

Re-education (Part 2)

Transformation

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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If you will recall from my last sermon, the Days of Unleavened Bread, beyond picturing the exodus of Israelites from Egypt, shows the process of re-education. One in which we stop doing something (the eating of leavening) and begin doing another thing (start eating unleavened bread).

I would like to open in Exodus 12, verses 15 through 20, because I want to go over this a little bit to reiterate how frequently the command to eat unleavened bread comes up. I emphasized this in the last sermon, and David Grabbe emphasized it in his sermonette on the Sabbath. It is a good thing to remember.

Exodus 12:15-20 ` Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread [That is the first direct command to eat unleavened bread in this section].
On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. ` On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and on the seventh day [here we are today] there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but *that* which everyone must eat?that only may be prepared by you. ` So you shall observe *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. ` In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread [Here is the second direct command to eat unleavened bread], until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ` For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land. ` You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread [Here is the third time it is commanded]."

So it just keeps coming back?one time, two times, three times?that He wants us to partake of this unleavened nourishment.

In I Corinthians 5 we will see the New Testament application again in order to get a good running start in this sermon. What we saw there in Exodus 12 equates to this:

I Corinthians 5:7-8 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may

be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened ~~bread~~ bread of sincerity and truth.

So the symbols of the Days of Unleavened Bread equate to ridding ourselves of sin, which Paul defines here as the leaven of malice and wickedness, and on the other hand, beginning to live in sincerity and truth, which is the unleavened bread that we begin to ingest.

Now remember that we found that sincerity was defined as pure and unadulterated judgment or discernment. And remember the illustration that it is the clarity that we can see something under the light of the sun.

If we are outside and looking at something, we can see it a whole lot better than when we are inside looking with just reflected light, or artificial light. But, if we see something under the light of the sun we can see it in all its glory, and see it in all its imperfections as well. By that, then, we are able to do something about it because we have a good knowledge of what shape this particular thing is in.

So in essence Paul is telling us that while putting sin to death we must begin to develop a Godly ability to judge ourselves and our circumstances according to the truth. That is, what God has revealed to us by His word. Whether by The Word, who is Jesus Christ or whether it is this book that has been given to us for our learning and instruction.

Now if you will remember from my last sermon on the Pharisees (Part 2) we went through Matthew 16, verses 5 through 12, where Jesus warns His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. This was also picked up in David's sermonette this last Sabbath.

Jesus, in this section, defines leaven as their doctrine?instruction, teaching?implying that their doctrine either gave people little faith (remember He said to the disciples, "Oh you of little faith?") or that it could simply destroy faith, certainly the true faith. This is because it was not based in the truth. They had some of the truth, but the way that they taught it caused the people who believed it to skew off in another direction because their judgment was not right.

They taught a religion where the people walked by sight not by faith. It was very heavily weighted toward a negative thing that is, not doing sin?avoiding sin at all costs. The Pharisees were known far and wide for being quite hard people because they did all they could to avoid sin, but they would not lift a finger to lift anybody's burdens, as we will see in my next sermon (Pharisees Part 3). That was one of Jesus' chief criticisms of them that they had no love or outgoing concern.

This doctrine of theirs skewed their practice of religion and way of life in a direction that was not toward God and the kingdom of God. That is why Jesus was so quick to tell the disciples to avoid that. It was not going to lead in the right direction.

Now this connects to my dad's series on the importance of doctrine in that teaching will produce a kind of faith It has to. Even atheists have "faith"?they believe there is no god and that the physical laws of the universe are doing everything. But they have to have "faith" to

believe that. And then, of course, this "faith" is manifest in the way that they live their lives?that is as if God does not exist. It will certainly not end up anywhere close to the kingdom of God.

So if the teaching is not based on the truth it will not produce Godly faith, which means then that the result will be an ungodly way of life. It has got to work that way.

This basis of truth is the foundation of everything that we do. We will do what we believe. Without the basis of truth our judgment will be skewed?we will not have biblical sincerity.

