

A SOUND MIND—TRANSFORMATION

PART 2

THE BATTLE FOR THE MIND

“ *for it is God who works in you both to will
and to do for His good pleasure.*”

Phil 2:13 NKJV



Review of Study 10

Transformation changes the expression of our minds from what we had before salvation to that which is representative of Christ. Transformation (renewal of the 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) that 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.

BIBLE TRUTH

Where and How Renewal Takes Place

Two figures are shown below to help illustrate where and how the renewal ministry of the Holy Spirit takes place. Figure 1 shows three concentric circles, representing our three aspects: body, soul, and spirit. The position of the Holy Spirit is representation by the fourth inner circle. The direction of the Spirit's work is shown, indicating He works outwardly from the inside of us. Transformation impacts our soul and spirit, but not our body. Recall, God created the physical world first, then the soul world, and finally the human spirit. However, *we are brought back into a right relationship with God in a reverse order, that*

is, we are born again spiritually, transformed in our minds, and then glorified physically (1 Cor. 15:45-46).

On the outside, Figure 1, is our temporary house (our body); proceeding deeper we come to our soul (mind). As we continuing going deeper and deeper into our essential human make-up, we come to the human spirit at the core of our being. At the very center of our core, the deepest area, resides the Holy Spirit. The innermost circle would be a black hole (devoid of God) for the unsaved, but the Holy Spirit comes into that void and fills this most important part when we are saved. With the Holy Spirit in our very center, the truth and light of

God enter the blackness of our deepest core. Our spirit becomes more and more conscious of Him.

In time past (Old Testament and Gospels), the Spirit worked from the outside to help mold a person's life. But now, in the Age of Grace, the Holy Spirit is within the person and works outward; a much more effective means for assuring a positive change within the believer. He works from the deepest recesses of our being, transforming our minds and lives in the process. To really understand this issue we have to delve into it in more detail.

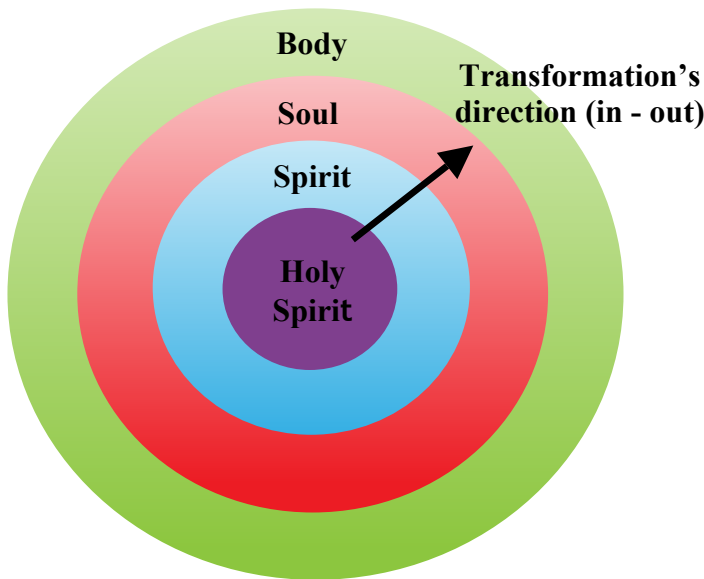


Figure 1. Schematic of our makeup.

Figure 2 is an up-close, detailed view, of that presented in Figure 1. The various parts of our composition and common biblical terminology are shown. We can be compared to an onion, with many layers, one after the other, and each layer going deeper into our essential being. The outer layers represent each person's body parts, the next layers represent the soul, then the layers of the spirit, and finally (at our central core) the Holy Spirit. Some of the common biblical words (spirit, soul, mind, and heart) are incorporated into Figure 2. Hebrews 4:12 indicates the soul (mind) and spirit (heart) are much alike, and interconnected in their nature and activities. Thus, only the approximate locations of the mind and heart can be shown, with considerable overlap. It is hard to know exactly where all Scriptural terms fit, but Figure

2 gives a general idea. Since this is a general overview, many items are not shown, like cognitive function.

