

**HAVE YOU CONFORMED OR BEEN TRANSFORMED?****April 19, 2015**

The last edition of the Cordova Connector looked at perhaps the greatest question that can ever be asked. Have you conformed to the world or have you been transformed “by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2)? Conforming to the environment in which we live is known in the scientific world as “adaptation.” Adaptation is nothing more than being able to change in order to survive in the present situation. In the physical world, there are natural changes that occur so that mankind can live, and God is the force behind those changes. For example, as our children grow, we watch them change into teenagers and then into adulthood. When we look around the world, changes are happening right before our very eyes. During the winter months, we watch water turn into ice and back to water. When it is hot, we see water evaporate and seemingly disappear. Change is not something that is novel or new to us in any way. However, physical change is not the only change that takes place in the world, there is also spiritual change.

With spiritual change, a man has two options: he can change by conforming to the world’s standards or he can change by transforming his life to God’s standards. The notion of Biblical conversion is simply changing from one state into another. One leaves the land of the lost and makes his/her journey to the kingdom of Christ. It is the case though, that many misunderstand the process of change when it comes to spiritual matters. It is a prominent belief that conversion or change must be accompanied by some sort of an “experience” that is out of step, in some way, from daily life. Many expect a dream, an emotional high, or some other phenomenon that proves they have been changed spiritually into what God wants.

Nothing could be further from the written truth about how one goes from sinner to saint. Spiritual change happens when one is changed by the Word of God into another state of being. Paul told the Thessalonian Christians, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe” (1 Thess. 1:6-7). The only thing they, and all others who have obeyed the Gospel of Christ, experienced was the Word of God, and it grew in their hearts, and they became submissive to its commandments.

One is not brought to God by some form of irresistible grace or a direct calling from the Holy Spirit. Paul said that we were “called” by the “Gospel” of Christ (2 Thess. 2:14), because it is the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16); but that is reasonable because one’s faith in God is produced by hearing the Gospel (Rom. 10:17). When Cornelius prayed to God, he was told to “Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved” (Acts 11:13-14). It is the Word of God that changes a person from being lost to being saved!

The book of Acts is replete with examples of people changing spiritually and becoming faithful Christians. When the church of Christ at Jerusalem was “scattered abroad,” they “went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4), that is how Philip came to be in Samaria (Acts 8:5). While there, he preached to the people and the result was “they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12). Nothing out of the ordinary happened to those people to show them that they were saved; they knew they were saved because they were obedient to the Gospel call!

Notice that the people of Samaria, upon hearing the Gospel being preached, did not say the Sinner's Prayer, they did not have an unusual experience, they did not "get religion," they did not confess that they were saved because of their belief and then baptized later, and they did not argue with God about His plan of salvation. No, they simply heard Philip preach the Gospel, they believed, and they were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19). At that point, they were added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47), and began to be useful in the kingdom of our mighty God! Don't wait for something to happen because it might- your life could end before you commit to Christ.

When one is transformed, it happens because they have renewed their minds by the Word of God. That renewing takes place when faith begins to grow in the heart of the one that receives it (Rom. 10:17), and they decide to be obedient to the Gospel plan of salvation. Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). Refreshing and renewing are words that mean the same thing, and that happens when one voluntarily turns his life over to God through obedience to His commandments.