

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, May 24, 2015
Be Not Conformed to This World – Part 1 of 2

Romans 12:1 ¶ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Over the next two weeks, Lord willing, we will consider the sobering instruction that we are to “be not conformed to this world”. There is considerably more to be said on this topic than could possibly be covered in an entire series of sermons, so we will only be scratching the surface. Notice first, that Romans 12 begins with a “therefore”, pointing to all that has preceded it. As we know, the first 11 chapters of Romans are full of some of the most plain, powerful statements of foundational doctrine in the entire Bible, including salvation by grace alone, and predestination. Seeing that, helps us to understand that we are now coming to some practical, daily application. Therefore – considering all of that doctrine that Paul has laid out – he proceeds to talk about how we ought to behave ourselves consistent with, and proving out, that doctrine.

Romans 12:1-21 “1 ¶I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11 Not slothful in business;

fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. 14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

We are not to be conformed to the world: the men of the world, the lusts of the world, or the behavior of the world. In our manner of life, we are to be **visibly separate** from those around us. We are to be holy – that is separate, and sanctified. Believing and preaching the scriptures is not enough - we must also have a daily manner of life that is consistent with that profession. Actively taking up our cross, and denying ourselves – mortifying the deeds of the flesh – putting on the armor – EACH DAY. Believing and preaching the Bible (standing alone) only makes us a “hearer of the word”, but we must also be doers of the word.

James 1:21-27 “21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. 26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. 27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

James 2:18-20 “18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”

2Peter 1:12,13 “12 ¶ Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the

present truth. 13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;”

It is important that we be stirred up, and continually put in remembrance of these blessed scriptures. Saturation! Young people are continually entering new phases of their lives, new circumstances, and are experiencing various degrees of new independence – quickly coming into their mental and physical primes, without one lick of experience to temper their pride – their senses have not been exercised by reason of use; Many among us are young in the faith, and have likewise not been exercised in these matters; For those that are established in our walk of faith - the flesh is forgetful, and Satan is relentless! Every time we look at the scriptures afresh – with the light that the Lord has blessed us with on that day – we ought to be asking ourselves if our current behavior conforms to the scriptures, not whether the scriptures can be conformed to our current behavior. The plumb line is always true! Changes are constantly happening in our lives, where Satan will look for an advantage, and a fresh opportunity to subtly move us off of our orderly walk, and ultimately to forsake our profession, and declare that serving the Living God is vain. “Transition times” are dangerous times! We must be watchful, and bring all things back to the plumb line! Transitions as a church; new people in our lives; new children and grandchildren; children entering new phases of their lives; changes at work; afflictions; changes in health, etc. Satan does his best work at these times, when we are unsettled, unsure, and distracted. We must be vigilant, and be stirred up in remembrance to joyfully, faithfully do our duty unto God, and to love our neighbor as we ought.

Hebrews 3:12,13 “12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Exhort one another daily - continually – considering and watching for one another, and provoking to love and to good works, as the need, and opportunity arises! We must be willing to do that duty, not being weary in well doing; AND we must be willing to receive that kind of encouragement and instruction – as it is health to our bones! To do otherwise is to be puffed up in pride (as the world is), deceiving ourselves that we don’t NEED that exhortation, and thereby we become hardened in sin – convinced by repetition that it is not sin! My words over the next two weeks are words of exhortation – please consider them in that way. Nothing I say to day is to accuse someone about some particular thing. If something pricks your conscience, then go to the scriptures, and get to the Lord in prayer, and see what it is that you ought to be doing. Don’t be angry and resentful, thinking that I’m accusing you. Don’t look around this room, and figure out how these words apply to other people. Apply them to yourself! These words

apply to me, first and foremost; they apply to my wife, they apply to my children. Reading these (and many other scriptures) was a heavy process for me, knowing my own sins, and that I have work to do – EVERY DAY – on these fronts. Don't look at me, or at anyone else for an excuse – “well THEY do it!” – you must be convinced in light of the plain words of scripture, as to how YOU ought to behave. There will be no excuse to make with God, based on someone else's behavior.

