

and as we prove with the Bible what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, we will start to become a “peculiar” people-- dressing, eating, talking, and living differently from the world.

Let us not conform to the things of this world but conform to the “Image of the Son of God”

Friends, if you are living a life of conformity, if you shy away from witnessing for Jesus, out of fear of what others might think, hold fast to this prayer that Jesus prayed for YOU:

*But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*  
Luke 22:32

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Just for a minute, suppose you had been an eyewitness to a bank robbery. The robber had been at the counter directly beside where you were and you had gotten a good look at him. You can distinctly remember that he had brown, unruly hair and that he had been wearing a distinctively patterned red shirt and blue jeans.

Now suppose you along with 5 other witness are called to testify in a court of law. Your testimony is last. Every other witness has stated that the robber was wearing blue jeans and every other witness stated that he had brown hair, but when they are asked specifically whether the distinctively patterned red

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1 Peter 2:9 reminds us, *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

Titus 2:11-14 adds, *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: **Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.***

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*Matthew 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

When Peter rebuked Christ for saying that He was to be crucified, Jesus, responding in a rebuke of His own, turned to Peter and said

*...Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* Matthew 16:23

On another occasion, when Peter saw that Jesus wanted to wash his feet, *Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.* John 13:8

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Because they recognized him by the way he talked, he started swearing to prove to them he did not know Christ and that he was not in any way associated with Him.

### **How many times do you conform out of fear of being ridiculed for your faith?**

Jesus told Peter,  
*But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.* Luke 22:32

Jesus foresaw what would happen, and looking past this, he gave words of encouragement to Peter. Peter, after denying Jesus three times, weeping and believing all to be lost, would remember these words. He would become truly converted and start to strengthen his brethren.

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But pride was standing in the way.

Before Christ was apprehended by the authorities, Jesus prophesied concerning Peter and what he would do.

*And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*  
Luke 22:34

Scripture says after Jesus was apprehended,  
*... Peter followed afar off.* Luke 22:54

Let's take a look in God's word to see what followed.  
Mark 14:65 *And some began to spit on him (Jesus), and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.*

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*There were 18 trials in total and the confederates gave the wrong answer on 12 trials (called the critical trials). Asch was interested to see if the real participant would conform to the majority view. Asch's experiment also had a control condition where there were no confederates, only a "real participant" **Results:** Asch measured the number of times each participant conformed to the majority view. On average, about one third (32%) of the participants who were placed in this situation went along and conformed with the clearly incorrect majority on the critical trials. Over the 12 critical trials about **75% of participants conformed at least once** and 25% of participant never conformed. In the control group, with no pressure to conform to confederates, less than 1% of participants gave the wrong answer.*

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As Jesus was inside being beaten for the love He has for humanity, Peter was outside denying before men any relation to Jesus. This is very sad indeed, yet even today among professed Christians we deny Jesus on a daily basis, not always only by our words, but by our lives and actions as well. What happened to Peter that evening was what we call “Conformity”

The word conform means, “*Made to resemble; assuming the same form; to reduce to a likeness or correspondence in manners, opinions or moral qualities; To comply with or yield to; to live or act according to; as, to conform to the fashion or to custom.*” – Webster's 1828 Dictionary.

So according to the dictionary, the word

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Peter quickly decided that Jesus should not only wash his feet, but his hands and head as well.

It is obvious, that although Peter loved Christ and followed him, he was still learning what it meant to be a Christian. At one time, he even tried to protect Christ using violence.

John 18:10 says, *Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.*

However sincere he was, Peter did not know his own heart. Jesus said that he had prayed for Peter, that his faith would not fail. He told Peter that when he was converted, he should strengthen his brethren.

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The Bible itself addresses the issue of conformity:

*And 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

Romans 8:29 tells us ... *to be conformed to the image of his [God's] Son ...*

Jesus does not want us to be conformed to this world. Instead, He wants us to be conformed to His image. He wants us to be conformed to His opinions, His moral qualities and His manners. He wants us to have His perfect character.

There is nothing wrong with being "peculiar", in fact, God emphasizes the idea of being different when following Him and His way,

*Using a line judgment task, Asch put a naive participant in a room with seven confederates.*

*The confederates had agreed in advance what their responses would be when presented with the line task. The real participant did not know this and was led to believe that the other seven participants were also real participants like themselves.*



*Each person in the room had to state aloud which comparison line (A, B or C) was most like the target line. The answer was always obvious. The real participant sat at the end of the row and gave his or her answer last.*

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shirt, shown as exhibit A is what they saw, they all testified that the robber was wearing a blue shirt.

What would you do? Would you still testify that the shirt was a distinctive red pattern? Or would you change your testimony?

Peter also faced a similar decision. Simon Peter, the son of Zebedee, was one of Christ's beloved disciples. As we read about the accounts of Peter's life we see that he was always in the forefront, more than the other disciples. He was outspoken and short tempered, but he had a zeal for Christ.

He was the one who jumped out of the boat to walk on the water to Christ, yet loosing heart he started to sink.

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Jesus gave Himself for us. He died to redeem us from all sins, to purify unto Himself a peculiar people.

Acts 3:26 says ... *God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*

Jesus did not come to save us *in* our sins instead he came to turn us away from them so that we can be purified and be a peculiar people unto Him. The Bible leaves no doubt that this is to affect every aspect of our lives.

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* 1 Corinthians 10:31

As we eat, drink and do all to the glory of God,

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"Conform" means that we become in manners, opinions or moral qualities like the things or people surrounding us, willingly or unwillingly.

In 1951, a man by the name of Solomon Asch from the Swarthmore College, conducted certain experiments to see whether people will conform when under group pressure. The following is an extract from *simplypsychology.org*

*"Aim: Solomon Asch (1951) conducted an experiment to investigate the extent to which social pressure from a majority group could affect a person to conform.*

*Procedure: Asch used a lab experiment to study conformity, whereby 50 male students from Swarthmore College in the USA participated in a 'vision test'.*

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*Matt. 26:69-75 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, *This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.**

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**Conclusion:** *Why did the participants conform so readily? When they were interviewed after the experiment, most of them said that they did not really believe their conforming answers, but **had gone along with the group for fear of being ridiculed or thought "peculiar"**. A few of them said that they "really did believe the group's answers were correct."*

In the same way, while Jesus was being beaten and ridiculed, Peter believed that if he stood up for Jesus he would stand out amongst the majority and would be seen as "peculiar". His association with Jesus would bring ridicule on him as well and maybe, he too, would be beaten. He went "*along with the group for fear of being ridiculed or thought 'Peculiar'*". He conformed to the opinions, moral qualities and even the manners of those surrounding him.

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