

True Transformation

1/11/2009

1. Read Romans 12:1-2 and consider what the “transformation” described in verse two might include.

Since verse 1 talks about presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, it doesn’t sound like a trivial or superficial decision. Verse two then suggests that we are to walk away from the habits and mannerisms of the secular world and carefully discern God’s will for our lives while living transformed lives that include a “renewed” mind cleansed of inappropriate thoughts.

2. How does Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 1:15-19; 3:16-19) differ from his message to the Romans? How is it similar?

In Chapter 1 Paul asks for enlightenment; for awareness of: the hope that comes from knowing God’s calling, the blessings of receiving God’s inheritance, and the sense of great power from seeing God’s handiwork. In Chapter 3, he then continues to describe equipping these new believers with a working knowledge of the power of the Holy Spirit to which they can have access. It is this spiritual insight that one would assume would cause the believers to undergo transformation of their lives.

3. Similarly, look at Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11 and see how this passage relates to the previous two and the concept of transformation.

Paul encourages these new Christians to continue to strive for a more holy life as they are “transformed” from their old selves to the perfection envisioned by God. (v. 6) Again we see a prayer for increased knowledge and discernment (v. 9) that will help the believers to make good decisions, so that they live transformed lives.

4. Finally, read Colossians 1:9-14 and determine whether this passage is yet more of the same or has a different emphasis.

This reads much like the passage from Philippians, demonstrating that Paul has a consistent message for the new church. They are to become more knowledgeable, mature Christians, so that they can take on roles as God’s representatives. One can not be the hands, feet, and mouth of God if we are not transformed from our old ways.

5. Pastor Steve described two themes that were common to these letters to the early churches. List them and provide a description of each.

- 1) Spiritual Insight – Self discernment, knowing God well, sensing the hope to which we are called, having our eyes opened to God’s vision for what He wants to happen, sensing the very presence of God as we go about doing His will.

2) Right Living – infusion of God’s wisdom into our actions, making right decisions, seizing opportunities for transformation (starting from wherever we are right now). (see Philippians 2:12-13)

6. To do all this requires that we sense the current condition of our soul as well as the presence of the invisible realm. Pastor Steve makes the case that we can’t do that on our own. What was his point?

Our fallen nature has to some extent hidden our soul from our sight. Only God can reveal the condition of our soul, yet to be transformed is to have our souls changed, so God can allow us enough discernment to know what is going on. That is why Paul continually prays to God to provide the new Christians with knowledge and discernment that will allow them to see that they are headed in the right direction.

7. Pastor Steve then ended this message with the observation that we are not spiritual people because of our taking any specific actions, such as praying, reading the Bible, or teaching a class. Rather, we sense a spiritual transformation in our lives when we see one or more of six outcomes. Describe each of the transformations and provide illustrations of what they might include.

1. **Me to You** – Instead of worrying about what is “mine” and attempting to build up that storehouse while protecting it from all others, we begin thinking of “you” first. Thus, our focus is less on me and more on missions, outreach, and giving to others. We need to do this for our own good (the good that is done with the recipients is an added bonus!).

2. **Me to Us** – We need to move from a focus on the individual (me) to the community (us). Thus, we worship together instead of in a corner by ourselves. We bless each other by reading and teaching and sharing, such that we strengthen each other’s faith.

3. **Following Jesus to Leading Like Jesus** – Part of our spiritual transformation ought to be a maturing from a “baby Christian” who follows others (mimicking their words and actions) to being comfortable helping others become more spiritual. Jesus led by example, and we need to do likewise.

4. **Consumer to Steward** – Consumers never make enough money and pay “me” first and then look to tithe or help others if there is anything left over. A steward realizes he has been entrusted with resources by God, so he sets aside God’s portion first and then seeks ways to serve God by giving to others as a priority. My possessions are no longer for me, but are for the Kingdom.

5. **Slave to Child** – Our relationship with God is very different if we look at Him as a slave master establishing a bunch of burdensome rules (many of which are meant to keep me enslaved) versus as a Father who we know is looking after our best interests and wants us to grow and flourish while looking forward to spending eternity together.

6. Visible to Invisible – When we are young, we tend to see only visible things. As we mature, we find we can begin to understand and even utilize things that we can not see. As new Christians, it is good to focus on the life of Christ and the visible actions and transformations that allow us to grow in faith. As we become more mature Christians, we begin to understand why the most powerful person in the room is the one who washes feet, why prayer might be the most appropriate action, and why sensing the will of God might be the most significant sign of all.

8. Why is it that we find ourselves doing the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result?

It is very easy to get into a pattern or routine that is hard to change. This is especially true if it is a pattern that is reinforced as “normal” by those around us. Submitting to God by offering to do something we have never done before if that is what He desires takes us outside of our comfort zones.

9. How will you know if you have been truly transformed?

This could take lots of directions. Many mature Christians describe a sense of peace that can not be explained in any other way than that we feel a close relationship with God and that we are doing what He wants us to do. There is no longer a desire to focus on “me” or possessions or a bunch of rules. Our goal becomes to cooperate and participate with God. Nothing else matters.