

CHAPTER 13

What Will the 21st Century Church Look Like?

Transformation by the Spirit

We, the believers are the church. The church succeeded for the first three hundred years of its existence without a building called church. From God's perspective, we are one family. The church of the last century experienced many changes. These changes from the early 1900's were a part of the restoration of things lost from the 1st Century Church. These changes caused many arguments which resulted in many divided factions.

The 20th Century Western Christian Church was never united. But God has something new for those who are looking for a church which reflects the Bible's picture. God has a plan that includes several Biblical steps of transformation. Buildings, seating charts, small group meetings or governmental org charts will not bring into existence these changes. God has detailed how his children can experience transformation. These transformations will not come by some new idea or charismatic leader.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. *Romans 12:2 NASB emphasis added*

God wants to transform us by the renewing of our minds. Unfortunately, some teachers put the emphasis upon the negative and miss this wonderful truth. God wants us to be in a process that continues for our whole life. We are called to a lifetime of transformation.

This process will bring us to an understanding of God's desires, God's will, God's view of things. Our small minds will never fully understand God's will. But we are called to a process of change that will stop us thinking as normal humans (*mere men* - I Co.3:3). We will be transformed into beings with two perspectives; a transformed human's perspective and God's perspective.

We will stop being conformed to the world's thinking as this process of renewing our minds continues. From one circumstance or problem to another, we will look at things differently.

I know many Christians that sincerely want to NOT be conformed to the sinful world and the way the world thinks about things. But they put little emphasis on this life-long process. They try real hard, only to find that they are still thinking like *mere men*. The positive change replaces the negative. Missing this truth causes some Christians to focus on the negative instead of cooperating with God's plan of transformation.

This process is much more than learning the Bible. Satan knows the Bible. As we absorb the truths of the Bible and walk with God this process of transformation will happen. Here are a few changes that this process brings into believer's lives.

I. How This Process Works

Dividing Between the Human & the Divine

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. *Hebrews 4:12 NASB*

As life unfolds, Bible truths are applied to present circumstances. This is not just a mental understanding of what the Bible says, but a real-time application of the Bible. What is God's will or desire? The present application of the Word of God divides between our soul (mental condition, emotions) and spirit (the unseen inner man that came alive at our new birth.)

As life unfolds, and we walk with God, our "being renewed" minds develop a wisdom from Heaven. We divide between what our normal human emotions and mind want and what our inner (spirit) man wants. No longer do we only react to physical circumstances. We also react to the unseen world. Spiritual reality is superimposed over the physical reality. We start allowing the Word of God to judge our thoughts and our intentions in each moral event of our lives.

It is this present application of the Word of God within our heart, mind and emotions that teaches us when our choices are our desires, God's mandates or simply neutral non-moral issues. The application of the knowledge of the Word of God brings the wisdom that allows us to discern our internal motives in each moral event.

As our minds are renewed, we become aware that there is a Godly view, a broken human view and a transformed human view. We live with an understanding of those who need to be rescued, since we need rescuing too. We live with an understanding of our new potential in God. Even though we still fall short of the goal. We start to live with an understanding of Heaven's view of Earthly events.

II. How This Process Works

Dying to Bad Self-Interests

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. *Galatians 5:16-18 NASB*

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. *Galatians 5:24-25 NASB*

As you continue in the process of your mind being renewed, you begin to see the Hebrews 4:12 division as what Galatians 5 calls the flesh versus the spirit. There are good self-interests that bring good fruit. Your desire to support your family and protect your children comes from a place of self-interest, but it is good. There are other times when your self-interest is not good or bad. Wanting to eat a chilly-cheese dog for lunch may upset your doctor, but not necessarily God. God's wisdom helps us discern the difference.

There are the self-interests that are wrong and should be replaced by the fruit of Galatian 5. These self-interests or selfish behaviors are called the deeds of the flesh.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. *Galatians 5:19-23 NASB*

As your mind is renewed, you will begin to actively discern and decide to die to bad self-interests and other sinful activities. These “deeds of the flesh” will not just disappear but be replaced by the Holy Spirit’s reactions, as you choose to die to selfish reactions and selfish motives.

Instead of getting angry at your boss, (he may deserve it) you discern the old pattern and die to that pattern. Your renewed mind divides between soul and spirit and discerns the intentions of your heart (to bop him on the head.) You then have a choice. **You will always have a choice.** But your renewed mind chooses to repent and die to the old pattern. Immediately there is the power of the Holy Spirit available to help you react with the fruit of the Spirit of *Self-control*.

This Fruit of the Spirit reaction is really in your best interest. Having self-control when you perceive injustice or other evils will help you be a part of the solution. With the Real Time application of the Word of God, you break the old patterns that have caused you trouble.

III. How This Process Works

Faith in God’s Power to Transform

... but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. *1 John 1:7-8 NASB*

The struggle of Galatians 5 can seem intense, at times, as God teaches us. Our faith that God’s Word is true renews our mind to a belief that He has the power to cleanse us from ALL sin. If we choose to sin, God continues to have the power to cleanse us. But if we fail and choose to just lay in the mud puddle of life, God will allow us to lay there.

