

When in Rome: Not Conformed But Transformed

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[0:00] All right. Well, as usual, I've got lots of things to say before I say lots of things. So no service here next Sunday. We're in the park next Sunday. So please come because otherwise it will be very sad, but please come. We're having our service in the park at 11. So it's in Capilano Park.

Where's Capilano Park, you say? Go to 50th Street. Head north, down the hill. Don't drive into the river. Instead, turn left into Capilano Park. So right as 50th Street ends, Capilano Park is to your left. And we're in site number one, which is a covered site. So no matter how blustery it gets, we will be undercover. So please come. The other thing, so remember to sign up on the sheet in the foyer to bring food. There are not many people signed up on that list. I said to Michelle this morning, if we have to forage for berries and roots and grubs next Sunday morning to feed everyone, she can lead that nature walk. So that'll be about 8.30, right, dear? About 8.30 because we need to make sure we forage sufficiently. So bring chairs, lawn chairs with you. There are benches and stuff at our site. But bring a lawn chair if you think you'd be more comfortable that way. Vern and Kathy, Vern and Kathy, will be leading worship for us. And then some guy will be preaching. And it won't be a sermon in Romans. I have something else in mind. So dress for the weather. If you're Connor, that means wearing shorts in minus 35. So yeah, but don't hesitate. Dress down. Dress summer for next Sunday in the park. So that's right. Bring bug spray. Bring layers of clothing just in case. And all those things. And we're far enough up from the river valley that we should be okay. Yep. So the rain out plan, should we need one, and we're talking torrential rain would be the rain out plan. It will be here and we'll meet in the gym. So we'll have our service, our worship time, and the sermon, and then lunch in the gym. So it'll be a little bit different environment if that happens. But unless it's pouring, and I'm talking pouring, where we have eight feet of snow, show up. See you in the park. I just got a text, and I'm hoping it's the text I was hoping for. It is.

So, Pastor Luwam from our Kachin, from our Kachin Church, from the Kachin Church, who worships in our fellowship center across the parking lot, he and his wife Sang Pan had a baby.

[2:45] Yes. And I texted him this morning, and I, because I heard it from, I think, Carol, and Carol, the ladies were talking about it over here, and I eavesdropped. And so then I texted him, and I said, you never tell me anything. And I said, with a heart and a prayer hands, and so he's responding. Anyway, I'm just going to leave that there for a second, because he's three-dotting me right now. So welcome here for this Sunday, July 5th, 2026. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my joy to be the pastor here. This morning, we're continuing in our sermon series when in Rome, and we're making our way through the book of Romans, and we're uncovering some of the really important truth that it holds for us, as important as when Paul first wrote it. So again, someone asked me about this last Sunday, not naming any names, said, oh, you're probably covering chapter 9 next Sunday. And I said, well, actually, I'm not. And I said, oh. So we're jumping over chapters 9, 10, and 11. Not because I'm lazy.

Not because they're not important. So I encourage you to read those for yourself. Now, I'll explain why. Name not confirmed yet, Luwam says. We're calling her Tutu, H-T-U-H-T-U, which means fourth daughter. For anyone who has daughters, a fourth one perhaps could be inconceivable to you. It is to me. I know that. Weight, 6.8 pounds, which is big. We made a couple of hospital trips for physiotherapy. He said the phototherapy, and I don't think that's what he means. But it's good now by the grace of God. Thanks, Pastor Kent. So there you go. Tutu, fourth daughter.

Name pending. So I'll get you that when I can. So scholars are sometimes actually puzzled by Romans 9 to 11. They suggest that it feels like a bit of a digression in Paul's thinking, because he focuses in those three chapters on free will and the concept of election. So we can get into free will and the concept of election. Maybe I'll preach on Calvinism and Arminianism at some point, and

then you'll either be happy or sad. But, you know, I may focus on something like that at some point. But in those three chapters, Paul also addresses the history of the Jewish people, and particularly in relation to God's overall plan and their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. Here's a great summary I read on those three chapters. The central message of Romans 9 to 11 is God's unwavering faithfulness to Israel, despite their national rejection of Christ. It reveals a divine strategy that uses Israel's disobedience to disobedience to open salvation to the Gentiles. Remember, Paul's ministry shifted from his own people to the Gentiles. That's a part of this. So while it still preserved a future hope for

Israel's restoration. So Paul is clear on that, that they are not somehow now excluded forever and ever, amen, not at all. Paul emphasizes in 9 to 11 that God's gifts and calling are irrevocable. They're rooted in his covenant that he made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and that Israel remains beloved for the sake of the fathers, even as they're currently enemies of the gospel for the sake of Gentile inclusion. Remember, we talked about, have talked about, even in Acts, that conflict between Gentile believers and Jewish believers, particularly the Jews feeling the Gentiles should not be included.

