

“Transformers”
Series: “*Beyond Compare*”

1/31/10

9 & 10:45 am

INTRODUCTION

“A man visited a construction site, where three stonemasons were working. He went up to one and asked what he was doing. The stonemason said, ‘I’m chipping a stone.’

“He then walked over to the second man and asked what he was doing. This man replied, ‘I’m building a wall.’

“Finally he asked the third man what he was doing. This man had a different perspective on the significance of his work. He replied, ‘I am building a cathedral.’”

As God chips away at your life, as He builds character one block at a time, He is doing much more than taking away some bad habits or strengthening some weaknesses. He is making you more and more like Jesus Himself.

Becoming more like Jesus is God’s ultimate building plan for our lives, and He wants it to be our highest goal—that which is *Beyond Compare* in our lives.

I’ve heard from various people this week who are asking God to show them what their highest goal is. To see if something at the core of their being has replaced becoming like Jesus.

When you think about becoming like Christ, do voices start to fill your mind? Voices that say it isn’t possible, or that it may be possible for others, but not for you?

Have you, even unconsciously, decided that becoming like Jesus isn’t *really* possible, but becoming more like the Apostle Paul or Peter, or Esther, Nehemiah or Ruth ... that’s more like it, more realistic a goal?

This morning we’re going to look at what the Bible says about *Transformation*, the process by which we become more like Jesus.

OPEN to Matthew 5:48 (**PAGE** 1503)

I. Transformation: It’s a Process ... and that’s how it’s supposed to be

READ Matthew 5:48 “**Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**”

Let’s say, a little boy or girl is going to their first t-ball practice ... and the coach is showing the team how to hit the ball. He gathers everyone around home plate, and picks one of the little boys to use as an example.

He says something like, “Now, you want to grip the bat like this, hold it above your head like this, put your feet like this, fix your eyes on the ball like this and don’t blink. Then, push off your back foot, step forward with your front foot, and at the same time start swinging the bat towards the ball. Stare at the ball and swing all the way through the ball, don’t just make contact. Got it? OK, line up and do it.”

And, then as the little kids struggle to remember where to put their feet, how to hold the bat and position their arms, to stare at the ball, push forward, etc. ... and fail to get it perfect ... the coach begins to be very stern and impatient and demand perfection NOW!?

Will that produce perfect swings and hits? No! Why not? Because they are little kids at their first practice who have seen one demonstration, and there’s a lot to put together. It’s going to take time!

Becoming like Jesus is learned; it is a process of growth and maturing. And God doesn’t look down from Heaven angrily, and say, “*Why aren’t you loving and joyful; filled with peace, patience, kindness, goodness faithfulness, gentleness and self-control just like My Son? Get that way NOW!*”

You might think, “*I thought He did!* I thought He wanted it now, or at least within five or 10 years, and as I tried, I became really frustrated, and decided it really wasn’t possible, so I gave up.”

Let’s look at and unpack what God’s expectations are:

READ Matthew 5:48 “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

1 Peter 1:16 “**for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’**” (five times in Leviticus)

That is what the Bible says, isn’t it?

Yes, but what isn’t as obvious in these verses is that *it is a process*; that God knows that, and has actually communicated it *as a process*.

explain:

Matthew 5:48 “**Be** (future, middle, indicative) **perfect** (*teleios*: having reached its end, i.e. complete, by extension, perfect)” (BAG)

“**Be**” is really more like “**Be becoming ...**”

It isn’t translated that way because it’s bad English; but that is more literally what it says.

Jesus is speaking of what He wants us to become *in the future*, *starting now*.

He is talking about the process of starting where you are now, and continually working at what He wants you to become.

“Be becoming ... perfect ...”

You might think, “*Process* is good, but **perfect** is impossible!”

“Perfect:” *reached the intended purpose, to be complete, to be mature.*

“Be becoming complete ...”

“... as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

“Be becoming more and more like your heavenly Father is now.” (present active indicative)

(Since Jesus is just like His Father, the Father tells us to become like Jesus)

The same is true of 1 Peter 1:16:

“for it is written: ‘Be (future, middle, indicative) holy, because I am (present, active, indicative) holy.’”

“Be becoming more and more like your heavenly Father is now.”

In one verse it is “**perfect**” in the other it is “**holy**.” They are striking the same point: *become like Jesus.*

That’s clear, we’re to enter into the process of becoming more like Jesus; the process of transformation.

