

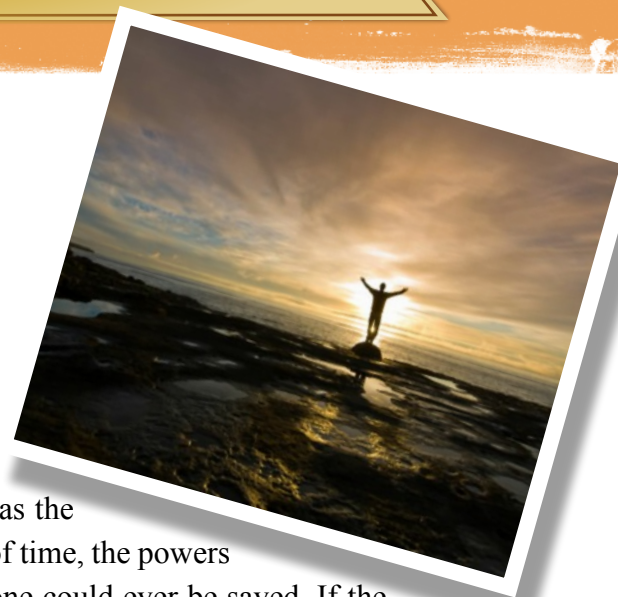
# A SOUND MIND—TRANSFORMATION

## PART 1

### A RENEWED MIND TRANSFORMS YOUR LIFE

“and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,”

*Eph. 4:23 NKJV*



#### Review of Study 9

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.

#### Introduction

Studies 10-11 have borrowed considerably from, *Biblical Transformation—The Renewed Mind*, by Steve Shober (also author of this study). The eBook just mentioned is available from Amazon and the *Grace 4 You* website, [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com). The topic of a sound mind and transformation were introduced in Study 9, which should be read before Studies 10-11.

When we are saved, our "old man"<sup>1</sup> (former non-regenerated self, that is, who we were before being saved) is crucified with Christ and then we are raised again in newness of life, all in the spiritual-heavenly realm. Spiritually, our old man is dead and the new man, created in Christ Jesus, is alive. In practical, earthly terms, our old man is still around and we wrestle with him daily; thus, we are asked to live as though the old man were dead (Eph. 4:22) and the new man alive (that is how God sees us, and now we are to act that way). You can be sure the old and new man

<sup>1</sup> The term "old man" is used in this study since it is used in the NKJV; but it also applies to women. The non-gender-specific term would be "former self."

war against each other for control of our minds (Rom. 7:19-25). The only way to put off the old man and put on the new man is by being renewed in the spirit of one's mind (transformation), **"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"** (Eph. 4:23-24). The spirit of the mind is a reference to our mental attitude, state of mind, and disposition with respect to God and spiritual realities.<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit influences a believer's spirit and mind; this influence accomplishes a renewal in the mind and allows a person to have a mind that "agrees" with the new man (new person) created by God. Renewing of the mind does not recreate the mind; it changes the mind and rearranges it so it functions in a new way.

The mind is where the battle occurs for our thoughts, goals, and values. The battle is between our new spiritual nature and our old corrupted minds, the world, and Satanic influences. Paul, in Ephesians 4:23, is, in effect, saying, "Change your outward expression from that which you had before salvation, an expression which came from your totally depraved nature and was representative of it, to an expression which comes from your regenerated inner being and is representative of it ... accomplished through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who when definitely, and intelligently, and habitually yielded to puts sin out of the believer's life and produces His own fruit. He does that by controlling the mental processes of the believer."<sup>3</sup>

### Why Renewal Is Needed

The need for renewed minds is related to the defacing of His image due to sin. Because we are sinners, our minds are polluted by the world and our own choices—we need mental detoxification, mind renewal, and the mind of Christ (to complement our new position in Christ). A renewed mind produces within us a new value system that is based upon His beliefs, desires, and goals (Phil. 2:13), so that we can finally think like Christ. Obtaining

<sup>2</sup> Henricksen, William; *Galatians and Ephesians*; Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Wuest; *Wuest's Word Studies*; William Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI; Reprinted 1980.

a Christ-like mind is the way we put off the old man and put on the new man (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:10).

Renewal is also needed because the benefits of transformation relate to good health. Renewal of the mind helps remove negative and obsessive thoughts, as well as unnecessary stress, which are sources of mental and physical illness.<sup>4</sup> In this study, negative and obsessive thoughts refer to the constant (obsessive) thinking about the negative events in life, whether true or not. Such thinking has serious mental and physical health implications, such as: depression, stress-related illness, and heart disease. A transformed mind can deal with such events in life without their continued control of our emotions and health.

