

Series: *Growing in Christ*
Message Title: Renewal and the Activity of the Holy Spirit
Date: Sunday, February 26, 2017
Scripture: Romans 12:1-2
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

What you have just seen on the video is an amazing process referred to as *metamorphosis*. A caterpillar becomes a butterfly, and is and has always been symbolic of transformation, overcoming, hope and new life.

What we see and know in the physical world is really a fuzzy shadow of a greater reality in the spiritual life. I am referring to the amazing work of transformation that occurs in the life of one who has come to faith in Christ (conversion), and begins to mature and grow in Christ (sanctification).

This principle is a vital part of our understanding of biblical discipleship and what it means to be *Growing in Christ*.

G-R-O-W-I-N-G in Christ
G = Grace

"A growing Christian knows the gospel is rooted in God's redeeming grace and is sustained, secured and serves throughout life by His amazing grace."

Saving Grace. Sustaining Grace. Serving Grace.

G-**R**-O-W-I-N-G in Christ

R = Renewal

Renewal is the second major area of focus in our study regarding Christian growth.

"A growing Christian is someone whose life is being reshaped by the Spirit of God as the mind is being renewed through the Word of God."

It is essential (fundamental) that we understand God's work of renewal in our lives. The place where this begins and ends is in the mind!

If repentance is a "change of mind" (*metanoia*), would it not be consistent that following Christ requires (involves) a renewed mind?

For the next three weeks, we are going to look at the renewing of the mind:

- 1) Activity of the Holy Spirit
- 2) Daily Development of a Devotional Life
- 3) Community Life of the Church (Word)

There is nothing more fascinating than the human mind. The brain may be just a blob of gray matter, but what happens therein matters!

"The human brain is awesome. It functions 24 hours a day from the day we are born, and only stops when we are taking a test or fall in love."

Your laughter is one of the amazing distinctions about the human brain.

And when it comes to your faith, it is not a mindless matter. To the contrary, God focuses on the need for our minds to be renewed.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 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 12:1-2 ESV).

metamorphosized (used four times in the New Testament). This is the path toward the will of God—a life that is aligned with God and His glory. It is the same word used to describe the transfiguration of Christ.

It is the opposite of the life before Christ. Read Romans 3:23. We all fall short, miss the mark, off the line, errant, but through faith in Christ, we are now aligned and lived for the glory of God.

Let’s take time today to “drill down” on Romans 12:2 and think about what is being said in this passage. The big picture is the worship life.



1. This Renewal Creates Contrast and Contradiction to the Prevailing Mindset of the World

Conformity: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity” (Romans 12:2 PHILLIPS).

The Bible uses the word, *world*, not to speak of the globe, planet or people, but a mindset, culture and set of values that dominate humanity apart from God.

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Ephesians 2:1-3 ESV).

Life without God vs. life with God.

“Our world view before Christ is a world view without a Creator, without a need for a Savior and with a view that we hold our fate and future.”

Whether we watch TV or movies, we often never hear any reference to God (unless profane). The only point of reference is man in the present: money, technology, sexuality, power.

“For secularism, all life, every human value, every human activity must be understood in light of this present time... What matters is now and only now. All access to the above and the beyond is blocked. There is no exit from the confines of this present world.”

—R.C. Sproul

But for those who come to Christ, the work of God in us begins to give us a wholly Christocentric view of life above and beyond. It is much more than WWJD (What Would Jesus Do). We begin seeing life and living life in light of a new relationship with Christ and His kingdom!

“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of

heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds” (Ephesians 4:17-23 ESV).

This is fairly explicit. You need a total change of mindset.

Christianity is all about a new life and maturity through biblical discipleship. It is the realignment of life with the God who made you for His glory.

Conformity to the world is “caterpillar mentality”—a false identity that makes you something less than God intended, but an identity you cannot escape without the understanding of God and His glory.

Read Romans 1:21-23. This is who you are and what you are—a crawling thing. But the truth is you were made for more! See Romans 1:24.

“Here were a decent godless people: their only monument the asphalt road and a thousand lost golf balls.” —T.S. Eliot

All this begins with a re-orientation to the Creator!

2. This Renewal is Internal, not External

Conformity to the world is based upon likeness—being fashionable and adaptable to the present environment. The world is always trying to change us from the outside in—wear this, buy that, say this, know him/her, etc.

Conformity is like a chameleon; it changes to take on the color of its surroundings—blend!

Renewal is a call to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. It is a radical call for change. It is a conscious activation and engagement with a new operating system in your mind. See Colossians 3:10.

In other words, renewal is not some external display of holiness by appearance,

association and activity; but rather a new set of motivations and affections—a total reorientation of life to the Creator and His will.

“Sanctification is a process of revolutionary change in that which is the centre of consciousness.” —John Murray, NIC

God’s call and plan for holiness in our lives does not involve our removal from the world, but our renewal to righteousness and godliness within the world.

It is more than I “want” to live one way but “ought” to live another; it is a change in the agenda of your daily life.

“I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth... I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” (John 17:14-17, 20 ESV).

What a prayer for preservation in the world by the truth of God's Word in us!

Now we see and know that God is not interested in changing our environment, but transforming us to be change-agents in this world.

The focus of this change? *Mind, mindset.* Why? Because something is wrong with our thinking. The world thinks the problem with the mind is that it is deprived of knowledge and needs greater educational opportunity and challenge. But God's focus on the mind goes beyond assimilating, processing and sorting information. It has to do with a greater issue—a virus that is running rampant and corroding data (a rebel mind, sin).

“But I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members” (Romans 7:23).

When it comes to our natural state of mind, the Bible is “strong as garlic”—one of the most savory flavors I know, but one of the most unbearable tastes if concentrated.

1 Peter 1:14-15—ignorant
Ephesians 4:17-18—darkened
Romans 1:28—depraved

The idea here is not deprivation, but rebellion. There is within man a need to suppress truth and its authority.

Therefore renewal of the mind is a process activated and sustained through the Word of God.

“We know the will of God by the Word of God.”

God reveals His will, His guidance, His precepts, commands and directives through His Word. Nothing can be defended as the will of God that is contrary to the Word of God.

There is always a battle for the Bible!

*Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and,
Behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.
—James Russell Lowell*

The only way this transformation can and will occur is a supernatural work of God by His Spirit and the eternal revelation of God through His Word.

3. This Renewal is a Work of Grace

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7 ESV).

You cannot accomplish this work through resolution, but through a thorough work of regeneration and renewal—something God does by His Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

When a person repents of sin and comes to faith in Christ, God not only moves upon that person, but moves in!

The Holy Spirit takes up residence in every believer so that He may take on a total

interior “renovation” that gives glory through worship from a place that once brought shame.

In May 2013, a couple from Waco, Texas, Chip and Joanna Gaines, had the opportunity to take something they had done for nearly 100 clients and make a reality TV series, *Fixer Upper*. They helped people “find the worst house in the best neighborhood” and transformed it into something glorious. You are a “fixer upper”.

If you belong to Christ, you have been purchased by His blood. You have transferred the title deed of your life to Him. And now He—by His chief contractor, the Holy Spirit—is working in you to create something that will defy sin, the Fall, all this world has done to you, and is raising you up for His glory and honor.

“God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him again to newness of life.” —A.W. Tozer

This is the work of God’s saving grace in Christ and this is the process of His renewing power by the Holy Spirit!