

“Do Not Be Conformed to the [Religious] World” (Part 1 of 3)

John Jones

Dear Brethren,

Over the next three weeks, I'd like to dig deep into Romans 12:2, its place in history and its place in the book of Romans. I think its true that the deeper we dive into Scripture, the more deeply we will be blessed!

**Romans 12:2** (ESV) - *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

This was the first passage I ever seriously considered and meditated upon. This occurred many years before I was introduced to the concepts of historical or literary context. This passage was initially introduced to me as a supporting verse for 2 Timothy 2:22 and fleeing “youthful lusts.” At that time, I interpreted the verse to mean that the more I read my Bible, the easier temptation would be to deal with. While I was certainly not too far off, I later came to realize that my interpretation was incomplete. Perhaps we can find more meaning within the historical context of the Roman church at the time and of the literary context of Paul’s writing.

**The Historical Background of the Roman Church**

We know that “visitors from Rome” were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when the initial 3,000 were baptised into Christ (Acts 2:10). Assuming that these early Christians returned and worshipped in Rome, the earliest Roman church would have been composed entirely of early Jewish believers. Their evangelistic efforts, at this point, would have been limited to other Jews in the synagogues of Rome. Later, however, the Roman church would have begun reaching out to the Gentiles, as the other early churches did. Following the conversion of the first Gentile converts, Cornelius and his household (Acts 10), the first mass outreach to Gentiles began (Acts 11:19-21). The successes among the Gentiles that Paul and Barnabas experienced during their first missionary journey (Acts 13:48-49; 14:1, 27) actually prompted the church in Jerusalem to send a letter to the Gentile brethren in nearby locations (Acts 15:23-30). Though we only have available the travels of Paul recorded in Acts, we can imagine the conversions among Gentiles continued to increase in the churches, including the church in Rome.

Paul’s meeting with Roman couple Priscilla and Aquila gives us more insight into the historical context of the Roman church (Acts 18:1-12). Priscilla and Aquila’s “trip” to Corinth was arranged by Emperor Claudius, who decreed that all Jews must leave the city of Rome. Roman historians Suetonius and Cassius Dio reinforce the biblical text of this historical occurrence. Looking to archaeology, we find that the Gallio inscription (Acts 18:12) in Delphi dates this event sometime between January of 51 and August of 52. The majority of the Roman congregation, presumably Jewish, would have been subject to Claudius’ edict. The welfare of the early Roman church, therefore, would have been left to the propriety of the rather recent Gentile converts for a significant amount of time.

By the time Paul, who had at that point had not personally visited the Roman church (Rom. 1:10-13), wrote to them, the Jewish population had returned (Romans 16:3). As you can imagine, the differences between the Jews and Gentiles in the church were amplified by the return of the Jewish Christians who most likely felt an overwhelming sense of culture shock. I can imagine them saying, “What happened to our synagogue style, mostly Jewish assembly?”, “Can you believe the Gentiles are coming to worship then going out for lunch at the temple of Athena!?”, “These guys don’t know our scriptures very well! What qualifies them to teach about Israel’s prophesied Messiah?”

Hopefully this historical insight will inform our understanding of the book of Romans, as well as the text in question. When Paul says that every Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, needs to, through “testing...discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” He is focused on a church family who is constantly on the brink of division because of differences in the membership. Are those differences cultural or are they doctrinal? We will dig into this question next week!

Have a blessed week!

John

**On Our Prayer List...**

**Becky Palk**-had back surg in Williamson County-will now have in-pt rehab.

**Faye Featherstone**

**Linda Rodgers**-had ER visit due to BP

**Mary Lana Adams**-had a fall now in Waverly hospital

**Hattie Tate/ Earline Davis/ Michelle Lashlee/ Dorothy Killebrew/W. R. Long /Jimmy Buckner/ Al & Vicki Peek**

\***Larry Fuqua** -(Kathy Martin’s brother) ER, kept overnight for a stress test  
 \***Marcia Simpson**-needs prayers in Sarah Cannon Hosp with many medical issues  
 \***Neely Ann Martin**-(Jerry & Kathy’s granddaughter) recovering fr fractured jaw  
 \***Pam Forster**-(Leanne & Gail’s cousin) recovering fr shoulder surg.\*  
 \***Chase Lewis**-(Vicki Peek’s family) he has lupus, been very sick  
 \***Ralph Simpson**-several medical problems  
 \***Frank Gugelchuk**-(Michelle Lashlee’s dad)heart issues  
 \***Alyssa Gold**-(Robert Proctor’s niece) in need of prayers  
 \***John Henry**-now recovering fr Pneumonia & **Carlene Davis**  
 \***Linda Burns** (Mike Burns sister-in-law) /**Bubba Tummins**(Bo & Amy’s bro  
 \***Faye Hooper**- medical problems \***Jeannie Belles**  
 \***Faye Marshall**-Traci Adams mom \***June Dreaden**-S. Rachford’s mom  
 \***Doug Simpson**-(Ruby England’s brother) heart problems  
 \***Nancy Turner**-continues to need prayers  
 \***Shane Cobb** \***Rebecca Davis**