Now, *Re-education Part One* concentrated on the re-education process that God put Moses and the Israelites through in the wilderness. It is apparent that Israelites failed this. Moses did not, but the Israelites did. They refused to let go of their Egyptian beliefs and to learn God's ways. Instead, they challenged God, they criticized and threatened His servants?remember Moses said that they were ready to stone him? They complained unceasingly.

It would be interesting to see just how many times the word murmur is in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They were constantly murmuring. Paul brings that up in I Corinthians 10. They murmured unceasingly.

As a result God would not let them enter the Promised Land. In fact He said that their graves were littered along the route all the way from Egypt to the Promised Land like so much trash along the roadside.

In Numbers 14 is the incident where they have come to the edge of the Promised Land and sent in the spies to check it out. At this point the spies have come back. This is God giving His judgment after this incident:

Numbers 14:22-23 "because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, "they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.

Numbers 14:29-30 ` The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.
` Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.

It is kind of interesting that He put it that way. "I would make you dwell in." It probably does not have that sense, but it almost sounds like God had to force them to do it.

Numbers 14:31-35 ` But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. ` But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.
` And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and

bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. ` According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection. [They rejected Him; He will reject them.] ` I the LORD have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

When God gets into this kind of mood, He means it; and He did. A couple of million people died in the wilderness during those 40 years. Not one of them, except Joshua and Caleb, and most likely, their families lived through it.

Today we are going to focus on our re-education process just as in the last sermon. We will not dwell so much on the negative aspects of unlearning the false ways that we picked up from the world, but the more positive aspect of learning God's right way of life so that we will be better able to enter our Promised Land—the kingdom of God.

And so hopefully this sermon will be a bit more positive than the last one, although it has not started out that way speaking about millions of deaths in the wilderness!

We skipped over a few verses in Numbers 14, and I would like to pick one of them up now.

Numbers 14:24 But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

It is interesting how He describes Caleb here. Caleb and Joshua were exempted from the judgment of God's sentence on the rebellious Israelites and this verse gives us the reason why.

He had a different spirit in him. And it said that he followed God fully.

Caleb, and assumedly Joshua as well, had an attitude toward obedience to God and all His commands that all the other Israelites did not have. They were cut from a different piece of cloth these two. I think that we could safely say that God had called the two of them and had given them His Spirit.

Now why these two, out of all Israel, I do not know. In His ability to see the hearts and minds of people, He picked these two out. We know definitely that Joshua was called. And I would say, because it says here in verse 24 that Caleb had this different spirit, that he did as well.

The two of them had that element that set them apart. It gave them what it took to be different, to follow God instead of the crowd, to make the most of what God had given them, to see things from God's perspective and to report back the truth of what they saw.

We will go forward a bit in Caleb's life in Joshua 14. It is interesting that both these things take place in the 14th chapter of these (Numbers and Joshua) books. This is after the Israelites had come into the land. They have fought many battles. And the land is being split up between the

various tribes. And now Caleb comes to Joshua to tell him that there is one more thing that needs to be done.

Joshua 14:6-11 Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: "You know the word which the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. "I *was* forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as *it was* in my heart. "Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. "So Moses swore on that day, saying, ` Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.' "And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old [and quite an 85 year old he was]. "As yet I *am as* strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength *was* then, so now *is* my strength for war [he was not the retiring type], both for going out and for coming in.

He was going to go out and he was going to win, and he was going to come back. This was a man!

Joshua 14:12 "Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim *were* there, and *that* the cities *were* great *and* fortified. It may be that the LORD *will be* with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said."

Now this is kind of interesting. All those spies came back and said, "There are giants in the land! We cannot defeat them! We need to do something else!"

And of course, Joshua and Caleb said, "We can take them! No problem!"

And so God's sentence goes, and 45 years pass, and Caleb is still of the same mind! "I want this mountain where all the giants are! Let me at them! Come on! We can still take them!"

