

Sermon Notes for April 23, 2017

Encouraging Words From Your Pastor
“The Absolute Necessity Of The Word Of God
In The Life Of The Christian”
Romans 12:1-2

Introduction

A. My Last Sermon Series To Be Preached At Christ Covenant Church

1. Before my last sermon will be preached on Sunday, May 21st, I desire to preach several sermons to encourage and as well as to challenge you as your Pastor.
2. For, I feel so much love for this church and want to remind you of a few things I really want you to know
3. You have probably heard what I will be saying to you over the next few weeks, but I want to remind you of these messages one last time.
4. These final messages will be directed to you as individuals as well as to you as a church body.

B. Today’s Message Will Focus On Your Need As A Believer To Have A Deep, Meaningful Relationship With Jesus Christ.

1. It is not enough to simply “come to church.”
2. It is not enough to simply “believe the essentials of the faith”
3. Your Christian life **MUST** be an active, daily, consistent walk with Jesus
4. Today, we are going to talk those critical steps that Christians must take to keep their relationship with Jesus vital and healthy.
5. I don't want to leave this place without making this clear to you.

I. The CALL TO SURRENDER

A. The AUDIENCE TO SURRENDER

Romans 12:1 – “Therefore, I urge you, **brothers**, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.”

1. **PLEASE REALIZE THAT PAUL IS SPEAKING TO BELIEVERS IN ROME!**
 - a. Paul is **not** addressing non-believers.
 - b. instead, he is speaking to those who are brothers and sisters in the faith; born-again believers.
2. and, what Paul is about to tell fellow believers in the church in Rome is “quite interesting.”
 - a. for, Paul is going to tell “**the brothers**” in Christ that they need to “make a decision” about Christ
 - b. this can be confusing as the believers in Rome have “already” made a decision for Christ
 - c. perhaps this is a decision that they have never made before in their Christian life; “another decision” after their “first decision” to trust Christ for their salvation

B. The ATTITUDE OF SURRENDER

Romans 12:1 – “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, **in view of God’s mercy**, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.”

1. The driving force that should “**cause**” these Christian brothers and sisters to make “**this decision**” is the mercy that God had shown them in their salvation. Notice Paul’s words about God’s mercy in salvation as he wrote to the Christians in the church in Ephesus.

a. **their past**

Ephesians 2:1-3a – “As for you, you **were dead in your transgressions and sins**, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.**”

1. before the Christians in Ephesus were saved, they were **dead in their sins**

- a. they were spiritually dead and had no desire for God,
- b. unable to do anything spiritual for themselves
 1. **R. C. Sproul** – The difference between resuscitation and resurrection.
 2. to illustrate what Biblical salvation is, imagine a person stranded on a desert island, some 300 miles away from civilization
 - a. there is “no chance” that they can save themselves
 - b. they **must** be saved by someone else
 - c. or they will die.

2. they were **depraved in their sins**

- a. before they were saved, the Christians in Ephesus, loved their sin more than anything else in the world
- b. **AND, THEY COULD NOT STOP SINNING!**

b. **their problem**

Ephesians 2:3b – “Like the rest, we were by nature **objects of wrath.**”

1. and, unless they were saved by Jesus
2. God’s wrath would eventually fall down on them and they would be lost forever and ever and ever

c. **their praise**

Ephesians 2:4-5 – “**But** because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **made us alive with Christ** even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.”

1. **BUT, GOD SAVED THEM!**
 - a. please notice this wonderful word: **BUT...**
 1. **Martyn Lloyd Jones** preached an entire sermon from **Ephesians 2:4-5** with the title; **“BUT GOD”**
 2. meaning, that despite their lostness,
 3. **God** intervened!
 - b. and, God intervened
 1. **BECAUSE** they could not “save themselves”
 2. and, **DESPITE** their inability to stop sinning
2. **HOW CAN BELIEVERS NOT PRAISE GOD FOR HIS MERCY BY SAVING US FROM AN ETERNITY IN HELL?**
2. So, Paul was encouraging the brothers and sisters in Rome to make “another” decision for Christ **BECAUSE GOD HAD SHOWN THEM MERCY BY SAVING THEM**
 - a. so, what was the “other decision” that Paul wanted them to make?
 - b. had they not already “decided” to become Christians?

C. **The AMOUNT OF THE SURRENDER**

Romans 12:1 – “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, **to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God** - this is your spiritual act of worship.”

