

BE TRANSFORMED

Romans 12:1-2

Introduction

1. Paul made the following plea to the Christians in Rome: “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” (Romans 12:1-2). Paul wanted them to...

- a. To present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.
- b. To be transformed by the renewing of their minds.



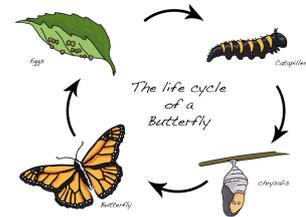
2. This same plea, of course, applies to all Christians throughout the gospel age. In this lesson, though, we shall focus on the concept of being transformed. Several questions come to mind as we ponder this concept:

- a. What does it mean to be transformed?
- b. What is the goal of transformation?
- c. What should motivate us to be transformed?
- d. What does one do in order to experience transformation?

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TRANSFORMED?

A. Defining the word “transformed”.

1. The English word “transformed” comes from the Greek word *metamorphoo* (G3339). It means, “To change into another form” (Vine’s). It is from this Greek word that we get our English word *metamorphosis*. It is used, for example, to describe the change that takes place when a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. The application to Christians is that the inward man be transformed into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). We also live in expectation of our bodies being transformed at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2).



2. The Greek word *metamorphoo* only appears two other times in the New Testament:

- a. It is used to describe the *transfiguration* of Jesus (Mark 9:2; cp. Matthew 17:1-2).
- b. It is used to describe our being *changed* into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

B. Understanding the concept of transformation.

1. The concept of transformation is seen in Vine’s description, saying that Christians are “to undergo a complete change, which under the power of God, will find expression in **character** and **conduct**”, and David Collins says, “A Christian is one who has been born again; a great change of heart has already taken place. But now he must undergo a greater, complete transformation of heart that is witnessed by a radical change of character and conduct”.

- a. Just as one cannot identify the butterfly with the caterpillar, a Christian is so transformed that he goes unrecognized by those who knew him formerly. Paul describes this change as *putting off the old man* and *putting on the new man* (Colossians 3:9-10).
- b. Our goal is to reach that point where we can say, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

2. This transformation is not something we can effect by our own power, and it is not something that is effected in us without an effort on our part. God does His part in exercising power through His word and we do our part in submitting to His power.

II. WHAT IS THE GOAL OF TRANSFORMATION?

A. To become like Jesus.

1. God's purpose in Christ is that many sons be brought to glory (**Hebrews 2:10**).
2. Those sons whom God foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (**Romans 8:29**).
3. This transformation begins at our baptism and is an *ongoing process* (**2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:9-10**).

B. How do we become like Jesus? Daniel W. Bailey suggests the following five things¹:

1. Must have knowledge of Him. A disciple is one who learns from his master to be like his master (**Luke 6:40**). This is why Jesus commissioned His disciples to "...make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...**" (**Matthew 28:19-20**).
2. Must meditate on Him. It is not enough to know about Christ, we must get to know Him and we can do this by allowing Him to dwell in our hearts through faith (**Ephesians 3:14-19**). Christ dwells in our hearts to the degree that we study and mediate on God's word (**Colossians 3:16**).
3. Must admire Him. The more we admire someone, the more we become like them; seeking to mimic their way of thinking, speaking, and behavior. We know this is true from daily life and it goes without saying. Paul says, "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 Corinthians 3:18**). Implied in this is a certain degree of wonder and admiration. "This admiration grows as we read about Jesus and hang upon His teachings: the honest and feeling heart cannot help but be touched by the goodness, compassion, mercy, wisdom, honesty and faithfulness of Jesus Christ!" (Daniel W. Bailey).
4. Must adopt His actions and attitudes. We come to know Jesus through our study, meditation, and admiration of Him, but this demands a conscious imitation of Him in our daily lives (**John 13:15; 1 John 2:6; cp. 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Peter 2:21**). For example, imagine seeing your worst enemy fall and badly injure himself; what would Jesus do? (i) Laugh loudly and cry, "Serves you right. God has paid you back for persecuting me" or (ii) Go and help him and offer words of comfort? The Christian life is not about self-ambition, but about serving God and serving our fellow man (**Matthew 20:25-28; Romans 12:1**).