He still had the same faith in God to win the battles for him. Nothing has changed. Not even his natural vigor has changed. He is raring and ready to go to get his inheritance. This is why God put him there at this time. God had a job for him to do, and he had been waiting 45 years to do this job. And he says, "Let me go! Let me at them!"

Joshua 14:13-14 And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the

inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day,
because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.

Here is the culmination of a life lived by God's Spirit. One who was constant for 45 years to do the job that God had given him to do.

I am sure that Caleb felt that this was something that had been left unfinished all those many years when he had come back with such enthusiasm to go in and take the land and defeat these giants. He had been ready to do all the things that God had spurred him to do by His Spirit. But, it had to languish all those 40 years in the wilderness. And then he had to do all the fighting with Joshua to get to that portion of the land at this point. And then he was ready to take it on. He was ready to do it with all the natural enthusiasm that he had plus what God was supplying him to finish His work.

Now, this phrase which is repeated several times here, "He wholly followed the LORD God of Israel," is a bit interesting.

Keil and Delitzsch Commentary comments that, "He had followed the Lord with perfect fidelity," which is interesting because that was one of the words picked up there from Numbers 14, that the Israelites had had infidelity. But, Caleb had perfect fidelity.

In other words he was faithful or loyal.

Fidelity, if you know anything of the Latin, is simply the Latin term for faithful. The Marines' motto is *Semper Fidelis*—"Always Faithful." Fidelity is a natural synonym for faithful or loyal.

Now, Matthew Henry in his commentary adds, "He conformed himself to the Divine Will," which is another good way of putting it. He conformed himself to the Divine Will.

From these comments we can glean at least three similar factors of this different spirit that Caleb had—the thing that set him apart from all the other Israelites, except for Joshua:

1. This spirit (attitude) was wholly or fully willing to follow and obey God.
2. It was loyal or faithful to God.
3. It conformed itself to God's will.

So, the three key words that I want you to pull out of here are: (1) fully, (2) faithful, and (3) conformity.

So, to put this in a phrase, we can say that, one with this spirit lives in fully, faithful conformity to God. That is what set Caleb apart. He was willing to do whatever God wanted Him to do, and he would make sure that he would conform his life to that.

And if we want to put it in New Testament terms, he lived in sincerity and truth.

We will read from the New Testament, Romans 12:1-2. These are very well known scriptures. We have been here a time or two during these Days of Unleavened Bread.

I want to go here because Paul gives us several important principles here in these two verses which parallel these two sermons that I have given. Let us read them first:

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Now the first thing that he does is he lays the groundwork of the attitude that we need to have. That is what takes place in verse one. Verse one sets the foundation of the proper attitude that we need. He tells us in a word that we have to be willing to give up everything?our lives.

Because this is a living sacrifice he wants us to give up our lives while we are living. That is in everyday of our life in all of our actions we need to have this attitude of being willing to sacrifice our natural wants and desires to do what God wants us to do. That is a hard thing for us to do with our human nature that wants everything for itself. Give me, give me, give me?starting with give me food, give me water, give me whatever so that it comes down to that I want all the wealth in the world, I want the cushiest of lifestyles, I want everything!

And so God tells us that no, a truly Christian attitude?one that has the spirit of God?is willing to give all that up?willing to sacrifice everything to be in fully faithful conformity to His will.

It oftentimes does not happen that God makes us give everything up, but we certainly have to have the attitude that we are willing to do it. And, on occasion God may call upon us to give something up just to prove us and test us a bit.

Most likely we will not have to do what Abraham had to do, and give up his heir, Isaac, his only son by Sarah in death.

Now, of course, God spared him of that ultimate sacrifice, but it showed God what Abraham was willing to do?how far he was willing to go to be fully faithfully conformed to His will.

Paul adds here at the end of verse one that this is our reasonable service. This is the only reasonable thing for us to do. Why?

First of all, God owns us completely. He holds the redemption receipts in His own hand. He gave His most cherished and beloved possession?His own Son?so that we could be conformed to His Son?s image so that we could have this opportunity.

