

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: November 8, 2009

## Living Consistent With A New Identity: Pursuing Radical Transformation

by Dan Trygg

"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."

Romans 12:2

"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 from the Lord, the Spirit."

II Cor. 3:18

The Greek word, *metamorphōō*, is used four times in the NT. It means "to change the essential form or nature of what you are", or "to become something entirely different from what you are".

**Twice it describes the transformation that came over Jesus when He "was transfigured"** on the mountain before His three disciples (17:2; cf. Mk. 9:2). The description of Matthew was "and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light". Whatever happened, there was no natural explanation for it. **His essential nature was changed before them.** Suddenly He became luminescent, and even His garments were illuminated.

**Another place the word is used is II Cor. 3:18.** There, Paul is making a comparison between the dynamics of the old covenant and the new covenant. The old covenant was law-based, *external* in nature. Its focus was mostly about behavior. People following that old way remained, at best, *sinners trying to be good*. By contrast, the new covenant is *internal* in nature. It is all about receiving new life, a new heart and inner transformation. Instead of sinners trying to be good, in Christ we can now *live as new creatures empowered by the Holy Spirit*.

**Moses was the giver of the old covenant law, and the greatest example of its glory.** He was privileged to meet with the manifestation of God's presence, and saw a bit of His "afterglow" (Ex. 33:18-23). **Being in the presence of God's glory radically affected the appearance of his face.** When he returned from meeting with God, *the surface of his face* radiated the glory of God. **In his case, however, this was only an outside-in, skin deep effect,** much like the dynamics involved in being in the sun too long. Most of us have experienced that. Sometimes we might not even be aware of it, but others can see our skin beginning to turn red. In a similar fashion, Moses did not know that his face glowed (Ex. 34:29). Others told him about it. Furthermore, just as sunburn begins to fade, **the appearance of the glow on Moses' face would diminish with time.** He did not want people to see the fading away of this glory, so he would cover his face with a veil. When he met with God, he would remove the veil and get "recharged", so to speak. He would then speak to the people, and they would see the glory radiating from his skin. After delivering the message from God, Moses would again cover his face, so that people would not see the fading glory (vss. 34,35). **It is clear that Moses himself was not "transformed". Only the surface appearance of his skin was temporarily changed.**

*Paul used Moses' experience to draw a distinction between the old covenant and the new.* **The old covenant did nothing to change or transform the heart.** It did reveal God's holy nature and what He required of those who would be in communion with Him. The problem was the weakness of our human flesh (Rom. 8:3). The law didn't deal with the sinfulness of our hearts. In actuality, **what the law could only do was show us how bad off we were** (Rom. 7:7). In a sense, the law set us up to fail, simply because it asked us to do what we could not maintain. The sin nature rebels against restriction and selfishly wants to do what is evil. It is actually *aroused* by the law. **The law not only shows us where we fail, but also is used by the sin nature to deceive us and cause us to choose sin,** which leads to spiritual death (Rom. 7:8-13). This is so much the nature of the reaction of sin to the law that Paul says, "apart from the law, sin is dead" (Rom. 8:8), and "the *power* of sin is the law" (I Cor. 15:56). Of course, **the law was never intended to solve our sin problem.** No one can be justified by works of the law, because no one can keep it perfectly (Gal. 2:16; Jas. 2:10). By exposing sin, and making us aware of both our accountability to God, and that our sin brings us under His wrath (Rom. 3:19,20; 4:15), **the law is a tutor that brings us to the end of our self efforts, the strivings of the flesh, and prepares us for the good news of the righteousness God gives us freely by faith in Christ** (Gal. 3:21-29).

Christ provides a righteousness which is *credited* to us when we trust in Him. **God knew we could not ever be righteous enough on our own to satisfy the demands of His holy nature.** Jesus came to be a corporate head for humanity, a representative who could *take our place*, and *even take us into Himself* (Rom. 5:12-19; II Cor. 5:14). As He died, *not only were our sins paid for*, and the just requirement of the law fulfilled, *but also our old sinful selves were put to death with Him.* **His righteousness is counted to those who trust in Him.** Furthermore, as Paul tells us, if we were united with Him in His death, we shall also be united with Him in His resurrection (Rom. 6:5). **The**

**power of the resurrection is the basis for the new creative power of the Holy Spirit which makes us new creatures** when we come to Christ (II Cor. 5:17; Jn. 3:3-5). In spite of what we may *see* and *feel*, the apostle John tells us, “*now* we are children (offspring) of God” (I John 3:2). **That new inner nature is not able to sin, being born from God’s own seed, and having been created in holiness and righteousness of the truth** (I Jn. 3:9; Eph. 4:24). To use Jesus’ word picture, it is a “good tree” that can only bear good fruit (Matt. 7:17,18). So then, if we receive this gift of righteousness, and are born from above, ***we are to live by the dynamics of that new life. We are no longer to live by the old way, trying to keep the law by our own efforts.*** If we try *that*, we will get the same pitiful results as before. It is like we make Christ to be of no practical benefit to us (Gal. 5:2-4).