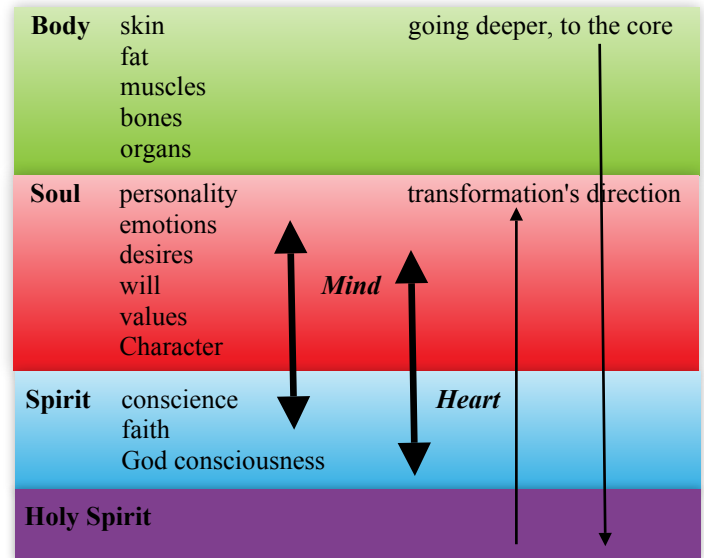


Figure 2. A detailed look at our structure and how it relates to biblical terms.

Considering our soul, things like personality and emotions are farthest from the core while character and value system are more central. The Spirit works in all these areas, but little (if any) specific discussion of the various layers is made in the Bible. However, it is consistent with God's plan to suggest that renewal of the mind may emphasize the deeper issues since they are most important to our lives. Also, since the Holy Spirit is within us, and works from the inside-outward, it is reasonable to infer the inner core areas are most crucial in the transformation process. When the deeper core areas (inner-self) are renewed, our lives are transformed. The renewal of the deeper issues makes it possible for the beneficial effects of that renewal to flow to all the other areas of the mind. This flow is based upon the fact the outer layers of the mind are dependent on (built upon) the inner layers and as those inner layers are renewed, there is, of necessity, a corresponding outflow of benefits. Thus, as our character, values, and desires are renewed, that renewal will have a profound impact upon our emotions and personality. A cascade of benefits flows from each step of renewal to the rest the mind. So even if the Spirit is working primarily in one area, all other areas benefit from that renewal.

As the Holy Spirit works, He is primarily interested in the most important areas of our existence: our spirits and the deeper parts of our souls. The matters of the spirit (God-consciousness, faith, conscience) are mostly addressed by salvation. Matters of the mind are addressed in transformation, and the deeper areas of the mind contain the core issues of life. In Figure 2, starting at the deepest issues of our mind (including a bit of the spirit) and going outward, the order is somewhat like this: conscience, character, value system, will, desires, and so forth.

Note: some people have serious personality disorders, diseases, or emotional disturbances that affect areas seemingly distant from the core. In such cases, the Lord certainly knows the best way to proceed with transformation, and it may not be as described here. Some of these cases seem beyond the scope of this discussion. Romans 12:1-2 is referring to Christians who are capable of participating in the renewal process (intentionally, understandingly, and cognitively), but many with serious mental disorders or diseases cannot participate for one reason or another. Thus, this passage may have limited application for those with diseases, developmental disabilities, dementia.... Some mental disorders are due to chemical imbalances or diseases of the brain, so it is good to seek professional medical and/or mental health care. Even if there is not a disease or chemical imbalance, professional mental health care should not be considered fighting against God, especially when such care is Christian-based and recognizes God's care for His saints.

Discuss: Please familiarize yourself with the intrinsic parts of our design in the figure above. Considering the soul and spirit issues, how would their correct functioning change your life?

