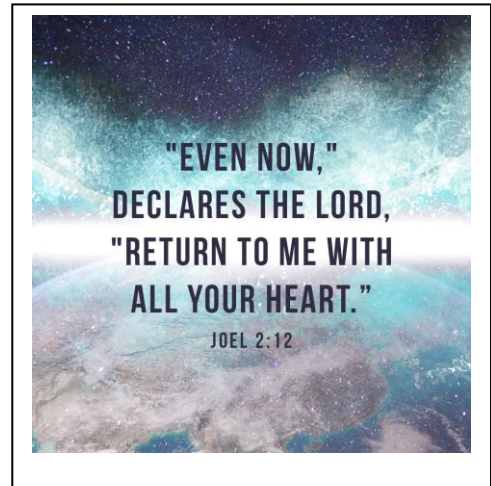


Sunday 13th Feb 2022 –

Be Transformed.

Scripture: Romans 12:1-8

We are continuing our series we started last week called “Collide”. We looked at the principle of standing firm in our faith. The world attempts to offer us a different set of values, one that includes things that are initially seductive, but ultimately inconsistent and difficult to stand on. But the question is how can we be kept from being conformed to the world, especially when we are in the world? The world wants to mould us into its shape.



What can we do to protect ourselves from being pressurised into conformity? What can we do to be inoculated against the moulding pressure of the world? Paul says: Don't allow yourself to be moulded by this world. Instead, be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." But what does He mean? How are we transformed? What are our responsibilities?

1. What Does Paul Mean?

The word “transformed” is the very word from which we get the English word ‘metamorphosis’! Metamorphosis happens when a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly. It is, as if Paul is saying, "don't be a caterpillar anymore, be metamorphosised! Be the butterfly you ought to be!

Why continue to crawl on leaves and eat bitter, yucky vegetable matter, when you can be flying free and drinking sweet nectar?"

Why continue to fill your soul with the bitter pulps of this world, when you can enjoy the sweetness of a godly walk with Christ.

Paul does not explicitly say what he wants us to be transformed into. But it is clear that he wants us to be transformed from being earthly-children of the world into heavenly-minded children of God. He wants us to be transformed from being the kind of persons that the world loves to the kind of persons that please God and glorify Him.

A caterpillar that has been transformed into a butterfly will no longer love to munch on leaves. It would never again do so. It would spend the rest of its days drinking nectar and frolicking in the sun.

So too it must be with us. We must be transformed that we may be spiritual butterflies enjoying the warmth of the Son of Righteousness and drink the sweet nectar of the Word.

2. How Are We Transformed?

Paul says that God is not interested in mere outward changes. He didn't say to be conformed to the Church or to the Law. That would only make us Pharisees or legalists. Paul says that God is interested in our hearts, not just our outward appearance and actions.

So he tells us that we must be transformed. That is, we must be changed not only in terms of outward behaviour, but internally!
You know, a caterpillar is not transformed into a butterfly simply by

growing wings and a proboscis!

Let's have a little nature study. **SLIDE**

The caterpillar first becomes a pupa or a chrysalis, and then an amazing transformation happens within the shell of the chrysalis. If you cut open a newly formed chrysalis, you will not find a caterpillar inside. Instead you will find a soupy paste, for within the shell of the chrysalis the caterpillar has dissolved into a soupy paste. And there within the outward shell this caterpillar soup is wonderfully reshaped by the hand of God into a butterfly with all its internal organs, tissues, legs, proboscis and wings.

So it is with us: We must be changed from within. We need a radical personal transformation, an inner change, a renewing of the mind. It requires a new attitude, a new perspective, a new disposition, a new way of thinking. In other words, we are to be totally changed from within.

Who can do this work, but God alone. Notice that the word "be transformed" means that it is not something that we can actually do by ourselves. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (**Job 14:4**). It is not something passive – it is something we must continue to allow to happen – our transformation.

Transformation is a continuous work that is done in us and to us. This is the work of sanctification in our hearts. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, where we are renewed after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness"

The Spirit of God is the one who does this work. Paul tells us that God has from the beginning chosen us to have salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (**2 Thes 2:13b**).

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. Now, this work of sanctification is a continuous work in our hearts until the day that we meet the Lord. This transformation does not happen as a matter of impulse or at the snap of a finger. It is something that involves hard work and heart work. It is something that must be done by the Spirit of God.