**Instead of living by the dynamics of the old covenant (the law), we are to live by the power and leading of the Spirit inside of us** (Gal. 5:5,16,18,25; II Cor. 3:5,6; Rom. 8:6,14). Even the OT identified this as the essential difference of the new covenant God would someday establish for His people. He was going to give them new hearts and put a new Spirit within them, His Spirit. *This would make obedience possible* (Ezk. 11:19,20). The Spirit would even *cause them* to walk in His ways (Ezk. 36:26,27). Jesus instituted this new covenant (Lk. 22:20), and ***we have the promised Holy Spirit, so that we could be transformed. This change comes from the inside out.*** Instead of restraining the old sinful nature, ***our focus can now be on following the new desire to do God’s will, which the Spirit causes to rise up within us*** (Phil. 2:12,13). *Giving ourselves to follow our heart’s desires is liberty* (II Cor. 3:17). Paul says that the more we contemplate and *understand* God’s love and delightfulness..., the more we will find ourselves transformed or transfigured (*metamorphoō*) into becoming increasingly like Him (II Cor. 3:18; cf. I Jn. 3:6). This comes from the Spirit within us. Unlike Moses’ temporary glory, which was only skin-deep and soon faded away, this transformation is from our inner being, and *increases in intensity* as we continue to grow.

**The final passage in the NT that contains the word, *metamorphoō*, is Rom. 12:2.** There the form is an imperative, a command. Literally, it would be translated “transform (yourselves) by the renewing of your mind”. Like the II Corinthians passage, ***this change comes about as we understand more of who God is, and what He has done in our lives.*** As we become comfortable in our relationship with God, ...established in His love, discerning the promptings of His Spirit, and growing in His grace..., and we begin to grasp *how* to put off the old way of living and *how* to walk with Him according to the inside-out workings of His life inside of us, *then* we can begin to “test-out-by-trial-to-discover the will of God” in our lives. ***Our lives will radically change as we live out the inner working of His Spirit within us.*** Everyone will see the difference, and will recognize that God is at work within us. The key to this outward change is the growing understanding that ***we are not who we once were. God has put an entirely different nature within us that we must come to understand. There is an entirely different way to live than what we have known up to now.*** The command to “to change the essential form or nature of what you are”, or “to become something entirely different from what you are” is only possible because God *has* put a new life and a new nature within you. **The “transform (yourselves)” command of this passage is based upon *this* premise, ...otherwise it would be an impossible command.** *We are different* than we used to be. We need to learn to tap into that new life, and express it in our behavior.

*The English word “metamorphosis” is a direct derivative of the Greek word, metamorphoō.* **The clearest example of this radical transformation in the world of nature is the change that takes place in the life of a caterpillar as it becomes a butterfly.** It is hard to imagine that the graceful creature flying around from flower to flower could ever have been a worm-like caterpillar. The transformation is so incredible! It had multiple sets of legs as a caterpillar; as a butterfly it has only six. Its mode of transportation changed from crawling through undulating its wormlike body, to flapping wings on its back. As a caterpillar, it was an eating machine, chewing up many leaves with its mandibles; as a butterfly, it no longer chews anything, but nourishes itself from nectar sucked through its long, coiled tongue. **The change in its form, and its manner of living is so dramatic and complete that it is almost incomprehensible that it could be the same creature.** This transformation happens mostly within the cocoon, away from human eyes. Even this stage, however, is *not without effort*. Time-lapse photography reveals that the bug inside the shell of that receptacle moves, wiggles and struggles, as its body is reworked and the new form takes shape. When it emerges, *it must fight and struggle* against the confining, constrictive hole it manages to open in the cocoon. *This process requires great effort*, but is necessary, so that the fluids contained within its wings could be wrung out as it emerges. Finally, *it must stretch* out those new wings and flap them, so that they open up properly and dry. When its transformation is complete, *it must learn* to use these new appendages to fly away and start its new life. ***This natural metamorphosis is an illustration of what we must go through in spiritual transformation. The inner stirring of new life is there, but we must work hard to work out the salvation that God’s Spirit is working in us*** (Phil. 2:12,13).