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*Diseases of the soul are more dangerous and more numerous than those of the body.*

Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman Philosopher (106-43 BC)

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We all carry a certain amount of mental baggage (hidden in the deep recesses of our minds) and it holds us down, keeping us captive to the past. This baggage results from the unfair, unjust, and wrong things that have been done to us over the courses of our lives. This baggage has to be dealt with, or it will cause health and relationship problems. Negative thinking and mental baggage keep a person captive to the past and prevent a person from advancing in life. Try as we may, we cannot get rid of them; they are always there holding us down. God understands and instructs us: **"...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead"** (Phil. 3:13b). The only way to move forward is to forget the past, and that is done through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (the past is not really forgotten; transformation destroys the control the past has on our lives so we can function properly).

**Your Thoughts:** If negative thinking or past baggage dominates your life, what do you think such

<sup>4</sup> Morter, Ted M.; *Cell Health and Wellness*; Lifetime Books, Inc.; Homestead, FL; 1992 .

thinking/baggage will do to your physical and mental health?

### Transformation or Legalistic Conformance

We can think we are being transformed, when in reality we have substituted something else as an inadvertent way of avoiding God's directive. Instead of really having a renewed mind, we substitute things like information and conformance to Christian rules. Information and conformance are sneaky things. If we do not allow ourselves to be transformed, we will settle for being informed (ever learning, II Timothy 3:7) or conformed to something other than Christ. That "something other" is generally legalistic conformance to Christian rules (supposedly to prevent conformance to the world). These two make a person seem godly by virtue of his or her appearance of spirituality. While they entirely miss the biblical directive, they give an outward manifestation that can be used to cover up the lack of true renewal. John Ortberg says, "If we do not become changed from the inside-out--if we don't morph--we will be tempted to find external methods to satisfy our needs to feel that we're different from those outside the faith."<sup>5</sup> It is here we Christians must be careful not to fall into one of the adversary's clever schemes, that is, the belief that by not conforming to the world (being separated) we are obeying Romans 12.

Legalistic conformance (to man-made religious rules of do's and don'ts) results in a person being against what the world offers. This type of conformity is indeed non-conformance to the world; but it is also conformance to something other than Christ. Unfortunately, conformance to something other than Christ is just as bad as conformance to the world. The mistake is thinking that non-conformity is transformation; it is not. Non-conformity can result in a person being a cranky, belligerent, isolationist; this is not God's desire. Transformation is a personal matter between each of us and the Holy Spirit. As the Lord produces His mind in us, we are compelled from our hearts not to be conformed to the world. Transformation produces the

desired non-conformance, but no amount of non-conformance to the world will transform the mind. *As a transformed child of God, our true inner-person can be revealed.*

**Discuss:** God saves us based upon faith in Christ, independent of our performance. Similarly, following rules (performance) has nothing to do with transformation; it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Pure non-conformists can end life being mean-spirited and negative because precious little transformation has taken place; what has occurred instead is a preoccupation with being against the world. This is the trap of "I don't drink, dance, cuss, smoke, chew, or run around with those who do." This legalistic trap results in spiritual elitism and pride, supposing transformation is based upon our performance. However, not doing these things is merely an outward conformance to the external things of life (things others can see). When our life in Christ is based upon our performance, there is a lack of true spiritual fruit and this lack becomes a negative testimony to others. God is concerned about your heart and mind, that is, your character, desires, motives, values, goodness.... The externals of life are hardly what God is talking about with transformation; they may make a person refined and cultured or they may make a person proud and judgmental, but either way the soul has not been touched by God. The external matters of life are to be an outgrowth (a reflection) of the transformed mind, directed by the Holy Spirit.

**Your Thoughts:** What is a negative testimony? Give examples in your life (or that you have observed) of getting hung-up on "the rules," not the freedom we have in Christ.

### The One Command of Romans 12

**"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."** (Rom. 12:2a). It is commonly believed Roman 12:2 gives us two commands: 1) not to be conformed to the world, and 2) to be transformed. There is no "and" between the two

<sup>5</sup> Ortberg, John; *The Life You've Always Wanted*; Zondervan Publishing House, 1997.

phrases (implying two things); there is a “but,” which indicates the Lord is instructing us to do one of two things. We have the choice of either conforming to the world or of having a renewed mind conforming to that of Christ. The choice of a renewed mind avoids the other. The legalists love to teach there are two items here for our obedience and then they come up with a list of do’s and don’ts to measure non-conformance to the world. This interpretation is missing the point entirely. Ideally, under grace, transformation creates a mind that has no interest in conformance to the world. In practical terms, our earthly struggle is often the fight between the world and Christ for our mind’s attention; we want to make sure the transformation side is always winning the battle. *The degree to which we are transformed is the degree we are conformed to Christ; this averts conformance to the world.*

**Your Thoughts:** Select which of these three options best describes Romans 12:2.

- Non-conformance and transformation are two separate commands.
- Transformation leads to non-conformance, so there is one basic command.
- Non-conformance leads to transformation, so there is one basic command.