So, it is only reasonable that as His slaves, His purchased possessions, we give Him whatever He asks. We do for Him whatever He commands us to do.

Another reason is that if we really want to reach the goal to fulfill God?s purpose in us, this is the only way to do it. If you do not have this foundation of a willingness to sacrifice, then none of the rest is ever going to happen. Sacrifice is the essence of love, and if you do not have any love, you are not going to be like the Father, or the Son. And, one?s spiritual life especially is not going to go anywhere.

So, it is only reasonable that we have this attitude.

The second thing that he tells us here has to do with the first sermon that I gave last week. Paul strictly commands us not to let the lifestyles, the attitudes, the goals, and the desires of

this world to shape us.

You probably remember what the Phillips Translation says on this verse, "Do not let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." That, of course, is, "do not be conformed to this world."

Do not let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold! Do not let what is happening in the world affect you so much that you begin to follow it in your own life.

We need to remember the Apostle John tells us in I John 2:15:

I John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

That is scary!

That should give us pause. If we are allowing ourselves to be conformed to the lifestyles and the desires, and the ways of this world, it is a big clue that God is not with you. James writes in James 4:4:

James 4:4 ?Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

There is a clue!

If we are sidling up to the world we are surely not prepared properly for marriage to the Bridegroom. In fact, we have kind of gone back on our betrothal by doing that, have we not?

We have become faithless to the covenant. And we have become His enemy.

That is scary, too!

The world, to us in our day is what Egypt was to the Israelites. We do not want to be found by God to be constantly going back to those familiar and corrupt ways of life because we will end up in the same situation that the Israelites did! Their bodies were strewn throughout the wilderness for forty years! Their graves littered the way like so much trash.

We have to make this connection between what happened back then, and what could happen now. It just takes place in a bit more spiritual context. The results are the same?death. But, the results for us are far more critical because it is not just physical death we are talking about, it is spiritual death!

So, the stakes are so much higher with us! We need to see that we have to really concentrate on doing these things. That is why God gives us, every year, seven days to think about these things because it needs to be reinforced and reiterated to us constantly. That we should not follow the examples of the Israelites, and not be conformed to this world?not be constantly running back to Egypt.

Now, the third thing that Paul tells us to do is to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

He advises us to be transformed, which means, "altered," or "changed" to something altogether new.

I do not know if you remember the little toys they used to have that looked like a truck, but then you can transform them into one of those big monsters that looked like something that Godzilla would fight. They transformed from something benign to something lethal.

Of course, God wants us to go the other way from something lethal?human, carnal, deadly?to something that is benign, and living, and loving; something that is far greater than what it began as?like the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. And that is exactly the word that is used there. We could put that word in there, and be metamorphosed?"morphed" is the way we say it today?into something different by the renewing of your mind.

Now this is in the passive tense if you have noticed: Be transformed! It means it is something that is done to us. But it implies that we at least allow this transformation to take place. Notice that he does not say, "God transformed these people." He tells us, "You be transformed by the renewing of your mind." That shows and implies and suggests at least a bit of cooperation on our part in this process.

So we certainly have a part in it, if only to yield to God. But yielding is not easy. It takes work too. That is where the attitude comes in, being willing to sacrifice, being willing to let God work in us. And if He has to strip us of the things that is holding us back, as it says there in Hebrews 12: 1-2. Sometimes, that is the only way that we are going to be able to run the race?by stripping off everything that is holding us back, all of those attachments that we have to this world.

Now the latter part of verse 2 also suggests works on our part. And, that is found in the phrase, "that you may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is."

Proving what is God?s will is a process of learning, and testing and experiencing God?s will. We can read or understand a lot of what God?s will is by what is in the pages of this book. That is our primary source of understanding God?s will.

But, notice also that I said there is also learning, and testing and experiencing.

We have to become sensitive to God?s Spirit and His movement of us through our lives so we can understand what God?s will is for us.

