

The Supremacy of Christ "Spiritual Transformation" Colossians 1:9-12

Introduction

Last week we began a series of messages on the Supremacy of Christ from the book of Colossians. Colossians is a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians living in Colossae (a small town in south-western Turkey). As we mentioned last week, Paul was one of the primary leaders of the early Christian movement, and he is credited with writing over half of the New Testament.

Paul begins his letter by thanking God for the Colossians and their decision to become followers of Christ. He commends them for receiving the "gospel" (the good news that Jesus is the Messiah and that through His death, we can be forgiven and reconciled to God).

Paul also rejoices that the "gospel" is changing their lives. By accepting Jesus and receiving Eternal Life, the Holy Spirit has given them a sense of inner peace and new hope for their lives. That is what the gospel does! The gospel can change everything about your life. No matter who you are or what you've done, the gospel can change your life the same way it did for Paul and the Colossians if you ask Jesus for forgiveness and let Him into your heart.

Moving forward now, in verses 9-12, Paul tells the Colossians about his ongoing prayer for them. He writes, "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." (Col 1:9-12 NKJV)

Paul prays that God would change their lives in a deep and lasting way. Paul calls this change "being transformed" (metamorphoo) – literally, "to be changed into another form" or "to be changed from the inside out." It's the word from which we get our word "metamorphosis" – the change that takes place from a caterpillar to a butterfly. In Romans 12:2, Paul writes, "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." (Rom 12:2 NKJV)

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, he writes, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2Co 3:18 NKJV)

The Christian teaching of the New Testament is that Jesus will return to this earth. Jesus will return to rescue all those who believe in Him, and we will be fully

transformed – complete with new glorified bodies. In the meantime, God is transforming our thinking and behaviors to be more Christ-like.

I. The Goal of Transformation

What does Christ-like transformation look like? Paul describes the central goal of God's transformation in verse 10, "that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;" (Col 1:10 NKJV)

That doesn't mean we have to earn God's acceptance. We already have God's complete and permanent acceptance through Christ. It means we live in a way that represents God well so that we uphold His reputation to others. Paul prayed that the Colossians would know God's will, informed by true spiritual understanding. That is our first responsibility as Christians. To know God and what He requires of us. Several times Paul alludes to wisdom and knowledge.

Paul also prayed that the Colossians would live according to the knowledge they received. He calls it "living out a walk worthy of the Lord." We base our Christian walk on our knowledge of God and understanding of His will. Paul says we are to "fully please God." This is only possible as we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us God's ways.

There are two essential things to learn about this transformation, both of which are entirely counter-cultural: First, God wants to transform us from being self-centered into being God-centered. The Holy Spirit works through God's Word to fundamentally displace us from being the center of our world to making our world revolve around God and His will. Most contemporary forms of spirituality view God as a force or energy to tap into and use to achieve your own goals and get what you want. This is radically different from Christianity. Christians are committed to putting Christ first in their lives.

Second, God wants His transformation to be comprehensive, not compartmentalized. The Holy Spirit works to realign our lives to God's will in every aspect of our life. God wants to transform us intellectually, financially, relationally, maritally – in every area of our life. The reason this transformation works is that God designed us for the Christian way of life. Living in contradiction to God's design damages us and causes us misery. That is the nature of sin. Allowing God to transform us to live according to His design really does bring us a deep fulfillment (Rom.12:2b).

Paul gives us a picture of the transformed life in these verses. The first phrase he uses is "bearing fruit in every good work." These are acts of goodness toward other people that attract them to Christ. John writes about this in Chapter 15 of his gospel, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my

joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." (Joh 15:8-12 NIV)

The second phrase Paul uses is "increasing in the knowledge of God." This is not an academic understanding of God. It is a life of personal relationship and experience with God. When we share God's love with others, it deepens our experience with Christ and gives us greater insight into God's will. In John 14, Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me." (Joh 14:23-24 NIV)

The third phrase Paul uses is "being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might." Paul experienced the power of God in this way. He knew what he was talking about. God's power enables us to become "steadfast" and able to hang in there through difficult circumstances that threaten to crush us. God's power in us causes us to become more patient and love people who are even difficult to love. As a result, we can be realistic about life's challenges and still make progress towards becoming more stable and faithful in our relationships!

As a Christian, you can have an optimistic outlook on life. We can joyously give thanks to God no matter what life throws our way. Instead of allowing the circumstances we encounter to determine our outlook and attitude, we rely on the promises of God's word and the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

We learn to resist disappointment and cynicism and instead cultivate a deepening joy and gratitude to God. Why? Because through Jesus, God has become our Heavenly Father. This is the message of transformation that we are called upon to share with our world. Christ can transform every aspect of your life so you can become all that God created you to be.

The gospel also promises that you will one day inherit a place in God's eternal kingdom. Paul calls this "the inheritance," and in the meantime, you can ask God for whatever help you need. The greater our thanks to God, the more joyous we become. Philippians 2:13 says, "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Php 2:13 NKJV)

God can transform you no matter how much you've messed things up, no matter how much others have damaged you or how difficult your circumstances are. The question is: How does God accomplish this transformation, and how do we cooperate with Him in it?