1. Once again, please notice that the Apostle Paul was writing to believers.
2. and, notice what Paul asked the Christians in Rome **TO DO**; **“to offer your bodies as living sacrifices”**
 - a. now, why in the world would Paul ask the believers in Rome to offer their bodies to God, **IF THEY HAD ALREADY DONE SO?**
 - b. you would **“think”** that when a person comes to Christ in salvation, they would “offer” their bodies to Christ at that time; wouldn't you?
 - c. now, if Paul is calling for the Christian in Rome to offer their bodies to God, **THEY MUST NEED TO BE TOLD TO DO SO!**
 - d. apparently, according to Paul, the believers in Rome **HAD NOT** surrendered their entire life to God or why would Paul have asked them to do so?
3. Let me ask **YOU** a question.
 - a. do you think that all Christians give “their whole life” to Jesus when they get saved?
 - b. let me tell you as a Pastor of 40 years in ministry:
 1. **I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MOST BELIEVERS GIVE EVERY PART OF THEIR LIVES TO JESUS WHEN THEY GET SAVED**
 2. In fact, of all of the men that I have discipled over the years, and that is a lot, I cannot think of **ONE** man who said that he had given Jesus his entire life at his conversion
 3. Almost every man said that there was a “need” to make “another” or a “fuller” decision to give his whole life to Jesus.

- c. it has been my experience to see that “most Christians” make a deeper commitment **after** they are saved.
 - 1. So, let me ask **you** a question: Has that happened to you?
 - 2. For, that **IS** what happened to me. (my marbles)
 - 3. Have you given Jesus **EVERYTHING**?
 - a. your **life**?
 - b. your **family**?
 - c. your **finances**?
 - d. your **future**?
 - e. your **job**?
- 4. so, let me encourage you as your Pastor:
 - a. **GIVE IT ALL TO HIM!**
 - b. for, when you hold back **ANYTHING** from Jesus, **you** are in control of your life and you are **not** allowing God to work fully through you.
 - c. “My Heart, Christ’s Home” – This is why I use this booklet in our discipleship ministry.
 - d. **Kent Hughes** – “This is as bold a call to total commitment as there is anywhere in the sacred writings. **It applies equally to all** – to the Professor, to the Preacher, to the pianist, to high schoolers – to everyone! **It is for the entire Church.** We must put away the medieval thinking that makes a distinction between clergy and laity – the idea that ministers and missionaries should have 100 percent commitment, but the laity is permitted 75 percent. **So, the truth is, all believers are called to total commitment to Christ.**”
 - e. **William Booth** was the founder of the Salvation Army. When interviewed once, the question was asked, “General Booth, you are mightily used of God. **What is the secret of God’s use of you?**” And General Booth replied, “**God has had all there was of me. There have been men of greater brains and greater opportunity than I, but from the day I was saved I had a vision of what God could do with me and I made up in my mind that God would have all there was of me.**”

II. The CALL TO STAND

A. The CHALLENGE OF THE WORLD

Vs. 2a – “Do not conform any longer **to the pattern of this world,**”

- 1. **DESPITE** your total surrender to Jesus, you, as a believer, will **ALWAYS** have a struggle being a Christian in this world.
 - a. despite your love for Jesus, the world is all around you.
 - b. and, you will always be confronted with the temptations of this world.
- 2. Please notice that Jesus **DOES NOT** want us to retreat or withdraw from the world – **FOR, HE DID NOT!**
 - a. look at **John 17:15-16** – “My prayer is **not** that you **take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.”

- b. in fact, Jesus calls us to “engage the culture”
 - 1, in **Matthew 5:13-17**, Jesus calls believers to be salt and light in the world.
 - 2. in **II Corinthians**, the Apostle Paul calls believers to be ambassadors for Christ
Vs. 5:20 – “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.”
- 3. So, the solution of being totally committed to Jesus does **NOT** mean that we are called to move into a monastery so that we can become more “spiritual”

B. The CALL OF THE WORLD

Vs. 2a – “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,”