So what does that “world” look like which we are not to be conformed to? In juxtaposition to that world, what should the servants of God look like? In simplest terms, the world is flesh; we are dead to that world – we take no pleasure in that world, and we are reborn, praise God, in the spirit! The world, being of their father the devil, hates their neighbor; we are to love our neighbor (in our hearts, in our words, in our actions, and by our example). The world serves the human; we are to render our reasonable service to the Lord who redeemed us!

Galatians 5:14-26 “14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

2Corinthians 6:14 - 7:2 “6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and

I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 7:1 ¶ Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.”

Over the next two weeks, we will be looking at some specific practical applications. Understand that I'm not drawing hard lines here, but applying the scriptural standard, based upon what we see around us. There are some things that are absolutes: e.g. No fornication! Always sinful, in every situation. There are many things that are less clear - things that are vain, but not necessarily sinful on their face. We know from Solomon, and from our own experience, that all of this world's attractions are vanity - meaning empty - but not everything is inherently sinful.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

Ecclesiastes 11:9,10 “9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. 10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.”

How we use something, in what context, and with what spirit, is the distinction between simply vain and sinful; it's the difference between using and abusing the things of this world.

1Corinthians 7:29-31 “29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; 30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; 31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

We don't want to move over into works righteousness, austerity, stoicism, voluntary poverty, etc - we are surrounded by those that would have us to be in bondage to their version of the law, when indeed we are at liberty.

1Corinthians 5:9-11 “9 ¶ I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out

of the world. **11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."**

We also know that what goes into a man doesn't defile him, but rather, what comes out.

Mark 7:15,20-23 "15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. ... 20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

Given that, it is clear that the sinfulness of many earthly things and activities hinges on a person's spirit in using that thing - these are questions of conscience, and doing what we do with a clear conscience, and an upright heart, unto God. However, that's not the beginning and ending of the analysis. We must also consider one another, and the impact that we have on one another with our behavior, such that we do not lay stumbling blocks before our brothers, because of our manner of life.

1Corinthians 8:9 "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak."

Our behavior, and example ought to be one of moderation and temperance. Those two concepts go hand in hand. Moderation – suitable; sweet reasonableness. Temperance – we are able to take, or leave the things of this world, content with such things as we have. Consider this: if suddenly you didn't have some earthly thing / comfort / enjoyment, how would that affect you? Would it be like ripping something off of your body? It shouldn't be! It should be like taking off a hat! We ought to have a loose grip on all of the things that we use in this world, willing at a moment's notice to let go of it entirely, without remorse! Remember Lot's Wife!

Furthermore, we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:2,3 "2 ¶With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

These things require that we deny ourselves, and that we look to the needs of others. When we examine these "questions of conscience" within our families, and in our own

hearts, we ought to **honestly** consider: how does it affect me and my family? how does it affect my brothers and sisters in Christ? how does it affect my testimony for the Lord? We must sow to the spirit – day by day; We must mortify the deeds of the flesh – day by day. We must put on the armor that God has mercifully provided us – day by day.

Keeping all of that in mind, let's now look at 3 practical categories: How we look; How we behave and talk; How we spend our time. We will cover the first category today, and the others, next week.

How we look:

Here's how the world looks:

Isaiah 3:16-26 “**16 ¶ Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: 17 Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. 18 In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, 19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, 20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, 21 The rings, and nose jewels, 22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, 23 The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. 24 And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. 25 Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. 26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.”**