### What's Inside Us

A pastor held up an orange and asked some young boys and girls, "If I squeezed this orange what will come out?" They all said, "Orange juice." "But I want grape juice," he replied. "If I pray sincerely and really believe with all my heart, then I will get grape juice, right?" he responded. The kids laughed at such a silly thing. So he took it to the next level, "But if I truly believe, God can do all things and promised that a believer could move mountains, so surely I can get grape juice out of this orange." The kids held firm to their belief that only orange juice would come out. Finally the pastor asked, "Why won't I get grape juice if I pray sincerely? After all, nothing is impossible with God." A youngster answered, "You will get orange juice every time because that's

what's in it." That's the trouble with kids; they are too honest.

What is truly inside is what will come out when we are squeezed by the events of life. If our minds are not renewed, if they are not transformed, what will come out is what is in us naturally, things like cursing, addictive behavior, bitterness, revenge, arrogance, pride, or emotional outbursts. If we allow the Lord to transform our minds (renew them), His fruit is produced in our minds; then what will come out will be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22). **“... for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth”** (Eph. 5:9).

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Today, the power of the indwelling Spirit is revealed by the internal changes produced in the heart and mind, leading to the production of spiritual fruit.

### What Morphing Is

Believers should embrace and clearly understand transformation (morphing).

- **It is a lifelong process of God.** Transformation is a slow, gradual process of renewal from the inside out. Since it is a process, it is not something that is instantaneous (like an act, gift, or miracle of God). Transformation's process goes on in our minds as long as we are on this earth.
- **It results in His fruit growing in us** (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9). It is an on-going process by which the Spirit produces characteristics, traits, values ... harmonizing with those of Christ. **"(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)"** (Eph. 5:9). However, it must be remembered that fruit grows slowly. A fruit tree/vine requires nurturing, and by way of analogy, that means we must be nurtured through the Word, prayer, and worship. Our minds need cultivation and weeding, such that there is removal of those things that would hinder growth in Christ. Our minds need

fertile ground, that is, a mind receptive and hungry for His action. Fruit production requires pruning, the strategic removal of “self” so we are closer to the Vine and produce better fruit. Finally, fruit production requires pest removal, the recognition we are in a spiritual battle with the “pest” of our soul, Ephesians 6.

- **It is not a gift.** A gift is acquired in a complete form all at one time. Since transformation is an *ongoing process*, it is not completed all at once, or at any one time.

- **The Holy Spirit does the transforming.** The passive voice (Greek) in Romans 12:2 means we have to

cooperate with Him (listening, yielding, relying, submitting, learning, praying, studying, obeying, ...). We cannot do it ourselves, and He will not force it upon us; thus, it is a collaborative venture.

- **We do not get a renewed mind by just praying, asking, or believing.** We have responsibilities (part of the collaborative venture). There are no shortcuts or quick and easy ways for becoming spiritually mature.

**Discuss:** Salvation is an act of God, which means it occurs in an instant and it is complete all at once. How does this differ from *the process* of transformation?

## TAKE TO HEART

### Summary

Transformation changes the expression of our minds from what we had before salvation to that which is representative of Christ. Transformation (renewal of our mind) removes negative thinking (a source of mental and physical illness) and the burden of believing our performance is the measure of our standing or acceptance with the Lord. We all have mental baggage (hidden in the deep recesses of our minds) which holds us down and keeps us captive to the past; we have to get rid of it. The mistake many Christians make is thinking non-conformity to the world is transformation; it is not. Transformation produces non-conformance to the world, but no amount of non-conformance to the world will transform the mind. Renewal of the mind is a lifelong process by the Holy Spirit, whereby the fruit of the Spirit is produced within us. We do not get a renewed mind by just praying, asking, or believing, but by relying upon and collaborating with Him.

### Gospel

We often think the Gospel relates to being saved, and that is how these studies normally use the word. However, the gospel is any good news from God. One bit of good news is that we can be slowly transformed in our lifetime to become more like Christ. Not only is it good news, it is a command from God: **"and be renewed in the spirit of your mind"** (Eph. 4:23). The

goal of being renewed is to put on (in a practical sense) the new person we became when we were saved, **"and that you put on the new man (person) which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness"** (Eph. 4:24, parentheses added).

### Encouragement

Your life may have a terrible past, but as a believer you can be sure all your sins have been forgiven. However, the past can still haunt you and control your life today. That is one reason for transformation, that is, to allow the Spirit to get into the deepest recesses of your mind, into the hidden parts of your past that you cannot admit to anyone, and change them. It is the inner working of the Spirit, unseen and unfelt, that brings about this change. There is a new freedom and release as the Spirit works, you can become the person you wish to be and not the one controlled by the negative events of the past. May the love of the Lord guide you and may His consolation lift you up as He renews your mind.

### Consider these responses to Your Thoughts

Negative thinking creates all sorts of mental and physical ailments.

A positive testimony entices others to want to know more about God, a negative testimony actually drives them away from the truth.

Romans 12:2: the middle option is best.