

Transformation and renewal

Adapted from *Possessed by God*, by David Peterson

By Jay Wegter

I. Transformation and Renewal

A. The Holy Spirit continually impresses upon the believer the obligation to put sin to death (**Rom 8:12-13**). The call to ongoing repentance is an ever-repeated response to ever newly repeated summons of God. Discussion: Read **Romans 8:12-14** and explain the role of the Holy Spirit in leading and motivating the believer's pursuit of transformation and renewal. What truths concerning co-crucifixion with Christ does the Spirit incorporate?ⁱ Where the Holy Spirit is in charge, there will be strength and motivation to keep *putting sin to death*. The life of sonship is produced by the Spirit's leading (**Romans 8**). Why are transformation and renewal biblical mandates?

B. The sanctified life will continue to express what it means to be in relationship with the Holy One, through the work of His Son and the gift of the Spirit. In the life set apart to God, and led by the Spirit, there can be no hiding from God's presence (**1 Thess 4:3**), and no compromise with the flesh (**Rom 8:11-12**).

C. Only the Spirit's constant infusion of spiritual life into the believer sustains the new resurrection life received at the new birth. Discussion: Read **Philippians 2:12-13**. Comment on the believer's responsibility of submitting to the Spirit and cooperating with His will and work. Why are the terms "fear and trembling" used here in the Philippians passage?

The "fear" mentioned in this passage refers to our response to God's sanctifying activity in our lives. When the believer understands that God's Spirit is working intimately with our desires and decisions so as to produce sanctifying choices, there should be response from us reverence, awe, and submission. The believer is to conduct his life with a conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit and a willing submission to His leading—resulting in power against the flesh. Discussion: Read **Galatians 5:16, 18; 6:8**. How would you define what it means to "walk by the Spirit?" And, to "sow to the Spirit." What is promised to those who walk by the Spirit and sow to the Spirit?

D. Our part in the process of renewal is to keep the eyes of our minds fixed upon things that are above, things that are unseen. Discussion: Read **Colossians 3:1-3; 2 Cor 4:17-18; Ephesians 4:22-23ff**. How would you connect these verses from the epistles with what Jesus said about true treasure in **Matthew 6:19-21**? When our affections are set on things above; our true 'treasure', we are most fitted to comprehend and reject the *deceptiveness* of worldly lusts. When our eyes are upon things above, our allegiance to Christ will manifest the pure and simple devotion to Him spoken of in **2 Corinthians**

11:3. Discussion: Read **2 Corinthians 4:18** and **Philippians 3:8-17**. Prove that the phrase “things that are unseen” refers especially to the age to come.

Those who are *friends of the cross* set their minds NOT on earthly things, but upon eternal things. Our responsibility is to fix our eyes on things that are unseen—that is, the age to come in which the resurrection of our body and glory will be ours. Faith and hope in God’s promises is the key to *being renewed day by day*.ⁱⁱ

E. Read **2 Corinthians 4:1-16**. Paul’s perseverance flowed from his confidence in what God was doing. Only the Adamic, outer man was wasting away—the inner man was being renewed day by day. Discussion: How does this spiritual reality keep the believer from crumbling in the face of adversity and affliction?

Paul, along with every believer is assured that renewal by God’s Spirit is *conforming us to the image of Christ*. Only the “man of this age” is wasting away—what we are *in Adam*. What we are in Christ now, and will be fully at the resurrection, is *being renewed day by day*. Even in the face of great loss and adversity, we can trust the Spirit to continue His great work of preparing us for glorification.ⁱⁱⁱ

F. Renewal means going back to the beginning and expressing each day what it means to be a new person in Christ. What renews us in Christ is faith in God and His promises. The Spirit’s ongoing task is to renew my mind through the Gospel. Discussion: Read **2 Corinthians 5:14-17** and **2 Peter 1:1-5**. Describe the Gospel’s role in these verses in providing the incentive to live as a new person in Christ.

