

Introduction

1. Transformation
 - a. What we believe about how we become more like Christ
 - b. “Trying vs. Training”
2. Short review/background
 - a. After salvation, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit begins to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ as we cooperate with him
 - b. Other resources can help (books, community, life experience etc.) but the Holy Spirit is doing the work
 - c. We obey God not just because that’s what we are supposed to do, but because of the life and hope we find in him as we respond with our entire lives, rooted in the story of redemption that is being woven by God
3. Overview
 - a. Scriptural context for transformation, and how it fits in the larger picture of what God has done through history.
 - b. Introduce the concept of transformation, and how it is accomplished
 - c. Walk through Romans 12:1-2, break it down in order to talk about how we are transformed into the image of Christ
 - d. Wrap up by explaining the differences between trying to transform and training to transform
4. Ephesians 3:14-21 (NLT)
 - a. Read to give an overview of the amazing story God is writing, and how we are a part of that story
 - b. When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. (NLT)
 - c. Hope that through this message today we can begin to understand the process of transformation in a way that causes us to respond with joyful obedience and excitement as we recognize what God is doing in and through us
 - d. The temptation is to think that if your transformation isn’t dramatic (not an impressive testimony, etc) that it isn’t “real” or impressive.
 - i. We can try to make our testimony more dramatic

- ii. Consider the reality: you were enemies with almighty God, alienated from him by sin, and now he calls you his son or daughter. That simple fact alone should be “dramatic” enough
- e. As we transition into talking about the specifics of transformation and what it looks like, keep in mind the amazing gift of salvation that has been bestowed on you already
- f. Quick note for unsaved people: I hope this encourages you to consider and ask questions, as you begin to see what we as followers of Christ believe about our lives being transformed

Trying vs. Training

1. How many of you have heard or said the phrase “I am trying to be more like Jesus?” It’s a common thing to say and think.
 - a. Though our intentions may be pure, saying and thinking this to ourselves over time can subconsciously create a mindset that we need to just “try harder” to be more like Jesus
 - b. This creates a cycle that we all may be familiar with: we get convicted, try really hard for a couple of days, and then get exhausted and defeated – simply because we are TRYING hard
 - c. We need to understand what Scripture teaches about transformation because without a clear understanding we will continue to get trapped in this cycle of trying, failing, and being discouraged
2. MAIN POINT: We cooperate with the transformative work of the Holy Spirit through a lifestyle of training wisely, not trying harder.
3. Key text: Romans 12:1-2
 - a. Read – five different translations. So much here, look for differences and similarities in words and phrases
 - i. ESV - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - ii. CSB - Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. ² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.
 - iii. NKJV - 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. ² 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.

iv. NASB - Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

v. NLT - And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

vi. Mainly going to use ESV

b. These are just two little verses, but they are packed with truth that we could discuss for many different messages

c. Serves as a bridge between the more “theological” section of Romans 1-11 and the more “practical” section of Romans 12-16

i. Important note: theology is always practical, and our practice should be theological

ii. If your theology isn't practical, check to make sure it is actually Scriptural. (example of Liberty debates) How does this apply to your life?

iii. In the same way, we don't just believe things for no reason. Some of you may say you don't like theology. Do you have beliefs? You have theology. Theology is meant to be owned and practiced

d. This is what the “therefore” is there for – to be a bridge – because of all these truths, this is how we should live. Romans 12:1-2 serves as a diving board into this next section

4. Let's walk through this passage and talk through some phrases that will help us understand what spiritual formation is. This passage builds up to it, giving us some context on what we believe about being transformed

Romans 12:-1-2

1. “mercies of God”

a. Out of God's mercy we are obedient – his mercy is the basis

b. Everything that we do in service to God is based on the mercy that he has shown towards us.

- c. Paul has spent a long time describing this mercy that God has shown us, and is now basically saying “because of all this mercy that has been poured out on us, this is what we should do in response.”
- 2. “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable”
 - a. Using the term “sacrifice” calls back to the old way of atoning for sin (old in that we used to sacrifice animals), in the same way we are set apart and pleasing to God
 - b. In the same way, we give our ENTIRE selves to God, the body, the mind, the heart. In a different sense, we are alive and willing sacrifices (even if at times we may feel less that willing). We don’t often think about surrendering the body, but we need to realize that our entire selves need to be presented to God, not just parts of us.
 - c. Not something we can turn off and on
 - d. You have probably heard the old illustration that living sacrifices like to climb back off the altar. This is true! It is important to recognize that our sin nature tries to thwart the process of becoming more like Jesus – whether by worldly desires or trying to rely on our good actions rather than faith.
- 3. “spiritual worship”
 - a. The Greek word here for spiritual is “logikos,” which implies that this worship is informed or deliberate. So Paul is being clear that the difference between an animal sacrifice and the type of sacrifices that we are is that we *know* what we are doing. This also hearkens back to Christ, who humbled himself and went to the cross as a sacrifice, knowing what he was doing.
 - b. Combining the words “spiritual” and “worship” we see that worship does not just mean singing songs. We worship intentionally through offering our entire selves up to God as a sacrifice. Worshipping through specific acts of adoration and praise are mentioned throughout the NT and elsewhere, but it is clear that true worship is worshipping the Lord through our entire lives – this is what we believe about worship.
 - c. How do we intentionally worship God? By surrendering our entire selves to him as a willing sacrifice.
- 4. “conformed to this world”
 - a. We need to repeatedly keep the world from forcing us into a mold or pattern
 - b. The implication here is that without the renewal of the mind, we will conform to the world. Since we are transformed by the renewal of our mind, it would make sense that if we do not renew our mind, we will conform to the pattern of worldly thinking
 - c. We need to realize we are never stagnant, spiritually. We are either becoming more like Christ, or more like the world. Feeling disconnected from God, stagnant, alone, while not spending any time with God or in