**THOSE DEALING/BEING TREATED FOR CANCER**

\***Kenny Fleming**- cancer meds  
 \***Jimmy Phy**-treatments  
 \***DONNA BURNS**-(WAYNE&ANN BERRYMAN’S NIECE)-CA  
 \***Wanda Dobbins**-(kin to Tyler’s) terminal CA  
 \***Chris McCurley**-prostate cancer  
 \***Jackie Borders**- Lauren Stuart’s mom  
 \***Ranae Duncan**-(Bo&Amy’s neighbor)-CA treatments  
 \***Casey Vailes**- (Ranae Duncan’s son)also has cancer  
 \***Barry Dean**-grandfather of a friend of Rachel Bell’s  
 \***Larry Hayes**-(fr Waverly COC) restarted chemo  
 \***Maggie Wright**-(friend of N. Buttrey) chemo  
 \***David Stokes**-(Drew Swearn’s) step-dad  
 \***Stephanie Smith** \***Kenna Rickenbrode**  
 \***Clay Crafton**-(Kathy Martin’s nephew) CA has returned  
 \***Sharon Curtis**  
 \***Matthew Wright**-(brother to Barbara Good) Lung CA

**ASSISTED LIVING & NURSING HOME**

**AHC Decatur County**-726 Kentucky Ave, Parsons, TN 38363-**Wyle Marshall** (Rm 726)-Traci Adams dad

**Humphreys County**- 104 Forte Hill Road, Waverly, TN 37185- **Billy Adams**-Rm 712

**NHC-Jim Buckner**-(Rm 320) **Earline Davis**-(Rm 103) **JoAnn Haley**-(Rm )**Doris Stokes**-Rm 127  
 812 N. Charlotte, Dickson, TN 37055

**Magnolia Place** -811 W. Main St. Waverly, TN 37055-**Mary Lana Adams**—Rm 113

**MILITARY**

**Dustin Proctor**-  
 (Navy Japan)  
 PSC 562 Box 7273,  
 FPO AP 96311-0073

**Dalton & Hope Palk**  
 - (Navy-Louisiana)  
 500 Woodland Dr, Apt 597,  
 New Orleans, LA 70131

**AT HOME:** **JANE RIDINGS**-172 Indian Creek Rd/HERBERT CAPPIS-1400 Bradley Rd/ELTON SMITH-7731 Hwy 70 East

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS**



**It’s that time again; Our “Truck or Treat” outreach to the Community is on Thursday, Oct 31st from 6:00-7:30 PM Trunk sign-up list in foyer- please be bringing candy for kiddos. Thanks**

**Our Fall Family Retreat**  
 Coming up this weekend, Oct. 18th-20th @ Nathan Bedford Forest . There will be a meeting this Wed night the 16th after services for all who are going downstairs in the fellowship rm.

**Teachers & Prospective Teachers meeting on Sunday, Oct 27th @ 4:45 in the fellowship room.**

**PEW PACKERS**  
 To restart on Nov 10th. This will be a regular Sunday night activity starting @ 5:45, for all children or the young @ heart Will include singing, Bible memory & of course fun!

**231 Trash Pick-Up**  
 on Sat, November 9th . Meet here at the building @ 7:30 AM.



**Baby Sprinkle for Brooke Davis Palk on Oct 27th, 2:00-3:30 PM, downstairs. All are invited! Registered @ Babylist.com & Trull Pharmacy.**

Our sympathy & prayers to the family of “**Rodney Simpson**”, Kerri his wife, Denise Thomason, mother-in-law & Sarah Bishop Simpson, dght -in-law. His service will be held on Oct 16th @ 4:00 PM @ Luff Bowen in Waverly.

**IN F.O.C.U.S.** Faith, Obedience, Character, Unity, Salvation

I hope everyone had a great fall break this past week. We were able to get away for a few days to the mountains with family. It was such a beautiful week and a much-needed break.

Our only youth activity was our devotional Sunday night at the home of Mike and Beth Robertson. We had a group of 17 youth and 13 adults in attendance. We enjoyed a great devotional period of singing and a lesson from Mike. After devo we enjoyed a meal and time of fellowship. I appreciate Mike and Beth opening their home to us and hosting. It was a great night and time together!  
 Christian Love, Keith

