

A Transformed Life (Romans 12:1-2)

- I. What does it look like to live a transformed life? How do we get to that state? What keeps us from attaining it?
 - a. Only applies to believers
 - b. Does not affect salvation
 - c. Does not earn “points” with God, because we already have the righteousness of God (II Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”). You can’t get better than perfect.
 - d. Why live a transformed life?
 - i. It is our duty since we are bought with a price (Romans 12:1-2, I Corinthians 6:20)
 - ii. We are created for the purpose of good works (Ephesians 2:10, Titus 2:14)
 - iii. Fruits of righteousness (Romans 6:21-22, 7:4-5, Galatians 5:22, Philippians 1:10-11, 4:17). Think of apple tree. It is not more or less and apple tree whether it produces a small amount of bad fruit or a large amount of good fruit. But the large amount of good fruit is more desirable, and it is the purpose of the apple tree.
- II. A worldly (carnal) life. If all the influences in our life are worldly, that will be how we operate (Romans 6:21). There will be no difference between us and unbelievers; in other words, we will have the same problems the world has (works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21)). And we see that pattern among Christians today. No difference in divorce rate, sexual immorality, drug and alcohol abuse, etc. Children of Christian parents often do not follow after God.
 - a. Why do so many Christians conform to this world?
 - b. Does living in the flesh make God mad? No. We have been forgiven and are accepted (Ephesians 1:3-7). (We can grieve the Holy Spirit; see Ephesians 4:30.) The question is, why would we want to? Living in the flesh produces death (Romans 6:21). Analogy of driving around an old beater when we have been given a brand new car for free. Another way to think of it is that God delights in seeing us operate according to who we have been made in Christ.
- III. A hypocritical life. It is possible to appear godly but to still be operating according to the flesh. It’s easy to give a list of “do’s and don’ts.” This is done in many churches. However, this pattern is still the works of the flesh, not the fruit of the spirit. In other words, we cannot “conform” to a godly life. The Galatians had this problem. Paul called them “foolish” and asked “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” (Galatians 4:9) Israel had this problem too, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” (Matthew 15:8)

- a. This message today is not a performance list
 - b. We are not under the law
 - c. I am not the measure of perfection!
- IV. God's Word as an instruction manual. Many view God's Word as a guide for their lives—to be layered on top of their already existing lives. In other words, "real life" is all the things we currently do; the Bible is there to help us know how to deal with this life. While it is true that God's Word is sufficient for any situation we find ourselves in, the Bible presents a very different picture. "Real life" is the one we have in Christ—the spiritual life. But the only way we can understand this spiritual life and live in its reality is by being transformed by God's Word.
- V. A Transformed life. The moment we believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ, a new life is created in us (II Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:24). Not a like new suit of clothes; it is an entirely new creation. God's Word builds and grows that new life. Our old life (the flesh) is dead, and God's Word gives us the power to reckon that to be so and to put on this new man. God's Word must transform our lives.
- a. What does a transformed life look like (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:17, 22-24)? I'm not going to stand here and tell you a list of things to do or don't do: Don't drink, don't smoke, don't go to movies, don't watch TV, etc. That's legalism. I am going to try to challenge you; I may say some controversial things. God calls us to live a transformed life. How do we do that, and what are some of the things that thwart the transforming influence of God's Word? (Important note: we do not have to "clean up" our lives in order to come to God, but worldly influences can certainly hinder the working of God's Word in our lives.)
 - b. Reminder: This message today is not a performance list
 We are not under the law
 I am not the measure of perfection!
 - c. What do we value? What if the most exciting thing to us was to think about and talk about the Word of God? What if we couldn't wait to get home from work and get refreshed from the Bible? What if we couldn't wait to get together with the saints to talk about things we had learned from the Word? What if God's Word consumed our thinking?
 - i. "Law and liberty cannot rationally become the objects of our love, unless they first become the objects of our knowledge." --James Wilson, Of the Study of the Law in the United States, 1790

- ii. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:21 see also Colossians 3:2)
 - iii. The world’s wisdom and the flesh should hold no attraction for us because, as we have already seen, there is nothing good that comes from that.

- d. What do we have time for?
 - i. Entertainment? TV, music, sports. The average child and adult spend 4 hours/day watching TV (not counting video games and internet and movies). I’m not sure if it is different for Christians. Many even pay for it. Can we justify tolerating things that promote evil, immorality, blasphemy, etc.? Many Christians do. (Romans 16:19, I Corinthians 14:20, 15:33, Ephesians 5:11-12, I Thessalonians 5:22)
 - 1. What if we spent the time of watching TV reading the Bible instead? You say, “That’s not possible! I need time to unwind and veg.” What if the Bible were how we unwound and recharged? (I am picking on TV because it is a centerpiece in most people’s homes, but the principle applies to anything.)
 - 2. Why do we need entertainment? Largely to escape reality. Definition: “to hold the interest of and give pleasure to; divert, amuse.”
 - 3. Why should the world’s entertainment hold our interest? Why should we want to escape the reality of who we are in Christ? What should be more pleasurable than learning more of who we are in Christ?
 - 4. Even if TV, etc. were all “clean” entertainment would it be good? (Anything not consistent with God’s Word is called foolishness.)
 - ii. Are all entertainment, hobbies, etc. bad? No, but the world’s thinking has a corrupting influence on us.
 - iii. A transformed view of time management (Psalm 1:1-2, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:16) (Compare also I Thessalonians 5:17)

- e. With whom do we associate?
 - i. Paul instructs believers to not associate even with *believers* who are living contrary to God’s Word, let alone non-believers. The people that influence our lives must be very important (Proverbs 14:7, 22:24-25 , II Corinthians 6:14-17, Ephesians 5:6-8, II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, I Corinthians 5:9-13 (see also references in (d) above. Also Romans 16:17. Compare also Deuteronomy 7:1-6)).

