

Discipleship: from Believing to Following

Part 3: Be Transformed, Not Conformed (10/4/26)

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- In person Bible Study Tuesday 6:30
- Prayer Group Wed noon & 6 pm
- Men's Group: Sat 10/10 at 8:30 AM
- ***FIGHT CLUB meeting after church!***

Please turn to *Romans 12:1-2*.

One of the best compliments I ever received came a few years after being Saved, in the early 2000's. A bunch of college buddies and I got together and, back in the day, we used get ourselves in all sorts of trouble. What's more is this: I was normally the ringleader of said trouble. The man who came up with bad ideas then convinced our group to act on them!

So here we are, all together again, and Jesus is now my Savior. I'm not just reading my Bible and going to Church: I can feel the Lord actively turning me into a different person. Things I used to believe; I now believed quite differently. Things I used to feel, think, say, and do...things that brought me pleasure or laughter...I didn't want to do those things anymore. Not saying I was never tempted, but now there was another voice telling me I needed to live differently.

At one point **one of my friends approached me and wanted me to start some of our old trouble**. He recalled the old days, the fun we had, and being together we could do it one more time! I was tempted. In my mind I went back there too, feeling some of those things, remembering the laughs. But I told him no; that I wasn't going to. He acted surprised but kept egging me on. After 30 minutes of this he got exasperated and said "what is wrong with you?! The Scott I know would have done all this w/o having me having to suggest anything!"

"I'm not that person anymore," I responded. I went on to explain that Jesus was in my life now, and that I was on a journey of becoming more like him. That He made me into a new person and that the old was dead. He finally said "I like the old Scott better! He was more fun!" I replied "I don't like the old Scott at all. He caused way too much damage and destruction."

[Rom 12:1-2 ESV] – 1 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.

Salvation is only the beginning, and the “easiest” step, to becoming a Christian.

It's good that we believe in Jesus, now let us follow Him.

The twofold purpose of being His disciple is broken down into 2 categories: INTERNAL and EXTERNAL.

- *The Internal is personal transformation—today's message.*
- The External is earning an ROI for Jesus which we already covered.

The goal is to be unrecognizable to people who know us, especially if they're familiar with our old selves.

- **The prize is to be so radically transformed** that even our spouse and family look at us and see a noticeable and consistent difference.
- Satisfaction would be for the person who said **we would never change is forced to rethink their prophecy.**

Transformation isn't just for the new Christian who got Saved last month, it's for those of us who've known the Lord for decades.

As a matter of fact, I would say us “older” Christians need it more because chances are decent *we've become complacent and have been driving on cruise control for too long.*

The transformation process, called Sanctification in the Bible, is a lifestyle and not a diet. Do you know how the diet industry draws customers? **With before and after shots.** Click on their websites and you'll see images of Johnny Doe when he weighed 300 lbs and then at 190. You'll see Janey Doe with a belly and wide hips, to the new Janey looking tight and fit.

Imagine someone you know is morbidly obese and you haven't seen them in awhile. You meet back up and they look like an Iron Man athlete and turned the keg into a 6 pack. People are now on **Ozempic** and reappearing much thinner in a short period of time. It's already happened to me that folk I hadn't seen awhile show up far thinner to the point where I literally didn't recognize them.

You and I must grab hold of continuing transformation and stop making excuses for complacency.

How about this: along with quoting verses to make ourselves feel better after we've messed up like "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ," *how about we also quote ones like Romans 12:2—to be transformed and not conformed [to this world].*

Here is a famous verse that isn't about being forgiven for your sin or initially getting Saved. **It's about walking out—living—one's Salvation.** Grabbing hold of the righteousness that Jesus gave us and making it our lifestyle. Keeping the robes Jesus gave us clean.

[Phl 2:12-13 ESV] – 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling, 13 for it is **God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**

Now I will quote from the Amplified Version:

[Phl 2:12-13 AMP] – 12 So then, my dear ones, just as you have always obeyed [my instructions with enthusiasm], not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation **[that is, cultivate it, bring it to full effect, actively pursue spiritual maturity]** with awe-inspired fear and trembling [using serious caution and critical self-evaluation to avoid anything that might offend God or discredit the name of Christ]. 13 For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work **[that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose]** for His good pleasure.

Just as children grow into teens who mature into adults, so must we. All of us start out as infants in Christ and we grow by following Jesus. Increasing in knowledge and wisdom, repenting of anything God calls sin, and grabbing hold of anything God calls good.

