

# Transformed Non-conformists

January 17, 2021

## Overview

As we saw last week, biblical change is predicated on the mercies of God (Rom. 12:1) by which he makes us new creations (2 Cor. 5:17). Biblical change is about *becoming who you are*. Our first step is offering our bodies as living sacrifices; then, also, offering our minds to the renewing work of God's Spirit as he illuminates Christ through the Scriptures. It's an entire *metamorphosis* God wants to bring about, but:

### *The Problem: Being conformed*

But the change isn't automatic. We face great pressures from within and without to conform. Our own bodies are not yet redeemed—as someone once said, “The problem with a living sacrifice is that it likes to crawl off the altar.” So we battle our unredeemed flesh. As Jesus said, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Then there are the expectations of others, and the whole sin-sick world system in which we live. We face pressures everywhere to conform, to maintain the status quo.

### *The Solution: Being transformed.*

That is, allowing ourselves to be transformed, allowing the renewing work of the Spirit to change us. The verb is in the passive voice. In other words, we don't transform ourselves, we let God's Spirit do it. (Compare the one other place where the word “renewal” occurs in the Bible: Titus 3:5.) How does it happen? The Holy Spirit illuminates our hearts and shows us Jesus through the living, God-breathed Scriptures. And that vision transforms us into the very image of Christ, little by little, day by day, body and soul! (Compare the two other places where the word “transformed” occurs: Matthew 17:1-2, and 2 Corinthians 3:18.) Think about Jesus in his transfigured glory. Marvel at him. And then realize that God wants to make you look like that, radiating glory all over the place!

The key, for us, is giving our minds to God's Word. There is no substitute for giving our eyes and brains to the Word of God. We will not be transformed without it; we are guaranteed to be transformed by it.

### *The Result: Being able to perform.*

That is, “perform” in the best sense of the word. Not on the hamster wheel of rote religion, but in the freedom and power of the gospel. We'll be true doers of the Word (James 1:22); we'll do the good works God created and ordained for us (Eph. 2:10). The promise of Romans 12:2 is that we will be able to “test and approve” the will of God. It's one word in Greek, but it has a double meaning: “prove” and “approve.” That is, we'll grasp God's will with our minds and embrace it with our hearts. We'll know it and we'll love it. We'll be the freest people in the world: People who do *whatever we want to do*—and whatever we want to do will be what we ought to do! It will be good, pleasing, and perfect to God.

This will be the complete undoing of our original sin problem. Romans 1:28 uses the same Greek word when it says that since we didn't “see fit” to acknowledge God—since we didn't “test and approve” him—he gave us over to a debased mind and depraved behavior. But now we'll “see fit” to know God and carry out his will. You could say we'll “see” it and we'll be perfectly “fit” to do it. That's true transformation.



Our Transformed Life  
Living the Vision of Romans 12

## Discussion Guide

1. We typically think of conformity as a young person's problem, but we all deal with it.
  - What are some ways in which you personally feel the pull to conform to this world?
  - What do you think are the greatest blindspots of conformity in our culture as a whole?
2. Preaching on Romans 12:2, Martin Luther King called us to be "transformed non-conformists." Process this quote. How does it inspire or challenge you?

"Everybody is passionately seeking to be well-adjusted, nobody wants to be maladjusted. There is probably no word in modern psychology that is used more than the word *maladjusted*. It is the word most frequently on the lips of the child psychologist. But there are some things in our world to which all men of good will must be maladjusted.

"As for me, I never intend to become adjusted to the evils of segregation and the crippling effects of discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to the moral degeneracy of religious bigotry and the corroding effects of narrow sectarianism. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. I never intend to become adjusted to the insanities of militarism and the self-defeating effects of physical violence. The world is in dire need of a society of the creative maladjusted."
3. Our text, Romans 12:2, teaches us that we are to be transformed by the renewal of our minds.
  - What's an example of this in your life? What is one way that you think differently now—more biblically—than you did in the past?
  - Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. If seeing Jesus (in the gospel and in Scripture) is so vital to our transformation, why do you think so many people are so ignorant of the Word and so unmotivated to get into it?
  - How do we fix this?
4. The last sentence of Romans 12:2 describes the result of having a renewed mind: We will be able to test and approve God's will. How do you interpret this? Is it saying that you'll develop direct line to God so that he will tell you exactly what to do in every situation? Why or why not?
5. What's an area or two in which you would like to have more guidance, more insight into God's will?
  - Is our 21-day fast helping you gain any insight?
  - How can we support you?
6. What's one key take-away from this sermon and discussion for you?