He renews our core functions and creates fruit in our lives; for example, a person may develop the fruit of joy (a character issue). However, inner joy may not appear as a "happy face" because happiness is a matter of our emotions and personality (how we interact with the

outside world, our persona). Joy and happiness are two different things, the former being much deeper seated and based upon inner values. On the other hand, personality and emotions are farther from the core (than is character), and while they may benefit from the Spirit's work in the deeper areas, that benefit may not translate into our visible persona.

Inner joy was mentioned above; other examples of His transforming power are seen when a person's value system is changed from pro-choice to pro-life or when a person's desires are changed over time (such that addictive behavior is overcome). Godly convictions, conscience, and behavior are created through a renewed mind and this allows us to put on the biblical new man. **"... and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him"** (Col. 3:10). The way the Spirit works in each of our lives is different, based upon His knowledge of what is required to make a person more Christ-like. If a person's emotions are deeply scarred or controlling his or her life, it is possible the emotional area would be a prime target for renewal. The same with some personality matters.

The Spirit is needed to transform us because we are unable to affect any change on our own. As an example, consider your character, which comes from the depths and recesses of your being. Your character is different from your personality, which is your outward manifestation to the world around you. Your character looks inward, it feels your hurt and joy, it arranges your inner value system, and it develops your motivations. Character is the foundation upon which your personality acts, so as character is renewed, it automatically impacts the personality. Your character has some very basic needs, and these needs are generally established early in life and are based upon your first and most primitive experiences. The word for character originally meant, "to carve, engrave, scratch, or cut grooves."⁶ It comprises the deepest imprints (grooves) in a person, and these grooves are not easily changed. For most people, these early-formed imprints are permanently

⁶ Malone, Thomas & Patrick; *The Art of Intimacy*, Simon & Schuster, 1987.

engraved into their being. Those grooves that are in error are the "scars of life" that cause many people mental health problems their whole lives.

We need Divine help to remove (or at least to reduce) the scars of our lives. Our scars are like scratches in a phonographic record or CD; every time our lives come to the scratch they cannot play the recording correctly. A record/CD with a scratch jumps around but never plays the right sound. So too with our lives; our grooves, implanted from youth, prevent us from thinking and acting correctly. Correcting the grooves or scratches is impossible for us, but it can be done through the power of the Holy Spirit, Who resides in our central cores. If done through self-effort, we may well make matters worse, like trying to fix the scratches on a CD by using sandpaper to get rid of them. If we try to correct these problems, it is like picking our character scabs and creating even worse permanent scars. We must rely and cooperate with Him so He can make us new from the inside-out, thereby removing (or reducing) the scars (character scratches) of the past. Otherwise, those scars will control us and hold us captive our entire lives. To be clear, those scars (as ugly as they may be) can be modified (plastic surgery may be an apt analogy) to the point they no longer control our present lives, even if not totally removed. They may come to the surface now and then, but the renewal process means they will not continually dominate our lives. This renewal offers us a new manner of life that is beyond all we can imagine.

Discuss: What are some of the grooves that have been carved into your character for which you seek His care? If you have tried to get rid of past negative memories or change who you are deep inside, now you know how true transformation works.

Where Transformation Takes Place

In Figure 2, God consciousness, faith, and conscience are shown to be matters of the spirit. The degree they are involved in transformation is not clear, since they are certainly involved in salvation. It would be reasonable to believe that our consciences are part of transformation

(close to, or part of, the soul). The parts of our make-up that take place in the transformation process are briefly explained below. The order shown below starts with the conscience and the deepest layers of the soul and proceeds outward (inside to outside), to the personality.

- 1. Conscience:** what we believe is good and bad (2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Tim. 1:19, 3:9, 4:2).
- 2. Character:** who we really are deep inside (morals, attitude, our personhood, concepts of justice, ideas of correct behavior...) (Eph. 3:16-17; Prov. 26:22).
- 3. Value system:** what we believe is true, right, honest... (Phil. 4:8).
- 4. Will and Desire:** what we wish and plan, our goals and purpose in life... (Phil. 2:13).
- 5. Emotions:** how we feel about the circumstances of life and people's actions, how we feel about the past, mood, negative thinking...
- 6. Personality:** how we appear to those around us, our outward expression. Our personality is far from our core, but it will certainly benefit from the transformation and modification of items 1-5 (a cascading effect that touches the personality).

