

GOD AT WORK / TRANSFORMATION

Though God rested from His work in creation, He continued to work through revelation of His love for mankind and His divine plan for their ultimate salvation. In our final lesson in this series, we will be considering how God is still on the *move* in the area of transformation. Consider **Romans 8:28-30**. ²⁸ **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.** ²⁹ **For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.** ³⁰ **And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.** See God is moving, even now, working to make us like Jesus.

Perhaps you will recall from last week that, according to both the apostle Paul and Peter, God was *moving* even before time began to set forth a plan for us to be holy (*set apart, special, unique*) and blameless (*pure and perfect*) in His sight. Now, it should be apparent just by looking at me or even at yourself in a mirror, that either God did a pretty poor job, or He isn't done yet. The Creator of the Universe is still working on me. If it only took Him 6 days to complete that project, what's taking Him so long with me? And with you?

For one thing, starting with nothing may have been an advantage. Ever tried to restore something that was a real mess? It can be so overwhelming, that it's hard to even get yourself *moving* in the first place. Haven't you ever thought that it'd be easier to scrap the whole thing and start over with fresh material? I sure have.

For another, the universe didn't resist. It was pliable in His hands. Not so with me...or you either. Even if it's just a passive aggressive resistance, it hinders the process. Why? God ceases to *move* in our lives when we aren't willing for Him to do so. Yet_ that doesn't mean He gives up. His patience is incredible. When something won't work the way it's supposed to, I'll fool with it awhile_ often a lot longer than most will_ to try to get it to respond. Maybe that's because I'm too cheap to replace it. I prefer to think I'm frugal. Yet, if I can't get it to work after several attempts, I throw it in the trash. Thankfully, God hasn't done that with me.

In both **Jeremiah 18** and **Romans 9**, God is portrayed as a Potter and we as the clay. His desire is to mold us into instruments of service in His kingdom. In both texts He suggests our unpliant nature may hinder the process_ even threatening to "*break some pots*" to pieces and start all over again, if necessary. Yet, His purpose is never for us to be just beautiful centerpieces merely to be admired. Instead we're to be vessels filled with the light of His glory. **2nd Corinthians 4** makes it clear the treasure is within us. ⁶ **"God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.** ⁷ **But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.** ⁸ **We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;** ⁹ **persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.** ¹⁰ **We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. / THE MESSAGE: ⁶ **It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful.** ⁷ **If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us.** ⁸ **As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do,** ⁹ **but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken.** ¹⁰ **What they did to Jesus, they do to us_ trial, torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, He does in us_ He lives!** Yet, the image we portray isn't dull and without luster.**

The passage we opened with today from Romans 8 tells us that God's goal is for us to be like Jesus. For no one better serves as an example of what God wants from us upon this earth. We may not resemble His outer appearance, but our character should emulate His heart.

Often I hear people say things like, "My how you've grown" when referring to a child's physical growth. Or, to an adult, "Have you lost weight?" Usually, people are sensitive enough not to point out how much we may have gained. Physical growth or decline is something we notice_ especially when it seems to take place rapidly. **Without some strict monitoring** however, even then, it's difficult to see progress even in our children. And when we're the ones trying to lose weight or bulk up it can seem like such a slow process.

I'm afraid spiritual growth often goes unnoticed as well_ unless it also happens very quickly. We notice when someone falls away. We also notice when someone makes huge initial changes from darkness to light when they are first saved. But the day to day changes may seem incremental. In fact, it can seem as if growth isn't happening at all. If **God really is on the move** here_ working all things for good to transform me into Christ's image_ it is not always evident. But maybe your concern isn't about what He could do, so much as what He'd be willing to do...especially with you.

If so, listen to these words from 2nd Timothy 2: ¹⁹ **"The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."** ²⁰ **In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble.** ²¹ **If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.** ²² **Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."**

Imagine you come to our house for dinner. Nina has the table set with her best china, but the utensils are plastic ware. Instead of crystal, she has throwaway cups from fast food restaurants. She brings out the salad in a large wooden bowl we got in a garage sale. She pours coffee from her silver tea pot, but instead of using her Royal Doulton, she uses Styrofoam cups. Finally, she brings out the casserole in a bedpan. Your appetite may have waned. You may pass on the casserole at least_ even if she told you that the dish had been thoroughly cleaned. But, in God's house, there are also many vessels. Not all of them are shiny. Some have been used for some pretty disgusting purposes. Yet, the blood of Jesus makes them all useful for noble things_ that is when we turn from our wickedness, flee our evil desires, and pursue Him.

I want to share one more passage_ and we'll close. In **Philippians 1:3-6** Paul seems pretty sure that **God was on the move** to finish the work that He started. Listen carefully. ³ **"I thank my God every time I remember you.** ⁴ **In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy** ⁵ **because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,** ⁶ **being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."** So whenever you're not so sure if God is still on the move to make you like Jesus, lean not on your own understanding, but trust in God and His promise to carry through. For in **Philippians 2:12-13** Paul also says this: **"...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling_ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.** It's a cooperative effort, but I've found that the hardest work of all for us to do is usually just submitting to the work that He wants to do in us and through us.