- ii. Non-Christian friends. Who influences whom? (I Corinthians 5:6-7)
- iii. A transformed view of association (I Corinthians 16:15, I Timothy 5:9-10, Titus 2:3-5) (Note that nearly all of Paul's instructions are about interactions with fellow believers.)

Other references for comparison: Paul continually talks about believers' refreshing or encouraging other believers. Paul desires to be refreshed by Romans (Romans 15:32). Titus refreshed by Corinthians (II Corinthians 7:13) Paul sent Tychicus to comfort the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21-22). These passages demonstrate a pattern of Christians' spending their time with other Christians to edify each other.

- f. Money. Most mysteries in life can be solved by following the money. Paul calls the love of money the "root of all evil (I Timothy 6:10)." Money can so easily snare us and pull us into worldly lusts (worldly thinking). Paul cautions us about its corrupting influence.
 - i. Is money itself bad? Is being wealthy bad?
 - ii. A transformed view of money
 1. Providing for ourselves and family I Timothy 5:8 (cf: II Thessalonians 3:10-12)
 2. A simple life (I Timothy 6:6-9). Timothy is commanded to "flee these things [related to money]" in verse 11
 3. Providing for widows (I Timothy 5:3 and 16)
 4. Helping fellow saints (I Corinthians 16:1-3)
 5. Supporting work of the ministry (Philippians 4:14-18)
- g. How do we educate our children? This is perhaps one of the most important areas. It is a particularly troublesome issue because the percentage of children continuing in the footsteps of their parents' faith is abysmal. One of our primary duties as parents is to teach our children to lead transformed lives.
 - i. Children are experts at spotting hypocrisy. We tell them that the things of God are important, but we don't demonstrate it. We tell them that truth and wisdom come from God's Word, but we often commend them to those who reject God.
 - ii. What about secular school? Can you justify having your children taught by the enemy? To be taught several hours a day by teachers and peers who reject God? There is no such thing as neutral education. It is not just particular facts that are the problem; it is the entire way of thinking. The world tells us many things about what an education is. But how do we evaluate the world's perspective from God's Word? It is foolishness

(Romans 1:21-22, I Corinthians 3:18-20). Analogy of uncouth, foul-mouthed, backwoods, hillbilly, drunkard teaching. Compare to sophisticated foolishness.

1. “Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted” – Vladimir Lenin
- iii. A transformed view of training our children. The Bible says little about how to raise children. I believe it is because we primarily teach our children by example. The transformation in our lives will automatically teach our children.
 1. Deuteronomy 6:7-9 “and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children...” The command here implies a constant, continuous instruction.
 2. Ephesians 6:4. “Nurture” It does not say that to send them out as soldiers of God. How do you nurture a baby? You protect him from anything harmful until he is old enough. You cover him from the sun, you put covers on the outlets, you put chemicals out of reach. (Why is the only instruction regarding children that they obey their parents? It suggests there will be little other influences in their lives they need to deal with.)
- h. “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:24). What keeps us from following God’s Word? The worldly influences we discussed above are often a problem. Sometimes we are too influenced by the world’s thinking to see how it is possible (parable of the sower (Mark 4:18-19)). The ultimate problem is that we don’t quite believe the Word of God. (Also example of Peter (Matthew 14:28-31))
 - i. “Be not conformed” (Romans 12:2). The world’s way seems attractive to our flesh, but we must by faith reckon our flesh with its worldly lusts dead. Will power is not sufficient because what comes naturally to us is walking in the flesh.
 - ii. “Quench not the Spirit” (I Thessalonians 5:19)
 - iii. “Be transformed,” How? “By the renewing of your minds.” (Romans 12:2). Again we must do this by faith; it is an act of faith not of will. It doesn’t happen by virtue of attending church or volunteering at church. It only occurs through God’s Word, but remember, the Word of God is foolishness to our flesh (natural man). See also I Timothy 4:13-16.
 - iv. I attempted to point out significant areas of life in order to challenge you to think about what a transformed life is like and to consider things that may be corrupting influences, things that hinder the Word of God. In no way should you take away a list of “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not.”

The renewing of our minds is an ongoing process. We should continually be assessing our thinking and actions to see if they are conforming to the world or being transformed by God's Word.

Closing thoughts. Ecclesiastes 12:13. Nothing the world has to offer is worth anything. The works of the flesh brings death. All is vanity, Solomon says. The only thing that matters, has meaning, and has lasting value is what God has to offer. The only way we can "get" what God has to offer is through the renewing of our minds that comes from His Word.