**Proper Conformity**

*Romans 8:29; 12:2*

**Introduction**

1. God has a purpose – to save those who love Him **(cf. John 14:15)**, and glorify them together with His Son in eternity **(Romans 8:28-30):**
	1. **(v. 29)** – Those who do God’s will are predestined to be in the same form as the glorified Son of God.
	2. **(v. 30)** – These are called by God in the gospel, justified by answering the call, thus glorified in the end – i.e. realize the destiny which God ordained them for.
2. This conformity to the image of the glorified Christ starts while still in the physical body, and is a constant process until it is consummated by God in the end with the redemption of the purchased possession:
	1. **Romans 8:16-18** – Those who have the disposition as sons to do what God says (walk in the gospel way) are the joint heirs with Christ of this glorification. Such must, and are willing to suffer with Him to receive such glory.
	2. **1 John 3:1-3** – Those who have answered the gospel call are children of God, and should be striving daily toward the purity of Christ.
	3. The ultimate goal of glorification with Christ in heaven for eternity will be realized by those who conform themselves to Him now – ***“to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality” (Romans 2:7)***.
3. While Christians have this hope and goal, the god of this age seeks to strike us with a shortsightedness which conforms to the transient world rather than the eternal glory of Christ **(Romans 12:1-2):**
	1. Some desire relevance, acceptance, and pleasure, so they seek to be conformed to the world.
	2. **Regardless of motive, conforming to the world is an ever-present danger to all Christians because we are surrounded by it.**
4. **Rather than allowing themselves to be influenced by the world to become more like the world, Christians must rather seek conformity to Christ.**
5. Do Not Be Conformed
6. An Ageless Danger
	1. **The Israelites were guilty of worldly conformity:**
		1. **Acts 7:38-41** – Were given the Law at Sinai through Moses, but turned back to the ways observed and learned in Egypt.
			1. ***“in their hearts they turned back”*** – i.e. they longed for the ways of the Egyptians, to be like them.
				1. “Perhaps, however, the expression means, not that they desired literally to ‘return’ to Egypt, but that ‘their hearts inclined to the habits and morals of the Egyptians.’” (Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible)
				2. God wanted to make them a holy nation, but they wanted to be just like their oppressors.
			2. ***“rejoiced in the works of their own hands”*** – it was ultimately about self-service. (as is all idolatry)
				1. **Exodus 32:6** – things associated with their idolatrous practice.
				2. **1 Corinthians 10:7-8** – Divine commentary on such.
				3. They conformed to the world ultimately to satisfy their fleshly desires rather than please God.
		2. **1 Samuel 8:5, 7-8** – Israel demanded a king like the nations – in doing so they rejected God just like when they turned to idolatry – conforming to the world around them.
		3. **1 Kings 12:28-31** – Jeroboam turned to idolatry as a matter of convenience soon after he became king of Israel upon the division of the kingdom.
7. The Nature of the Danger
	1. **Contrast** – ***Romans 12:2 – “renewing of your mind”*** – a matter of the inward man conforming to the values and characteristics of the world.
		1. **Colossians 3:1-2** – mind set on things on the earth.
		2. Conforming to the world is a matter of having a mind of the flesh – ***“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds no the things of the flesh” (Romans 8:5)***.
	2. **Conforming to something lacking value, and duration:**
		1. **1 John 2:17a** – it is all passing away – the one conformed to it will be left with nothing.
		2. Like those who love money – **cf. James 1:11** – fade away in pursuit.
	3. **Failing to do what God desires:**
		1. **James 4:4-5** – Conforming to the world is committing adultery against the Lord.
		2. **Romans 2:6, 8-9** – Those who do such will be punished eternally.
			1. What God desires is seen in contrast to **verse 8** – He wants us to obey the truth.
			2. This will sanctify us, or set us apart from the world – **cf. John 17:14-17** (praying for apostles, but applicable in principle to us).
			3. ***“just as I am not of the world”*** – namely, in order to avoid conforming to the world, we must conform to Christ – intimately related to the truth. 🡪
8. Be Conformed
9. The Image of His Son
	1. **Romans 8:29** – It is God’s will that we be conformed to Christ.
		1. **Galatians 2:20** – This was Paul’s desire, to be conformed to Christ, or to have Christ live in Him.
		2. Not literally, but by faith in Him.
		3. **Galatians 6:14** – such accomplishes the opposite of conformity to the world – great opposition to it.
	2. Christ’s image is revealed and conformed to in the gospel:
		1. **2 Corinthians 4:6** – apostolic ministry is preaching the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.
		2. **2 Corinthians 3:18** – such is transformative – into the glory of the Lord – conforming to His image – becoming like Him.
		3. **2 Peter 1:3-4** – God’s will that we partake of the divine nature through the knowledge of Christ. (*epignosis* – full knowledge or discernment; participant knowledge)
	3. **Such conformation to Christ’s image is through transformative process which requires effort on our part 🡪**
10. Be Transformed
	1. **Romans 12:2** – not conformed, but transformed.
		1. Where conforming to the world is a result of a fleshly mind, conforming to Christ is a result of renewing that mind which invariably leads to transformation.
		2. Such a renewal of mind does not just happen, but comes through immense effort.
	2. **This renewal and transformation occurs through:**
		1. Repentance
		2. Study (to renewal)
		3. Practicing Righteousness (to transformation)
		4. **Cf. Ephesians 4:20-24** (snapshot of this renewal and transformation):
			1. **(vv. 17-19)** – Gentile living.
			2. **(vv. 20-21)** – Christ teaches something different.
				1. **(v. 22)** – put off – repent of sins.
				2. **(v. 23)** – renew mind – through knowledge of Christ’s teaching (**cf. vv. 11-13).**
				3. **(v. 24)** – put on – that new man Christ requires us to be.

**Conclusion**

1. Our ultimate hope and goal is to be glorified with Christ – i.e. be conformed to His glorious image.
2. This conformation is something which begins while we live in the body – we must already be conforming to Christ.
3. To do so, we must avoid conforming to the world.
4. We must understand, and practice proper conformity.