

## YOUR GOAL OF TRANSFORMATION

Has winter finally transformed into spring? Lots of back and forth. It's a lot like the Christian life, ups-and-downs and back-arounds on the journey to becoming more like Christ. It's all keyed to how you trust and obey God's truth in Scripture. Your goal is to be changed, knowing Christ and becoming more and more like Him. This is also the objective of understanding Scripture. First, observation of the content of the Bible, then interpretation of the Author's meaning, with application of His timeless truths to your daily life. It's all focused on transformation, by trusting and obeying what He says, to become like Him.

**1- Reading & Heeding!** Understanding the Bible is like a journey, a process with a goal. Every step of the way adds to your spiritual growth, reaching toward an objective and purpose. You learn the Bible not just to be informed but to be transformed. The Bible says that believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are brought into spiritual union with Him, in order to become more and more like Him. That's why you choose to believe the Bible and live out its truth, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The familiar words of James 1:22 remind us, *"be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law of liberty and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing."* The Bible changes you as you read it and heed it.

**2- Walk the Talk!** If you have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you are to do what He says. Obey God's Word, don't just listen to it. Go on the journey, following Him. The Bible is not just truth for truth's sake, or knowledge for knowledge's sake. It's not how much you know, but how much you grow. So get going and get growing. So what if you're in church every Sunday, if your life is not changing to be more like Christ, as you trust and obey Him Monday to Sunday. Be doers of His word, and be blessed.

James says God's word, as written down in the Bible, is "the perfect law of liberty." When you understand Scripture, its content in its context, and the intent of the original author to his original audience, then you can properly apply God's truths to your own life situations. And you will experience the liberty of knowing His truth, not just intellectually, but spiritually, emotionally, volitionally, as a set-free doer of God's word. Liberty in Christ is the opposite of three common mis-steps of the application of Scripture:

**3- Moralism?** No! Some so-called Christians water down what the Bible teaches. Jesus becomes merely an example of good behavior, which you are to emulate, and improve yourself accordingly. Too much preaching today is mere moralism, as though you can fix yourself. Moralism won't transform you to become more like Christ, and your efforts will not be blessed, as James notes. It takes God's power.

**4- Legalism?** No! This mis-step extends moralism to mere lists of acceptable behavior and beliefs. Some people find this attractive, because all they want is a checklist to busy themselves with endless activity. Unfortunately some people erroneously think being a Christian simply means avoiding certain things and actively pursuing other things. But legalism can't transform you to be like Christ, and it won't bless you.

**5- License?** No! This error of licentiousness goes to another extreme. It presumes upon God's grace by throwing out His commandments. Erroneous gnostic-like ideas misunderstand grace as though believers have no rules for living at all. But license can't transform you like Christ, and won't bless you either.

**6- Liberty!** Yes! The Bible teaches the reality of God's grace and truth as liberty. Christ comes to set you free. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you are re-born in Him, no longer slaves to sin but free in Christ to trust what God says, with His power to live it out. Ephesians 4:22 *"put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."*

That's the purpose of the Christian life, echoed in Romans 12 and 2 Peter etc, as partakers of the divine nature, by trusting and obeying Christ. United to the Lord Jesus Christ through repentance and faith, re-created by the Holy Spirit, renewed in our minds, to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

**7- Bearing Fruit!** In John 15, Jesus says *"abide in Me and you will bear much fruit."* He says this glorifies the Father and proves that you are His disciple. Just as a branch abides in the trunk to get its life-force, so the Christian must be united to Christ. His truth is nourishment for your life, and by obeying Him you bear His fruit of righteousness. If neglected it can result in infantile regressions, retarded growth, malnutrition, and lack of fruit. Are you spiritually starved? Fruitless? Unable to serve the Lord and fulfill His purposes? Nourish your soul with His word of truth, live it out, and you will become more like Him. If your root is in Christ you will bear His fruit. You will become more and more like Him. Read your Bible! ☐