God will not force you to walk with Him. God will help you choose the best but will never choose for you. He will send others to encourage you to get up and continue. But it is required of each believer to have faith that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross has the power to forgive sin – your sin. You can be fully cleaned up by God’s power. Today.

IV. How This Process Works

Light Affliction

Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, *II Corinthians 4:16-17 NASB*

As you are transformed, you change your view of your life with its tribulations and problems. As your mind is renewed and you die to *self*, you view life having “*light afflictions*” not heavy problems. Obviously, some of life’s losses are severe, but in most circumstances, we can see God’s purposes producing in us an “*eternal weight of glory*.” This glory has a weightiness that is not a hard thing to bear, even as we see the normal physical processes of the passage of time.

Another way of saying this is that you see God’s Eternal Purposes in your life, whether the circumstances are good or bad. This Eternal Purpose is producing blessings and rewards of God’s glory in our lives.

As you walk with God through each high and low spot of life, you will continue to be transformed by God’s power, as your mind is renewed by the application of the Word of God. As you choose to die to self, you do not slow down this wonderful process of becoming a son that reflects his Heavenly Father’s love and forgiveness toward the World.

Instead of becoming a dry, sad and cold religious person, you reflect God’s joy and peace. You see that God is working all things out for your good.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; *Romans 8:28-29 NASB*

V. How This Process Works

Relationship instead of Formulas

When humans teach humans using well intentioned formulas the result is NOT Divine Transformation. As God’s children walk with Him and begin to have a partial Heavenly understanding, their relationship with God changes. Every man who has ever lived has had some type of a relationship with God.

All men have had relationships that range from distant, strained, broken, intimate, angry, ignored, close or loving. As Transformation continues, no matter where your relationship with God starts, it will become better. This progression to a better relationship is what God is desiring.

The Church Transformed into

Christians Experiencing God’s Love

We love, because He first loved us.
I John 4:19 NASB

Angelica Hale competed in the finals of America's Got Talent in 2017. She was a talented 9-year-old and had many fans. Most people watching may have missed a very touching and inspirational part of her performance. As she sang, the camera showed her parents watching her in real time. There was no back-stage coaching or editing. Tears dripped down her smiling parent's faces, as their daughter sang. They watched with the most amazing look of pride and love as they encouraged her to continue singing.

God is watching us with this same heart of love. This parental depth of love and pride toward a child is the picture of the love God has for us. Jesus, when teaching us how to relate to God said this.

... your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. *Matthew 6:8b-9 NASB*

A transformation occurs when Christians see Father God encouraging them to fulfill their destiny. God's love is more and deeper than the love we have for our children. The message of the Gospel – The Good News will increase as God's children see their Father smiling and encouraging them to fulfill their destiny. The picture of a frowning, disappointed and angry God will be replaced with a Biblical picture of God as our Father.

The Church Transformed into Christians Loving the World

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. *John 3:16 NASB*

Transformed Christians reflect God's love for the world. Because our English translations use the word *World* as equivalent to sinful culture (Romans 12:2 above), we have become confused. God loves this world that He created. He loves the people in this world. God loves the natural world with all its trees and weeds. God loves the broken, the sinful, the deceived World. The transformed Christian's job is to reflect that love.

There is a dark entity that hates this world. There is a dark entity that hates the people of the world and their creativity. There is a dark realm that dislikes everything about humanity. That realm is God's enemy.

That darkness wants to deceive the whole world. And that deception will be broken by the power of Christian's love and Heavenly wisdom.

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,

"Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. *Revelation 12:9-11 NASB emphasis added*

Christians will overcome the deceiver of the world by:

God's love for them - the blood of the Lamb

The word of the testimony – their understanding and wisdom.

They did not love their lives – sacrifice of selfish pursuits.

This expression of loving the world will be so intense and prioritized by these 21 Century Transformed Christian that they will sometimes sacrifice everything, even their physical lives to see God's plan be fulfilled in this world.

The Christian's vision for this world will be bright and hopeful. The doomsday visions of darkness will be replaced with a loving God, freeing the Earth from the darkness of a raging and defeated deceiver.

The Church Transformed into Christians Loving One Another

Let us have no imitation Christian love. Let us have a genuine break with evil and a real devotion to good. Let us have real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a willingness to let the other man have the credit. *Romans 12:10 PHILLIPS emphasis added*

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christians will avoid the common practice of fake Christian love. When there are disputes or dissension, real and genuine love will be encouraged by their leaders.

By spending time meditating upon Jesus and the Word, Christians will show a tolerance and patience toward their brothers in Christ. Humility will be an inner quality of heart. Instead of thinking they are ahead of their brothers, or better than their brothers, they will be delivered from this deception. The deception that thinks about the Body of Christ as a dissected, non-functioning group of disconnected members will be broken.

Viewing ALL Christians as our brothers and sisters in Christ will bring a different reaction of love toward the group down the street. Preferring one another becomes a simple reaction of one family member to another.

The priority of the church will once again be to Love One Another.