- 1. So, in order to serve in the world, Paul tells believers how to deal with the world around us
 - a. Paul is calling the believer to be a Christian who is totally devoted to Christ, who is walking with Him
 - b. **WHILE** he is out in the world making an impact for the Kingdom
- 2. Please note what Paul means by the word; “conform to the pattern”
 - a. to pour into a mold
 - b. to look like, act like, believe like and live like
 - c. it is what I call the “great sucking noise.”
 - 1. the world is always calling, always asking, always advertising
 - 2. the world wants you to be “just like everyone else”
 - 3. and, if you **do nothing** to fight the power of the pull of the world, it **WILL** “suck” you into its mold
 - a. look around you; we all look the same and act the same
 - b. “Knox Box”
 - c. you go to Africa and “they” look the same; you go to India and “they” look the same
 - d. I laugh at bikers who say that they are “non-conformists”; and yet, **THEY ALL LOOK ALIKE!**
 - d. one of our greatest fears as people is to be seen as “different”
 - 1. it is a “natural” tendency to want to blend in
 - 2. it takes a very unusual person to be able to be “different” in a society of sameness
 - 3. my experience at a party while in college
- 2. So, if you want to look, act and live, like the world
 - a. if you want to have the same priorities, the same values
 - b. if you want to fit in; to have everyone like you
 - c. **THEN, DO NOTHING** and the world will pour or even “suck” you into its mold
- 3. it is my opinion that the world is currently working “overtime” to take over our lives

- a. **technology**
 - 1. iPhone
 - 2. computer
 - 3. iPad
 - 4. television
 - 5. movies
- b. a lack of spirituality
 - 1. never has there been less of a commitment to the church (**20%** church attendance in Knoxville!)
 - 2. in fact, if a Christian takes a stand on Biblical issues, they are seen as a spiritual bigot.
- c. it has never been harder for a Christian to **NOT** be sucked into the world

III. The CALL TO STABILIZE

A. The POSSIBILITIES OF THE BELIEVER

Vs. 2 – “Do not **conform** any longer to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- 1. In today's world, there has never been a clearer option
 - a. it is harder, more difficult to be a follower of Jesus than ever before
 - b. so, what is the believer to do to remain spiritually strong?
- 2. The Apostle Paul gives us the solution:
 - a. please remember that Paul was ministering during the period of the Roman Empire
 - b. comparing the spiritual pressures between being a Christian in Rome and a Christian in America is like comparing:
 - 1. a firecracker
 - 2. to a hand grenade
- 3. So, believers can live a Godly life in the world, but there is something that we **MUST** do.

B. The POWER OF THE WORD

Vs. 2 – “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, **but be transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- 1. Instead of doing nothing so that the world will **CONFORM** you, Paul calls us to be in God's Word so that it can **TRANSFORM** you!
 - a. transformed defined:
 - 1. the greek word is metamorphoo; where we get the word metamorphis
 - 2. it means:
 - a. to change into another form
 - b. to be transfigured
 - b. transformed applied:
 - 1. **PLEASE NOTICE THAT THE WORD TRANSFORMED IS THE SAME WORD THAT DESCRIBES JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION**

Matthew 17:1-2 – “After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There He was **transfigured (metamorphos)** before them. **His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.**”

- a. the same greek word in our text (metamorphoo)
 - b. thus, believers **ARE** to go through a “spiritual transformation
2. please notice the verb tense:
 - a. **present** – this is to be a continual action
 - b. **passive** – the action is to be done by “another” (by God)
 - c. **imperative** – it is a command
 - d. **IN OTHER WORDS, BELIEVERS ARE COMMANDED TO BE TRANSFORMED BY THE WORD OF GOD ON A CONTINUAL BASIS.**
2. So, instead of allowing the world to “conform” us into a “cookie cutter” of the world “around us,” Christians are to be “transformed” by the Word of God “within us!”
 - a. you do nothing and the outside world will conform you
 - b. you read God’s Word and the “Word” will transforms you
 - c. the decision is yours:
 1. your decision to **NOT** be in God’s Word means that you have made your decision
 2. for, to “do nothing” in God’s Word **INSURES** that, the world’s views, priorities and lifestyle will take over your life.

