

Romans 12:2 **Be transformed**

I. Introduction: Change is scary.

- A. "Change – what people fear most." Fedor Dostoievski
- B. Letter to President Jackson, the 7th President of the U.S.
President Jackson,

The canal system of this country is being threatened by the spread of a new form of transportation known as railroads. The federal government must preserve the canals for the following reasons.

One, if boats are supplanted by railroads, serious unemployment will result. Captains, cooks, drivers, hostlers, repairmen and lock tenders will be left without means of livelihood, not to mention the numerous farmers now employed in growing hay for horses.

Two, boat builders would suffer and towline, whip, and harness makers would be left destitute.

Three, canal boats are absolutely essential to the defense of the United States. In the event of the expected trouble with England, the Erie Canal would be the only means by which we could ever move the supplies so vital to waging modern war.

As you may well know, Mr. President, railroad carriages are pulled at the enormous speed of 15 miles per hour by engines which, in addition to endangering life and limb of passengers, roar and snort their way through the countryside, setting fire to crops, scaring the livestock and frightening women and children. The Almighty certainly never intended that people should travel at such breakneck speed.

Sincerely Yours,
Martin Van Buren (8th President)
Governor of New York

- C. In spite of fear, Christians are commanded to change.
 - 1. Paul begins Romans 12:2 with a negative command "do not be conformed to this world (age).
 - 2. He follows with a positive command, "be transformed..."
 - 3. Paul has spent eleven chapters laying the theological groundwork.
 - 4. Now he follows with the practical implications of being a true Christian.

II. What does Paul mean by transformed?

A. Definition of the Greek word.

- 1. It is a combination of two Greek words (meta) and (morphe) and means to transform (literally or figuratively, "metamorphose"): The word is translated change, transfigure, or transform.
- 2. The entomologist, when he uses the term, envisages the transformation of the caterpillar through the chrysalis stage into the winged butterfly. It is a change of form and appearance from ugliness to beauty, but it also suggests a change of habits and manner of life.

B. How is it used in Scripture?

- 1. Matthew 17:2: **And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.**
- 2. Weust's Word Studies: *The usual manner of our Lord's outward expression during His humiliation was that of the Man Christ Jesus, a Man of sorrows and of grief, the itinerant preacher and teacher from Nazareth dressed in the homespun of a Galilean peasant. But here, our Lord allows the glory of the essence of His deity that came from His inner being as deity and was representative of Him as such, to shine through His human body. This radiance caused His face to shine and His garments to appear white as the sun.*

Paul therefore says in effect to the saints, "Change your outward expression from that which you had before salvation, an expression which came from your totally depraved nature and was representative of it, to an expression which comes from your regenerated inner being and is representative of it."

3. 2 Corinthians 3:18: **But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.**
4. Clarke's Commentary: The word implies a radical, thorough, and universal change, both outward and inward.
5. The verb is imperative, present, passive. Therefore it means we are commanded to continuously **be transformed**. We can not transform ourselves, but we must place ourselves at God's disposal for His transforming mercies.

C. There is a story told of an American who went over to Paris, and, wishing to buy his wife a little gift, purchased a phosphorescent mother-of-pearl match-box container; and the beauty of it was that in the dark it was said to radiate a wonderful light. He packed it in his trunk, took it home to the U.S.A., and after the family welcome dinner, asked for the lights to be put out. In the dark he took the match-box container from his pocket to present it to his wife, but, when he looked at it, it was as black as the darkness around. Then he said, "That is just what they palm off on foreigners. I've been swindled." Next day his wife, a bit curious, discovered on the box a few words in French. She took it down to some friends who had a French maid and had it translated. That night, in the darkness, it was all aglow, for she had followed the instructions written on the box, which said, "If you keep me all day long in the sunlight, I will shine for you all night long in the darkness.

1. In the dark, we are as dark as our surroundings.
2. In the light of the love of Christ, we are transformed and become a light to the darkness around us.

III. What does such a transformation look like practically?

A. Peter Jones, in *Capturing the Pagan Mind* captures the essence of such a change.

The traffic has slowed to a crawl. The rubber-neckers cannot resist. On the main road into Damascus, an accident victim lies helpless and blinded. He is not any old commuter, but Saul, the infamous public prosecutor, carrying arrest warrants from the high priest to imprison Christians and wipe out their heretical faith. This arrogant protégé of the Jewish leadership lies in the gutter, holding up traffic.

...What kind of event was it that brought this brilliant career to a screeching halt? What took the top of the class to the bottom of the pile?

That something earthshaking happened no one can deny. Scholars have debated for centuries about what really happened on the Damascus road, but no one contests the dramatic change. Saul became Paul; the Jew became a Christian; the representative of the high priest became an apostle of Jesus Christ, and the proud careerist became a humble servant. In losing everything associated with his past, Paul loses all sense of being an up-and-coming star. His self-understanding is radically changed, so he will say that his goal is no longer to promote himself but to know and promote Christ... From a brilliant young man who was eager to climb the social ladder, Paul gave up thinking of himself as the "first" and accepted a position at the end of the parade and the "last." From a life of boasting, implicitly and explicitly, about his achievements, Paul now boasts in his weakness. He calls himself the "worst of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:16) and the "least of the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:9). Following this event, Paul becomes a stunning early example of the saying of Jesus: "The first will be last, and many who are last be first" (Matt. 19:30)... The changes were so radical in Paul's life that his entire worldview and thinking process was turned inside out.

- B. When God saved Israel out of bondage in Egypt, He commanded them to change their appearance and behavior.
1. The men could not cut the corners of their beards.
 2. The people could not wear wool and linen together.
 3. They had to wear tassels on the corners of their garments.
 4. Every male had to be circumcised.
 5. The people could not eat certain foods.
 6. They were commanded to “not be conformed to the world.”
 7. They were commanded to “be transformed.”
- C. God is calling you to be different than the world around you.
1. As a Christian, you must let God transform you.
 2. Ephesians 4:21-24: (Today’s English Version) ...**as his followers you were taught the truth that is in Jesus. So get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to--the old self that was being destroyed by its deceitful desires. Your hearts and minds must be made completely new, and you must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy.**
- D. You must be changed by God as Saul was changed.
1. You must put off the old self – stop doing the things you know are not pleasing to God.
 2. Read God’s word – it will show you what is pleasing to God and what is not pleasing to Him.
 3. Pray that He will give you wisdom in how to serve Him.
 4. As you dwell in the Light, reflect the light of the Son of God into the darkness of the world as the little match-box container reflected the light of the sun.
 5. You must resist the temptation to be like the world.
 6. Peter Jones, in *Capturing the Pagan Mind* relates the following story:
In the 1960s, “Bill Bradley in a tract distributed throughout the nation’s universities by Athletes in Action,” stated “The choice is simple...between the eternal and the passing...between Jesus Christ and the world, *I’ve made my choice*. I love Jesus Christ...How about you?”...By the 1990s, Bradley, ex-senator and presidential candidate, seems to have had a second conversion experience: “Christianity offers one way to achieve inner peace and oneness with...the world. Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Confucianism and Hinduism offer others. Increasingly I resist the exclusivity of true believers.”
- E. John 14:6: **Jesus said ..."I am the way , and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.**
1. You can not get to heaven through the way of the world.
 2. You can not get to heaven through your own strength.
 3. You can only get to heaven through the radical transformation that occurs in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.