

What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

A Christian's Life Is A Transformed Life



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

A Christian's Life Is A Transformed Life

Learn why a transformation is necessary, how to transform, and what the Christian's transformation should look like

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

A Christian's Life Is A Transformed Life

What does it mean to be a Christian? Being a Christian means a great deal. Fortunately, God has given us all the information we need to know about what being a Christ really means. As we study His saving message, we discover that a Christian's life is a transformed life.

Why Transformation Is Necessary

Throughout this lesson, we will be discussing some general principles as well as some specific areas in which the Christian's life must be transformed. As we do, there will certainly be many areas in which the Christian will be sacrificing his own pleasures in order to please God. But, why should the Christian sacrifice himself to God in this way? Why should he give himself to be transformed into what God wants him to be?

What it means to be transformed

To begin answering these questions about why the Christian should give himself to be transformed in this way, we need to first understand what it means to be transformed.

To "transform" is to change what a thing is into something different. Transformations happen because something has been repurposed. For

instance, a building could be transformed from an office space to a restaurant as a result of a new owner taking charge of the structure. All of its furnishings would be changed. The proper appliances would be added. Décor would be changed. While it would still be the same structure, it would not look or function the same as the original structure. It would be transformed because it would be repurposed. Those who were familiar with the original structure may still be able to tell that it is the same structure; but, it will be completely clear that the building has been repurposed.

Similarly, those who are Christians have been "repurposed." The Christian has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:19-20). Therefore, the Christian's body has went from a temple of Satan (in which the Christian had served and glorified Satan through living to please himself and engaging in sin) to being the temple of God (in which the Christian is now serving and glorifying God by living to please Him). Because of this repurposing and change in ownership, the Christian will undergo numerous changes in order to serve his new purpose. While it is still the same body and the same person, he may not look and does not function the same as the original. Those who were familiar with him prior to this transformation may still see some elements of his original personality and be able to tell he is the same person; but, it will be completely clear that he has been repurposed!

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 summarizes this transformation in this way: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Transformation is necessary because of sin

The transformation of the one who becomes a Christian is necessary because of sin. While we live in our sins, we live in a condition that is separated from God. Isaiah 59:1-2 demonstrates that it is our sins that separates (builds barriers between) us and God. This is a condition of being spiritually dead (separated from the God who gives life). Thus,

Romans 6:23 declares that the “wages of sin is death.” This is precisely what we deserve.

Then, those who die in this condition of being separated from God in sin will be sentenced to eternal spiritual death in Hell fire. Revelation 21:8 refers to this as the “second death.” It says, “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

The Scriptures are clear that this is the result of every sin a person commits (every time he/she violates the will of God). Passages such as Romans 1:18-32 clearly demonstrate this to be true. After listing numerous sins, Paul said that those who practice such things (as well as everyone who approves of the same) are “deserving of death.” Furthermore, in Galatians 5:19-21, Paul identifies certain sinful works of the flesh and says that “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Therefore, this transformation was needed in your life because you were the one who was dead in your sins. Ephesians 2:1-3 says, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Because of this sin, God commanded that you repent and be “converted” in order to have your sins removed. Acts 3:19 says, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” In fact, the Scriptures identify all of the steps of conversion as: Hear God’s word (Romans 10:17), believe (John 8:24), repent (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Because of the essential nature of every one of these “steps” (as indicated by the verses listed), these are all necessary to be converted to God.

To be “converted” is to turn. So, if you are walking in one direction and turn to walk in the opposite direction, you “convert” the direction you are walking. Spiritually, you had been living your life in sin (for the ways of the world). However, in order to become a Christian and be forgiven of your sin you were required to change that direction and live for the Lord. Repentance is central to this turning. Repentance is the determination in your mind to stop living for sin and live for the ways of God. According to Acts 3:19, both are necessary in order to have sins forgiven!

