

July 29, 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 am I? Who are you? The purpose of The Apostle Paul's letter to the believers in Rome is, I believe, to provide us with an answer to that very question. I don't think it is possible to study Apostle's letter to Rome and not come away with a better understanding of our true nature.

So, what can we learn about ourselves from this letter?

1. We are all sinners and therefore, under the ***"law of sin and death"***, condemned to eternal damnation. We are either guilty of intentionally breaking God's commandments or we are guilty of breaking our own rules and regulations. The point that the Apostle makes very clearly is ***"There is no one righteous, not even one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."***
2. No matter how many 'good works' we do we cannot by these good works erase the reality and the consequence of a single sin. Under the absolute law of sin and death we are eternally dead because of our sin. Without the intervention of God we have no hope no matter how 'good' we are.
3. Salvation does not come through our goodness, but through the love and mercy of God. ***"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."*** The source of this grace was Jesus' innocent life sacrificed on the cross to satisfy the requirement of the law of sin and death for our guilt. That gift was given while we were ***"powerless"***, while we were ***"still sinners"***, and even while we were God's ***"enemies"***. We did not deserve grace and we never can. It is always and will always be ***"the gift of God"***.
4. As those who have received the grace of God what should our reasonable response be? Continuing to sin when our sin has cost God so much makes no sense. Dying to sin and its source is the only reasonable response we can make. Since all sin is sourced in our selfish natures putting those natures to death is the only way that we can truly give up our sin-filled ways. If I have surrendered my natural drives and desires to the control of God's will then I have died to my self, the thing that tempts me sin.
5. When I lay down or put to death my natural self, then burying that old self in baptism is a natural part of my own gospel story. My willingness to die to my own selfishness, and to allow that old, selfish being to be buried, leads me to the new life that God raises me to. (6:1-11)
6. Putting the old man of sin to death and keeping it dead is no easy task. The battle between my sinful selfishness and the selfless being that God calls me to be will consume the rest of my life. My salvation does not depend on how well I am fighting that battle, but on the grace of God that has saved me. For me there is ***"...now no condemnation..."*** because I am in Christ Jesus and his ***"...law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and***

death.” It is essential to our walk as believers to understand that we do what we do because we have been saved and not so that we might be saved.

7. For those who have been saved full transformation becomes the only reasonable response to God's glorious grace. Transformation does not mean that we try to change a few things in our lives, but it does mean that we allow God, working through his Spirit, full sway in our lives to remake us into the image of his Son. Transformation means that through God's power we are becoming a new being. ***“I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*** (Galatians 2:20)
8. So, who am I? I am a child of God, saved by his grace, surrendered to his will, being transformed by the his power, and living as Jesus Christ, his Son, before the world.

