

## IN THE COCOON\_ (*Keep The Change*)

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> lesson in our series on transformation that I've entitled "*Keep the Change*" referring to the plan to be moving ever forward in the process of becoming the people God wants us to be. Though it is clearly stated in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17 that those in Christ are new creations, we have seen repeatedly that just as a child is conceived within the womb, "*pure yet not mature*", so we have to grow and develop once we are born again.

This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Romans 12:1-2, the text which we'll be examining more closely today. The Apostle Paul writes there: "**I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--His good, pleasing and perfect will.**"

To be conformed is to be forced into a mold. To be transformed is to change from the inside out. It is change that flows from what is already inside of us, that is, the Spirit of God. Once more, the word that Paul uses to challenge us about transformation is the Greek term "*metamorphosis*" and the illustration we have been using is that of the changing of the caterpillar into a butterfly. Notice how / or where the transformation Paul speaks of takes place? In *the renewing of the mind*.

*The mind is the cocoon* we are to enter into. It is not one that we spin, but one that God has prepared for the purpose of creating us anew. The mind is incredibly complex. Neurologists and Psychologists do their best to study and understand how it works, but the best of them admit that there are mysteries of the mind that will likely always allude them. MIT professor Dr. Steven Pinker says though there is benefit in comparing the mind to a computer, it is too limiting. He suggests the mind is more like a network of computers each programmed with software for specific purposes. The areas of the brain that seem to control cognitive thought are wired to areas that foster emotions via pathways along neuro-transmitters and synapses. So our minds use the facts they assimilate through our 5 senses, factor in our feelings and filter them all through previously held conceptions and convictions to formulate data and interpret it. Computers process things in a serial manner. Though seeming to multitask, I'm told they really only do one thing at a time. The mind, however, is like a parallel processor, working through millions of functions simultaneously.

Computer programs are intricate recipes of logical and statistical operations directed by comparisons, tests, branches, loops, and routines embedded in subroutines. Our minds, once programmed by God to serve Him and us well, were infected with a virus that has corrupted the bios. God formed us. Sin deformed us. Christ can transform us.

Despite the science fiction about computers and robots with Artificial Intelligence going berserk and warring against mankind, scientists readily recognize that the danger isn't in what such a device will decide to do on its own. Rather, the real concern is what it might have been programmed to do by someone with a fully functioning, but malevolent mind. And isn't that the issue for all of us?

"*Epistemology*" is the analysis of "how" we know things. Yet it is one thing to observe a process through a microscope, but quite another to comprehend it. And this is one of those things that may be beyond finding out. There's no doubt that our minds are fitted with some pretty ingenious software. The neurons of our mind continuously and spontaneously fire for no clear reason, even in our unconscious state. The precise purpose of our dreams is debated, but no one can deny that we have them. Most psychiatrists and psychologists confess that the mind is designed with a code of ethics – in fact anyone without them is considered psychotic - yet they aren't sure where it comes from. Why do I share all of this? Merely to assert, that though I don't know how it all works, I know it does - and the Holy Spirit is telling us to enter the cocoon and surrender to the process.

Albert Einstein said, "*Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.*" Paul is clear here: we must think differently. The aim of our thinking must be adjusted. Consider these passages: In Colossians 3:2 we read, "**Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.**" The verb tense here is present active. It's the idea of "*think, think, think*", and "*think*" some more. In Ephesians 4:24 we're told to "**be made new in the attitude of our minds**" And Philippians 4:4 says "**whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.**" We are to concentrate on spiritual things. For you, that might mean imagining the home in heaven that Jesus has prepared for you. But, don't neglect to meditate upon what Jesus did to make it possible. Focus on the cross and what He endured for our sake. (Hebrews 12:1-2) Think on the abundant provision of God's grace, the hope of glory, and the power of the resurrection.

So, in order to be changed, you must change the way you "*process information*" before the "*process of transformation*" can advance. How? This part I can help with. We must "*factor facts*" through "*the new program*" God has created for us. Filter everything through our beliefs and convictions, letting the Holy Spirit interpret them for us.

Of course, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of ***spending time in God's Word***. Read it daily. Listen to it. Use Bible Gateway or Study Light, or podcasts or lessons from Bible based websites. Absorb the word. Meditate upon it. Recite it aloud often. Let the truth of God be the fountain from which your thoughts flow.

As David wrote in Psalm 119:11-16: **"I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to You, O LORD; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from Your mouth. I rejoice in following Your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on Your precepts and consider Your ways. I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your word."**

**Spend much time in prayer.** Talk to God. Seek answers from Him and wait for Him to respond. A hurried prayer is better than none, but I encourage you to take time. What if you asked your spouse a question and left the room before they had a chance to reply? Don't rush through it. 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:17 urges us to **"pray continually."**

**Worship Him** every day. Bathe yourself in praise...program your radio or pack your Christian Music CD's into your car. Download psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs onto your phone or mp3 player. Let the lyrics flood your soul. Sing along. Romans 12:1 suggests that being **"a living sacrifice"** is **"Letting your life be a song to Him."**

Tell God how much He means to you – and how much you need Him. And **do what He tells you to do.** Our minds are control centers directing our bodies to move. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. That implies, putting into practice what He instructs us to do. Act as God directs. As Jesus Himself said in Matthew 7:24, the wise are those **"who hear His words and put them into practice."**

If we persist in filling our hearts and minds with things of the world – be it through the music we listen to, programs we watch, or the materials we read – the things that are counter culture to the Spirit of God will stifle the process of transformation. Sometimes we are so focused on trying to find ourselves that we forget who it is we are to become.

One last thing. The longer we've allowed for wrong thoughts to determine our course the harder it can be to renew our minds. Yet, with the Spirit of God's help we can do as 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:5 says: **"Take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ."** Within the cocoon of our mind, we can redirect our thoughts and be transformed from the inside out.