Now we know what His overall purpose is, but a lot of times we struggle with the little decisions that we need to make in order to move toward that overall purpose. And so we learn from the book the basics of His will and then we use the Holy Spirit to come to understand those things and to be moved and motivated to fulfill them.

But, oftentimes it takes a lot of experience, a lot of testing, a lot of learning at the school of hard knocks before we become sensitive enough to know the prodding of the Holy Spirit to put us in the right direction.

So this transformation happens over a long period of time. Our minds are not renewed right away. It has to go through this process of getting rid of the old, the false, and the things that are going to take us off track; and putting in the new. And that takes a long time?many years

of a converted life to renovate the mind.

You know, when they renovate houses they take out all of the old stuff. They repair things, and then they put in all the new; and it is not until you get to the end of the process and see the nice shiny kitchen, or cabinets, or the new interior of the house that you finally feel like something great has happened.

And that is how it is with our minds. It is going to take a long time to clear out the debris, to clear out the trash, and begin making repairs so that we are able to really handle the truth. Finally it is going to end in real transformation with a glorious body.

But, it is going to take all that time through a great number of years, thousands of experiences, millions of decisions, to effect that change.

And so this word here, "renewed", means renovated; changed qualitatively. It is not just changed. It is made better. Sometimes, change for change's sake is not good at all. You have to change for the better.

David was reminding me last week about the demon that was cast out of the person. And Jesus said that nothing happened and seven other demons came and inhabited the empty space.

So, it tells us something about what has got to happen once we clean it out, and make the repairs; we have to fill it with something good so it can be truly transformed.

In Acts 7, we will see the example of one man—an illustration of this transformation taking place. This is the example of the Apostle Paul himself. This takes place at the end of the incident of Stephen's martyrdom. I want to pick up a couple of verses here, and then go all the way into chapter 8, verse 3. This describes the pre-conversion lifestyle of Saul of Tarsus.

Here, Stephen has just said that he saw Jesus standing at God's right hand:

Acts 7:57-60 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Now this idea of putting the coats at Saul's feet gives the indication that he was in charge; that he was chief executioner in this; or he was the one who had worked things out. He was a henchman—a leader in all of this.

We can see in chapter 8, verse 1, that this was true.

Acts 8:1-3 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made

great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.

Now in this verse, I get the picture of the old cave-man thing grabbing them by the hair and dragging them off someplace. But, it is very violent?very hateful, just full of persecution and anger, and other evil emotions against the church.

Evidently, Paul was chief persecutor of the church in its first few years because Stephen was martyred about 2 years after Jesus' death, about AD 33 as far as I am able to pinpoint it. And Saul was not converted until about AD 35. So, he had at least a good two year run of persecution against the church.

As you can see here he was demonstrably ungodly. And he himself later said in I Timothy 1:15 that he was the chief of sinners. Certainly we can see from some of the things that we are reading now that he was not far wrong.

Acts 9:1-2 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

At this point he decided that since all the people were scattering to the various neighboring areas around Judea that he was going to take the persecution to them. The picture you get of his breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord gives such a malicious feeling of hatred and murder that he was just a Hitlerian figure to the early church.

It is not easy to think of the Apostle Paul in these terms. Of course he was not the Apostle Paul at that time, he was just Saul of Tarsus.

But, you can see what he came from; what his mindset was; how off the track he was, even though he had been raised and taught at the feet of Gamaliel?who the Bible is fairly sympathetic toward?Saul was just a zealot of a person. He was a physical zealot. He was not just zealous spiritually, he was zealous to stamp out any rival religion; anything he felt was heretical or blasphemous.

Acts 9:3-5 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" [at least he had sense enough to address Him as Lord] Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It's hard for you to kick against the goads."

That is interesting. How long had God been goading him to go the right way?

Am I looking at this correctly? That God had been moving him toward something much like someone would use a goad to move cattle to a certain place. And Paul (for how long?) had been kicking against it wanting to go his own way; wanting to do what he wanted to do. How long had he resisted his own calling? I do not know. But, you can see his mind. He was totally rejecting God up to this point.

