

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Do Not Be Conformed To This World

By Richie Thetford

Every Christian should take note of what is recorded in the Word of God, penned by the apostle Paul in Romans 12:1-2. ***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*** This instruction given to the saints at Rome is greatly needed by Christians today. We live in a world which subjects us to various pressures, calling upon us to “conform” to the world’s standards. Just because “every one else” dresses immodestly, uses vulgar language, is involved in the mad pursuit of material things, is intent on the things of this life that are pleasurable, etc., etc., Christians should not involve themselves in these things.

The word **“transformed”** is the Greek word **“metamorphose”** which means **“to change into another form, transfigure, transform.”** The metamorphoses is often illustrated in high school biology by the changing of a worm into a butterfly. Transformed is also used of Christ to describe His transfiguration (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 9:2). As Christ was transformed into a Divine radiance, Christians are to be transformed into the image of Christ (Col. 3:8-11).

Let us always be aware that no matter how popular and widespread sin and ungodliness may be, it doesn’t excuse it or make it more acceptable. In Exodus 23:2 it says ***“You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice.”*** In the New Testament we read these words; ***“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”*** (Titus 2:11-13). It is very important, in God’s eyes, that Christians continue to live their lives in such a way that others see us denying ungodliness, worldly lust, and striving to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. We must do this regardless of what those around us are doing. ***“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”*** (Matt. 5:14-16).

The life of the Christian is to be different – a pure, clean, wholesome kind of difference that others may constantly see. It’s terrible when our conduct can’t be distinguished from that of the worldly people around us – we should know better! This is why we must be very careful to conduct ourselves correctly in all our relationships in life. Always strive to keep our lives clean and pure. Let us not be conformed to this world, but be transformed into the image of God. ***“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”*** (2 Cor. 3:18). ■

Freedom From Restraint

By Dennis Abernathy

The “politically-correct” crowd who embrace pluralism, atheism, agnosticism, and humanism, generally reject the God of the Bible, and the principles of morality contained therein. They define “liberty” as the right to believe in and practice whatever they choose. Freedom to them means “freedom from restraint!” They wish to be left free to indulge their fleshly appetites fully. Thus, we see the rise of free-love, co-ed dormitories, and living together in a sexual relationship without being married. Many insist on being unhampered in their engagement in illicit sexual activity, i.e. pre-marital, extra-marital, and homosexual sex.

This sexual anarchy has naturally resulted in cultural catastrophes and a trilogy of social terror. We are witnessing (1)

widespread divorce for any reason, and the breakdown of the home and family; (2) legalized abortion; and (3) the legal sanction and growing social acceptance of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism as moral, and normal behavior. But God says such is neither normal or moral!

The widespread acceptance of these three factors undoubtedly shows that illicit sexual activity inevitably destroys marriage, and leads to the destruction of children-either by killing them in the womb, abusing them, or neglecting to rear them properly. Many of the ills of society, and the corruption of our culture, is traceable to this fundamental lack of sexual restraint. How badly we need the Bible's advice: "*flee fornication*" (1 Cor. 6: 18), and "*flee also youthful lusts*" (2 Tim. 2: 22), and "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*" (Heb. 13:4). ■

Are You Halting Between Opinions?

By Jim Stauffer

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (1 Kgs. 18:21). These were the words of the prophet Elijah to Israel as he prepared for his contest with the prophets of Baal. There is wisdom in these words even if we are talking about less serious matters than those eternal. One cannot go both ways at the same time. Cannot be committed to opposite principles simultaneously. Jesus said, "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt. 6:24). We must choose which way we will go, which master we will serve.

A person who fails to make the choice fails to serve either very well. We actually become much like the Laodiceans, who were trying to do just what the Lord says we cannot. "*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth*" (Rev. 3:15-16).

We must do as Elijah challenged Israel. We must make the best, wisest, most logical decision. Who should I serve? Should I serve the God of heaven Who has promised all spiritual blessings in His Son Jesus? Or should I serve Satan, who is the Prince of this world who offers me temporary satisfaction for my carnal desires. I can enjoy pleasing my body first and foremost and that pleasure is immediate and only temporary needing to be repeated continually. Or I can make the choice to sacrifice in the immediacy to enable my eternal being to enjoy eternal bliss when this life is over. You see, I will live eternally when this life is over, the choice I make here will determine where I spend my eternity.

Jesus tells me there are many things I can enjoy here that will prevent me from living with Him in heaven. John says it this way, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*" (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Jesus teaches the same principle in His Sermon of the Mount, "*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell*" (Matt. 5:29-30).

Elijah makes a very logical appeal to Israel and then backs it up with evidence when he with God's approval and power, provides a contrast between the power of God and the non-existent power of Baal. Their response at this demonstration was, "*And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God*" (1 Kgs. 18:39). God has given us the greatest demonstration of all in the resurrection of Christ from the dead and His ascension to the right hand of the Father. We must halt no longer between the desires of the flesh and spirit and choose spirit for in it is life (Jn. 6:63; Rom. 8:6; Deut. 30:19).

It is examples such as this that Paul says should provide hope when we persevere with the encouragement of the Scriptures (Rom. 15:4). ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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