

CONFORM OR CONSECRATE
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"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.

I repeatedly hear that our team has not changed, but continues to be like the old time believers, absolutely true to the word. We are very thankful for the compliment and praise God this has been true for 66 years. It seems to me that conformity has become the norm of fundamentalism and true lasting consecration is sadly missing from the preaching and practice of today's saints. One can easily see theological conformity in the hodge podge of the religion of the day. Much preaching has fallen to the theories of accepted psychological thinking and practice while destroying spiritual practice and personal dedication. It is fatal to the ministry when the preacher obeys men rather than God. The rule book of the ministry must be the Bible and to fit into any other pattern of acceptance is certainly a step backward to any Christian. Today, conformity is not only seen in the ministry but in the music allowed. To shape the Christian message to the beat and tempos of the worldly crowd is a terrible path for the church to follow. It may be popular and accepted by many but it does great damage to the work of God. Thousands of churches have lost their Godly testimony and fervor to a floodtide of cheap worldly music that satisfies the flesh and starves the soul. The church must stop conforming, both in preaching and worship, to the opinions and likes of the worldly minded crowd. Conformity or consecration is largely a personal battle. Your attitude toward the world will determine whether or not the Lord will use you. Some make the mistake of isolation from the world

around them. God does not call us to be a hermit. We are to be in the world but not of it. (John 17:15) We have to live our daily lives among others in work and play but we do not have to give in to the practices which pollute the sinner. We are to march to a different drum. Nor are we to become fire-eyed monsters who lash out at the crowd around us with negative, bitter denunciations and self glorifying actions. We must rather stand above, without fear, with real purpose, demonstrating who's we are and the true way of righteousness. We must not allow them to squeeze us into their mold, but stand fast within the limits of Biblical obedience. Beware of the pressure and remember conformity is weakness. They say "Everybody is doing it." You need to answer, "Not me if it does not please God." They may call you chicken if you don't, but you are cowardly if you do. Dr. Bob Jones always warned, "Never sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate." Many conform to the pattern of the world when it comes to apparel and adopt the "grunge" fad of sloppy dressing often wearing that which advertises evil. Some adopt revealing and tight clothing that degrades their body and tempts others to sin. Men become effeminate with ear rings and womanlike jewelry which detracts from the manly image they need to project. Change is not always wrong if it does not detract from ones overall testimony but if it dishonors Christ, stands for evil, and gives the wrong message, it is a tragic mistake. Conformity to the crowd is always weakness. Pilate gave in to the crowd and showed great weakness. (Luke 23:23) He gave in to the crowds loud voices. (Mark 15:15) Watch out for the phrase, "Everybody's doing it," for to follow is usually the path of conformity and compromise.

Consecration is the opposite to conformity. It means to set aside or dedicate one's life for sacred purpose and lasting service. God will not take this from you but it must be given to

Him in a definite act of surrender. The consecration we all need is three fold. It must be PERSONAL for "every one of us shall give an account of himself to God" Rom. 14:12.

We are creatures of intellect, emotion, and will. We can know what is right, feel our need and choose what is right in the light of God's word. Daniel at the age of 16 decided he would not defile himself and God made a great deliverer out of a boy who made the right choice. You can do the same in every crisis and each decision that faces you. I remember standing at a campfire 52 years ago and making a complete surrender to the Lord. By His grace I have stood with that consecration decision.

Your consecration must be COMPLETE.

He must be Lord of all or to you He is not Lord at all. Remember, "*Ye are not your own*" I Cor. 6:19-20. The word "present" in Romans 12:1 must be a total gift with nothing withheld. Christ wants all your present desires and control over your future decisions. As our Lord he expects our total life to be placed in His hands. He will know best how to invest us in the plan He has for each of us. All hindering habits, secret loves, evil associations and questionable friendships must cease. The time is short and he wants our total surrender.

Lastly, our consecration must be IRREVOCABLE. Remember, "*No man that putteth his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God*" Luke 9:62. It is sad when the consecration of many is a temporary, careless, short-lived one. Paul spoke of one who ran well and then was hindered. (Gal. 5:7) The battlefields of Christianity are scattered with the remains of those who started out so well and ended so ill. Demus started out so well but forsook "*because he loved the world*" II Tim. 4:10. How much better to be like Paul who said "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my*

course, I have kept the faith" II Tim. 4:7. Let's not fall victim to conformity but stand with unswerving consecration, squarely in the path the Lord has laid out for us. The hardships of true soldiering will fade away in the elegance of eternal reward, when we hear His "Well Done".