

Series: You Should Be Committed
Sermon: "All In!" Romans 11:36-12:2
October 23, 2016
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We are in our final week taking a closer look at the importance of gathering together for worship. The first message dealt with the issue of excuses (not reasons) that those who profess Christ give for being out of fellowship in the local church. These reasons ranged anywhere from the ludicrous (I had to mow my lawn, I had to work at 3 PM when church was at 11 AM) to ones that the church has brought upon itself in some cases (hypocrisy, cliques, unloving attitudes to divorced and others in distress). In short, a Christian is commanded in Hebrews 10:25: "Don't give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

The second message last week dealt with the top ten reasons and benefits of being in church, including because it shows our love for God, because the Lord is present, and it brings us fellowship with other Christians.

Overall--and some may consider this harsh, but it's true--there is a huge lack of commitment in the American church today. People do not understand that when a person is really saved by Jesus Christ that it is not an optional thing to be involved in a local church.

This week, we will discuss how the American church--starting with OUR church--must change. I do believe that we are at the time when many are falling away from the church, and a real complacency or even apathy has developed within the church. However, that does not mean that we should stand by and just allow this to happen. **We must be agents of change, and the change must start with YOU and ME.** Are you "All In"?

It's not really hard to find the biggest complaint about those that profess Christ by those outside the church. But before we examine this issue, let's make sure that we understand a key label that I am using: those that profess Christ. Just because you are a professor of Christ does not mean you are a possessor of Christ. Or as others would put it: **Just because you talk the talk doesn't mean you will walk the walk.**

So, the biggest complaint against those that profess Christ is that they act no better than the rest of the people on Planet Earth. People know that Christians are to be different. While some of those outside the faith expect Christians to act perfectly, there are quite a few that say--and with good justification--a statement like this:

"Yeah, ol' Billy Bob goes to church every Sunday. I see him walk into the church, I see his picture in the paper along with others at church events, but if only you knew how he acts the rest of the week! If he is what a Christian is, I sure don't want to be one. Billy Bob takes home "employee five finger discount" stuff from work, he screams at his wife and cusses like a sailor. For Pete's sake, I can act that way all by myself, all on my own, without having to hang out with hypocrites on Sundays!"

Those outside the church may well expect more from us, but I do think that Billy Bobs are more common than not. We can understand if someone is merely a professor of Jesus. However, I think that there is a massive amount of people that are saved that do not act the part, and thus paint a big red and white target on the church for the unsaved.

When the titanic was under construction the design team had a five hour planning meeting. In which 4 hours 50 minutes were spent discussing the interior decorations and 10 minutes was given over to life boat provision. And look what happened - it sank and it will happen to you also

in the spiritual realm if you neglect the conformity of your heart and soul to the mind of Christ.
(Gospel application – Justification must lead to sanctification)

Let's take a look at our text from Romans 12. The Epistle to the Romans, written by the Apostle Paul to those Christians in Rome, is a Scriptural masterpiece and shows the state of mankind (both Jew and Gentile) as lost and in need of Jesus Christ. The text is rich in doctrine, teaching that righteousness--the major theme contained in chpts 1-11--is attained only by faith and trust in Jesus Christ, that justification (being declared not guilty of sin) was by faith in Jesus only.

Chapter 12 begins with "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." Any time you see the word **therefore**, the text then points back to prior text; it may be a few verses or a few chapters. However, here in verse 1, it points back to the entire book of Romans. It is as though Paul is saying "**Because of everything I have told you to this point, therefore...**"

We are called to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. I do believe that people in this current culture do not know the meaning of the word sacrifice; many people have an "entitlement" mentality in regards to their walk with Jesus. Instead of a sacrifice on the altar as in the Old Testament, we are to make the sacrifice of living a separate life from that of the world that is acceptable to God. But often people do not put God first, they put self, first.

What we are called to is not unreasonable, but instead is your spiritual response or worship for what God has done for you in Jesus. It is not an extraordinary request; it is what we should consider ordinary. Give this some thought: **for all that Jesus has done for us, does it not show gratitude and love by living a holy and acceptable life to Him?** Are you "All in"?

