

Title: The Only Path to Transformation

Text: Acts 2:14–39

I see all kinds of ads online that promise that you can change who you are...

The church / you need to understand something very important. There is only one way that you can change from God's perspective.

Main Idea: The Only Path to Transformation is Submission to Jesus as Lord

Interrogative: How does this work?

Transition: In verses 36-39, Peter gives three important steps in the process of transformation...

1. Your Transformation Starts by Understanding God's Plan (vs. 36a)

Acts 2:36 ESV

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God ~~has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.~~

Peter, addressing the angry crowd, does an amazing job of utilizing the Old Testament Scriptures to prove his point that Jesus is the Christ.

[Joel 2:28-32](#) - Peter cites this prophecy of God's Spirit being poured out on all people to explain the miraculous events of Pentecost, signifying the fulfillment of the prophecy in the new era inaugurated by Christ.

[Psalm 16:8-11](#) - Peter uses these verses to affirm that David was speaking of the resurrection of Christ, a key proof of Jesus' messiahship, as the words describe one who will not see decay.

[Psalm 110:1](#) - This Psalm, quoted by Peter, emphasizes Jesus' exalted position at the right hand of God, illustrating His divine authority and fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.

And these Old Testament quotes are used by Peter and the Holy Spirit to bring a realization or understanding that their long-awaited Messiah is non-other than Jesus of Nazareth. He fulfills each of these Old Testament passages.

Thus, Peter's call for "The House of Israel" to listen up! To "know for certain" the plan that God had put together from before the foundation of the earth.

God's plan to send Christ for the salvation of those that would believe was not a reaction to Adam and Eve's failure to follow God's command. No, this plan of rescue was hatched within the Godhead with full understanding that humanity would fall and would need redemption well before the Fall ever occurred.

This is what Luke communicates throughout the book of Acts...

Acts 2:23 ESV

²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Do you see the words Luke uses here? “According to the definite PLAN and FOREKNOWLEDGE of God, you crucified and killed Jesus!”

Acts 3:18 ESV

¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

Acts 4:27–28 ESV

²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Acts 13:39 ESV

³⁹ and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

William Barkley said it so well...

The Acts of the Apostles (Revised Edition) Lord and Christ

HERE is a passage full of the essence of the thought of the early preachers.

(i) It insists that the Cross was no accident. It belonged to the eternal plan of God (verse 23). Over and over again Acts states this same thing (cp. 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). The thought of Acts safeguards us from two serious errors in our thinking about the death of Jesus. (a) The Cross is not a kind of emergency measure flung out by God when everything else had failed. It is part of God’s very life. (b) We must never think that anything Jesus did changed the attitude of God to men. It was by God Jesus was sent. We may put it this way—the Cross was a window in time allowing us to see the suffering love which is eternally in the heart of God.

Before you build anything, you must have a plan. The builder must know and understand the plan. If they don’t, the results will be disastrous!

Imagine a team tasked with building a bridge. They are provided with a detailed plan, but in their eagerness to finish quickly, they decide to ignore it. They believe their experience is enough, and the plan is just a formality.

As they build, they soon find that the pieces aren't fitting together as they should. Frustration grows, and the structure becomes unstable. The project is delayed, and additional costs mount.

Finally, a wise supervisor steps in and insists they return to the original plan. Reluctantly, they follow the blueprint, and the bridge comes together perfectly.

The Jews should have known God’s plan, but they did not. And the result was they killed the Christ. The Messiah they had longed for. Ironically, God used their evil intentions to bring about their salvation.

Do you understand God’s plan for humanity? Do you understand God’s plan for you. This is the first and most crucial step for transformation. Without salvation, you may turn over a new leaf and even be a tremendous catalyst for Good in the world. But it will all be for nothing because

in order for you to have a relationship with God, you must be transformed by the power of God through the Gospel of Christ.

Explain the gospel...

Review - The Only Path to Transformation is Submission to Jesus as Lord

- Your Transformation Starts by Understanding God's Plan

2. Your Transformation Increases by Knowing Who Jesus is (vs. 36b)

Acts 2:36 ESV

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

This is interesting. The unmade one was made or appointed. God made or appointed Jesus to a very special, twofold position. We see this in differing ways.

First, remember the Great Commission?

Matthew 28:19–20 ESV

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

But why can Jesus instruct these men to go and accomplish such a monumental task?

Verse 18 gives us the answer...

Matthew 28:18 ESV

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Jesus has ALL authority given to Him by God to accomplish the will of God through Himself and the agency of man.

But God hasn't just given him authority, God has given Him two names that illuminate two important aspects of the scope and purpose of His authority.

Peter says these titles are Lord and Christ.

Lord – Kurios, In this case, God very God.

Christ – Christos – the anointed one, Messiah, King.

