

Signs of Life (Transfiguration) – Romans 12:1-2

I. Introduction:

- A. I don't know about your neighborhood, but at our house there is only one kind of elegant butterfly.
1. It is the Yellow Tiger Swallowtail. When it flits its way through our backyard I almost always look up to see.
 2. When it lands on one of Judy's flowers, it usually only sit there for a moment before it flies off again.
 3. It has life; it has energy; it has beauty. I know it to be alive, because it proves itself every time I see it.
- B. As a ten-year-old, amateur lepidopterist, I studied, killed, collected & mounted dozens & dozens of butterflies.
1. We had a lot more variety in Omaha, Nebraska, than what we have in my back yard.
 2. I learned, as you have learned, that butterflies begin as fragile eggs; they hatch into larva, they become pupae, transforming themselves inside cocoons, before later emerging as those beautiful creatures.
 3. The Tiger Swallowtail lives its life in various stages and forms, before metamorphosizing as the butterfly.
 4. The average gardener might see a caterpillar, knowing it might some day be a butterfly; but which one?
 5. Or he might find a cocoon, but without some help, he may not know which butterfly will emerge.
- C. Similarly, we as God's saints will one day be fashioned like unto our glorious Saviour, but today? Worms.
1. Nevertheless, we are not commissioned to live as ugly caterpillars until the day of the Lord's coming for us.
 2. God expects us to be experiencing the transformation process right now – *"Be ye transformed."*
 3. And it is in that transformation progress that people – Christians & non-Christian – know that we have life.
- D. The English words *"be ye transformed"* are from a very fun Greek word to which I have already alluded – *"metamorphoo" (met-am-or-fo'-o)*.
1. The process of bringing caterpillars into adulthood has appropriately been called *"metamorphosis."*
 2. Following the same logic and definition, Christians are supposed to mature, developing from grotesque looking worms – **God's** strange-looking caterpillars – into creatures of magnificence and beauty.
 3. Of course, **unconverted** worms – the worms of Satan – will never be anything more than worms, burrowing through the compost of the world. They are worms of a different character.
 4. But the caterpillars of God are of a different nature and are **expected** to be transformed.
 5. And again, we know them to be alive because they are metamorphosizing.
- E. This word *"metamorphoo" (met-am-or-fo'-o)* is used in the Bible only four times.
1. Twice the word describes one thing and then on the other two occasions something else.
 2. This evening, I would like to examine those two ideas and then to bring them together.
 3. Hopefully in doing so, we'll be able to understand what Paul is exhorting us to do here in this verse.

II. Let's begin with **MATTHEW 17:1-9**.

- A. *"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,*
1. *And was transfigured before them: & his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*
 - a. *And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*
 - b. *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*
 - c. *While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*
 - d. *And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.*
 - e. *And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.*
 - f. *And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.*
 - g. *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."*
 2. We have this same event described in **Mark 9** & **Luke 9**, although **Luke** uses slightly different terminology.

- B. The word translated “*transfigured*” is “*metamorphoo*” (*met-am-or-fo’-o*), just as we find it in **Romans 12:2**.
1. And what was it that took place that day up there on Mount Tabor?
 2. Despite being shrouded in mystery, it is simple enough for us to at least touch the hem of this garment.
 3. For reasons which we will likely never learn, the Father sent two heavenly ambassadors to speak with Christ Jesus about His upcoming death.
 - a. I can’t believe there was information that Jesus lacked about the crucifixion.
 - b. And I doubt that He needed to be encouraged, although humanly-speaking perhaps that is a possibility.
 - c. I don’t know if this meeting was for **Jesus’** benefit, **Moses & Elijah’s** benefit, for the **disciples**, or **us**.
 4. But what I **do** know is that the Lord’s appearance was radically changed.
 - a. **Matthew** says that *“his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”*
 - b. **Mark** says *“his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them.”*
 - c. And **Luke** says *“the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.”*
 5. Apparently, the Lord once again enjoyed the glory which He had with the Father before His incarnation.
 6. While in human flesh, most of the time, the true nature of the Lord Jesus was veiled.
 7. Perhaps only once during His 33 years on earth was that glory permitted to shine through unhindered.
 8. And three living men were permitted to see it.
- C. What is it for us to be transformed or transfigured? Look at the Lord Jesus.
1. Was He changed into a different person? No, He was not.
 2. Was his appearance altered to the extent that He was no longer recognizable?
 - a. I don’t think so, even though the three disciples were probably not able to look directly at Him.
 3. In **Hebrews 1:3** while speaking about Christ Jesus, Paul said of Him, *“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”*
 - a. Obviously, by nature, Christ Jesus carries within Him the brightness of the eternal and glorious God.
 - b. But usually that was kept hidden.
- D. When **Moses** went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Law, he spent time in the presence of the Son of God.
1. And when he came down, the glory of the Lord so transformed him that people couldn’t look at his face. He had to wear a veil in order to speak to them.
 2. That is exact what should take place in us.
 3. When **Saul of Tarsus** neared the city of Damascus, he saw and spoke with the risen, glorified Christ.
 4. Saul was temporarily blinded by that visit, and apparently he had eye trouble for the rest of his life.
 5. Earlier, at the Transfiguration of Christ, the life-changing and eye-blind glory of the eternal Son of God was permitted to radiate out so that mountain was illuminated by the light of Heaven itself – Christ Jesus.
 6. During the transfiguration, Christ was the same person, but the expression of that person was something the disciples hadn’t seen before.
- E. It is also interesting to notice that the three gospel writers speak of the transfiguration of His clothing as well.
1. His clothes were white as the light. **Mark** says, white as snow, so as no fuller on earth could whiten them.
 2. The word “*fuller*” means one who dresses cloth, or fulls it, so as to make it more thick and strong. Here it means one who bleaches cloth, or makes it white; one who cleanses garments, when by wearing they become soiled. Among the Greeks, that was a distinct trade.
 3. **Luke** says that those clothes were white and glistering; that is, resplendent, shining, or a very bright white.
 4. All this splendor and glory was a change in appearance only. And yet it was still very real – and powerful.
- F. I think that we learn about our transformation by considering the Lord Jesus’ transfiguration.
1. By this shall others be able to see that you, too, have spiritual life.