2Kings 9:30 “**¶ And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.”**

Proverbs 11:22 “**¶ As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.”**

The fashion of this world is 100% about the ornamentation and glorification of this rotting, stinking, corrupt flesh. Talk about gilding a turd! We ought not be conformed to those things. Look around you, and see what the fashion of our day looks like: everything is aimed at fleshly ornamentation and leisure; clothing is designed to expose as much

flesh as possible – putting their secret parts on display; much of what *is* “covered” is a skin tight, glorified under garment; dump trucks full of money are spent on “products”, and plastic surgery; clothing gets tighter and shorter by the day; flesh is destroyed with tattoos; fingers, toes and faces are painted; pieces of metal are shoved into ears, eyelids, lips, noses, cheeks, navels, and other shocking places; women chop off (and otherwise torture) their hair – that beautiful symbol of subjection that the Lord gives as a covering. Men are feminized, neutered, “metrosexuals”. People of all stripes craft themselves to emulate and imitate celebrities and sports heroes. On and on it goes, with EVERY BIT OF IT aimed to draw attention to this WORTHLESS flesh. It must not be so, with the people of God! Why would you emulate such a thing? The people of God ought to be adorning ourselves with modesty, with shamefacedness, with spiritual ornamentation, that is pleasing to the Lord!

1Timothy 2:9,10 “9 ¶In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

So the instruction is modest (clean, neat, decent, fitting, suitable, appropriate) apparel, which is driven by a proper spirit (shamefacedness and sobriety). The spirit of the matter is the key to it: you cannot create a proper spirit in a person by creating a dress code; but a person with a spirit of shamefacedness and sobriety will evidence that spirit in their modesty.

Proverbs 31:10,30 “10 ¶Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. 30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”

1Peter 3:1-22 “1 ¶Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: 6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. 7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of

life; that your prayers be not hindered. 8 ¶ Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. 13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? 14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 16 ¶ Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 18 ¶ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 ¶ The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

Speaking of wives - the saying in this generation is that the wedding is all about the bride – it's the “bride's day”. All of the proper, beautiful symbolism and concepts of marriage and the wedding; of Christ and his bride, the church, have been corrupted, and mangled into an obscene, multi-billion dollar, fleshly, satanic industry. Flip on a TV at any time, and you are bound to see some vapid slut shoving herself into an expensive dress, with the help of some lisping fag, all aimed to glorify the aforementioned slut! I could multiply words on that, but here's the point: the wedding is most certainly NOT about the bride! God forbid! The wedding is about the groom! It is hailed as the “Marriage Supper of the **Lamb**”! Does Jesus Christ exist for the church, or does the church exist for Jesus Christ? Was Adam created for Eve, or was Eve created as a help meet for Adam? So, when the bride is presented to the bridegroom, pure, chaste, and adorned in her wedding garment, is that to honor herself? God forbid! It is to honor her husband! Our wedding garment, our ornamentation is spiritual! It is given by our bridegroom, and it is for the honor of our Lord, not ourselves! “The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's

face". That beautiful line from "The Sands of Time" reflects the scriptural principal that we KNOW that our only righteousness comes from the Lord – we have none of our own – and therefore when he crowns us with his glory, we return that glory to him, and cast those crowns at HIS FEET! Is it any wonder that this godless generation would have this concept completely backwards – thereby subjugating and conforming God to the human! Understanding that, ought to help us when deciding ANYTHING about how we use this world – clothing, or otherwise! Are we doing it to honor ourselves, or to honor our bridegroom? Are we doing it with an eye toward what is pleasing to our Lord, or to catch the eye of a human? To do the latter, is to play the whore!

It is not consistent to say that a person has adorned themselves with spiritual ornaments, and yet they present themselves with the appearance of a fleshly worldling. Does that mean that we have to dress like slobs, or wear a burqa, or a tent, or a moo-moo? Of course not, and it is a wrangling argument to pretend that those two extremes are the only option. Follow after modesty and sobriety; seek to adorn yourself in a way that honors Christ, and not yourself, and you'll be good! Sweet reasonableness!

Philippians 4:4-9 "4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

Next week, Lord willing, we will examine the remaining two topics: how we behave and talk, and how we spend our time, in light of the sobering instruction that we be not conformed to this world. I love you all. Amen.