

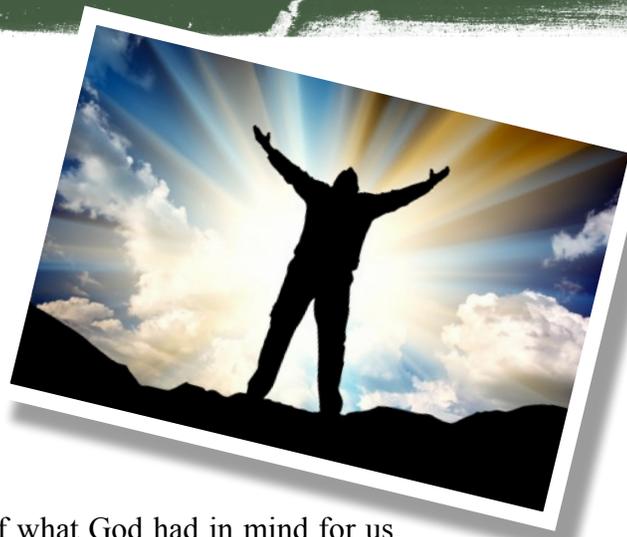
GOD'S DESIGN OF HUMANS— OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

PART 2

SALVATION, GLORIFICATION, TRANSFORMATION

“ *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.*”

Romans 12:2 NKJV



Review of Study 8

Understanding God's creation of humans gives us a better idea of what God had in mind for us. God specifically uses the word *created* three times in Genesis 1: first, for the creation of the physical universe; second, for the creation of the *soul* (self-awareness); and third, for the creation of the human *spirit* (God-awareness). Humans were the crowning act of creation, being created in His image, with three distinct parts/aspects: body, soul, and spirit. We are distinguished from the animals by our spirit, which defines us as human. Since animals have no spirit, they are incapable of having any concept of God. The human spirit is a purposeful creative act of God, not an evolutionary process or adaptation. Both males and females were created in His image; meaning we were created without sin, with the ability to make choices, with a mind to reason/think, and with the ability to understand spiritual things. God has a plan corresponding to each of our three aspects. First, He wants to save us (relates to our spirit), then to transform us by renewing our minds (relates to our soul), and finally, to give us a glorified body in the future.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD

This study will consider our three parts/aspects and the plan God has for each of them, that is, salvation, transformation, and glorification. The topic of transformation is so poorly understood that it will be given more thorough coverage in Studies 10-11.

The Secret

Salvation was carefully considered in Studies 4-7, but there are additional items we must consider. Going back

to our design, it is obvious any designer would plan things thoroughly and well in advance of beginning any project. Similarly, God's plan was fully developed before He created anything. Part of His plan was to keep something a secret, not to deceive or deprive us, but to assure His plan would work. If that secret thing were known ahead of time, the plan would not work. Our fate, and that means each of us, depended upon that secret being kept at all costs. The Age of Grace (the Age in

which we live) was the secret (called the mystery in the Bible) in His eternal plan. Had our Age been known ahead of time, the powers of darkness would not have crucified Christ, and without His death no one could ever be saved. **"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the ruler of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"** (1 Cor. 2:7-8). The mystery (secret) was not that Christ had to die—that was well prophesied; it was a whole new, unprophesied Age of Grace.

As wrong as Christ's death may seem, an innocent Man dying at the hands of sinners, His death was absolutely essential if any sins were to be forgiven. No sins could be forgiven if the penalty for them was not paid. If no sins were forgiven, all of us would be condemned to Hell. God's love compelled Him to provide the payment for all the sins of the world; that payment required the sacrifice of His Son on the Cross. So for thousands of years, God kept this secret in His mind, hidden from everyone, even the angels in Heaven. He did not reveal it in any way or to any one, not even in symbols or types in the Bible. If it were in symbols or figures of some sort, Satan would have found out—he is no dummy. We must recall the *mystery* was the world's biggest secret of all time; but now that it has been revealed, it is the "good news" we must proclaim to others, **"and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ"** (Eph. 3:9; also see Col. 1:25-26; Rom. 16:25-26).

At just the right time, God revealed that mystery to the Apostle Paul. The mystery has been an unbelievable blessing to all humans around the world because in our Age, God is pouring out His grace. In our Age: we are saved by grace, all people are equal, believers become members of the Body of Christ, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Heaven, we are indwelt by the Spirit, and He transforms our minds.