We have an old self and a new one.

Our old self is us before we got Saved.

Our new self is what Jesus created after He Saved us.

[Rom 6:6-7, 11-13 ESV] – 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. ... 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

The question people ask is: **if our old self is crucified and died with Christ, then why do we still sin?**

The part of us that died, then was born-again (resurrected) into a new creation was our spirit—the most important part of us. Before Christ, our spirit was cut off from Jesus and dwelling in darkness. When Jesus washed us with His blood and forgave us of all, our old spirit DIED...then Jesus breathed new life into it. It rose from the dead, completely remade into His likeness.

Our new Christ spirit has its own mind and heart. Its own desires and goals, and these things match up with the Holy Spirit.

Our problem is we still have this body, called “the flesh” by the Apostle Paul. The flesh is our physical “made of this world” body, whereas our regenerated spirit is our spiritual body made from the stuff of heaven. The flesh has a mind and heart of its own, complete with its own desires, goals, wants, and needs.

The flesh isn’t evil like the devil is evil. The devil has no good intentions or anything else inside him, but is a complete reprobate.

The desires of our earthly body, heart, and mind were corrupted by the fall as I’ve preached about before.

- God programmed the desire to eat and procreate, but the fall corrupted that into gluttony and sexual immorality.
- The heart desires to love and be loved, but the fall twisted that into guilt trips and manipulation.
- The mind likes reasoning and intellectual pursuits, but the fall turned that into arrogance and rigidity.

We’re going to call all of that “the flesh” in this sermon.

Although the flesh isn't demonically evil, **it is at war with our spirit and hence our perpetual internal conflict:**

Galatians 5:16–17 “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” (ESV)

Romans 8:5–8 “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit **set their minds on the things of the Spirit**. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to **set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace**. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. **Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**” (ESV)

As a disciple, **my goal for myself is to set my mind on the things of the Spirit** which means I will end up **denying the things of the flesh.**

We do this from the following position:

- God loves me and that will never change.
- God has forgiven men, and that is forever.
- God has made me His Son, and I'm part of His family forever.
- I didn't and don't have to earn any of that, it was and is a free gift given to me by Jesus. Amen!

Yet I please God when I am transformed and become more like Jesus.

- God smiles when I cast off the goals of the flesh and run after the goals of the Spirit.
- I'm already eternally secure in God's love and acceptance.
- Now I'm going for a *“this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased!”* and *“well done!”*

Our old self is dead and buried—let him stay there. Why would we want to reanimate that corpse? Why try and give it life? *That's what we're doing when we choose not to pick up our cross, deny ourselves, and follow Christ.*

We are not that person anymore! **We have been made into something completely new!**

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (ESV)

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (ESV)

Ephesians 4:24 “and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (ESV)

Both of our “selves”—the old and the new—are compared to clothing in the Bible. The old self is likened to “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) and our new self is a white robe of majestic righteousness and God’s glory (Isaiah 61:10).

It’s compared to clothing, **but in reality they’re both bodies**, just like this one but in the spirit. Bodies need food and drink, and they either grow or atrophy. *Whichever one we feed is the one that gets bigger and stronger.*

Let’s feed our spirit that Jesus has raised from the dead and made to look like Him! **Let it grow, mature, and become stronger.**

Common word in the new testament is “edification” and Paul makes this the mission of the Church:

[1Co 14:26 NKJV] – 26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done for edification.**

It means to build up and add on to. Not just repair or maintain a structure, but to *make it bigger and expand it.*

You and I are buildings, Temples of God to be exact. The Church itself is compared to a massive building.

When we indulge “the flesh” we add onto the old, filthy, dilapidated building that has a “condemned” sign on it.

When we pick up our crosses and follow Jesus, we are adding to the Temple of God. We’re making it bigger, roomier, adding on floors and rooms.

To compare our new selves to a body is equally applicable: we're feeding it so that it grows getting bigger and stronger.

Capable of doing more. This is the spiritual process of maturity:

[Eph 4:13-16 ESV] – 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to mature manhood**, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may **no longer be children**, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to **grow up** in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, **makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**

[Col 1:28 ESV] – 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ.**

The internal purpose of following Jesus is transformation.

Maturity in Christ by feeding and exercising our new selves, the part of us that was resurrected into the likeness of Jesus.

Next week we begin the meaty series about spiritual disciplines that will help to do exactly that.

FIGHT CLUB MEETING