Acts 9:6-9 So he, trembling and astonished [I bet!], said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" [Now there is a good attitude!] Then the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

I guess he figured out that he had better fast because this was something that he really needed to concentrate on and turn over to God. So he had a very good reaction for one who had been breathing out threats and slaughter against the church, having this totally rejecting attitude.

We will skip over this part about Ananias until we come to verse 17.

Acts 9:17-20 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul [What a change!], the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately [It is interesting how many times "immediately," or "suddenly" is in this passage!] he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

What a change! He had been killing these people, or throwing them in jail, threatening to kill them, and now within three days or so (maybe a week) he was doing the exact opposite; preaching the very Christ whom he had considered blasphemous, and heretical just a few days before.

Acts 9:21-22 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

Almost a total metamorphosis in a week's time!

God blinds him, humbles him, reveals Himself to him; and suddenly he is a different man altogether.

Obviously, his complete transformation took many years, and we know that he still struggled against some of his own problems for many years after that as we saw there in Romans 7.

But, God's Spirit in him made him totally new. His example shows what God wants to see in us.

And do you know that this is such a shining example of radical transformation through His Spirit that God includes it three times in the book of Acts. The first in this time by Luke in the third person, and Paul tells it twice himself in the latter chapters. And there are a couple of times when he refers to it himself in his epistles.

This is such an astounding thing. I like to try and think about it as Joe Jew who is in the church and whose relatives had been taken off in one sort or another to prison by Paul/Saul, and how my attitude would be welcoming this one into the congregation. Could you welcome someone like Charles Manson into the congregation? I mean Paul was not that vicious, but I am trying to give you an idea of the type of person we are talking about here.

What if Goebbels from Germany? could you accept him into the congregation for all that he did in those concentration camps?

It would be hard to do.

II Corinthians 3:18 shows you what God can do with a person? how astounding God's Spirit can be in making a transformation. This is happening with us. We may not see the same astounding difference? the same radical change? but it is happening to us also? if we allow it!

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

I think that sometimes we give short shrift to God's Spirit within us. I think that it is because we do not allow it to work within us as Paul evidently allowed it to work in him. He was able to sacrifice those things that he held dear. When Jesus revealed Himself to him it says in another place that he gave up everything as rubbish. He was then wholly committed. What was the phrase? fully, faithful conformity. He was in fully, faithful conformity to Jesus Christ from that point on. That is why there was such a dramatic change in the man. And that is the way that we need to be.

So there are two things in this little verse that we need to emphasize. First, we are all being transformed by God's Spirit. We all "are being transformed? just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The second is that we are all being transformed into the same image. We are all being made to fit the same template. God is not cutting out cookie figures here. But we are all going to be made to conform to the same One who is the standard. We know Who that is.

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

This is the template. And just as children of a father and a mother all have certain similarities?they look the same?so will God?s children all will have similarities; they will all look somewhat like the Firstborn. In this case, He sets the standard. If you see the standard you will be able to recognize all His younger Siblings because He is the template that God is creating all the other children to match.

Now this transformation process that we have been included in and are being put through has the greatest and highest goal that there ever could be.

The goal simply is to become just like Jesus was on earth during our physical human lives and ultimately be what He is now in all His glory at the right hand of God.

So, this means that while we are living now as human beings our job is to duplicate His life in us. And in doing so we will be given the glorious body and all the rest of those attributes that God has in the Resurrection.

We will see a bit of this in Romans 10 verse 4; this hints at that:

Romans 10:4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

It is a somewhat difficult verse to translate from the Greek. It is a verse without a verb in it. It has to be supplied. So, it is really hard to figure out where the verb should go. It is probably correct this way.

Except that the word "end" makes you feel like the thing is stopped. But it really means "the goal," or "the aim."