So, how does transformation take place?

(We’re going to look at one means of transformation today, and will continue with others next week).

II. Transformation: How Does it Happen?

TURN to Romans 12:2 (**PAGE** 1763)

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

We are transformed by ...

A. The renewing of our minds

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world ...”

The world’s way of thinking molds us more than we realize.

ILLUSTRATION

At the community pastors’ prayer time this week, before we prayed the topic of racism came up. As part of this discussion, one of the pastors mentioned how President Obama is often called “African American.” Someone asked, “Why is it said he is African-American when he is half African-American and half Caucasian?”

One of the African-American pastors explained why. In the old race laws in our country it was determined that if a person was 1/16 of an ethnicity other than Caucasian, then they were not Caucasian, but whatever the 1/16 was.

So, although those laws, for the most part, are now stricken from our society, the standard remains.

When will the day come where we do as MLK, Jr. said, and recognize someone by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin?

God says we all have the same origin: Adam and Eve.

But, in many ways, our minds are still conformed to the patterns of this world ... patterns that are not from God and do not accomplish His goal of making us more and more like Jesus.

This is just one example of how the world, society, forms our thinking; the framework through which we see everything, including God and His Word.

God, through Romans 12:2, is urging us, commanding us, to no longer be controlled in our thinking by the patterns of the world ...

... which includes no longer putting things in our minds that are according to the pattern of the world ...

... but, to put in our minds those things that will **renew** them into the image of Jesus according to the pattern of Jesus Himself.

Romans 12:2b “... **be transformed** (present, passive, imperative; “*keep on being transformed*”) **by the renewing of your mind ...**”

God is saying that our minds are molded, are being molded by what we expose them to...

by what you put in it,

by what you focus upon,

by what you believe.

Your mind is molded and influenced and formed by various sources. Choose godly sources.

The result will be **transformation** of our lives into the image of Jesus.

The “**mind**” is the control center of one’s attitudes, thoughts, feelings and actions (cf. Eph. 4:22-23).

What we focus our minds upon molds our thinking, and results in attitudes, words and actions that make us either more like Jesus or more like the world.

As someone keeps on exposing their mind to godly molding—God’s Word, prayer, and Christian fellowship—one’s actions, habits, and character keeps on being **transformed** and we will become more like Jesus in our attitudes, habits, words, actions, character.

ILLUSTRATION

Reading Romans 8 as a new believer I was struck (Holy Spirit speaking) by this truth of mind focus:

Romans 8:5-6 “**Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.**

6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”

So, I thought, “*How can I keep my mind set on the things of God throughout the day?*” The idea came, “write down v. 6 on a piece of paper, squash it up and put it in your front pocket.”

I wrote it down, and the next morning put it in my pocket and went to school. As I was walking between classes, I stuck my hand in my pocket, touched the piece of paper, had forgotten what it was, pulled it out, and read the vs. and started thinking about it. “Life and peace” grabbed me and I started thinking how God had given me eternal life,

and how grateful I was. Then, I started thinking how I wanted others to know Jesus, so I prayed for the chance to talk to someone.

It didn't happen all day. But, I thought, "I was open, I prayed, I was available." As I was driving home, a guy was hitchhiking. I picked him up. He was a student at ASU also, and we started making small talk. Next thing I knew, he asked me a question and the answer had to do with my new interest in Christianity. He started asking questions. I was answering with answers I didn't know where they were coming from. They were coming from my mouth, but the Holy Spirit was the one filling it. He lived in my neighborhood, so I was able to share with him for about 15-20 minutes, and later took him a Bible.

That was the fruit of a mind influenced and formed by a verse from God's Word. I was more like Jesus, concerned for someone else's soul, and speaking God's Word to him.

We are transformed when our minds are renewed through the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

Christ-likeness is not produced by imitation, but by transformation. Our part is to set our minds on God's Word, and those things that are pure, lovely, trustworthy, honorable ... often through God's word. God's part is to transform us. And He will!

"Father in Heaven, thank You for helping me understand that becoming like Jesus is a process that You designed, and not a demand to meet immediately. But, help me to now enter the process, and focus my mind on the things of the Holy Spirit, the things of Your Word, so that You can transform my thinking and my life. In Jesus' name, Amen."