Holman Illustrated Bible Commentary C. Pentecostal Witness to the Dispersion (2:14–47)

Peter addressed his words specifically to Jews (the house of Israel) and affirmed that Jesus whom they crucified was both Lord and Messiah. By calling Jesus "Lord and Messiah," Peter was staking the biggest possible claims. "Lord" is reserved in the Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) for God (Yahweh). Thus Peter says Jesus is God. Peter further noted that Jesus was the Messiah (anointed one), Israel's hope for salvation.

Peter ends His sermon here in a very powerful manner, and we can learn much from his approach.

He doesn't soften Jesus at all. Instead, Peter presents Jesus in a powerful and fearful light. He presents Him as the glorious, eternal, all-powerful King that He is.

And so His people should treat Him as the King that He is.

Psalm 2:12 ESV

¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

While Jesus is certainly and thankfully "Gentle and Lowly," He is still to be revered for the God/man that He is. We must have an awe for who Jesus really is.

He is no longer the helpless baby in the manger, He is the Mightiest King on the throne.

Revelation 6:15–17 ESV

¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Exalting Jesus in Acts Pentecost Means Christ Has Ascended to the Throne (2:22–36)

We need to recover awe of the ascended Lord of glory, as Revelation 6:15–17 describes Jesus. His love has been spurned; his purity has been trampled; his truth has been buried. But one day this merciful Jesus will rule with a rod of iron, and the most powerful of men will hide in fear of him.

*Perhaps no one has illustrated the meekness and majesty of Jesus better in recent history than C. S. Lewis. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Lucy is posing questions to Mr. and Mrs. Beaver about Aslan, a character representative of Christ:*

"Is—is he a man?" asked Lucy.

"Aslan a man!" said Mr. Beaver sternly. "Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion—the Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh!" said Susan, "I'd thought he was a man. Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."

"That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs. Beaver; "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you” (Lewis, The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe, 75–76). Tony Merida, Exalting Jesus in Acts (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 30–31.

The writer of Hebrews tells us these important words...

Hebrews 10:31 ESV

³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Do you know who Jesus really is? Because if you do, you find submitting to Him more important than ever.

And this leads us to the last point...

Review - The Only Path to Transformation is Submission to Jesus as Lord

- Your Transformation Starts by Understanding God’s Plan
- Your Transformation Increases by Knowing Who Jesus is

3. Your Transformation Happens Only by Submitting to the Lord (vs. 37-39)

Acts 2:37–39 ESV

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

The “House of Israel” now has ears to hear. Because of Peter’s bold and courageous preaching and willingness to clearly articulate the truth of God’s Word, they came to the realization of their perilous position before the God of all Creation.

They were *“cut to the heart!”* The word *“cut”* or *“pierced”* means *“to agitate violently.”*

God’s Spirit brought them under great conviction.

Has God done that to you? He did it to me in 1991!

I believe that in order to be saved, there must be some sort of conviction like this present in one’s life prior to salvation.

And this conviction brought them to the place of asking a very important question.

“Brothers, what shall we do?” They recognized their personal responsibility and culpability regarding their offenses against God. And they felt a great pressure to respond to the supernatural conviction of God.

What did Peter instruct them to do?

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...”

Repent - This is a change of mind/heart that leads to a change of action. It is your mind agreeing with God and His Word and then walking it out in your life. There is no salvation without repentance (Luke 13:3).

Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ - a public, prominent identification with Christ, that He is not only the King of Creation, but also the King of your life.

For the forgiveness of your sins - A better way to translate this is instead of “for” use “because of the forgiveness of your sins.” The conjunction “for” can legitimately be translated “because” and the context of this sentence demands it. Why? Because we know from other Scripture, water baptism isn’t necessary for salvation.

The MacArthur Study Bible Chapter 2

Genuine repentance brings from God the forgiveness (remission) of sins (cf. Eph. 1:7), and because of that the new believer was to be baptized. Baptism, however, was to be the ever-present act of obedience, so that it became synonymous with salvation. Thus to say one was baptized for forgiveness was the same as saying one was saved.

And, of course, the beautiful reality for the true convert to Christianity is the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit.

God not only dwells with His people. But God actually dwells **WITHIN** His people.

And I don’t want you to miss perhaps the most important sentence for you here this morning.

Acts 2:39 ESV

³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Do you understand what Peter is saying here?

This beautiful promise of salvation isn’t **just** for the House of Israel and their children, but also for all who “*are far off*” - also known as the gentiles. That, my friends is you. Salvation wasn’t just for the Jews, it was and is for you!

“everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.”

This Salvation is provided by the fierce and fearful God of the Bible.

Prior to salvation, we have God’s wrath on us because we are sinners who have manifest sin in our daily lives. Because of this we face eternal condemnation.