[6:55] So the passage 9 to 11 unfolds this profound theological vision in which God's wisdom and judgments are unsearchable. And you've heard that kind of wording in scripture, that his ways are unfathomable and that they come, that whole section culminates in a doxology that exalts God as the source, sustainer, and ultimate ending of all things. So in some ways, chapters 9 to 11 are a bit of a mini sermon or a section that can be pulled out of the flow of that section of Romans. And the reason for that is, remember I said people view it as a bit of a digression. Well, that's because this main line of thinking that we had from Romans 8, remember it was very positive, very uplifting, very encouraging.

And then that flow of thinking picks up again in chapter 12. So 9, 10, 11 are on a bit of a different topic, a bit of a different focus. And then Paul returns 8 to 12. He returns back to 12. And that's where we find ourselves this morning. So our passage for this morning is a nice short one for you. It's Romans 12, verses 1 and 2. So go ahead and have a peek there. I still hear pages flipping. That's good. Romans 12, 1 to 2, which says, Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship.

Do not conform 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. Our sermon this morning is titled, Not Conformed, But Transformed. And we have quite a bit I Want to Cover, so let's dive right in. I want us to start by considering the idea of conformity.

[9:09] As we just heard a few moments ago, Paul gives this directive, and do not be conformed to the world. What does conformed mean to you? Get some thoughts in your head.

Is it a word that we just quickly glance over? We read it or hear it, and eh, doesn't really mean that much to me. How does it relate to your daily living, is another way to think about it.

So we need to become familiar, I think, with the concept of conformity, if we're really going to grasp what Paul means, and not just the words, but the meaning behind the words.

So understanding conformity. The word conformity is defined as conforming to someone else's pattern, their way of acting, thinking, how they do things.

It also involves the idea of wanting to be like another person. Doing what they do, saying what they say, even wearing what they wear.

[10:11] Conforming or conformity can also mean accepting the ideas, the fashions, the ways of walking and talking, and so on, that are popular.

A conformist, therefore, is someone who may be afraid to be different. That's interesting. Or feels a need to be like everyone else. As I think about it right in this moment, wanting to fit in, right?

Wanting to fit in, or at the very least, not stand out. So that's what conformity kind of means. And we can all probably recognize our society exerts on us, really, a pressure to conform, to fit in, to do what everyone else is doing, or saying, or thinking.

Welcome to social media. Which you've heard me say a million times is neither social nor media, in my perception. I remember feeling pressure to conform as early as elementary school.

Maybe you can relate to that. Wearing what others wore. Carrying that lunchbox. Wearing that shirt or those shoes.

[11:25] Now, my family didn't struggle financially, but I remember my parents thinking, well, you know, a \$100 pair of shoes or whatever was a little bit crazy in elementary or junior high.

So maybe you can relate to this. Sometimes I got conformity adjacent. Does that ring any bells? So a product that wasn't exactly the product, but it was close.

The colors were similar. Sometimes it would pass. Sometimes it really, really would crash. Maybe you can relate to that. So while the pressures to conform, I think, may start there, may start when we're quite young, it really does continue for the rest of our lives.

Needing to make that kind of salary. Needing to drive that kind of car. And so on. So marketing and advertising, you know, that's the world I kind of come from.

They often use a sense of conformity, that's human nature. Acceptance, that's also human nature, to market products from shampoo to weight loss drugs and everything in between.

[12:39] Next time you're watching a commercial, I don't know about you, but I'm annoyed by commercials because I have enough distance from them in my mind that I get what they're trying to do. So, but think about it.

Next time you're watching commercials or even hearing commercials on the radio, think about the fact that, I don't want to make it too weird, but you're being targeted, essentially. And that's not a, I shouldn't put on a tinfoil hat or anything, but it's true.

Because whatever company is, whatever organization it is, they're using the opportunity to get the attention, the eyeballs of a certain audience on their message, their product, whatever.

So they know what they're doing and they're trying to get your attention. So maybe you can think of some dangers of conformity, maybe they've already popped into your head, but it can actually be dangerous because it can lead you to do things that you know are wrong.

Here's another personal story of mine. I worked in real estate, shopping center, property management, that kind of stuff. And particularly in the shopping center industry, lots of males, unfortunately, lots of females in marketing.

[13:57] So those were mostly my friends. But I remember going to a strip club. Now, don't panic. Going to a strip club, Connor still reminds me of this story.

