection between what the writer had already stated, and what he is about to state. **“Brethren”** denotes a brotherly relationship between the writer and the recipients. Both Paul (the writer), and the **“saints”** (cf. Rom. 1:7) at Rome were **“children of God”** (Rom. 8:16), and therefore members of the Lord’s **“house”** or church. **“Therefore”** being members of the Lord’s **“house”** (or family) it was imperative that they know how to **“conduct”** themselves **“in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”** (cf. I Tim. 3:15).

Looking more closely to our beginning text, we note that Paul said **“I beseech you...by the *mercies of God*”** (Rom. 12:1). Paul’s appeal to these **“brethren”** was not based upon the **“severity of God”** (Rom. 11:22), but upon **“the mercies of God.”** Yes, we ought to be motivated by the **“severity of God,”** but it is much better to be moved by **“the mercies of God.”** Mercy, as used in our text, is from *oiktirmos* (Gk) which denotes **“pity, compassion for the ills of others”** (Vine). Thankfully, God is **“the Father of mercies”** (2 Cor. 1:3), and He is **“rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us”** (Eph. 2:4).

Specifically, in our beginning text, Paul besought the saints at Corinth to **“present”** their **“bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God,”** which he said is **“your reasonable service.”** **“Present,”** as used in this verse, was a term often used to denote the offering of a sacrificial victim on the altar. Cf. Lev. 16:7,11. The animals which were offered as sacrifice were to be without **“any blemish of defect,”** for that was **“an abomination to the Lord,”** Deut. 17:1. In this, the gospel age, we do not offer animals in sacrifice unto God, but we are to offer our **“bodies as a living sacrifice...”** (Rom. 12:1). This reminds us of Rom. 6:13 wherein Paul admonished the saints at Rome to **“present”** the **“members”** of their bodies **“as instruments of righteousness to God.”** And, now in our opening text, we note that the saints at Rome were to **“present”** their **“bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God,”** which the writer said is **“your reasonable service.”** All the parts of the body (the eyes, hands, ears, hands, feet, mouth, mind, etc.) must be devoted to the service of God. This, Paul said, is **“your reasonable service.”** **“Reasonable,”** as used in this verse, is from *logikis* (Gk), and is defined as **“pertaining to the reasonable faculty”** (Vine), who further stated that **“the sacrifice is to be intelligent, in contrast to those offered by ritual and compulsion; the presentation is to be in accordance with the spiritual intelligence of those who are new creatures in Christ and are mindful of the mercies of God.”** With this in mind, we must conclude that it makes sense for one to present his body unto God as a **“living sacrifice,”** striving diligently to be **“holy”** and **“acceptable to God.”** Those who use the members of their bodies as **“instruments of unrighteousness to sin”** (Rom. 6:13) are not only committing sin; in plain language, they are also acting stupidly!

This brings us to verse two in our opening text, wherein Paul said **“do not be conformed to this world.”** **“Conformed”** in this verse is from *suschematizo* (Gk) which means **“to fashion or shape one thing like another”** (Vine). The **“world”** must not be that by which we **“fashion or**

shape” our lives. Instead of being “*conformed to this world,*” we must be “*transformed by the renewing of our minds*” (Rom. 12:2). We must not be “*conformed to this world*” because “*this world*” is not our home! As Christians, “*our citizenship in heaven,*” and if we live transformed lives then some day Jesus Christ will “*transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body*” (Phil. 3:21). Hence, instead of being “*conformed to this world,*” we should diligently strive to be “*conformed to the image of Jesus Christ*” (Rom. 8:29), who is “*holy, harmless,*” and “*undefiled*” (Heb. 7:25).

Sadly, too many professed Christians, like the Israelites of old, instead of living transformed lives, seem to be more desirous of being “*like*” the “*nations*” around them (cf. I Sam. 8:5). This brought tragedy and heartache to the Israelites, and the same attitude if pursued will bring tragedy and eternal heartache to us! We shall now notice some of the ways whereby many professed Christians are:

Conformed to this World

1. In speech. Please note Eph. 4:19: “*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*” Sadly, however, the speech of so many in today’s world is aptly described in Rom. 3:13-14 which says: “*their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.*” Such is the language of so many in “*this world,*” and, sadly, the speech of some professed “*Christians*” leaves so much to be desired. Generally, they don’t go “*all out*” in using the most profane sounding words, but they frequently use euphemisms which mean the same. Even such seemingly harmless words like “*gosh,*” “*golly,*” “*My God,*” etc., are often used in such a way as to be taking God’s name in vain!

2. In dress. Please note I Tim. 2:9-10: “*In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls, or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.*” One’s attire should be that of a person who professes “*godliness, with good works.*” Attire which is so revealing that people of the opposite sex can be influenced to commit adultery in their hearts (Matt. 5:28) should be avoided. The Bible clearly speaks of “*the attire of a harlot*” (Prov. 7:10). Dresses in which the neck line is plunging and the hem line is elevating should be avoided. Attire which exposes the mid section should also be avoided, as well as mini skirts, short shorts; such attire can hardly be described as “*modest,*” or that which is befitting a person “*professing godliness, with good works.*”

3. In Entertainment. Entertainment per se’ is not wrong. Solomon said “*A merry heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones*” (Prov. 17:22). But much modern entertainment is worldly and immoral in nature. Some modern music is filthy, suggestive, indecent, and immoral. Many dance movements are lascivious and lust-producing. Mixed bathing, involving people whose bodies are 90 percent nude, often leads to lust, resulting in fornication. The consumption of alcohol and the use of illicit drugs should be off limits to all sincere souls who really want to go to heaven. (Prov.20:1; 23:29-34; I Pet. 4:1-3).

4. In one’s work ethic. The Bible clearly states that “*if anyone will not work, neither should he eat*” (2 Thess. 3:10). The mentality that “*the world owes me a living,*” and the desire to “*get something for nothing*” does not reflect the mindset of a true Christian. One who consistently loaf on the job, while collecting a pay check as a full time employee, is actually stealing from his or her employer. But a genuine Christian will not steal! Cf. Eph. 4:28.

5. In attitude. A true Christian strives, “*in everything to give thanks*” (2 Thess. 5:18),

instead of moaning and groaning about everything under the sun. A true Christian “*suffers long and is kind*” (I Cor. 13:4); he doesn’t provide for himself a regular pity party so as to give grievance to every perceived insult. A true Christian strives to “*meditate*” upon “*whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely,*” and upon “*whatever things are of good report*” (Phil. 4:8); he refuses to go on a rampage when he doesn’t get his own way!

Conclusion: There are so many ways whereby a person can be “*conformed to this world,*” but those who are determined to go to heaven are careful to avoid such. “The world” wants us to “go along in order to get along;” “*the world*” criticizes those who refuse to conform to its ways. In Old Testament times God warned His people, saying, “*do not learn the way of the Gentiles*” (Jer. 10:2). And in the New Testament Peter admonished God’s children, saying: “*As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*” (I Pet. 1:14-15). The devil is our “*adversary*” (I Pet. 5:8); he want us to conform. “*The world*” exerts much peer pressure upon people of all ages to conform to its ways, but the Bible clearly states that “*whoever...wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*” (Jas. 4:4)! Indeed, in this life we are **in** the world, but we must make sure that we are not “**of** *the world*” (John 15:19). Consider ye well!
—B. Witherington
