

OUR BODIES IN SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION V

Romans 8:28-39

INTRODUCTION

Do you believe that you can become like Jesus in character and conduct? Do you really believe that you can become good and kind and loving and wise like Jesus, not just in spurts and sputters, but as the consistent character of your life?

I ask because I'm hearing feedback that many of us still think the Christian life is an unrealistic ideal that the average Christian cannot attain. Is that what you still believe? If it is, then you're really not listening to God nor accepting what God is saying to you.

God tells us plainly that His vision, His goal for all of us who are trusting in Jesus as our Savior is that we will become like Jesus in our character. God says it very clearly through the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:29

Romans 8:29

²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God declares His vision for us very clearly in 2 Corinthians 3:18

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Again in Galatians

Galatians 4:19

¹⁹my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

One of the hardest aspects of spiritual transformation is bringing our bodies into submission to our spirits and living for things eternal rather than things temporal. But it is now possible because the Holy Spirit lives in us and He has the power to break the control of sin embedded in our bodies and free us to become more and more like Jesus in every aspect of our character. Becoming like Jesus in every aspect of our humanity; our minds, our hearts, our bodies, our social interactions and our souls, is not an impossible ideal, but is a very real and possible opportunity because of the Holy Spirit of God Who now lives in us. This is what we learn so emphatically from Romans 8:11:

Romans 8:11

¹¹ Moreover if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit who lives in you.

It is the Holy Spirit living within us that makes it possible for us to be conformed to the image of Christ, but we must be actively involved in the process as well. We tap into the grace and power of the Holy Spirit when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

Romans 8:5

⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

To say it another way: **we experience the power of the Holy Spirit to retrain our bodies when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit.**

So here's the question: why aren't more of us making progress in the Christian life and becoming more like Jesus?

Some of us just don't want to change. For whatever reason we are so self-centered and self absorbed we don't even want to think beyond ourselves and our little kingdom. There is not much I can say to those of us who are of this mindset except what the Scriptures say:

Romans 8:6a

⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death

and

Romans 8:13

¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die

Some of us simply don't want to change, but others of us don't believe we can change to the extent that our very bodies change. Some of us don't believe we can really become consistently loving, patient, kind in any and every circumstance. We think that people like the Apostle Paul, Martin Luther, Mother Teresa and Billy Graham were born spiritual and in a different class than the rest of us. We could never be as spiritual as people like that. And because we don't believe it's possible, we don't even really try.

And so what we must really believe is that God is playing with us. Is that what you believe?

That is the complete opposite to the Apostle Paul's response to everything God has given us to be transformed. Let's read Paul's response in Romans 8:31-39, but let's back it up a bit so we get the full context:

Romans 8:28-39

²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure

that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,
³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of
God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In verse 31 Paul asks,

³¹What then shall we say to these things?

In the context of Romans 8, what are “these things”? “These things” refer to all the things God has done through Jesus and the Holy Spirit to deliver us from the control of this body of death. From condemning and punishing our sin through Jesus’ blood sacrifice to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s ongoing ministries to us that aid us in overcoming the control of our physical bodies.

How does Paul answer his own question?

Romans 8:31-32

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

God is pulling for you. God is on your side. God will give you and me what we need to overcome the control of our bodies to be controlled by His Spirit and our spirit. Nothing in this physical world can separate us from His love. We are completely secure in this process of spiritual transformation. God has a vision for your life and has given you everything you need to be successful – to become like Jesus on the inside and the outside.

Do you have this vision for yourself?

I want us to view this DVD by Rob Bell which expresses these truths through Jesus’ calling of Peter, Andrew, James and John to be His disciples.