And I sat on the curb outside waiting for everyone else to come out. And I had buddies who were going, come on, it's not that, sit in the back. And I said, yeah, you may think no one will ever see, no one will ever know, but I'll know.

I'll know that I compromised and I just don't want to do that. But go ahead. Totally, I'm not judging you. We'll hang out after. But the more people in a group that begin to conform, I think the greater the pressure can become.

Like there's an example. There was not unkind pressure, but there was pressure on me to just join the crowd. And I thought, nah, I'll be embarrassed. I'll feel dumb.

All those things. But pressure and guilt from other people who are already on board can start to feel like it's snowballing. So if you're the only one, like it's all these expressions like, well, everyone else is doing it, right?

[15:07] How easy to compromise your personal ethics or your beliefs, your personal beliefs in God to just say, well, just this one time. See?

It becomes dangerous. It starts to snowball. And when you've given in once, it can become easier and easier to conform the next time.

Well, I did it once and it didn't feel that bad, so why not? It gets very, very slippery indeed. 1 John 2 verses 15 to 17 says, Do not love the world or anything in the world.

If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life comes not from the Father, but from the world.

The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. However, conforming to the things of this world will ultimately separate us from God.

[16:19] So now that we have, hopefully, a better grasp of what Paul commands us to do when he says, do not be conformed to this world, how do we deal with the pressures of conformity in our lives?

It's a good question. Well, fortunately, Paul includes the positive side of this concept in the same passage. Paul advocates for believers to be transformed, not conformed.

So hopefully, some questions come to mind for you there. What does it mean to be transformed? What's the goal of transformation? What should motivate us to want to undergo this kind of

transformation?

What does one need to do, if anything, to experience this kind of transformation in their lives? Let's start with some clarity around what transform or transformed means.

The Greek word is, say this ten times fast, metamorpho. There you go. Now you speak Greek. It's all Greek to me.

[17:32] So what it means literally is to change into another form. This is where we get the word metamorphosis.

We use the word transform or transformation to mean a change of form. In the New Testament, this word is used to describe what happens to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17.

It's used in Romans 12, verse 1 and 2, which we're looking at this morning, as what should happen to Christians in their service to God. So the idea being commanded here by Paul is this.

Christians are to undergo a complete change which, under the power of God, will find expression in character and conduct.

Say that again. Christians are to undergo a complete change which, under the power of God, will find expression in character and conduct.

[18:37] Bless you. So in other words, we who are caterpillars are intended to become butterflies. So note here that Paul uses the passive voice.

He indicates that transformation is something that we allow to be done to us, not something that we do under our own power. We need to submit to God's power and by his grace, we're then changed into another form.

We become a new creation. So having learned what transformation means, what's the goal of it? Well, the goal of transformation is to become like Christ.

becoming like Christ is a concept that Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 3.18 and in Romans 8.29. He makes it clear that this has been predestined by God.

So don't panic when you hear predestined. It just means God determined this. We talked about it last week. God knew that this would happen. So God knew people would accept him or not.

[19:48] God knew that people would be transformed by his grace or not. So the whole purpose of being a student or disciple of Christ is to become more like our teacher.

I don't know if you had, you probably all had many teachers over the course of your life in very different stages of education. Some you love, right? I remember some very fondly all throughout my education, even into my post-secondary.

some, not so much. But that, when our teacher is Christ, we want to become more like him because we love him.

So the goal of living a Christian life is also not just to become like Christ, but to become more like him in how we speak, how we act, how we treat other people.

another goal of transformation is to live like Christ. So not just become like him, but live like him. Scripture tells us that we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God.

[21:05] And this is exactly what Jesus modeled for us when he was on earth. God's will is good.

God's will is acceptable and it is perfect. And this is also exactly what Jesus modeled for us when he was on the earth. This is the goal of being transformed.

In fact, it's the ultimate goal of being a Christian. But, despite knowing what we should do, why do many followers of Jesus never truly experience this kind of transformation that God offers?

Don't start thinking in your head, oh, like so-and-so, can't believe how unchrist-like they are. No, do not do that. So why do some Christians, some followers of Christ, remain caterpillars?

Why do they never develop? Maybe they lack the proper motivation. They just don't see the specific purpose. So along this line of thinking, what should motivate us to undergo transformation?

[22:16] Hopefully you think of a billion things all at once. But I think the mercies of God are incredibly important. In our text, Paul appealed to transformation based on God's mercies, which he outlines earlier in Romans, and maybe you remember.

mercies include freedom from sin, the gift of eternal life, peace with God, access to God's grace, and salvation from our sin and God's wrath against it.

