

June 3, 2018

Be Transformed

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your reasonable act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."
Romans 12:1-2

Who are you? Who am I? Why are we here today? What are you and I looking for in this building; from this gathering? What kind of relationship do we have with Jesus? What kind of relationship do we want with Jesus? What kind of life do we want to be living? What kind of life are we living now? Do we really want to live a different way?

To be honest, most of us will struggle to answer these questions honestly. The truth is, most of us live our lives from day to day without a great deal of thought and with little or no intentionality. We follow our well established patterns, do the things we always do, think the things we always think, and question very little of it all.

You and I are not, for the most part, deep thinkers. We tend to function without a lot of careful planning; without much real effort to weigh our choices or consider our decisions. And to be honest, most of us like this kind of life. Even if it is a bit mindless, it is, at least, comfortable and we understand how to do it.

So, when God tells us to be ***"transformed"***, to be totally and completely changed, we tend to nod and agree with the concept and then quietly return to what we already know. I am convinced that very few of us, even those who have worn the name 'Christian' for a lot of years, are now nor ever have been fully and completely transformed. And yet, transformation is what God wants for us and of us. Our Father and God wants to recreate us in the image of his Son, to remake our lives in every way, to instill in us new purpose and a glorious hope. God so wants us to live victorious lives, and we are so sadly satisfied with much, much less.

Understand then, that if our God tells us to be transformed, that it is possible to be so. God never commands us to do things we cannot do; to be things we cannot be. But also I believe, we need to understand that be transformed means that the process is not something we can do, but something we can allow to be done to us. And, frankly, this concept flies in the face of what most of us have always understood about our faith. We live a 'pull yourself up by your own bootstraps' faith and wonder why we are not experiencing transformation. God is not commanding us to transform ourselves, but instead to allow ourselves to be transformed by his overwhelming power.

At the same time, God is not suggesting that we should just stand in place and wait for him to magically make the change. As all powerful as God is, he will not transform us against our own will. As in all things, God lets us choose or reject his transforming power. We can surrender to his transforming power or we can hold on to our own failed ways. It is always our choice.

So where does God's transformation begin? It begins, I believe, with our complete acknowledgment of who we really are. The Apostle Paul writes, ***"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness...for though they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile...You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you condemn yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things."*** (Romans 1:18-2:1)

You and I are sinners, but when we say that so easily becomes a trite acknowledgment. Sure, I am a sinner; you are a sinner. Of course we are. Paul tells us, "*...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*" But what exactly are my sins? What are yours? Why are we among those against whom the wrath of God is being revealed? Take a minute, or the rest of the day, and acknowledge your particular sins to yourself. Be honest.

The truth is God's transforming cannot be accepted nor experienced by those who do not know they need it. It is only when we come face to face with our own sin-filled lives that true transformation can begin. So, what are you doing wrong that needs to change?

**We cannot be more dead than dead, and
we cannot be more saved than saved.
Without Jesus we are absolutely dead in
our sins, and in Jesus we are absolutely
saved by his grace.**