Transformation is necessary because the Christian’s life is not his own

As mentioned previously, the Christian’s life is no longer his own. 1 Peter 1:18-19 discusses the price the Christian has been purchased at: “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

In order for you to have the opportunity to be forgiven of your sins and live eternally in Heaven, Jesus Christ had to leave Heaven, come to earth, suffer, and die. Romans 5:6-11 helps you understand this purchase price: “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

Now that you have been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (ransomed from the consequences of your sins) you have the responsibility to give your life entirely to God and use your life to glorify God in all things. The apostle Paul recognized this when He said, “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).

Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 demonstrates that when you truly understand the love that Christ has shown toward you in giving His life on the cross so that you can be saved from the consequences of your sins and live eternally in Heaven, you will devote yourself entirely to Him. In fact, the language that is used is that the love of Christ will compel (control) you. The picture of the Greek word for “compel” is one of being shut up in a narrow, walled road, with the walls making the road so narrow that they force you to walk in one single direction. In the same way, when you understand the sacrifice that Jesus has made for you, His love will compel you to live your life entirely for Him! Therefore, you no longer live for yourself, “but for Him who died” for you and “rose again.”

Transformation is necessary because the Christian is a new creature

As we think about transformation, let’s also understand that transformation is necessary because the Christian is a new creature. And, as we consider this, let’s learn a lesson from two small creatures that are very different from one another: The chameleon and the caterpillar. The chameleon is well-known for blending in with its surroundings. The caterpillar, on the other hand, is also well-known. But, it is well-known for its transformation into a beautiful butterfly. The chameleon only changes in order to fit in to its surroundings. However, the caterpillar completely transforms. After its transformation, it functions as a new creature – and does not function as a caterpillar any more.

Which one of these two creatures best describes your life? Do you try to just blend in with your surroundings – even if that means participating in or approving of sin? Or, are you transformed into a new creature?

Certainly, the Bible describes that the Christian has become a new creature in Christ Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed

away; behold, all things have become new.” After being buried with Christ in baptism, you are raised to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). As a new creature in Jesus Christ, the Christian must not be living in the same sinful ways he had lived prior to becoming a Christian (just like the butterfly lives a new life as a butterfly rather than continuing to live like a caterpillar)!

The Scriptures also describe this transformation as a new birth. In John 3:3-6, Jesus taught a man, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The man (Nicodemus) responded by asking Jesus, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” However, Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Obviously, Jesus was not talking about a physical rebirth. Instead, Jesus was speaking concerning a spiritual birth. Now, consider a couple of essential lessons concerning this new birth. First, a new birth is required. The way you had been living was not pleasing to God. Your life was being lived for sin and was contrary to the will of God. Therefore, you needed a new life in order to please God. Second, realize that this new birth is accomplished by being born of water and the Spirit. The water involved in this birth refers to the waters of baptism (see Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38). Being born of the Spirit is accomplished by believing and obeying the word that the Holy Spirit has revealed (contained in the New Testament). So, when you are obedient to God’s word and are baptized into Jesus Christ, you are born again!

Now, having been born of the Spirit, you must live your life in a transformed way – one that continues to be conducted according to the teachings of God’s word (the Bible). The apostle Paul teaches that if you will dedicate your life to walking according to the revelation of God’s Holy Spirit (through the teachings of the Bible) you will not be living according to the desires of your flesh (Galatians 5:16-25). You will do this because you have been transformed into a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Transformation is necessary because the Christian is not of this world

Jesus Christ lived in a way that was as different from the world as light is from darkness. John 3:18-21 makes reference to this when it says that “the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Because of this difference, Jesus said that the world hated Him (John 15:18).

Similarly, God calls those who become Christians out of the world. Those who are Christians follow in the steps of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:18-19).

So, those who are Christians live *in* the world (physically existing on this earth); however, they are not *of* this world. They do not value the same things. They do not have the same goals. They do not speak in the same ways. They do not dress in the same immodest ways. They do not participate in the same ungodly recreation/entertainment. They do not make the same sinful choices. They are truly different from the world.