It is *telous* in Greek. And it could mean "end," or "completion." But I think that most scholars understand that here Paul is thinking of the goal, that end, the aim of the Law for righteousness; meaning what the law points us to. What the law is intended to accomplish has its goal in what Christ is. What the law does is show us the paths of righteousness that leads to Jesus Christ.

So if we follow the law with the help of God?s Holy Spirit we should be coming close to the image of Christ. And when you add Christ?s own example and His own instructions then we really have the chance to get really close to what He is.

Christ perfectly followed the law and His Father?s will. And He had the Spirit always. And look at what He became! The idea is that if we follow the same route, look at what we can become!

Notice also that in this verse that that idea of "all" comes out again: For everyone who believes. God is not leaving anybody out. God is not working with one person at the exclusion of another whom He has also called. God is working with us individually, and all together. He wants all of

us to be there and He wants all of us to be His children.

The word for "righteousness" here is "*dikaiosune*." It is simply, "conformity to the claims of a higher power." Fully, faithful conformity. Conformity? that is to all that He commands or appoints.

So, even with this word, we can see that Christ is the standard of righteousness to which we are being made to conform. Nothing new here.

I do not think I am saying anything to you today that is new, but maybe I am saying it in a way that you have not thought of before. This is all basic Christianity. And we have to be reminded of it every year. That is why God puts us through these Holy Days so that we can learn it.

Paul illustrates this conformity by the metaphor of putting on clothes:

Colossians 3:9-11 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds [my last sermon], and have put on the *newman* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

When we are called, accept Christ as our Savior and dedicate ourselves to seeking the kingdom of God we put off our dirty clothes. It is just like shucking something that we have been out working in. And we put on clean ones. We go through the process of baptism, which shows that. We go in the old man and come out the new man. We are cleaned up.

As a new man, it says here, we are renewed in knowledge. That is, we have new basis of truth.

The old way from before?while we were the old man?had a different basis of knowledge that we were working from. We worked from what we learned growing up. We learned from what the preacher said in our former church on Sundays. We learned from the examples of our parents. We learned from what the teacher taught us in school.

We learned by experience through life of carnal ways to get things done. We learned from peer pressure how to sneak out of the house in the middle of the night and do whatever. We learned from our fellow employees how to steal time from the boss or steal materials. We learned how to steal money from the IRS. We learned a lot of things as the old man.

But now, when God calls us, we are new men, and have to be renewed in knowledge. We have to have a new basis of truth. We have to have a new foundation from which to make decisions and from which to behave. We have to conduct our lives in a totally new, daring and challenging way.

And it says here in Colossians 3:10 that this knowledge has its basis, its source, and its power in the Creator God. It says here, "Who has renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

In a way you could say that once God calls us and we accept His invitation we are at the point

where Adam and Eve were back in the Garden of Eden?well not totally because they had not experienced sin yet. We have. But, at least you could say that we are at the point where, because of Christ's blood, we are completely clean?we are totally unleavened.

And now as spiritual babes we have to learn a whole new way of thinking. We have to be renewed in knowledge. And we have to go the way that Adam and Eve did not go. Now we have the opportunity to make the right choices instead of choosing once again the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

So we start out fresh and we can therefore become renewed. And thus we can say as it goes on to say here that Christ is everything for us at this point and throughout the rest of our lives because:

1. He is the means by which we have access to God. He is the means by which we have been cleaned up so that we can have this access to God. He is our way in. He is our mediator. He is the one who has broken through the veil And now we have an Advocate before the Father.
2. It is His instruction that we learn and apply because He is the Word of God. This Bible is His Revelation.
3. And not only that, it is His example that we are trying to follow.
4. He is the goal we are trying to attain.

To recap these quickly:

1. He is the means by which we have access to God and forgiveness of sin.
2. His is the instruction that we learn and apply.
3. He is the example we are trying to follow.
4. He is the goal we are trying to attain.