Mind renewal through the Gospel puts our focus back upon what God is doing in us. God never backs off from His purpose to conform us into the image of His Son (**Rom 8:29-30**). Renewal each day means we are to live as a new person in Christ. We are to reject the sins that are totally out of place in God’s people—the sins Christ died to destroy, **Colossians 3:5-9**.^{iv}

Our daily task of living to reflect the holy character of God, and living under righteousness (justification) is our preparation to live with God forever. When the N.T. describes God’s grace, with that description of His grace comes an explanation of the believer’s *identity* in Christ, the believer’s *mandate* to be conformed to Christ, the believer’s *relation* to the Body of Christ, and the believer’s *destiny* in Christ. These grace-based *spiritual realities* are a powerful incentive for Christian living. Thus, the Gospel gives us “kingdom values” that are joined to our hope of resurrection life.

G. The believer is being renewed to the image of Christ. Christ is both the “architect” of the new man, and the “goal”—pattern, blueprint or template for the new man (**Col**

3:10). Sanctification means living as a new person in Christ.

Read Colossians 3:5-10. Certain attitudes belong to the old self, and certain attitudes belong to the new self. Renewal involves putting on the attitudes of the new man. These new attitudes can be referred to as the “garments of grace.” Discussion: List the “new man” behaviors in **Colossians 3:1-23**. Describe how these “new man” behaviors affect our relationships. List the “old self” practices that must be crucified or “put off”.

Setting one’s mind on things above means considering the members of our body as dead to sin, dead to *immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed, anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, lying*. And putting on the new self; putting on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with and forgiving one another; putting on love; letting the peace of Christ rule in your heart; teaching and admonishing one another with Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness; being a submissive wife and a loving husband; avoiding *bitterness*; being obedient children; avoiding *exasperation* of children; do work heartily as unto the Lord.

H. Read Romans 12:14 and Galatians 3:27. Explain what it means to “put on Christ” or to be “clothed with Christ.” Hint: read above what it means to live as a new person in Christ. Putting on Christ means operating from that place of radical identity with Christ—so that he reckons his identity in Christ and his union with Christ.

By active faith, you who believe daily take Christ as your life, your completeness, your confidence before God, your righteousness, your favor, your security, your destiny, your sphere, your environment; THEN live accordingly as a new man in the sphere of Christ. This is the new man ‘asserting himself’.

I. Read Ephesians 4:15-16. The paradox found in this passage is that growth comes from Christ, yet He enables the whole church to grow up into Him. Note that growth takes place in the Body of Christ as “every joint supplies” its part in edification and nurture. Discussion: In terms of the social relations within that Body of Christ, what is necessary for that growth to take place? Hint: mutual edification must be the norm. Believers are to pursue maturity through stability in doctrine (**v. 13-14**); they are to *speak the truth in love* (**v. 15**); they are to *grow up in all aspects into Christ* (**v. 15**); each member is to *supply his part to the building up of the Body in love* (**v. 16**).

Locate each word in **Ephesians 4:15** and **Colossians 2:19** that is used to describe the function of the individual members of Christ’s Body in building the saints to maturity. Explain from these verses why spiritual growth will not take place at a proper rate if believers are isolated from other Christians. This passage helps us understand that our ministry is to focus upon helping others engage with Christ *now* so that they are ready to

meet Him *when* He returns. Discussion: How would you tie this passage with **Colossians 1:27**? Describe how every obedient believer is engaged in seeking to move those around him closer to Christ. Read **Colossians 1:28-29**. Why should we know where our fellow believers are in the process of becoming complete in Christ?

“Our ministry with one another should help us to engage with Christ now that we are ready to meet Him when He comes.” We are active in the process of growth – Christians only grow *together* with a growth that comes from God (*from Christ, into Christ*). Spiritual growth does not normally take place in isolation from other believers. Growth is similar to renewal—God works through His Word in moving us toward His ultimate goal for us in the new creation.^v

Christ in us is the hope of glory—we ought to stimulate one another to love and good deeds based upon that blessed hope of glory (see **Heb 10:23-25**).

J. Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. Believers have the incredible privilege of beholding God’s glory without the darkness and blindness of hearts hardened by sin. Concerning our new covenant status and our capacity to view God’s reflected glory in Christ those who have believed the gospel are considered the “unveiled ones.” Our new covenant privilege entails an uninterrupted vision of God’s glory. Discussion: What are the two stages in the Spirit’s work alluded to in this passage?