In fact, as was true about Jesus, those who are Christians are also expected to be as different from the world as light is different from darkness. In Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

This difference in the Christian’s life can be clearly seen by everyone who is around him. It is as noticeable as a city that is set up on a hill or a light that is shining in the midst of darkness. This difference will be noticeable to everyone; but particularly to those who knew the individual prior to his transformation. Consider 1 Peter 4:3-4: “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in

lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

Those people who knew you prior to your transformation will think that your new ways are strange. They won’t understand your transformation. They are still focused on living their lives for the sinful ways of this world. Many times, these ungodly people will even speak evil and mistreat you because of your change. At one time, you were “one of the guys” and you wanted to fit in with them and enjoyed participating in those sinful things. However, now that you have transformed (and they haven’t), you look strange to them! Certainly, the Christian must never be able to fit in with the same crowd that engages in sinful things in the same way after becoming a Christian as he did before he became a Christian!

Transformation is necessary because the Christian’s life is a life of holiness

God is entirely holy. 1 John 1:5 says that “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” Verse 6 goes on to explain that we cannot have fellowship with this God of light while we walk in the ways of sin (darkness). Yes, even the spiritual beings residing in Heaven are pictured as continually proclaiming the holiness of God. Revelation 4:6-8 says, “Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!’”

To be holy is to be “set apart.” With regard to God, He is entirely set apart from everything that is evil or sinful. Nothing that is evil is part of His nature. Now, consider what is said in 1 Peter 1:13-16. “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”

Consider a number of applications from this passage. First, God’s holiness requires that those who are His people must also be holy. The reason for this was observed in 1 John 1:5-6 (because those who are in fellowship with sin/darkness cannot be in fellowship with God). Second, the holiness of God is the standard for your holiness. You are not free to define holiness in whatever way you desire. Instead, the passage says, “as He who called you is holy, you also be holy....” Third, you must be obedient to God as His child and not conform yourself to the same sinful lusts you had prior to becoming a Christian. That is, you must not live according to those desires – because you have been transformed. Fourth, this holiness is required in “all your conduct.” So, this is not just a transformation in certain areas you choose to transform yourself in. Instead, this is a total transformation of all your ways in order to bring your life into full harmony with the holiness of God!

This kind of transformation to holiness is what God expects out of everyone who becomes a Christian. Ephesians 1:3-4, for instance, teaches that God has blessed the Christian with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. It also demonstrates that God has chosen (before He even created the world) that those who would be His people should “be holy and without blame.” Therefore, He calls those who are His people “saints” (i.e. Ephesians 1:1). To be a “saint” is to be a most holy thing. It is simply impossible, then, to be a “saint” and live your life according to the sinful ways of the world.

How This Transformation Occurs

The one who desires to please God must be transformed. An individual simply cannot please God and refuse to be transformed into who God wants him to be. Therefore, it is essential for you to

understand how this transformation occurs. For the Christian, this section should describe what you have done. If, however, you find that you have not done what we are about to study, then you should quickly do whatever you have failed to do previously.

God has made this transformation possible

I have already quoted from the first part of Romans 6:23. We have seen that the “wages of sin is death.” Now, let’s consider the rest of the verse: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Many passages in Scripture teach that we simply could not be saved from the consequences of our sins without the grace and mercy of God.

For instance, after Ephesians 2:1-3 (quoted earlier) demonstrated the hopeless condition of living in your sins, verses 4 and 5 say, “but God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”! Later, the passage describes how we once had “no hope” and were “without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Then, verse 13 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were afar off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

As we saw from Romans 5:6-11, Jesus’ sacrifice is the only thing that could save us from experiencing the consequences of our sins (i.e. spiritual death and the wrath of God). Therefore, “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). Salvation from sin is available for everyone to receive. However, God has not forced you to be transformed. He has simply given you the opportunity – and invites you to receive the gift of salvation He has made available to you if you will be transformed. But, how are you transformed?