community, does not mean we are in a holding pattern. We are conforming to the world, and before we know it we'll be in step with worldly thinking.

5. "be transformed"
 - a. This all builds up to this command: "be transformed by the renewal of your mind"
 - b. The word transformation implies that who you are before Christ is different than who you become after salvation. There is a change, a difference. This may be dramatic, or more subtle. It may be fast, or over time. As we mentioned earlier.
 - c. This same word is used in the gospels for Jesus' transfiguration - the ongoing renewal and change in you that Jesus brings through his Spirit.
 - d. This is something we need to do often. "Reset to stupid." Renewal is not a one and done thing. We must consistently allow the Holy Spirit to renew our mind and hearts.
6. "discern the will of God"
 - a. The Greek meaning is to find out the worth of something by putting it into practice.
 - b. So by the renewal of our minds, we begin to be able to make godly, biblical decisions and consider things from a godly worldview
 - c. Ultimately, a transformed person someone who can do the "right thing at the right time in the right way with the right motive" – John Ortberg
6. All of this should lead to one main point: MAIN POINT: We cooperate with the transformative work of the Holy Spirit through a lifestyle of training wisely, not trying harder. WE CANNOT TRY TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS.
7. Thoughts on trying versus training
 - a. It can be hard to draw a dividing line between training and trying. They can seem similar, but they are very different. While training does require your cooperation, it is different in that the strength and ability comes from a life of submitting to the Holy Spirit, not from your own effort.
 - b. Trying
 - i. Implies loneliness
 - ii. Obligatory
 - iii. Failure is final
 - iv. Your design
 - v. Foolish
 - vi. Safe/Limited
 - vii. Reactionary
 - viii. Immediate
 - c. Training
 - i. Someone is training you – you are not alone (Proverbs 3:11-12, John 14:26)

1. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.
2. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

ii. Joyful

iii. Failure can be redeemed, part of the process (example of Peter)

1. Repentance and renewal can lead to the strengthening of our faith, while

iv. Your trainer's design (Romans 8:26-29)

1. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
2. We want to design our own training program – we want everything to work together for what we consider “our good” to be

v. Wise (Ephesians 5:15-17, Galatians 3:2-3)

1. We don't know how to train ourselves – we can't do it. We aren't qualified.
2. Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
3. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearting with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

vi. Unlimited (Mark 10:17-22)

1. We cannot put boundaries around the transforming work of Christ – our human efforts we can focus on stuff we want to at that point
2. You know the commandments: do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother. And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” And

Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

vii. Preparatory

1. Romans 12:1-2

viii. Takes time/way of life (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

1. We want immediate gratification – example of training/weight loss
2. Train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

d. WE MUST ENTER A LIFELONG TRAINING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

8. Conclusion/Takeaways

- a. I’m going to not give too much practical application, I don’t want to go into next week’s teaching about how we should behave in light of our beliefs about transformation
- b. Transformation comes about through a training relationship with the Holy Spirit, made possible by Jesus Christ
- c. The Holy Spirit is a qualified trainer – we are not.
- d. Training processes take time – a lifetime
- e. We must overhaul our view of our relationship with Christ to not be one of obligation, but one of desire and passion
 - i. Only then can we move from a fruitless life of trying hard to be like Jesus, but failing, into opening up our life to being trained by the Holy Spirit
- f. Where are you?
 - i. Unsaved
 - ii. Saved but feeling exhausted, frustrated and ashamed?
 1. Understand that religious activity is a great place to hide from God and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit
 - iii. You think you are saved but have never experienced any kind of transformation that comes from laying down your desires before God?
 1. Praying the “sinner’s prayer” does not necessarily indicated belief in the transforming power of God
- g. Wherever you are today, I pray that you allow the Lord to work on your heart and change your mindset from one of trying to one of allowing the Lord to transform you. This must be a consistent process of renewing your mind, as we see in Romans 12. If that means believing on him for the first time, praise God. If that means repenting of where you have hidden from

the Holy Spirit, praise God. If that means committing or recommitting yourself to the training process, praise God. Now, how should we act based on what we believe? That's for next week...