Read **1 Corinthians 15:49, Colossians 3:10, and Hebrews 2:5-9**. How should it affect us as we behold the glorified Christ and realize the future of redeemed humanity? (Hint, see **1 John 3:1-3**.)

Beholding and transformation: beholding has transforming power—but there is spiritual combat. The flesh and the Spirit are locked in battle. “The call of Scripture is to live out the practical implications of our sanctification by pursuing holiness as a lifestyle. We are to do this by looking back to the cross and forward to the resurrection, when by God’s grace we will share His character and life completely.” The more our *hope is fixed on the resurrection*, the more we will seek an energetic compliance with God’s purposes in Christ. “If we are definitively sanctified by the work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit, ‘growth’ in holiness will mean increasing and abounding in practical expressions of that status, calling and commitment which is *already ours* by God’s grace.”^{vi}

II. For Review

A. Justification is living under _____. Sanctification is living in _____.

B. Sanctification is primarily being possessed by God, a definitive act of God, then living out our separation unto God as His possession. If sanctification is viewed primarily as a process, what aspect of sanctification is quickly lost? Closely related to this error is the separation of sanctification from justification. Explain why this unscriptural separation would produce a devaluing of justification.

C. What errors in the understanding of sanctification take place as soon as it is separated or divorced from the cross and union with Christ?

D. Scripture calls us to live out the practical implications of our sanctification so that we pursue holiness as a lifestyle. We do this by looking back to the cross and forward to the resurrection. As the Apostle teaches in Romans 6, holiness is living out a lifestyle of union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

E. Sanctification has “three tenses” so to speak, definitive, progressive, and final. Read the following passages and then identify which of the three tenses is primarily in view.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 _____. **1 John 3:3** _____.
Hebrews 10:10, 14 _____. **Hebrews 12:14** _____.
1 Corinthians 1:2 _____. **Romans 6:22** _____.

Describe how sanctification (in its three tenses) is deliverance from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. Why must each stage precede the other?

F. The N.T. language of sanctification is not usually entire sanctification, but renewal, transformation, and growth. Write down at least one N.T. passage for each of these dimensions of sanctification. Renewal _____. Transformation _____.
_____. Growth _____.

G. Certainly progressive sanctification involves taking our justification seriously, it is living as God’s own possession. (Discussion: Read Romans 8:5. What does it mean to set one’s mind on the things of the Spirit? What is the content of those things of the Spirit?)

H. The Spirit is opposed to the flesh at every point (Galatians 5:17). The Spirit has a completely different standard of behavior for us to follow than the flesh. (Discussion: Read Galatians 5:16, 18, 25. Comment on the following statement: Life in the Spirit is walking *in step with the Spirit*, it is dependence upon the Spirit, and it is submission to the Spirit. Does the obedient believer have an awareness that he bears the above relationship(s) to the Spirit when he obeys? Explain your answer.)

VIII. Sanctification and God's Law

A. Calvin notes that the law of God is intended to convict of sin, to restrain evil, and exhort God's servant to do His will. The Christian profits from God's law because it arouses him to obedience. The law strengthens him to draw back from disobedience. The law motivates the believer to work, not for salvation, but out of thankfulness, loyalty, and devotion to Christ. Discussion: Read **Romans 13:8-10**. In what sense does the law of God provide the *shape*, or mould, of a Christian's holiness?

Read **Romans 7:7-11**. Describe the "evangelical" use of the law found in this passage.

Read **Romans 7:12-14**. Does the law of God remain the standard of holiness in the N.T. (see **Rom 3:31; 13:8-10; Jas 2:8-12ff.**)?

B. In its progressive dimension, sanctification is conformity to God's moral _____. But the source of holiness is the gospel, for it is the _____ of God unto Salvation (see Romans 1:16-17). According to Martin Luther, what should remain uncontested king or ruler in the conscience of the redeemed man, the law or the gospel? Why?