However, God’s great love compelled Him to rescue us from this eternal Hell by punishing Christ instead of us. And those of us who by faith trust the finished work of Christ on the cross, His burial, and resurrection will be rescued from death and be given new life.

I want you to think about something with me.

in verse 36, Peter makes a clear point on which this sermon is based - **Jesus is Lord**.

And so, for us who have responded to God's gracious offer for salvation have a responsibility to now live for him.

Some argue that we can live any way we see fit now that we are saved from Hell. I would argue that the New Testament is replete with verses that call for holy living.

To be clear, we do not live holy lives to be saved. We live holy lives because we are children of the Holy One!

"Submission to the Scriptures is submission to God. Rebellion against the Scriptures is rebellion against God" - Kevin DeYoung

And I argue that just as Jesus is the only path to joy, so the only path to transformation is to obey Jesus Christ as revealed in His Holy Word.

The Lordship of Christ in your life is the key to radical transformation.

So many people who profess Christ yet who still live obeying and submitting to their feelings and emotions as their final authority, will not find the transformational change promised in God's Word.

Matthew 28:19–20 ESV

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Here are some examples...

Regarding the last verse, we are to go and make disciples of all nations. Yet the thought of opening your mouth and sharing the gospel terrifies you. So, your feelings and emotions tell you to keep your mouth shut, yet God's word says to speak his truth in love.

Which will you obey? Your feelings or His truth.

When you obey his truth, you grow! (Explain how)

How about this one?

Ephesians 5:25 ESV

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

But Pastor Mark, my wife is a nag! She is a dripping faucet. She has no respect for me whatsoever. How am I supposed to love a woman that treats me so poorly?

Well, do you remember what Paul says about how God loves us?

Romans 5:8–11 ESV

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

You are thankful for the grace and mercy God gives you, but you want to withhold that same grace, mercy, and love from your wife?

1 Peter 3:7 ESV

⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Or what about this?

The person you work with (substitute - go to church with or are neighbors with) drives you absolutely bonkers! Your feelings tell you to ignore them at best or lash out at them at worst.

On the other hand, God's Word tells you...

Matthew 22:37-40 ESV

³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

So, will you live by your feelings and emotions and treat your neighbor with contempt, or will you obey the truth of God's word and be transformed?

Or one last one...

This one is going to feel legalistic. Going to church!

Did you know that Barna's research considers faithful church attendance to be twice per month?

Yet God has a purpose for regular, weekly church attendance. Listen to the command with a purpose...

Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

God understands that we need each other in corporate worship to help one another grow in Christlikeness. And when we forsake regular church attendance, we are circumventing the transformation process in us and in others.

Each act of obedience changes us into Christlikeness.

Why? Because the Spirit of God empowers us to do what we could not do in our own strength and then confirms in us what He accomplishes through us.

2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

The word transformed here is

μεταμορφούμεθα = Metamorphosis

You and I, as followers of Christ, are being changed just like a caterpillar is changed into a butterfly.

But instead of transforming inside a cocoon, we are transformed by *“obeying ALL that He has commanded us.”*

The question is, do you really want to be transformed?

Some of us are content with being a little transformed or partially transformed but not fully transformed.

We like to hang on to the things from the old life that bring us comfort or happiness.

But for the Christian, true joy and contentment isn't fully realized until we are fully given over to following Christ.

Application - Specific application in your personal worship time.

1. Read some scripture every day.
2. Before you read, ask the Lord to show you His will.
3. When you see a principle or command in His Word that you know you must obey, faithfully obey it. Regardless of how you FEEL about it!
4. Watch Him change your life.

This is what it means to submit to the Lordship of Christ.

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- Your Transformation Starts by Understanding God's Plan
- Your Transformation Increases by Knowing Who Jesus is
- Your Transformation Happens Only by Submitting to the Lord

Conclusion

Somewhere along the lines in evangelical Christianity in America, we have manufactured the idea that Jesus is my cosmic good luck charm that I can pull out when I need something or when life gets difficult. That He exists for me, and it is His obligation to make me happy, wealthy, healthy, and content.

It's actually the other way around. You exist to bring glory to Him.

Your life is not your own, you have been bought with the price of His precious shed blood on the cross.

He saved you for His glory and for His purposes.

Romans 14:11–12 ESV

¹¹ for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." ¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

And do you know what brings our God the most glory? When you obey all that He has commanded you.

Why? Because when you do, He transforms you into the likeness of His precious Son! What could be more glorious than everyone in His church living their lives like Jesus?

Imagine if each of us were just like Jesus. This community would be transformed as well.

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. **Who are you praying for daily?**
2. **Who are you engaging with weekly?**
3. **Who are you sharing the gospel with monthly?**