C. The PERSISTENCE OF THE WORD

Vs. 2 – “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

1. Please notice that your time in God’s Word IS NOT A ONE TIME OR OCCASIONAL THING
2. Please notice that believers will be “transformed by the **renewing** of their mind”
 - a. the word renewing is actually not a verb, but a noun
 - b. the word should be “renewal”
 1. a complete change
 2. a “renewal”
 - a. **HGTV – Chip & Joanna Gaines – Fixer Upper**
 - b. **THAT** is what Paul means by renewal, a total transformation!
3. Here is some lessons from this text:
 - a. **one** – there is **only one** way that the Christian can be “transformed”
 1. it is **not** by **attending church**
 2. it is **not** by **being involved in ministry**

3. it is **not** by **giving to the church**
4. it is **not** by **serving on a mission trip**
- b. **two** – you will **not be transformed until** you make a commitment to be in the Word continually; even every day.
 1. try eating one meal a day and then, skip eating until the end of the week; you will ultimately starve
 2. many believers eat like homeless people, whenever they find Food
 3. how do you feel when you don't eat?
 - a. hungry
 - b. weak
 - c. angry
- c. **three** – there is a huge difference between **studying** the Word and **meditating** on the Word
 1. your devotional time in the Word is to be just that: devotional
 2. when you feed your soul, it is **not** a time of study but a time of “relationship” with Jesus
 3. I have always taught that there is a difference between engaging your “right brain” and your “left brain” in your personal devotional life
 - a. when you want to “study” God’s Word, either to teach or disciple others, then bring out the commentaries and study guides: your “left brain”
 1. this is when you put your thoughts together in an order
 2. you are looking for symmetry; you are looking for facts
 - b. but . . . when you want to spend time with Jesus, personally and intimately, this is **not** a time for facts or organization; your “right brain”
 1. like Mary, you want to sit at the feet of Jesus
 2. and say, Jesus; speak to **ME**; not a class; tell me about yourself and how I can know you better
 3. my conversation with a former staffer
- d. **four** – do not attempt to read the **entire Bible in a year** for your personal devotions
 1. to read the Bible through in one year – you would have to average reading seven chapters per day
 2. you **CANNOT** meditate on seven chapters!
 3. instead, spend time in your personal devotions and **then** read through the Bible at another time in the day.
- e. **five** – meditate on **small passages**; like a half of a chapter
 1. read it, read it and read it again
 2. Christians who live in the 21st Century, **MUST LEARN TO MEDITATE** – AND THIS IS HARD BECAUSE MOST OF US ARE TECH ADDICTS!
 - a. we have “tech ADD”!

- b. **Leah Reading** – Doug Henry, a Professor at Baylor University, says that mobile technology has the tendency to “divide”, distract, and cause people to focus on self.” Why? Technology has changed the way that we think and work. **We have shorter attention spans, demand instant gratification, and don’t take the time to read anymore.**

This makes focus in general more difficult for people. It’s harder to focus on sermons or pray for an extended length of time, all because people have trained themselves to **pay attention in short spurts.** That, and the constant availability of technology means other activities get cut short because people are drawn incessantly towards their phones to update a status, download an app and put everything they do on the web.

D. The PAYOFF OF THE WORD

Vs. 2 – “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. **Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--His good, pleasing and perfect will.**”

1. Ultimately, meditating, memorizing and spending quality time in God’s Word is where you will find out God’s will for your life.
2. Let me tell you; I don’t always know how meditating in God’s Word changes my life but it does.

II Timothy 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**”

- a. although the Bible does not speak to each and every issue in our lives as Christians, God will reveal Himself to you when you stay in His Word
- b. **I KNOW THIS FOR A FACT:**
 1. when I am **“in”** God’s Word, I know Him and what He wants me to do in my life
 2. however, when I am **“out”** of God’s Word, I feel as if I am on my own, and have to develop my own, usually selfish philosophy of life.

IV. The CALL TO STRATEGIZE

A. The MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE TEXT

1. Finally, in today’s text, Paul tells of the **blessing** of being transformed by being in His Word
 - a. I hate to admit this but I have missed the true meaning of this part of **Vs. 1** for years
 - b. so, today, I want to share with you what I learned **THIS WEEK** about this verse

- c. for in **verse 1**, the New International version of the Bible says that when we give Him our lives and are transformed by His Word, **“this is your spiritual act of worship.”**
- 2. There are some Bible translations that **“got it wrong” – Vs. 1:**
 - a. **NIV** – “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - **this is your spiritual act of worship.”**
 - b. **English Standard Version** – “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, **which is your spiritual worship.”**
 - c. **New American Standard** – “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, **which is your spiritual service of worship.”**
- 3. Bible translations that **“got it right” – Vs. 1:**
 - a. **King James Bible** – “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.”**
 - b. **Douay-Rheims Bible** – “I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, **your reasonable service.”**
 - c. **Darby Bible Translation** – “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, **(which is) your intelligent service.”**
- 4. The greek word for “spiritual act of service” is **LOGIKOS**; from where we get logic or logical!
 - a. this word: logikos changes the meaning of the text
 - b. so, listen to what it truly means