Through the instructions of the Scriptures

What is powerful enough so as to bring about the kind of transformation God desires in your life and result in the eternal salvation of your soul? Only the word of God! Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

God's word is powerful enough to transform any life (even the most wicked) into a life that is pleasing to Him. Remember, this is the same word of God that was powerful enough to say, "Let there be light" when there was none – and it came into existence (Genesis 1:3). This is the same word of God that that was able to rebuke the wind and the sea whenever Jesus said, "Peace, be still" – and "the wind ceased and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39).

Look carefully at 2 Timothy 3:16-17. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Every word that comes from God works to make you into who God wants you to be. In fact, if you will give yourself to listen to, believe in, and obey the words of God, you will be made perfect/complete and be fully equipped to accomplish every good work God wants from your life.

As we have already seen, God requires you to be born again of the water and the Spirit. Therefore, if you want to give your life over to God, you must do everything God says you must do in order to be saved. God has said that you must: Hear His word (Romans 10:17), believe (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 17:30), confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). Then, after becoming a Christian, God expects that you continue to allow His word to transform you by producing the fruit of your repentance (Acts 26:20) and by being faithfully obedient to God until death (Revelation 2:10).

Through the renewal of your mind

As you consider all of the instructions God has given you, there is a renewal of your mind that is at the heart of it all. In fact, unless you are transformed in your mind, you will never be pleasing to God.

Romans 8:5-8 describes this transformation. "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to

be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

The individual whose mind is set/focused on the physical things of this life is incapable of pleasing God. His mind is "enmity against God" (hostile toward God). He will never conduct his life in harmony with the instructions of God – because he is focused on the physical things of life. In contrast, the one who is spiritually minded will live in a way that is pleasing to God because he is focused on the things of God. Therefore, this man will dedicate himself to live according to whatever things the Spirit has revealed to be truth (as revealed in the pages of the Bible)! While the carnally minded man is focused on pleasing himself, the spiritually minded man is focused on pleasing God (even when it means denying himself of his own pleasures).

The spiritually minded man will see himself as being clay in the hands of God. He will not rebel against the instructions of God. He will not demand that the Potter make him into some other kind of "vessel." Instead, he will humbly submit to the will of the Potter and be willing to be used in whatever way it seems good to the Potter!

What This Transformation Should Look Like

Having established the need to be transformed and how this transformation happens, let's make application of these principles and focus on what this transformation should look like in your life. Generally, this transformation involves going from a life that was focused on pleasing yourself and living for the sinful things of this world to living a life that is focused on pleasing God. Let's consider some specific passages to observe what this transformation should look like in your life – as well as consider a couple "case studies" of transformation.

Romans 6

Romans 6 is a chapter that speaks about what people ought to do with the opportunity to be transformed. In this passage, the apostle Paul addresses two anticipated questions. The first question is: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (6:1). This question stems from his statement about grace in 5:20-21, saying that “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.” Well, if God’s grace abounds where sin abounds, shouldn’t we just keep on living in sin so that God’s grace can just abound even more?

However, Paul answers this objection with an absolute “no.” “Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (6:2). Paul reminds them that they had put their “old selves” to death, been buried with Christ in baptism, and had been risen to walk in newness of life (6:3-4). Since their “old selves” had been crucified with Jesus, they should “no longer be slaves of sin” (6:6). Just as Christ died only once and lives to God, they were expected to consider themselves dead to sin and “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:8-11). Therefore, they were not to allow sin to reign (have rule over) their earthly bodies any longer so that they would obey it in its lusts (6:12). Instead, they were to present the members of their bodies as instruments (tools) for accomplishing the righteousness of God (6:13).