O To Be Like Thee

A great hymn written by Thomas O. Chisholm and published in 1897.

The refrain goes:

O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee!
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

The goal of transformation is that Christ's image is stamped on our hearts.

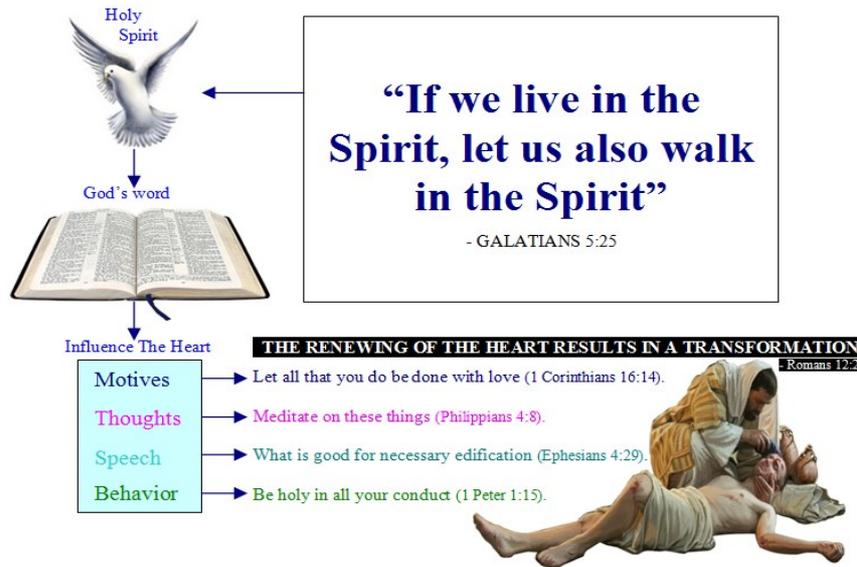
III. WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION?

A. The process of transformation begins and continues with the word of God:

1. The beginning of renewal. It is the word of God that first pricked our hearts and led us to obey the gospel (cp. **Acts 2:1-38; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14**).
2. The process of transformation then continues to the degree that we allow the Holy Spirit to renew our minds (**Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:20-24**).
3. We renew our minds by walking in the Spirit (**Galatians 5:25**). The chart below shows how this works:

"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).

¹ www.greaterbuffalochurchofchrist.com/web_BecomingLikeJesus.pdf



B. Understanding the process of transformation is easy enough, and yet there are Christians who are in a state of stagnation; they are not continuing to transform through the renewing of their minds. Why is this?

1. Peter encourages Christians to “desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). This is very likely the major problem – a lack of desire to study the scriptures. “Sad to say, many brethren find studying a chore rather than a joy” (David Collins). A person who doesn’t study probably doesn’t have the desire to do so.
2. There are those who actually find great joy in studying the scriptures and yet they fail to grow! James identifies a common problem: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). Some people delude themselves into believing they are growing spiritually simply because they hear the word. James says that such people are deluding themselves.
3. Many are failing to transform through the renewing of their minds because they are failing to “put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9); things such as “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth” (Colossians 3:8). Basically, this is a failure to repent.
4. Many are failing to grow because they haven’t broken their friendship with the world: (i) They are still unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14), frequenting the haunts of the wicked (Proverbs 4:14-15), watching inappropriate movies and television programs, etc. (ii) They are still allowing their attitudes and behavior to be influenced by the principles of the world (Romans 12:2). John warns, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

Conclusion

1. God’s desire is that we be transformed by the renewing of our minds into the image of His Son. This transformation will only take place if we walk in the Spirit.
2. Paul’s appeal to be transformed is based on the “mercies of God” (Romans 12:1). What are the mercies that Paul had previously discussed? Freedom from sin (Romans 6:16-18), the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23), peace with God (Romans 5:1), access to the grace of God (Romans 5:2), and, salvation from the wrath of God (Romans 5:9). God’s mercies are enough motivation for any sincere believer to repent and be transformed (cp. Romans 2:4-5).

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Based on a sermon outline by Mark Copeland.