Salvation for the Spirit

When a person believes that she or he is a sinner and that Christ died to pay for her or his sins (a personal understanding that He did it for each sinner), then that person becomes saved (for this study being saved is basically equivalent to regeneration, redeemed, born-again, recreated, reconciled, new creation, salvation...). Salvation is based upon personal belief; it is not related to a person's religion or religious ceremonies. That means each person has to believe he or she is a sinner whose sins have already condemned him or her to death (Hell), and Christ paid for those sins. **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (Rom. 6:23). Salvation is freely granted to the believer by God's grace; no one deserves it—that is what grace is about: **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"** (Eph. 2:8-9). Belief is what He asks from us, and with the slightest faith on our part, He dispenses His grace. We can never earn or pay God back; it is a gift to us based upon His love for us. **"For He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"** (2 Cor. 5:21, parentheses added)

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*The first and greatest punishment of the sinner
is the conscience of sin.*
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Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Roman philosopher, (4 BC - 65 AD)

Salvation is an *instantaneous act* of God that recreates, regenerates, and saves us spiritually the moment we believe. Instantaneous means it is not something that takes any amount of time (as though God were waiting for us to accomplishing some spiritual works, or give up some sin, or meet some standard of good behavior). It is *complete* and we do not get some now and some later; we get it all at once. Not only is it instantaneous and complete, it is based upon *an act of God* whereby He dispenses His grace. This act of God cannot be undone

by us, for example, if we have a period of unbelief, commit a certain sin, or live in sin. The omniscient God knew full well how we would behave in the future, before He saved us. Furthermore, God promises this act will last until we go to Heaven (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 4:30). Thus, we have a salvation that is securely sealed and that will last for all eternity. He created the seal and only He can break it, which He says He will not do.

Discuss: Read Eph. 4:30: the believer is "sealed until the day of redemption," meaning God has placed a seal upon your salvation. Discuss the comfort of knowing your salvation rests upon His faithfulness, not your actions or your faithfulness to Him.

Salvation is accomplished totally by God. We are incapable of doing anything about our *dead spiritual condition*, so God does it all by His grace. Salvation is more complex than we are capable of understanding. The good thing is we do not have to understand all that takes place when we are saved, that understanding will slowly develop over the years. However, we accrue all sorts of spiritual blessings that we had no clue existed. These blessings are inherent in salvation and each believer receives them the instant he or she is saved (Eph. Chapters 1 and 2)

Glorification for the Body

We will now continue with God's plan(s) for our entire person. After salvation, transformation would logically come next. However, we will consider glorification of our body first, because it is a short topic, and then we can spend considerable time on transformation.

His plan for the believer's body is to give us a glorified body in the future, at the Rapture. The Rapture is the event that ends our Age and is part of the mystery (a secret coming of Jesus Christ to take His own out of the world). There are no signs or wonders preceding it, so no one knows when it will occur; it cannot be predicted. We do know it will occur before the terrible events that begin at the start of the seven-year Tribulation. If we die before the Rapture, our souls and spirits go to be with the Lord,

while our bodies lie in the grave (1 Cor. 15:50-57). At the Rapture, the bodies of the deceased in Christ will be raised, incorruptible and new; the new glorified bodies will be reunited with their respective soul and spirit to live forever with the Lord, **"who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body..."** (Phil. 3:21a). Those who are still alive when He comes will meet Him in the air; we instantly will be given new, glorified bodies and our body, soul, and spirit will be with Him forever. **"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"** (1 Thes. 4:16).

During this life, He provides for our bodies in countless ways, which we most likely do not sufficiently recognize. However, it is our new glorified bodies that show His plan for this aspect of our being. Our new bodies will be perfect: all diseases, deformities, handicaps, and imperfections will be removed. We do not know what exactly we will look like, but it seems we will be able to recognize each other. For example, at the Transfiguration of Christ (Matt. 17:2), Moses and Elijah were there with glorified bodies and the three apostles recognized them; how could they recognize them when they had never seen them? Were they told these were Moses and Elijah? Perhaps they recognize them based upon other factors, say their characters, which were mentioned in the Bible. This study will not delve further into glorification, other than to note that God has carefully considered the eternal welfare of each of our aspects.

Transformation for the Soul

The key verse for this study is, **"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"** (Romans 12:1-2).

In this study, it is necessary to keep the wording true to Scripture and to keep it as simple as possible to maintain the flow of thought. Transformation applies to the soul. However, the words *mind and soul* seem to portray similar meanings in the Bible, and the words *spirit and heart* generally have similar meanings. Thus, in this study, *mind and soul* will mean the same thing and *heart and spirit* will mean the same thing. However, there does seem to be considerable overlap in what the various terms mean.

His plan for the believer's mind is to renew it, to make it completely new, thereby transforming the entire life, **"...and be renewed in the spirit of your mind"** (Eph. 4:23). Living a sanctified life (holy and God-pleasing) is based upon this renewal, that is, upon the Holy Spirit producing His character, will, values, and desires in our hearts. Ultimately, we see that His grace is seen not only in salvation, but in every aspect of our being, and at all times in our lives. His transforming power assures that which humankind so desperately seeks: a sound mind.

