

# Romans (12:2a)

## *Insulation & Transformation*

Part 59 - January 15, 2006

### UN-CONFORMING

As we began chapter twelve, Paul told us that *everything* we've been reading in Romans has been one long description of the mercy of God through the work of Jesus; from twelve on Paul switches from belief to behavior.

And in response to God's mercy, he says we should offer our bodies as "living sacrifices"; daily committing and surrendering our hands and hearts, eyes and ears as instruments of worship.

- God wants your bod to model the mercy you've received.

However, it's not enough to just live it on the outside; God isn't satisfied with mere mechanical compliance. The outside must express and reflect the inside.

So, from verse 1 to verse 2 Paul switches from body to mind:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. - *Romans 12:2 NIV*



There's a reason we have to be told: "Do not conform"

- We are imitative by design.

It doesn't matter if children are learning or playing, just about everything they do is in the form of imitation. And if you boil it down, there are only two models to copy:

1. When they reproduce our good habits, they are modeling God.
2. When they replicate our bad habits, they're modeling Satan.

Q: Ever watch your kids pitch a fit and realize: "That's ME!"



Now, notice that Paul says: "Do not conform "any longer" ... Unless we willfully, prayerfully, diligently resist the urge to fit-in and conform-to our environment, it just happens instinctively and reflexively.

- Therefore: We must consciously "un-conform" ourselves.

Q: But, un-conform ourselves from what?

Q: Do we just study what they wear and watch and listen to and play and purchase, and then do the opposite of all *that*?

Well, maybe some of that stuff. But Paul is focusing beneath outward behavior. He's looking at the enemy's value system.

We must un-conform ourselves from: "The pattern of this world"

Just turn on a TV or a radio, or open a magazine and you'll see it. We live in a self-worshipping age of me-first-philosophies. Here's a secret: Everyone has since the eatin' in the garden! Un-conform from that well-established, time-honored pattern.

## SEPARATE BUT PARTICIPATE

Now, if we overreact or oversimplify this verse, we can end up retreating into the church for fear of "catching" sin.

Q: Is it wrong to drink a beer at the company picnic, in front of all those unbelievers? Shouldn't I just ... hide it at home?!

Q: How will my friends and family and coworkers know that I'm different if I don't try to not look like 'em?

When Paul wrote the Corinthians, he said:

I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. - 1 Corinthians 9:22 NIV

Q: How do you become all things to all men without *conforming*?



Think of doctors dealing with an epidemic. Even as they reach out to others, they protect and guard themselves. And the more they witness the ravages of the disease, the more their compassion *and* their vigilance intensifies.

- We must simultaneously separate *and* participate.

These two crucial Biblical impulses to relate and retreat will always be in tension in the life of a mature believer.

- If we imitate the culture, our light won't shine before men.
- If we isolate ourselves, our light will hide under a bushel.

Jesus described this as being “in” but not “of” the world:

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. - *John 17:15-16*  
NIV



When I was young, my uncle Joe took me out on his shrimp boat. We had a huge catch, and we boiled them onboard in a big copper kettle. Uncle Joe emptied a 50 lb. bag of sea salt into the pot. While they were cooking he melted a cube of butter for each of us.

And we got to walk among the drying racks (picture a hallway with walls made of freshly cooked shrimp), and we got to eat the best of the catch! Now, here’s the thing: Those shrimp spent their entire life in salt-water. But if Uncle Joe hadn’t poured that bag of sea-salt into the pot, they would’ve been flavorless. They lived their lives surrounded by salt, yet it didn’t penetrate or permeate their body. This is what God desires to do in each of our lives.

- We must not isolate or imitate, we must insulate.

## RENUZING OUR MIND

The Lord wants us to insulate us from the world by giving us a mind that thinks the way He thinks, and sees the way He sees, and feels the way He feels.

- Therefore we must be transformed into a new creature.

When Paul says: “be transformed” he uses the Greek word that gives us the English word: metamorphosis.



The caterpillar is confined to its cocoon until it one day emerges transformed. The same creature that went in came out; but the change is so remarkable that it doesn’t even resemble its former self.

- God wants your mind to undergo a metamorphosis.

Q: How does metamorphosis (transformation) happen?

A: “By the renewing of your mind”

Paul is calling for a renewal much deeper than mere mental effort can achieve. And yet, he’s *not* talking about Holy Spirit “magic” (where you just get it in a “poof” of prayer).

Let’s say you’re cruising along in a large yacht with an autopilot. And you want to change the direction it’s going. You have two choices:

1. You can grab the helm and by sheer willpower force it to turn in the direction you desire.

The problem with this is that the autopilot will continue to work against you. You'll eventually get worn out and let go.

2. You can reset the autopilot.



We have mindsets and viewpoints and postures and demeanors and bearings and attitudes and habits and false beliefs that contradict the simple truths available to us in the Bible.

God's word resets our autopilot.

Q: How often do you use it to adjust your perspective?

Picture yourself resetting those controls over your life.

Q: Which aspects of your thinking process need to be renewed? Self worth? Humility? Faith? Fear? Hopelessness?

- We must read, study, memorize, meditate, and apply.



On Wednesday nights Shar's at youth group, so I cook for myself. And I usually microwave vegetables, like broccoli, cauliflower, and/or Brussels sprouts. When they come home they always make a big deal about how awful it stinks in the house: "What in the world did you eat?!" But, ten minutes later, they can't smell it anymore.

But if we were to step outside for a breath of fresh air it would *renew* our sense of smell. And we would immediately detect how much we had acclimatized to the stink.



Because we acclimatize to our culture, we must allow God's Spirit to refresh, retrain, and renew us through His Word.

[We must] Renuzit or lose it!

But that's only the half of it. This is how the Holy Spirit works from the outside in, through the truth of God's Word applied to our lives.

But, we must also understand how He works from the inside out.

Next time: Romans, chapter twelve, verse two ... "b"!