II. The Method of Transformation

Look at verse 9 again, "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the

knowledge of God;" (Col 1:9-10 NKJV)

Being filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding unleashes God's power to transform us. Some may think that "the knowledge of God's will" refers to getting God's guidance for important life-decisions (e.g., who to marry; where to go to school; what career to pursue). These decisions are important, and God can give us guidance on making them – but that's not what Paul means. Paul's phrase "the knowledge of God's will" is speaking of the gospel; the revelation and realization that Jesus is God's Messiah, and that His death and resurrection has provided the solution to our deepest problems. Paul makes this clear in Chapter 2 when he speaks of the "true knowledge of God's mystery," referring to Christ Himself, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The key to being transformed by God is the same key to becoming a Christian and experiencing God's peace and hope. In Philippians 2, Paul writes, "fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself." (Php 2:2-3 NKJV)

While understanding the content of the gospel is important, it is responding to it in faith that is transforming. To become a Christian requires only a basic understanding of the gospel that Jesus died for your sins and wants to live in your heart. To be transformed by the gospel requires allowing the Holy Spirit to teach you God's ways and help you be changed by them. We sometimes call this being filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit causes us to become filled with spiritual knowledge.

Paul highlights this in these verses. First, we become familiar with the contents of the gospel. Throughout this letter, Paul lays out for us how to live the Christian life. This is what Paul refers to in 3:16a when he says: "Let the word of Christ richly (*plusios*) dwell within you..." He is challenging us to listen to and read again and again the contents of his letter until we thoroughly understand it. He wants us to pay close attention to what he is saying.

That means to break it down like we're doing in this series of messages. Read small passages carefully, write down your thoughts, memorize the verses, repeat them back to yourself, use them in your prayers to God, and meditate on them until they take up residence in your heart. When you do these things, it unleashes God's power to transform you or, as Paul says, "so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."

III. The Fruit of Transformation

Paul describes the fruit of transformation in verses 11-14, "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance

of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Col 1:11-14 NKJV)

God's plan of redemption includes a transformation that bears fruit even in a sinful environment. The world can be falling apart and you can still be a Christian and ardent follower of Jesus Christ. When we embrace the life-changing gospel message of Jesus, we become partakers of the inheritance of the saints. The inheritance of Christ's riches is not something we earn, it is something we are given because of our relationship with Jesus.

The fruit of transformation also includes deliverance from the power of darkness. Satan and evil have no power over us when our relationship with Christ is strong. Satan may entice you with temptations or try to scare you with persecutions. Jesus spoke of this darkness in Luke 22:53, when He was arrested, "When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Luk 22:53 NKJV)

There is always spiritual battles we must face but we must stand firm and put on the whole armor of God. The power of darkness lulls some believers to sleep while attracting and fascinating others. The Bible says men love darkness because their deeds are evil. The covering of darkness conceals a person's intent and emboldens them to do things they would not do in the light.

Spurgeon said, "Beloved, we still are tempted by Satan, but we are not under his power; we have to fight with him, but we are not his slaves. He is not our king; he has no rights over us; we do not obey him; we will not listen to his temptations." (Spurgeon)

The fruit of transformation is that we live in the light of God's kingdom. Instead of darkness and hatred, we live in God's love and compassion. For the sake of the gospel, everything we are and have now belongs to God. The price of our freedom from this darkness and the world has been paid in full by the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The sacrifice Christ made for our eternal freedom releases us from Satan's grip and satisfies God's penalty for sin. God removes our sin as far as the east is from the west never to be remembered against us again.

That is the power of God's forgiveness and the fruit of the gospel's transformation. We are forgiven, in Jesus Name! We are no longer separated from having a profound relationship with the Creator of the Universe. The Emmanuel, God with Us, has once again come down to walk and talk and fellowship with us.

Conclusion

As we progress through this series in Colossians, I hope that it will be life-transforming for you! Ask God to illuminate the gospel's application to your life.

Ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart so that you see how these truths apply practically to your life. Let the Holy Spirit cause a longing in your heart to be more steadfast and intentional in developing your relationship with Christ.

This is why Paul taught these truths. He prayed for “Spirit-imparted wisdom and understanding” to fill the hearts and minds of those Colossians believers. So when you read these passages this week, pray for God to help you and guide you! And pray for this for your Christian friends!

God’s transforming work not only occurs in us when we receive the gospel, but it also works in those we share the gospel with. Throughout this letter Paul reminds believers to share the gospel with others. A deep and lasting spiritual transformation takes place when we share and practice the gospel in Christian community.

I encourage you to read your Bible regularly and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it’s truths to you. And find a Christian friend or two that you can meet with regularly for some Bible study and prayer. That is at the heart of the gospel! And the gospel will transform your life!