

N U R T U R E  
**F A I T H**  
with  
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April 2, 2017

A Faith that Is Good and Pleasing

**READ:** Romans 12:2 (Common English Bible)

*“Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is – what is good and pleasing and mature.”*

**MEDITATE:**

We are all too some extent suggestible. Stand still on the sidewalk and look up with enthralled interest and a crowd will quickly gather around staring upwards. The instinct to go along and do as others do is a powerful force. We are like clay, easily shaped and molded by our environment. It is a fact that those in the advertising industry count on. A product or service is presented as something that will enhance life, others testify to the veracity of the promises made and in some measure we are separated from our dollars – convinced of the value to purchase as others have. Every day the wind of conformity blows across our consciousness, urging us to go along, be like everyone else, purchase like everyone else and not stand out.

But “standing out” is precisely what Paul wants for us! Patterning our behavior after the behavior of others and conforming to the world deeply troubles the apostle Paul. Here, in his letter to the Christian Church in Rome, Paul makes an appeal that we not surrender to the world and what the world values. Naturally, there is safety and comfort in going along, submitting to the shaping influence of the culture. But what is safe and comfortable also hampers growth in Christ just as the lack of exercise hampers the development of strong bodies. A strong and mature faith is the goal of those who follow Jesus. This kind of faith – a faith that is good and pleasing to God – is produced from eyes that are fixed upon Christ.

Directing our gaze upon Jesus, and away from the world, is how we begin to organize our life around him. Rather than stand in the place of everyone else, Paul asks that we listen for the movement of the Holy Spirit, stand in its path and permit it to sweep over us in its onward rush. William Barclay offers a fresh hearing of Paul’s words: “And do not shape your lives to meet the fleeting fashions of this world; but be transformed from it, by the renewal of your mind, until the very essence of your being is altered.” Paul would have liked that translation: “the very essence of your being is altered!”

Far too many in the church today fail to have robust convictions. When persons in leadership speak and behave in a manner that is contrary to God, they either fail to recognize it or they are fearful of holding their leaders accountable. This is the result of an anemic faith. Going along and getting along is preferable to the cross of fidelity to Christ. Paul desires followers of Jesus Christ that have developed such strength of maturity that they step into the world, recognize disobedience to God and accept the challenge of the storm that will blow across their lives when they call those leaders back to God purposes. And when the gusty winds blow and the storm grows fierce, the mature in faith will not be shaken. Strengthening them will be the very power of the risen Christ.

**APPLY:**

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you?

2. What insight can you apply to your life this week?

3. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayer to pray?

**PRAY:**

*Give me a spirit that is tireless in running toward the goal of a mature faith, one that is good and pleasing to you, O God. Amen.*