

Separate from the World

Romans 12:2

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“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” (Romans 12:2).

Some time ago a young Christian asked me, “What do you think heaven is going to be like?” As we talked we concluded that it sure wasn't going to be like the world around us. This morning's newspaper had stories of scandal, death, destruction, hypocrisy, greed, a few shady deals, plots to overthrow a government, shooting in the streets, racial strife; and that was just the front section of the paper! I haven't seen the rest of it yet. Who knows what I'll find there, if I take the time or even bother to read it?

One thing is for sure: Those of us who began our pilgrimage to the Holy City certainly wouldn't want to pattern our lives after all of that, especially if we have the option of conforming our lives to the ways of heaven. So the Apostle Paul beseeches us not to copy the temporal and fleeting fashions, standards and lifestyle of the present time, but to be wholly transfigured by the renewing of our minds.

Of course, we cannot accomplish that by human endeavor. It is God who turns us and then we are turned. We must place our minds under the powerful and transforming influence of the blessed Holy Spirit of God. We must trust God for grace as we apply God's means of grace. This will bring a change in our thinking and thus in our lives.

The most powerful way I know to do that is to invest time with the Lord day by day, and to get into the Word and spend time in prayer. Through this the Holy Spirit can make the truth of God meaningful and real, so that not only our minds are affected, but also our hearts. The Bible says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

This is the process of sanctification that Paul spoke of in II Corinthians 3:18: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

What image? Whose likeness? Again the Apostle does not leave us in the dark. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, how's that for a challenge? When you think of all that you know about yourself and all that you know about Jesus, where does that leave you? Dangling? In despair? Convinced there is no use? I hope not.

Think how far the Apostle Paul had come: from Saul of Tarsus, the murderer of believers, to the writer of these blessed words. So take heart. Yes, growth is slow, but if we meet the conditions in the Word of God, it is sure.

Don't be discouraged. Get into the Word, pray, obey what God speaks to you about, and start proving what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

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