

CONFORM, REFORM OR TRANSFORM

Request: Recently Al talked about transformation of Christian Way of Life (CWL) from Rom.12: 2. Could you explain the difference between conformation, reformation, and transformation.

The Greek definition of conform, transform, and reform will help us understand their meanings.

- **Conform:** (suschematizo) to fashion or shape one thing to be like another (Rom.12: 2).
- **Reform:** (diorthosis) to make straight, to correct a previous bad behavior (Heb.9: 10; Acts 24:2).
- **Transform:** (metamorphoo) to change into another form; to be transformed into something different (Rom.12: 2; 2 Cor.3: 18).

The doctrinal meanings of these three systems of changing lives will help us understand how they effect the CWL.

- **Conformation** is choosing to live by the system of worldly thinking (cosmos diabolicus).
- **Reformation** is choosing to live by a set of cultural accepted norms and standards.
- **Transformation** is choosing to live by cycling sound bible doctrine, the word of God (Gen.45: 1-15; Titus 1:9).

This lesson will study FIVE points on the different ways that Conformation, Reformation and Transformation affect the believer's life.

- 1. All members of the human race are operating under at least one of these three spheres of influence and most often by a combination of them.**

This is illustrated in our lesson text of Gen.45:1-15. The brothers of Joseph are struggling from a combination of old man conformation and reformation (Rom.7:15-21).

Their struggle will be contrasted with Joseph operating from new man transformation towards his offenders.

- 2. Joseph's brothers are an example of believers living under the conformity system when they attempted to kill him, sold him into slavery and then told their father a wild beast devoured him (Gen.37: 18-33).**

Because of their Old Man Cosmos Diabolicus (OMCD) thinking the brothers weren't interested in divine viewpoint thinking regarding decisions in life. They lived by what they wanted and not by what God wanted, i.e. in their ME world.

They only changed their conformation living if it suited their lustful interest. They attempted to kill Joseph (Gen.37: 20), threw him in the pit (Gen 22-24) and then sold him into slavery (Gen 25-28).

“That in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the **old self which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.**” (Eph.4:22)

- 3. By the time the brothers came to Egypt, they were living under a combination of the conformation and reformation systems of old man thinking.**

By this time, the brothers were at a place in their lives where something had to give. God began to increase the pressure on the brothers (life-threatening famine) (Gen.41: 56-57; 43:1).

No matter how good the brothers tried to live, every time some adversity occurred in their lives their consciences screamed out of guilt to God (Gen.42: 8-13,129-23,25-36; 44:16). Their iniquity regarding Joseph was eating them alive.

The brothers of Joseph are an example of reformation as they attempted to put their iniquity behind them by living a better life, i.e. Judah. (Gen.44: 16,20-22, 27-34).

Notice that even the combination of conformation and reformation couldn't relieve their Old Man Cosmos Diabolicus (OMCD) guilt. It only postponed dealing with the truth and prolonged the guilt of their offense against Joseph.

At best, reformation (hard work, will power, and human good) only improves old man. It can eliminate the excess and bring oneself into cultural accepted norms and standards (Phil.3). Very often it is nothing more than exchanging one area of lust trend for another.

Reformed living tends to keep past mistakes, self-pity, emotional remorse and guilt alive to remind oneself of past failures (Gen 45:5) and is commonly used as avoidance for dealing with the OMCD source of the problem.

Reformation does not remove OMCD thinking nor does it produce New Man Divine Viewpoint (NMDV) thinking. "be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph.4:23; Rom.12:2).

Legalistic churches promote religious motivation for reformation while Grace churches promote the teaching of sound bible doctrine and transformation (2 Cor.3: 18).

4. God suddenly confronted the brothers with compassion, mercy and grace from the life of the offended one, Joseph. Gen.45:1-15 is an emotional charged dramatic scene.

Note the following four homiletical points of new man transformation taken from Gen.45: 1-15.

- Compassion for enemy (Gen 45:1-4)
- Calling of God (Gen5:5-8)
- Caring of family (Gen 45:9-13; 47:11-12)
- Conciliation of family (Gen 45:14-15)

"And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." (Gen 50:20) (Read Gen 50:24-26).

After years of living with the memory of being abused by his brothers, Joseph has the opportunity to confront his adversaries from a position of authority.

Because of transformation, Joseph was able to deal with his brothers and their offenses against him with new man divine viewpoint thinking (Phil.2: 3-4).

5. Joseph was dealing with his brothers with compassion tempered with spiritual savvy because he understood that reformation is not transformation.

Because of transformation, Joseph was able to give grace and mercy to his brothers without any illusions of future failures or promises of future change (Gen.42: 14-15,22-23,35; 50:19-21).

Joseph was living transformation of NMDV - "And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." (Eph.4:24)

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Rom.12: 2)