Then, verse 15 records the second anticipated question: “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” This question stems from what he said in verse 14, stating that we are not under law but under grace. Well, if we are under the grace of God, can’t we just keep on sinning?

Once again, Paul’s answer is an unequivocal “no.” He begins to remind the Roman Christians that they are slaves of whoever they give themselves to obey. Either they are slaves of sin (which leads to spiritual death) or they are slaves of obedience (which leads to righteousness) (6:16). Thankfully, Paul says, they had obeyed the doctrine that had been delivered to them and had been set free from sin, becoming slaves of righteousness (6:17-19). Then, he closes his response to this question by reminding

them of the dangers of sin – that sin does result in spiritual death (6:20-23).

Ephesians 4-6

In the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians, the focus has been on establishing the truths about the eternal plan of salvation God had prepared through Jesus Christ. Now, Paul is revealing that those who will come to Jesus Christ can be partakers of all the spiritual blessings that have been provided through Him. Then, in the final three chapters (chapters 4-6), Paul explains that this great opportunity also comes with responsibilities to live for the Lord.

Ephesians 4:1 marks this transition. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” Based on all of wonderful truths about the opportunity to be saved through Jesus Christ, Paul pleads with the Ephesians to live their lives in a way that is “worthy” of the gospel’s calling. Then, he describes various points about what this will look like in the life of a Christian.

Namely (for the purposes of this lesson), I want to draw your attention to the section that begins in 4:17. Paul says that those Christians should no longer walk (live) “as the rest of the Gentiles walk” (4:17). They live in their sins. However, those who were Christians had learned the way of Jesus Christ and were taught according to His truth. Paul instructed, “that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (4:22-24).

After instructing them to be transformed in this way, Paul demonstrates what this looks like, beginning in 4:25. He gives examples of transforming such as: Putting away lying and speaking truth, putting away the practice of stealing to work with your own hands and give to those who have need, putting away corrupt speech to speak that which is edifying and impart grace, etc. (4:25-32).

He continues to demonstrate this transformation in chapter 5. He says that fornication,

uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, and coarse jesting are not to even to be named among the saints (God's holy people). He continues to say that they had once been "darkness" but are now "light in the Lord" and were to walk "as children of light...finding out what is acceptable to the Lord" (5:8-10). In fact, they were to be transformed to such a degree that they were to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Instead, they were to be working to expose those works of darkness (5:11). He also tells them that they were not to live as fools, but as wise and understand what the will of the Lord is (5:15-21).

As Paul continues through chapters 5 and 6, he even demonstrates that this transformation should impact their relationships, specifically identifying the relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and slaves and masters (5:22-6:9). Even these relationships are to be controlled by the will of God.

Finally, this transformation will be worthless if the Christian does not take the proper degree of protection against the assaults of the devil. So, in 6:10-18, Paul identifies the armor that Christians must put on in their lives in order to be victorious against the attacks of Satan. This armor is identified as being: Truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, the word of God, along with prayer and supplication.

Colossians 3

Colossians chapter 3, much like Ephesians 4-6, speaks very specifically about the transformation that is expected to take place in everyone who becomes a Christian. The first four verses are key to the entire chapter. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

"If then you were raised with Christ...." This would include every Christian! As we saw from Romans 6:3-4, everyone who has ever become a Christian has been required to die to sin, be buried

with Christ in baptism, and be raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. So, when Paul instructs these individuals to "seek those things which are above" and set their minds on the things above rather than the things on the earth, it applies to every Christian! Then, also appreciate the fact that the transformation in their minds (from focusing on earthly things to focusing on heavenly things) is key to every one of the other points of transformation he will describe through this chapter.

First, he begins by identifying some things that must be put to death in the life of the Christian (3:5-11). These things are to have no part in the lives of God's holy people. They are identified as: Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, and lying. They had previously lived according to these ways. However, they were now expected to have put off the "old man with his deeds" and "put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (3:9-10).