Verse 2 says, "**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**"

The biggest problem in the individual believer and, consequently with the church today, is NOT that professing believers want to live with one foot in church and one foot in the world. It is worse than that: people want to live in the world and have their relationship with Jesus as a manageable "deal" where Jesus is just something that the person does when convenient and is not the centerpiece of their lives. This shows up on Sunday mornings, as people feel that they have to shop, mow the yard, have noon birthday parties and otherwise just "fit Jesus in" at their convenience. **The problem is that the American church has two feet in the world with their toes stuck in the door of the church "just in case I need Jesus"**. This is not the Christian life to which we are called.

Paul tells the Romans "**do not be conformed to this world**". Paul already said what was expected of the believer, what his spiritual worship is: you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Now he tells the Romans--and us--to "Stop imitating the model you see outside yourself" or "Stop bending to a pattern that is not your pattern." For the believer in Christ, we are to model ourselves after Jesus and not the world or culture around us.

We are called out of the world, and not called to be of the world. Yes, we still live in the world but we are called to be different, to be salt and light. How do we do that? By going "All In" by developing a discipline of heartfelt worship and learning what God's Word actually says. **The Word of God is to transform us**. This key term is the Greek word metamorphousthe, from which we get the English term metamorphosis, a transformation. Daily worship and devotion is behavior modification, it changes you and me; like a caterpillar changes into a butterfly.

Since the Son of God has died for me, then the least I can do is live for Him. C. T. Studd, British

athlete turned missionary, once said, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him."

A seminary professor was vacationing with his wife in Gatlinburg, TN. One morning, they were eating breakfast at a little restaurant, hoping to enjoy a quiet, family meal. While they were waiting for their food, they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man moving from table to table, visiting with the guests. The professor leaned over and whispered to his wife, "I hope he doesn't come over here." But sure enough, the man did come over to their table.

"Where are you folks from?" he asked in a friendly voice. "Oklahoma," they answered. "Great to have you here in Tennessee," the stranger said. "What do you do for a living?" "I teach at a seminary," he replied. "Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I've got a really great story for you."

And with that, the gentleman pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with the couple. The professor groaned and thought to himself, "Great ... Just what I need ... another preacher story!" The man started, "See that mountain over there? (pointing out the restaurant window). Not far from the base of that mountain, there was a boy born to an unwed mother. He had a hard time growing up, because every place he went, he was always asked the same question, 'Hey boy, Who's your daddy?' Whether he was at school, in the grocery store or drug store, people would ask the same question, 'Who's your daddy?' He would hide at recess and lunchtime from other students. He would avoid going in to stores because that question hurt him so bad.

"When he was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early to avoid hearing the question, 'Who's your daddy?' But one day, the new preacher said the benediction so fast he got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. Just about the time he got to the back door, the new preacher, not knowing anything about him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him, Son, who's your daddy? The whole church got deathly quiet. He could feel every eye in the church looking at him. Now everyone would finally know the answer to the question, 'Who's your daddy?'

"This new preacher, though, sensed the situation around him and using discernment that only the Holy Spirit could give, said the following to that scared little boy ... "Wait a minute! I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God. " With that he patted the boy on his shoulder and said, "Boy, you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it."

"With that, the boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door a changed person. He was never the same again. Whenever anybody asked him, 'Who's your Daddy?' he'd just tell them, 'I'm a child of God.'"

The distinguished! gentleman got up from the table and said, "Isn't that a great story?" The professor responded that it really was a great story! As the man turned to leave, he said, "You know, if that new preacher hadn't told me that I was one of God's children, I probably never would have amounted to anything!" And he walked away.

The seminary professor and his wife were stunned. He called the waitress over & asked her, "Do you know who that man was who just left that was sitting at our table?" The waitress grinned and said, "Of course. Everybody here knows him. That's Ben Hooper. He's the former governor of Tennessee!"

In Jesus, God has transformed you from enemy of God to child of God. How will you respond? I'm all in!! Amen.