

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The First Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia S06A (Ref.230A rdg) 0711 21

Jesus said that there would not be very many people of real faith when He came back. He said it would be as it was in the days of Noah when just a few were saved from the flood, and also as it was in the days of Lot when only three were saved out of two cities.

We are told the conditions of becoming a real Christian according to the Bible standard in Romans 12:1-2, which is the most important thing that could concern anyone.

Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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."

The first step is to 'present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God.' When we do that, we will 'become holy and acceptable to Him.'

A living sacrifice would be different than all the sacrifices that were offered in the Old Testament, where the animals were given as a blood sacrifice. But we are to be a living sacrifice, we are to place ourselves into God's hands to do with as He pleases; for His Will to be done in our lives fully and completely, regardless of how opposite it may seem to the natural mind and heart.

Then we are to learn what His Word really means and what it is trying to teach us, believe it and obey it. We can't do this in our own strength, but we must ask for His Holy Spirit to come upon us and enlighten us to His Word, giving us the wisdom that we need and the understanding, that we may put it into practice in our daily lives.

Jesus told us that God would send the Holy Spirit to teach us all things. John 14:26, *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”*

The Holy Spirit has been sent here to give us the light and strength that we need and to lead and guide us to a full obedience to God’s Word.

We cannot permit anything or anybody, including our own life, to come between us and the will of God. That’s what Jesus meant when He told us in Luke 14:26, *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”*

Jesus didn’t mean for us to hate our loved ones, but we must put God’s will ahead of our love for our family and friends, a total surrender to God’s Will and plan for our lives. The moment we have truly surrendered to His Will; we have become holy and acceptable to Him.

However, our decision must be final in this surrender because all successful dealing with God depends upon it. Anything short of a full surrender will permit Satan to hinder our receiving the full benefits of God’s power. Satan may try to influence us to reserve the right to do something contrary to God’s Will, but the moment we yield to him in the slightest way, he will take advantage of it, and it will give him that much power over us.

Now we come to the second verse of Romans 12, *“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.”*

Paul tells us not to be conformed to this world, that means in our appearance, in our thoughts, our words, and in our actions. We are to be transformed, to be completely different from what we were before we surrendered our life to God and His Will and plan.

We are to dress decent, respectful, not following the latest trends and styles. Our thoughts are to be pure and clean; our words and actions are to be Christlike, not offensive to anyone. To be fully conformed to the image of Christ, to talk as He would

talk, act as He would act, to be humble and thoughtful as He is. To follow the very example that He left for us to follow.

Fallen man has a plan for everything in this life, which is called 'the ways of the world', but in reality, it is really the ways of Satan. The plans of fallen man are all inspired and controlled by Satan, and they don't realize it. Man thinks they are his own sensible thoughts.

Satan is a spiritual being and can put thoughts, desires, and plans into the heart of fallen man which seem to be his own thoughts, but in reality, they are directly opposite to what they should be and will end in destruction here and the 'lake of fire' hereafter if not gotten rid of.

We have the power of choice and if we listen to and follow Satan's thoughts and suggestions, God is unable to help us. That is why we have to make a final surrender to do God's Will in every part of our life, get rid of every plan of Satan, and be fully conformed to the image of Christ.

Fallen man's plans are to depend on himself or some other human plan instead of God. That is the same sin Adam committed when he started out to depend on some plan of his own instead of following God's plan. This enabled Satan to get full control of Adam, and everyone since then has been born under the control of Satan.

That is why we need to be fully transformed to the image of Christ. Without the Holy Spirit working in our lives, we are deaf, dumb, and blind to God and His Will and plans for our life.

Depending on our own efforts or some other human plan instead of God, is the root of all sin. It makes no difference how outwardly pious or righteous we may seem, if this root has not been exposed and destroyed through God's power and the great Atonement work of Christ on the Cross, we will find trouble here and the 'lake of fire' hereafter.

Fallen man has one motive behind all these human efforts and plans, and that is to find perfect happiness here in this life apart from God.

God's plan has always been for us to be happy in this life. What we lost through Adam's sin; Jesus has restored. The Blood of Christ has given us everything we desire to make us happy in this life. We do not merit it and cannot receive it through any effort of our own.