Then, Paul identifies specific things which the Christian must "put on" in his life. They are identified as: Tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, forgiving one another, love, the peace of God, the word of Christ, and the giving of thanks. Then, like we saw in Ephesians 4-6, this transformation also touches the Christian's relationships (as Paul identifies the same relationships of husbands and wives, parents and children, and slaves and masters).

Romans 12

A final passage for us to consider that details the Christian's transformation is in Romans 12. As Paul has been teaching the Romans about the salvation that is available to everyone in Jesus Christ, he comes into chapter 12 and begins to give specific instructions through the remainder of the book about what kinds of things they should be doing as Christians. Specifically, I just want us to focus on 12:1-2: "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.”

Notice first that Paul’s plea is based on the “mercies of God.” So, since God has shown great mercy to you, you should devote yourself to accomplishing His will. Just imagine if you had owed a tremendous amount of debt that you could not repay and you were about to suffer serious consequences for failing to pay, then someone showed such mercy on you that you were entirely released from that debt. Wouldn’t you devote yourself to the one who showed mercy on you? Wouldn’t you consider yourself forever indebted to him and be grateful for the sacrifice that was made on your behalf? The same should be true about the mercy God has showed to you.

Second, consider that the mercy of God should lead you to give yourself to be used entirely in the service of God, that you would be a living and holy sacrifice that is acceptable to God. Notice that this is not a partial commitment of yourself in the service of God. Instead, this is an entire devotion of your body, your spirit, your physical resources, etc. to be used to serve and glorify God!

Finally, this complete devotion of yourself to God means that you will not be “conformed to this world.” Instead, you will be “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” So, you will not be “cut from the same mold” (conformed) as the world. You won’t be living your life in the same wicked and sinful ways. Instead, your mind has been transformed to seek the perfect will of God and live your life accordingly!

Case study: Paul

Not only does the Bible provide numerous passages to describe this transformation, but it also gives many “case studies.” One example is found in the apostle Paul. When we are first introduced to Paul in the Scriptures (in Acts 7-9, then known as Saul), he is involved in the stoning of Stephen (a preacher of the gospel) and severely persecuting early Christians. In fact, Paul detailed some of his work in persecuting Christians as putting some into prison, compelling them to blaspheme the Lord, and even voting for their executions (see Acts 26:9-11).

However, you can read Acts 9, 22, and 26 about this man’s conversion. Then, the Scriptures detail his transformation – how he went from a persecutor to a Christian, an apostle, and preacher who would be persecuted himself!

Case study: The Corinthians

The ancient city of Corinth was a notoriously sinful place. However, even in this very wicked place, the gospel of Jesus Christ demonstrated its power to transform. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” They *were* these ways. But, they had been obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Acts 18:1-8). Therefore, they were washed, sanctified, and justified of their sins and were now living for God!

Conclusion

As a Christian, God expects for your life to be a transformed life! He expects you to be living a different kind of life than you were living prior to becoming a Christian. That is, He expects you to live holy in all your conduct and give your life entirely over to the control of Jesus Christ and the gospel!

Study Questions

1. Why Transformation Is Necessary

What does it mean to be “transformed”?

How does sin makes transformation necessary?

What role does the renewing of your mind have in this transformation?

How does the fact that the Christian's life is not his own make transformation necessary?

3. What This Transformation Should Look Like

Describe what this transformation looks like according to the following passages:

How does the fact that the Christian is a new creature make transformation necessary?

A. Romans 6 –

How does the fact that the Christian is not *of* this world make transformation necessary?

B. Ephesians 4-6 –

How does the fact that the Christian's life is a life of holiness make transformation necessary?

C. Colossians 3 –

D. Romans 12 –

What can you learn about transformation from Paul?

2. How This Transformation Occurs

How has God made this transformation possible? And, why could you not make this transformation happen by yourself?

What can you learn about transformation from the Corinthians?

What role do the Scriptures have in this transformation?