B. The UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEXT

- 1. **DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE APOSTLE PAUL IS SAYING IN THIS TEXT?! THE REASON** that Christians are NOT to be conformed to this world but transformed by the Word is **THAT IT IS LOGICAL!**
 - a. Paul says that it makes sense for the believer in Jesus to be transformed by the Word than to be conformed to this world
 - b. it makes sense because:
 - 1. God showed us mercy and we should thank Him for His mercy
 - 2. Christians should not “look like, act like and live like” the unbelieving world
 - 3. **AND, SHOULDN'T THE FOLLOWER OF JESUS “WANT” TO LOOK LIKE, ACT LIKE AND LIVE LIKE JESUS!?**
 - 4. we have many in this church who are engineers, Doctors, accountants – **WHO THINK LOGICALLY!**
 - a. to follow Christ and not the world is **LOGICAL.**
 - b. to be in God's Word to become more like Jesus **IS LOGICAL**

2. Sometimes, we get “too spiritual” about this text
 - a. so, once again, WHY should we give our lives totally to God and allow His Word to transform us
 - b. while I would agree that we should want to worship God more by reading His Word; **IT IS THE LOGICAL THING TO DO!**
 1. why would a devoted follower of Jesus want to be “carted off” by the world?
 2. instead of being transformed and made more like Jesus by reading and meditating on His Word?
 3. **IT JUST MAKES BETTER SENSE TO DO SO!**

Conclusion

1. **As I look to my departure as your Pastor, THIS IS A MESSAGE THAT I WANT TO LEAVE WITH YOU. . .**
 - a. **First**, I want you to know **THAT GOD WANTS ALL OF YOU:**
 1. not a piece of you
 2. not a part of you
 3. He wants your entire life **SO THAT HE CAN WORK FULLY IN YOUR LIFE TO MAKE YOU ALL THAT HE WANTS YOU TO BE**
 - b. **Second**, please realize that the world is getting “more worldly”
 1. never before have I seen such a dearth of spirituality in this nation
 2. churches are failing; churches are closing
 - a. there is little talk of God
 - b. and, if you believe as a Christian, you are seen as crazy
 3. and, it is my opinion that being a Christian in this world will become more and more difficult over the next 10-20 years.
 4. there will be an even greater pressure to become “like everyone else” in the world
 - c. **Third**, to deal with this struggle with the pull of the world, it is the most logical and best decision to spend time **daily** in God’s Word
 1. do not depend on the Preacher to feed you
 2. do not rely on your elders on Sunday School teachers to feed you
 3. fill your own heart with God’s Word, for you will need His guidance more than ever
 4. that is **LOGICAL!**
 - a. that is **smart**
 - b. that **makes sense**
 - c. that is **how the Christian is to think!**
2. **Let me say that this city, this nation and this world needs a church that preaches and teaches God’s Word, as never before.**
 - a. May this church and this church family be “people of the Word”
 - b. Because our world is slowly losing its way.

3. Why are Christians called to spend time in God's Word?

Pastor Doug Goins - When I was born, my father was fighting in the European theatre in the World War II. I didn't meet him until I was **eighteen months old**. But **every day of my life for the first eighteen months**, my mother **talked about my father to me**. She **read every letter to me** that my father wrote to her from Europe. She **read me her letters to him before she sent them**. And central to all of that was **a picture of my father**. It was a formal Army portrait of him in full dress uniform. He was a handsome man, and he look terrific in his uniform. My mother had it enlarged and framed it, and she kept it on the table at the end of my crib in my room. **So I heard all about my father AND I had his picture. My mother said that I would kiss his picture and hug it because she kissed and hugged it.**

When I was eighteen months old, my father came home in the middle of the night. He came into my room and turned the light on. **There was my father in his military Uniform** standing over my bed. My mother said that I stood up in bed, looked at him, walked to the end of the crib and got the picture. I looked at the picture, looked over at him, put the picture down, went back to him, and **held up my arms**. And my father picked me up and held me. As great as the picture and the stories and the letters had been, they didn't compare to the reality of literally and physically being in the arms of my father.