

January 9, 2021

## Transformed

***"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade..."***

***Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."***  
I Peter 1:1-12

Last week, as we began this new year, we talked about the importance of resolving to really become a transformed people through our faith in Jesus Christ. In wrestling with how I might encourage us to make this resolution a reality it occurred to me that I really cannot make transformation happen for you through anything that I say or do. Transformation is up to each of us individually. Individually, we either open our minds and hearts to the Spirit's transforming process or we don't.

But, how do we open our hearts and minds to that process? As we noted last week the Spirit within us is constantly seeking to transform us in many ways, but perhaps most specifically through the Word. Letting the Word transform us requires much more, I think, than simply reading it.

Reading Spirit-inspired Scripture can easily become part of a checklist of tasks which, in the end, produce little transformation. How do we make our time with the Word more transformational? I am convinced that one way is to really saturate ourselves in a particular passage over time.

Reading a passage once can easily become almost meaningless. The words don't really penetrate our hearts and minds. We think we already know what they say and what they mean. We've heard them before. We've heard sermons on them before. We've got this.

What would happen if we really saturated our hearts and minds in a single message from the Spirit for a whole week? What would happen if we prayed that the Spirit would open our minds to his message? What would happen if we applied what the Spirit is saying to our own lives in specific ways? What would happen if...?

I would like to challenge us to seek to saturate ourselves in the Spirit's transforming Word in a very real way this year. How? At the risk of creating another checklist to spiritual growth I would suggest a process along these lines. Every day I will...

Start my study with two or three minutes in silence

Read the passage out loud.

Explain what it means to me. (journal)

Explain what it demands of me. (journal)

Explain what I will do with these demands. (journal)

Ask the Spirit to guide my transformative applications.

As we begin this transformational process I would like us to consider the letters of the Apostle Peter. In his first letter he addresses "*...God's elect, strangers in the world...*" who have been scattered probably by persecution. He tells these believers and he tells me that we have been given a "*...new birth into a living hope through the resurrection...*"

The Apostle also reminds me that through my faith I am "*...receiving the goal of (my) faith, the salvation of your souls.*" And, because the hope of my faith is the salvation of my soul my life should be filled with "*...inexpressible and glorious joy...*"

In answer to my saturation challenges I would say that the Spirit through Peter is reminding me that I have hope for the salvation of my soul through the mercy of God poured out on me through the death of his one and only Son. I believe the Spirit is demanding that I focus on the salvation of my soul and not on everything else that might distract me.

In addition I am committed to living with more joy in my life by reminding myself every day that the salvation of my soul is all that really matters. Transformation is ultimately all about the salvation of my soul. In a very real way Peter is focusing my attention on the salvation of my soul when the world so often demands my focus elsewhere.

