

TRANSFORMATION not CONFORMATION

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Rom 12:2)

For 1,500 years the people of God were under the Law of Moses. The Ten Commandments, as you know, were written on tablets of stone and kept in the Ark of the Covenant. Additional commandments given by God to Moses were written in the Book of the Law and placed beside the Ark (Deut. 31:26). All of these laws, however, were external. Their purpose was to force man to “conform” his behavior to the will of God.

There was obviously something wrong with this covenant, that’s why God decided to write a new one (Heb. 8:7). This new covenant, however, would not be external. This time, the covenant would be written within man. God promised to write His laws in man’s mind and heart. Consequently, under the new covenant, the people of God would not be “conformed”, but “transformed”. These new laws would not be in the form of external commandments, but instead, would like a DNA code that would re-write man’s genetic nature from within. The new covenant actually makes a new creation out of sinful man (2 Cor. 5:17).

The classic example of transformation in nature, of course, is the caterpillar becoming a butterfly. The caterpillar is not “conformed” but “transformed”. In fact, the word “metamorphosis” is precisely the word translated as “transformed” in Rom. 12:2. So these two words help us to focus on the dramatic difference in these two covenants. Christianity brings “transformation not conformation”.

For three years Jesus had guided His disciples externally. His primary command to them was “follow me”. This command is found 77 times in the four Gospels. Jesus would walk ahead of them and His disciples would follow. On the night before Calvary, however, Jesus said that now He was going where they could not follow (Jn. 13:36). He would, however, not leave them like orphans (Jn. 14:18). He promised to come back and continue to guide them. This time, however, He would not be in His physical body. This time He would not be confined to human limitations. This time He would come back as the Holy Spirit. That’s why it was necessary for Him to go away (Jn. 16:7). As a Spirit, Jesus can be everywhere at the same time.

So after guiding His disciples for three years from the outside, He was now going to guide them from the inside. Note this promise: **“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:23)** The word translated as “home” in this verse is the Greek word “mone”. It is only found twice in the Scriptures. The other time it is translated as “mansions” in Jn 14:2 (KJV). So in Jn. 14:2 Jesus promises to prepare a place for us, and in Jn. 14:23 we are to prepare a place for Him.

That’s where the guidance is going to take place, inside of you. Christ in you, is not an irrelevant concept, it is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). It is the essence of the New Covenant. The transforming energy of Christ was powerfully at work in Paul (Col. 1:29). Through faith this same transforming power can also dwell in the hearts of all believers (Eph. 3:17). In fact, Paul went so far as to say that he no longer lived, but it was Christ living within him (Gal. 2:20). So Jesus really does not leave His disciples as orphans. He now guides us by means of the Holy Spirit. Now, however, we are not be conformed to the will of God by outward pressure, but transformed into the image of Christ by the power of His Spirit from within.

The Holy Spirit, of course, first and foremost works through the Scriptures. When the Good Shepherd speaks, His sheep hear His voice. We make decisions every day, however, about which the Scriptures do not give specific guidance. God, however, is still interested in our daily decisions, no matter how insignificant they may seem to others. He has promised to give us wisdom in these matters, if we will only ask in faith (James. 1:5 - 8).

So please do not despair when seeking to do the will of Christ. He has promised to never leave you, or forsake you (Heb. 13:5). His presence, however, is within. So do not be “conformed” by this world, but “transformed” by the renewing of your mind.