



# Holy Spirit #7

Transforming lives w/c 16 June 2024

*"Transformation is a process, and as life happens there are tons of ups and downs. It's a journey of discovery – there are moments on mountaintops and moments in deep valleys of despair." (Rick Warren)*

## Read Galatians 5:13–26 and Romans 8:1–11

Have we *been* transformed, or are we *being* transformed? The answer is surely both. Paul, writing to the church in Corinth and that at Colossae describes our new creation and change of allegiance – 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Colossians 1:13 – as something like a switch being flipped, a simple step from one side to another. As we will see though, much of the biblical teaching and exhortation is to do with our continuing to change. Our readings this week look at some before and after imagery – but how are we changed?

Our transformation by God can be thought of as an instant that then has to be worked out. Underlying it all though has to that love which seeks the good of others. In Galatians 5:24 Paul is looking back to Leviticus 19:18. His words, *"to live by the Spirit"* two verses later can make it all sound a bit optional (in the NIV reading at least). The original though is definitely an imperative (and plural).

It may have become a bit of a cliché but it seems accepted that to master a skill it needs around 10,000 hours of practice. That's not just a modern thought – it's probably roughly the length of a medieval apprenticeship. The Spirit works through us not in spite of us; not for nothing does Paul talk of striving (Philippians 1:27) for the gospel. We are who we are; we are not a blank canvas. Christian growth is not a makeover show. Are we too hooked on instant answers?

There are just three references to "transform" in the New Testament (in the NIV that is, other translations may differ) and, intriguingly, they reference the remoulding of our mind, our spirit and our body. In writing to the church at Rome, Paul tells us that we must (imperative again) be *"transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (12:2). The Greek makes it clear that its to be an ongoing state and it's something addressed to the church as a whole – a plural. The translation perhaps tricks us into thinking we're being addressed just as individuals. How can we discern a renewed mind – be that ours or someone else's?

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul looks more at the spiritual side of transformation – again it's a picture of continuous ongoing change. I feel that Tom Wright's own translation perhaps gives us a better understanding: *"And all of us, without any veil on our faces, gaze at the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, and so are being changed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as you'd expect from the Lord, the spirit."* (Tom Wright – New Testament for everyone). What should it mean for our life today to be in the image of Christ – as individuals, as a church?

And finally, in Philippians 3:21, we read of a future transformation of our bodies. We have a few hints as to the nature of that – John 20:26b leads us perhaps to see it as something more substantial than our present reality, passing through a locked door as we might walk through the mist and fog on a winter's day. How do you feel about that?

*"Paul is anxious that everyone who professes Christian faith should allow the gospel to transform the whole of his or her life, so that the outward signs of the faith express a living reality that comes from the deepest parts of the personality." (Tom Wright – writing on the pastoral epistles)*