And as Paul says this as a command from God – be transformed. What does that mean? It means that we must not be totally passive like the ‘caterpillar’ in the chrysalis. It is something that must be done to us, but we must respond to the work that is done in us.

Paul puts it this way in **Philippians 2:12-13** to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is the Spirit of God who works in us for His good pleasure. We must respond to the gracious work that is being done in us. We have responsibilities to fulfil if we would be transformed.

3. What Are Our Responsibilities?

Paul says to be transformed by renewing our mind. What does He mean? Paul is not suggesting that Christianity is a mindless, emotional or mystical religion. We cannot live the Christian life without thinking. Our mind is the citadel of our soul.

Paul would be horrified by the kind of Christianity that is promoted in many circles today where there is a lot of emphasis on the heart and on

love, but very little emphasis on God's word, Christian doctrine and the cultivation of the mind. Every Christian must be a thinking person. Paul reminds us to use our mind to consider what is our reasonable service in response to what God has done for us. The word 'reasonable' may also mean 'logical.' The Christian life is logic on fire, a logic that blossoms into the flower of gratitude.

How can we renew our minds? Simply by continuing in the Word, as the Lord Jesus in His prayer to His Father says in **John 17:17** "Transform them and make them holy through Your truth for Your word is truth." And Jesus tells His disciples in **John 8:31-32**: "If you continue obeying and abiding in My word, you will know that truth, and the truth will set you free.

How do we do that? Simply by hearing and reading the Word and then prayerfully putting it into practice. But we must begin by opening ourselves up to all the means of God's grace offered to us, especially the reading and hearing of the Word of God!

Growth in grace does not come magically. It is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit which guides our faithful use of the means of His grace. God causes the growth, but we have to water our soul with the Word of God. We have to make it the top priority in our life to increase in the knowledge of Christ.

Let's not allow the television to dumb down our mind or allow the pleasures of life to rob us of time spent studying and listening to God's Word!

We cannot assume or think that we know enough already. If we claim that, then we must ensure our knowledge of the Lord is increasing and growing. If we don't want to increase our knowledge of the Lord but continue to speak as if we do, we can harm other believers in Christ.

Many steer away from Church doctrine by saying that it is only for those who love theology. But we need to remember that many of the Jewish people departed from Christ when He began to preach hard doctrine. If we refuse hard doctrine, we will be following the example of the unbelieving Jewish people.

Remember, that it is only by the renewing of our minds that our lives will be transformed.

Sadly, many have become so comfortable in their faith and have very little motivation to improve their spiritual life, thinking that one hour every week spent sleepily attending a worship service is enough for their souls. But if all you receive from the Word is from the one hour of our morning worship, then you are backsliding.

The LORD, says, My people are bent on backsliding! If your mind is not constantly being transformed by the renewing of your mind, then you are backsliding!

Resolve to never excuse yourself from the means of grace whether public or private. How easy is it to come up with an excuse to not attend weekly prayer meeting, Sunday worship, or to regularly study the Bible?

The devil has a bag full of excuses enough for all of us. And many of them are very good excuses indeed. But the devil does not give his excuses for free. You have to buy them. You have to buy them with your soul!

Paul is saying to be transformed by renewing our mind or else we will backslide and slowly be swallowed up with worldly issues. The world we live in is like a slippery slope. We must either be climbing upward to Heaven or we will be sliding downward. No one can remain at the status quo. Our refusal to conform to this world's values must go deeper than just our behaviours and customs. It must be firmly planted in our mind.

God wants us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices – daily laying aside our own desires to follow Him, putting all our energy and resources at His disposal and trusting Him to guide us.

1 Sam 15:22 tells us that our obedience and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. It's about looking at the reasons for making the sacrifice rather than at the sacrifice itself.

God makes it clear that obedience from the heart is much more important. We must let God transform us into a new person by changing that way we think. Our souls have been made alive by the Holy Spirit.

Though our metamorphosis is not yet completed and won't be until we are glorified, we can already begin to enjoy the life of a spiritual butterfly.

We must exercise our wings in prayer and feed on the nectar of the word.

We must not starve our souls nor allow it to degenerate by a lack of exercise; nor grieve the Holy Spirit by hardening our hearts and refusing to feed our souls that He has made alive.

We must not sell our souls to the devil by buying excuses to refuse to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

God has good, pleasing and perfect plans for us. He wants us to be transformed people with renewed minds, living to honour and obey Him. Because He wants only what is best for us and because He gave His Son to make our new life possible, we should joyfully give ourselves as living sacrifices for His service.