Is that a motivation to transform? Shouldn't God's grace and mercy towards us, his eternal love for us, motivate us to seek to be transformed according to his will and plan for our lives?

What about the love of Christ? Paul revealed the motivating power of the love of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5, 14, and 15.

And in fact, Paul mentions throughout his ministry that it's this love for him from Jesus that motivated him to live for Jesus.

[23:27] He mentions it again in Galatians 2, verse 20. Our love for Jesus, my friends, should be a significant motivator for us to want to live for him and like him.

So what does the process of transformation look like? How will I know when I'm transforming? How will I know when I get there? Well, sanctification, lifelong process, so there's never a, I finally made it.

Remember that transformation is a passive process. As Paul says, we're to be transformed. That's not just language he throws out.

He means it that way. We're to be transformed. We can't transform ourselves by our own strength or by being a good person. I'm a good person.

I'm probably going to heaven. You heard anybody say that? It's been, it's struck me recently more, in a more powerful way that people who don't know Jesus will be separated from him for eternity.

[24:35] It's not just information. It's fact. For every person that dies apart from Christ dies in separation for eternity.

our transformation begins when we are baptized into Christ, into his death and resurrection. It's there when we begin to see God at work in wonderful ways.

We're buried and then raised with Christ, given a new life, made alive in him, and our sins are washed away.

Having been buried with Christ by baptism into his death, crucified with Christ, that we might be freed from sin, we are raised to live with Christ.

So when joined with faith and repentance, baptism becomes the starting point in which true transformation can and will take place.

[25:44] The process of transformation continues as Paul talks about as we renew our mind. Paul speaks about this in our text this morning. So what does it mean to renew our minds?

Well, unless we truly repent of sin and our minds are genuinely renewed, any changes in our lives are likely to be superficial at best.

Christ. I'm sure you've heard many stories of camp conversions. Somebody goes away to summer camp, it's introduced to Christ. In that insular environment, it's easy, it's fun, it's encouraging, it's deeply meaningful, and then you return to regular life.

Renewing of our minds is made possible when we set our minds on the things that Jesus modeled as valuable, the things that the Holy Spirit prompts us to pursue.

When our minds have been renewed, truly renewed, we can experience a true transformation. So the process of transformation is really quite simple.

[26:56] Meditate on and think about God and His Word. Strengthen your relationship with God through prayer. Talk to Him. Get together with other believers for mutual encouragement.

Center your mind on Jesus through the Lord's Supper. And friends, your mind will gradually be renewed. So with renewed minds, it becomes possible to put off the old and put on the new, as Paul suggests.

things. When our minds are focused on the things of God, sin starts to lose its appeal. It should start to become easier to live the kind of life that Jesus modeled for us.

And remember, we're not alone in our efforts to live transformed lives. God is working on us and in us as well. Oh, wait a minute though.

If it's so easy, how come some people never transform? Why do many Christians remain caterpillars and never truly transform?

[28:10] Weren't they regenerated at their baptism, as we've talked about? Yes. Don't they have God's promise to help them, just like we do? Yes.

The problem is likely a failure to renew their mind. not seeking to make better choices and focus on the things that truly feed us the way God intended.

You've all heard the expression, garbage in, garbage out. Can a mind be renewed if it's being stifled and starved from studying scripture?

Can a mind be renewed? Now, I'm a TV and movie person, so don't hear me saying, under no circumstances shalt thou. But can a mind truly be renewed on a junk food diet of bad movies and TV?

There are programs that I will not watch because I know they are garbage, and they're particularly garbage for me. What about endless social media scrolling?

[29:17] How much time do we spend on our phones? or on Netflix? Why many Christians don't experience transformation, I believe, comes down to a few things.

They become what they think, and much of what they think, not that becoming. They spend more time consuming the things of this world than the things of God.

Ultimately, our attitudes and behavior are a direct reflection of what we are putting into our minds. The things that you will tolerate are based on the inputs you receive.

We've been called to be transformed into the image of Christ. We have all the motivation we need, God's mercies and his love.

We have the opportunity for a fresh start in the washing of regeneration. salvation. But friends, we must allow our minds to be renewed by setting them intentionally on the things of God.

[30:28] God wants to give us a complete makeover. He's provided the means, Christ's sacrifice, to remove the corruption of sin.

He's provided the tools, Bible study, prayer, fellowship, to shape us into new people. Are we making good use of all the means and tools that God has given us?

My friends, let's start every day by simply asking God to shape us into the likeness of Christ. It can be that simple a phrase.

And to help us be not conformed, but transformed. Amen. Amen.