To know we do not have to be held captive or dominated by personal deficiencies and inadequacies is exciting. God certainly accepts us just as we are for salvation, and His earnest desire is not to leave us in the condition He finds us. His desire after salvation is to start changing us from the inside, renewing us from the depths of our being (changing how we think, which, in turn, modifies our actions). The emphasis is not who we were when we became saved, but who we can become by the grace of God. As the Lord renews us deep inside our minds, our ways of thinking become transformed. This renewal changes our soul, and we begin to think and act like the new person we are spiritually in Christ. We acquire new minds and that truly changes who we are. The Lord knows this change is needed, if we are to be like Christ. Otherwise, we will retain our old deceitful hearts and minds.

The word **transformed** in Romans 12:2 is the Greek word *metamorphosis* (*meta* means change or transfer, *morph* means form); thus, transformed means *a change*

in form. The idea is to change our minds into another form, to *transfigure* them. We commonly use the word metamorphosis (transformation) to describe the change of a rather unattractive chrysalis (larva) into a beautiful butterfly. Christ's transfiguration in Mark 9:2-13 was a metamorphosis. While Christ's transfiguration was rapid, our minds' transformation is a renewal process, a life-long process. Transformation, or, if you prefer, "morphing," is an internal and real *change in form* of our minds by the Holy Spirit. This renewed mind then leads us to live, think, and reason in a godly manner.

Many Christians confuse or equate the biblical word transformation with salvation. Unbelievers are told if they place their faith in Christ, He will transform them, that is, give them salvation. Faith is the key for receiving God's grace and His grace saves/regenerates, but that certainly is not transformation. Transformation results from the renewal of our minds, a process that begins after salvation and proceeds for the rest of our earthly lives. The degree our minds are renewed is related to the degree we allow God to work in our lives.

A believer's mind has to be changed in such a way that the old nature (with its values, beliefs, and practices) is replaced by that which conforms to the mind of Christ. We are not genetically programmed, nor are we capable of transforming ourselves. In addition, there is no indication that God will transform us automatically, nor will He force transformation upon us. The Word teaches He will renew our minds as we allow Him to work in our lives and cooperate with Him in the process (this is walking in the Spirit).

"Believers are commanded to change [if you prefer, exchange]* the expressions of the old life and nature for that of the new nature that indwells every Christian by the renewing of the mind by the Holy Spirit. "Renewing" means "a complete change for the better" effected by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).¹ Not only does a renewed mind

* The phrase in brackets was added by the author.

¹ Brock, Robert; *The Commands of Christ for Christian Living*; Exposition press; 1997

change us in the depth of our being, but we will be able to grasp, at last, the good, acceptable (well pleasing), and perfect (complete) will of God. We will see the will of God is exactly what we need in our lives: "...**but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God**" (Rom. 12:2). Ultimately, His will

in our lives will prove to you, family, church, society, even the angels in Heaven (Ephesians 3:10) that the perfect will of God is a gracious provision for our mental and spiritual well-being.

Your Thoughts: What does it mean to you to have a sound mind?

TAKE TO HEART

Summary

God had a plan for each aspect of who we are, but that plan and the fate of humanity depended upon God keeping a secret. The Age of Grace was the secret (called the mystery in the Bible). Had our Age been known ahead of time, the powers of darkness would not have crucified Christ, and without His death no one could ever be saved. If the secret were found out before the intended time, God's plan(s) would have come to naught, including His entire plan for our body, soul, and spirit.

Salvation is His plan for our spirit; it is an instantaneous and complete *act of God* based upon belief in Christ. Giving us a new glorified body is His plan for our body, and this occurs at the Rapture. Our new bodies will be perfect: all diseases, deformities, handicaps, and imperfections will be removed. His plan for the believer's mind (soul) is to renew it, to make it completely new, thereby transforming our entire lives as we begin to think and act like the new person we are in Christ. Transformation means *a change in form*, and the idea is to change our minds in such a way that the old nature (with its values, beliefs, and practices) is replaced by that which conforms to the mind of Christ.

Gospel

God's desire, His plan, for each of us is to be "found in Him" when He searches the hearts of humans. The

heart/spirit that is not in Him is lost and subject to damnation. However, it is easy to be in Him by becoming righteous. Through faith, God gives us Christ's righteousness: "**and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith**" (Phil. 3:9).

Encouragement

The correct perspective in life helps us not to get discouraged. Our perspective is often influenced by the adversities of life, causing us to think we are not right with the Lord or wondering why He allows such things to happen. The believer is instructed in the Bible that adversity is used by God to create needed change within us. Thus, "*What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the Master calls a butterfly*" (Richard Bach). It is often the difficulties of life that God uses to transform us from within, that is, He uses adversity to do something good in us. So, we take heart, as struggling caterpillars, knowing the Master is creating within us the characteristics of Christ. May the Lord create within you the joy and hope you need, and to experience His fellowship and comfort throughout the circumstances of life.

Note: Adult Studies 10-11 discuss transformation in greater detail.