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John Allen Chalk: Personal Correspondence

John Allen Chalk

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10-20-1967

From/To: Jay Smith (Chalk's reply filed first)

Jay Smith

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#### Recommended Citation

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October 20, 1967

Mr. Jay Smith  
20th Century Christian  
2814 Granny White Pike  
Nashville, Tennessee 37204

Dear Jay:

What a wonderful spirit in which you wrote on October 11. I had been with Jim Bill McInteer two weekends ago when your name arose and I was thrilled at that time, even though it corroborated with things that I already believed. to hear him say that you had such a great spirit and were, above everything else, such an honest individual. I am always thrilled to be with such refreshing people. Honesty seems to be a little known commodity within the lives of all too many of us these days.

Since writing you and especially upon receiving your letter, I have been made to look more closely at the passage we are discussing. I do see that the transformation of Romans 12:2 could be indicating that gradual process within the Christian's life that we normally call sanctification. If this is the case, then there is some sense in which spiritual growth, that is the transformation itself, must be dependent upon our own continual surrender and our own efforts at meditation and communion and service. However, if the transformation here does refer to the same processes that Paul describes in Romans 3-5, then I think there is no question but that the greater emphasis is on that wonderful work of God in changing the lives of those who obey Him.

The only reason I was sensitive to the point is because of the recent discussions regarding the Holy Spirit. I have seen in those discussions and in subsequent studies and readings a definite rationalistic element that I do not believe to be Biblical in our teaching and preaching. In fact, I am afraid that our understanding of the birth of the Spirit in John 3:5, as well as our almost total emphasis on the individual's action in obeying Christ, distorts the conversion process as taught in God's Word, eliminating the action of God in the change that occurs in the obedient life.

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Thank you so much for your reply. If you gain any further insight into Romans 12:2, send it along for my health.

When you need further materials for W. A. Wilde Company, please let me know.

Fraternally yours,

C John Allen Chalk  
Radio Speaker

JAC:dw

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# 20th CENTURY

# Christian

2814 GRANNY WHITE PIKE  
 NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37204

October 11, 1967

Mr. John Allen Chalk  
 5<sup>th</sup> and Highland Church of Christ  
 Box 2439  
 Abilene, Texas 79604

It certainly was good to get your letter of September 28. I appreciated the opportunity of being with you at Benton, and feel the day was most inspiring. Your lesson on the "Prodigal Son" (while depriving me of my text on the next morning) was certainly challenging. I came back to Nashville, telling Jim Bill how much I thought of your presentation, as well as the explanation in response to questions asked the following morning.

The point you raise concerning Romans 12:2 was of special interest to me. Upon receiving your letter, my first thought was that you were exactly right and I had missed the point on this passage -- somewhat to my embarrassment. In fact, I wrote a letter discussing the point that you made. However, before I sent the letter out, I did some checking on a large number of commentaries that we have here at the office, and find that this very point is somewhat in dispute -- it seems primarily over whether or not the verb form is an infinitive or an imperative in this particular place. I want to do a lot more study on this, because it is one of my favorite verses.

Even if Godet and the commentaries are right that you suggested, I think this fits in perfectly with Paul's thought -- that is, that we sacrifice ourselves and Christ will then transform us through the power of the Word and Holy Spirit. In fact, this does not do a great deal of damage to my two step emphasis on the Christian life. It does de-emphasize the Christian's role a little bit in the second step, but the effect of the transformation is still there. Anyway, your remarks point up the danger of not double-checking passages which seem the clearest (at least in English), and whose meaning we have come to take for granted. This is always a danger of exegesis and preaching. At any rate, I certainly am going to check this out even more thoroughly before I preach on it as confidently as I have in the past.

I looked over the material you sent me -- in fact, sent it on to the W. A. Wilde Company to use in setting up the first edition of the supplementary piece which we are going



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to call "Preacher's Pointers." They were supposed to have done this for the last month, but for some reason put it off until later. I told them to use as many of these under the heading of "Insight" as they could, and then I would try to do a little space counting and see how many could be used for the following months.

Thank you for every consideration.

20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY CHRISTIAN



Jay Smith  
Publications Director

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