Discuss: The six items above, in general, comprise the deeper things of who we are. The Lord wants to work in these areas of our lives. Why would anyone resist this?

How the Holy Spirit Works

Today, the Holy Spirit's power is seen in transformed hearts and minds, not in the physical-external things of life (Phil. 4:13; Eph. 3:16-20; 1 Tim. 1:8, 3:5, 3:10-12). He indwells the believer, and His power is revealed by the internal changes produced in the heart and mind, leading to the production of spiritual fruit (which is not seen, but recognized by the spiritually minded). These internal changes and the fruit produced are what transformation is all about; transformation is a characteristic truth of our Age (not seen in other ages), and is something we should value as a special blessing of God for his saints. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law"** (Gal. 5:22-23).

Discus: Transformation changes you deep inside. It changes who you are in the core of your being. Instead of miraculous gifts or powers, you will receive something superior, spiritual fruit deep within (Galatians 5:22-23), which will make you more like Christ.

Transformation helps conform us to Christ in this life, and enables us to receive eternal rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The believer's rewards will be based upon our attitudes, desires, fruit, and works according to what the Lord was able to do (as we yielded to Him) in our lives to renew our minds. Our rewards will not be based upon what religious rules we followed.

TAKE TO HEART

Summary

We can be compared to an onion, with many layers, and each layer going deeper into our essential being. God is primarily interested in the most important areas of our existence, that is, our spirits and the deeper parts of our souls. God works from the deepest recesses of our being, working outward, transforming our minds and lives in the process. When the deeper core areas (inner-self) are renewed, our lives are transformed. The matters of the spirit (God consciousness, faith, conscience) are primarily addressed by salvation. Matters of the mind are addressed by transformation, and the deeper areas of the mind contain the core issues of life. Starting in the deepest areas of our inner-self and going outward, the order of transformation seems somewhat like this: conscience, character, value system, will, desires, and so forth. The spirit works to remove the scars in our minds, often created in our youth, and develops within us a mind that is not only conformed to the mind of Christ but also bears godly fruit.

Gospel

God tells us, **"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"** (Phil. 2:12). This is not a command to do something that would bring about our salvation. The Philippians were already saved, so the phrase *"work out your own salvation"* refers to making that salvation work in practical terms in daily life. That is, we need to make our salvation a real thing in our lives, such that it produces fruit. This is not accomplished by human effort as the next verse teaches, **"for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13). Once saved, the Holy Spirit works in our lives to create the *will and desire* to do what is good and

right, according to His pleasure. Thus, He creates the correct intentions in our minds and helps us carry them out, that is, to work them out. This is what transformation is about, making our salvation work in daily life.

Encouragement

God has taken great care in designing us with three aspects and having a specific plan for each aspect. He obviously cares for each of us and has plans for our welfare in this life and the next. As we understand more and more about His plan(s) for us, our reaction can be nothing but awe and praise. He has left nothing to chance, and has a designated plan for us that applies today and every day of our lives. May the grace of God uphold you and give you the hope only He can provide. **"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen"** (1 Tim. 1:17).

Note: The topic of transformation has been only introduced in these studies. The complete discussion can be found in the book, *Biblical Transformation—The Renewed Mind*, found on www.grace4you.com and on Amazon. If you want insight into how transformation impacts depression, stress related health issues, negative thinking, mental and physical health, past emotional baggage, rewards in Heaven, and so forth, then you must get this book. The book describes the four stages of transformation and the biblical weapons at your disposal. With the four stages in mind, and knowing your weapons, you can develop a realistic plan to work with the Lord on any specific transformational issue.