III. We can also learn some things about Romans 12:2 from the **TRANSLATION** of the **SAINTS**.

- A. Please don't misunderstand me by thinking that the words "**translation**" and "**transfiguration**" are the same.
1. They are not even close cousins. And for this reason I'm not going to stress the point too strongly.
 2. But here is the thing – Jesus' transfiguration was from one glory into another glory.
 3. And at the rapture – at the translation of the saints – **we** are going to be changed from glory to glory.
 4. **I Corinthians 15** – *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be **CHANGED**,
 a. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be **CHANGED**.
 b. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
 c. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."*
- B. Are you going to be a different person in Heaven than you are today? I don't believe so.
1. You will be the same person – only glorified.
 2. I may get to throw away my glasses, but can't you still recognize me without these old things?
 3. The Lord may ask me to shave my beard, or perhaps to let it grow out, but I'll still be the same person.
 4. I will have been glorified, perfected, completed and perhaps shined and polished.
 5. But I will still be the same person, just as I am the same person that I was before the Lord saved me.
- C. **Philippians 3:21** is another related verse.
1. Brethren, *"our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:
 a. Who shall **CHANGE** our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,
 b. according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."*
 2. At the translation, the Lord will give us a glorious make-over, but we will be the same saints still.
- D. Do these scriptures have anything to do with **Romans 12:2**?

IV. Before we return let me take you to the other scripture which uses the word "**metamorphoo**."

- A. Please turn to **II Corinthians 3:13-18** –
1. *"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:*
 2. *And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.*
 3. *But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.*
 4. *Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.*
 5. *Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*
 6. *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **CHANGED** into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."* What does **verse 18** say?
 7. This says that Christians with unveiled faces, looking into the Word of God, or the gospel of Christ, (which mirrors the glory of the Lord) are metamorphosed into that same kind of glory through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 8. This takes us back to Paul's exhortations in **Romans**.

V. **Romans 12:1-2**.

- A. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*
1. Before going on, let me clarify that Christians are transformed through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 2. We are new creatures in Christ, worms of a different kind than what we were, and these new worms – these caterpillars are expected to transform.

3. It is not through ourselves and by the renewing of our minds that we metamorphosize.
 4. The transformation is done by the Lord, but only as we yield ourselves to His power and love.
 5. It is by the renewed mind and other beautiful things that we illustrate our transformation and our spiritual life
- B. The true non-conformist in this world today, is the child of God, who is becoming more and more Christ-like.
1. Through his reading of God's Word, and through his hearing the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, he is metamorphosing into a creature of another world.
 2. It is not necessarily something of which he is consciously aware, just as Moses was not aware that his face shone until people started shading their eyes and hiding their faces.
 3. The Christian is supposed to be someone whose mind is being renewed to reflect his regenerated heart.
 - a. And when these two elements are synchronized, there will be genuine outward changes in his life.
 - b. He will not be conformed to the world of lost men, governed by Satan.
 - c. His vocabulary will be changed, his habits, his clothes, his hobbies and his entertainments will change.
 4. Will it happen over-night? In some cases and in some ways, yes, it will.
 - a. The vast majority of sins, should be and could be cut off like the closing of a book or the flipping of a light switch. But in other ways, these changes will come more slowly.
 - b. And that is why Paul is mentioning this subject. This may take work, the work of submission to God.
 5. When **Josiah** ordered the cleansing and repair of the temple, work was **begun** immediately.
 - a. But it wasn't **completed** immediately. It took some time. And yet it was thorough.
 6. Perhaps it will take a while to transform our vocabulary, our circle of friends, our theology, and how we use our spare time.
 - a. It may take time even for our closet to be transformed.
 - b. But whether immediate or slow, it is our duty to **seek** this transformation and to **anticipate it**.
 - c. The Lord expects it and other Christians are looking for it as well.
- C. That we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.
1. The word "**prove**" is what a metallurgist might use when talking about the quality of a piece of steel.
 2. When we are transformed, we are in a position to know, test and carry out the will of God.
- D. Let me close with a story about Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice.
1. Both men, earnestly desired to know the will of God and how to serve the Lord as He directed.
 2. They grew up conformed to the religious world of their day – the Protestant, Congregational church.
 3. But they had both been saved by the grace of God, and as I say, they desired to serve God.
 4. Filling themselves with the Word of God, and humbling themselves before the Lord, their minds and hearts were moved from one variety of false doctrine to the truth.
 5. When they came to understand that infant sprinkling was not baptism, they chose the truth and to pattern their lives accordingly.
 6. They were transformed from Protestants to Baptists.
 7. Then from there, more and more of the perfect and acceptable will of God became plain to each of them.
- E. This sin-sick world in which we live needs more Judsons and Rices.
1. This world, and the churches of Christ, even our own church, need saints who refuse to be conformed to the world.
 2. We need to **see** men and women transformed; we need to **be** men and women transformed.
 3. Transformed people are those who see the will of God accomplished in their lives.
 4. They are people who glorify their Saviour, not only after their translation, but today... right now.
 5. ***"Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."***