C. Prior to salvation, the law was a condemning and restraining "prison guard" (see Galatians 3:22-24). Under grace, the believer is freed from the law's condemnation and dominion. Under grace, freedom from the power of sin is available. The law is now written on the heart as the "norm" for Spirit-controlled behavior. Discussion: Read **Hebrews 8:10** and **2 Corinthians 3:3-6**. Describe how the believer's relationship to the law changed at salvation. Is the law the revelation of the character of God? Is the law a covenant now?

D. According to **Romans 8:14-15**, the believer is not under law, but under grace. To be "not under the law" is to be freed from the constraining, condemning, sin-strengthening regime of the old era. But, even after coming to Christ, people still can be subject to the law's condemnation and power. It is reliance on the grace of Christ alone that frees us from the "old era" powers of sin, flesh, and death. Discussion: Read **Hebrews 4:14-16; 13:9; Galatians 5:1-6**. Discuss the need for the believer to rely on the grace that is in Christ Jesus in order to escape the condemnation and subjugating power of the law.

E. According to **Romans 7:12-14**, the law is not intrinsically a negative force, but is holy, and just, and good. Discussion: Read **Romans 7:4-6** and describe the effects of the law on the unregenerate person.

F. When considering the O.T. law as a Mosaic system, the commands could not be isolated from the system itself. But in the N.T., the ceremonial has been set aside. The

moral norms and absolutes of the law still obligate the Christian. The command to love one's neighbor as one's self sums up the second tablet of the law (see **Romans 13:8-10**). Love is the heart of Paul's ethic. Love transforms our relationships.

Paul emphasized love as central to sanctification, but he never enjoined a love that was floating, separated from the law (**1 Tim 1:5**). Scriptural love is not free to write its own ethics. Sentimental, 'law-less' love is a Hollywood concept, not a Scriptural concept. The love commanded in the N.T. has specific commandments as its ethical center. The law provides the parameters for the expression of love by Christians.

Write out the O.T. command found in each of these N.T. passages:

Romans 13:9 _____.

I Corinthians 9:9-19 _____.

Ephesians 6:2 _____.

Galatians 5:13-15 _____.

G. The law's concrete commands do not diminish love, or quench life in the Spirit. The law's commands are the safeguard of love, for the Spirit uses such commands to inform believers and enable them to please God. Discussion: Explain how the law commands that you wrote out in question "F" are designed to inform the conscience of the believer.

H. Paul alludes to the law even when addressing the Thessalonian community (**I Thessalonians 4:1-8**). Paul considered the law's demand for holiness to be authoritative. But, Paul and Jesus used the law to support holiness in a different way from the typical Judaism of the day. Discussion: Read **Matthew 5:33-42** and describe the "new way" that Jesus applied the law.) **Matthew 5** in addition to Paul's ethical teaching, suggests that the law as interpreted and applied by Jesus and His Apostles should guide the Christian. Discussion: Read **Matthew 5:21-30**, then explain how the righteousness of the kingdom goes far beyond the literal demands of the law.

I. Paul does not simply call for obedience to the law's commands; he incorporates the arguments from the law. God's will for Paul is the object of a repeated seeking, and finding and doing. But, Paul refuses to identify God's will absolutely with the statutes of God's law. Doing God's will is more complex than simply reflecting on the Law of Moses, even though such reflection has a part to play.

For Paul, it is the knowledge of God in Christ that preeminently transforms and renews (**2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6**). The knowledge of God in Christ is the Gospel's ongoing role. The law's restraint is an inadequate antidote to fleshly indulgence (**Romans 7:7-25**). Only life in Christ, lived by the power of the Spirit can fulfill the law (**Romans 8:3-4; 13:8-10**). Discussion: Discuss why Paul refuses to reduce obedience to adherence to a moral code.

Why is it inaccurate to focus the primary meaning of sanctification on performance, rather than stressing its relational dimension of love, and life in the Spirit (Hint: how was salvation ‘a relationship given—what was ‘given’ that reconciled us to God? What relational status resulted from the relationship given?)?

End Notes:

ⁱ Peterson, p. 115

ⁱⁱ Peterson, p. 130

ⁱⁱⁱ Peterson, p. 126, 129

^{iv} Peterson, p. 131

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Peterson, p. 136-137