The results of these human efforts are disastrous for time and eternity. Therefore, to be not conformed to this world means that we are to be led and guided out of everything that is controlled by the self-life and made over according to God's standard.

Spiritually, we are to learn to depend on God alone to cleanse us from all sin, to deliver and protect us from every power and influence of Satan, to fill us with His own righteousness and peace and keep us by His Divine Power from falling back into our old ways and plans.

The Bible plainly teaches that every true child of God depended on Him alone for their health and protection. They were all healed by the power of God, in the present moment and without cost. Fully protected from all danger when their trust was in Him alone, without any human safety measures.

Financially, we are to lay up our treasure in heaven's bank, instead of trying by our own efforts to become prosperous and well-off. This means we are not to lay our treasure up in real estate, saving funds, or any other plan of making provision for the future.

This was the teaching of our Savior and the disciples of the early Church, and those who have obeyed it in the present time have found out that it works out exactly the same as it did in Bible times.

We are also to be directly opposite from the world if someone were to steal from us. Jesus said, in the sixth chapter of Luke, that if someone were to steal our cloak, we were not to forbid them to take our coat also. Also, we were to give to everyone that asketh of us and to lend and not to hope for repayment.

Learning to obey these passages of Scripture brings about the most valuable spiritual blessings possible. It will remove that love for money that we all have had and will let God come into our hearts to take the place of that love.

This life of faith and financial trust is one of the greatest means of spiritual growth and development in the Christian life. It also enables us to enter into our great financial inheritance.

We have fallen heir to God's great financial wealth, just as much as His spiritual, physical, and all other blessings. All other plans must be laid aside, gotten rid of, and place our full dependence and confidence in God alone. Then we can receive those blessings that He is so delighted to give to us.

The financial reward for losing anything for the sake of obeying God's Word, is one-hundred-fold, and as Jesus told the rich young man in the tenth chapter of Mark, and in the world to come, life everlasting. We need to remember that receiving eternal life depends as much on our financial attitude to God as anything else, as Jesus made very plain in the 16th chapter of Luke.

It also means that we are to become directly opposite to the world's way in our attitude to those who wrong us. We are not permitted to right our own wrongs nor to hold any resentment whatever to those who say and do mean things to us. Romans 12:19-21.

Instead, we are to forgive from the heart and place the whole matter into God's hands for Him to make it right. (Mark 11:25) We are not to even change our attitude toward them, but to treat them with kindness and Christian love, return "good for evil, bless them that curse us, and pray for them that spitefully use us." (Matt. 5 & Luke 6)

We can see by all these Scriptures, what a great meaning it is to not be 'conformed to this world' but to be 'transformed by the entire renewal of our spiritual nature.' Instead of being under the control of Satan, we will be under the control of God's Spirit. Instead of having the 'evil nature' we were born with, we will have the very 'nature of Jesus Christ' Himself.

Instead of being totally ignorant of God, we will come to know Him as He is, which Jesus said was a condition for receiving eternal life. Instead of living and walking in the ways of fallen man, we will come to the place where every thought, word, and act will be Scriptural and our whole confidence will be in the living God alone.

Thus, we see what a great work is to be done in us that we might become perfectly happy here and be really and truly ready for eternal life. This is completely different than the average person's idea of the Christian life. Many think all you have to do is go to Church and believe some historical facts of the Bible, to be fairly honest and sincere, and they will go to Heaven.

This is far from what Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, and far from ever getting a chance to go to Heaven with such an attitude.

It is very important to get started right, as Paul tells us, and to meet the various trials, and temptations, and circumstances that arise in our daily life according to God's will, that He has written out for us in the New Testament.

Every trial met according to God's Word will bring new spiritual light and strength, and a greater growth and development in the Christian life. These trials and temptations come because there still remains some of the old ideas and plans of the self-life that have not been exposed and gotten rid of.

Therefore, when a trial comes, if we meet it in the true Bible way, it will be a great step toward perfecting our trust and obedience on God. He wants us to be perfectly happy, and the only way He can do this is for us to be in His will and living according to His Word.

God knows our weaknesses; He never asks us to do anything in our own strength or to see or understand one Truth of Scripture of ourselves. This is the Holy Spirit's work. All we need to be is willing and to make our final choice to place our trust in Him, and then His power will accomplish everything we may need or desire.

The First Century Gospel

Church/Philadelphia