He is all in all for us. He is everything. He is the perfect unleavened bread, you might say, or as He put it, He is the bread of life. And unless we eat of it, we will not have eternal life. It makes John 6 really come to life?thinking of it in terms of Christ all in all.

We will go on a bit and see the character of this new man in a little more detail. These are some of the areas a new man becomes re-educated in:

Colossians 3:12-17 Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in

the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Now we need to be adding these bits of unleavened bread to our spiritual diet. He mentioned several here. If we were to go through them individually, we could take all day. So, I am just going to break them down into six major points:

1. We need to start putting on Godly attitudes that affect interpersonal relationships. That takes in all of verses 12 and 13?tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, forgiving one another. These are all attitudes that we all need to have and practice that have to do with our relationships with one another. We start in the home. From verse 18 to the end of the chapter, he starts with husbands and wives; and then he talks about children; and then he talks about employer/employee relations; and then he talks about Christian relationships. So we begin where we are, putting on these attitudes that will allow us to get along with one another; that allow us to show love toward one another.
2. The second bit of unleavened bread is love. Maybe it should be the first one, but here Paul puts it after these other ones. Love is the bond of perfection. It is the glue that holds everything together.
3. Peace. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. You have to have peace because if you do not have peace, no righteousness is going to be built (James 3:18). Only in a spirit of peace are good things going to blossom in your spiritual life. So peace is very important.
4. Gratitude. Be thankful. Do these things with thanksgiving. We need to be appreciative of the things that God has done for us. Every day we need to thank Him for all the things He supplies. That could go on a long time! There is a lot to be thankful for. If we have the attitude of gratitude we start things off on the right foot because we see our inferior position in all of this. Things are only given from the superior to the inferior. And if we recognize what we have been given, and who has given it to us, then we are more than likely setting things up for us to make those proper choices, because we understand our obligations.
5. Deep knowledge of God's Word. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. We need that Bread of Life?that every word of God?in us all the time as the foundation of our decisions. We need to be able to know God's word so well that we do not need to consult the Bible because we know it already, and can make a decision immediately because we are fully conformed to God's will. We are faithful to His word. That is why it is so important to study to make sure that we know what the Bible says so that we can know what God's will is for us in any situation.

I know that sometimes our recall is not all that great. Sometimes we forget. Sometimes it does not come to mind at all that a scripture?such a little bit in God's Word?would have affected our decision. That is why we need to keep studying.

He also mentions singing Psalms. Do you know how much wisdom there is in the Psalms? Just remembering Dwight Armstrong's words?there is a lot in there and we do not catch

it while we are singing it because usually our minds are following the words but we are not taking them in. We are just singing the song. But there is so much in these hymns that we sing every week. Paul tells us to sing those hymns. It does not have to be in church. Sing them in your head as you are going off to work. There is a lot you can learn from them. That one we just sang regarding David's trial in Psalm 51. There are boatloads of instruction in there. We should not think of them as something we do on the Sabbath.

They are a lot better than the songs and the music that is out there now. I was thinking about that the other night in terms of re-education. I was just thinking about all the song lyrics that I know, and how sinful most of them are.

It is a good thing I do not know the rap songs. The rock and roll songs are bad enough. I was thinking, "How am I going to train my mind to forget these words?" All I have to hear is a little bit of a tune and I remember the whole lyric, and I will be singing it the whole day. And all this filth is going through my mind. I will not say any of the songs now because I do not want you to have to live with the filth that I do.

But, I know that a lot of you are baby boomers, and gen-x-ers and we have grown up with these songs and they are just there?all the way from Janice Joplin to Brittany Spears. They are horrendous things that they are singing. But, they have a catchy tune, and suddenly we are thinking about these words that are talking about fornication, and murder, and thievery and other things that we do not normally think of on our own.

Would not it be better to unlearn those and learn the hymns? Something that is a great deal more pure and helpful toward the kingdom? I think so!

6. The final thing Paul mentions here is: Glorify God by doing His Will. If we do His will and make the right decisions we will be glorifying God. We need to put those things we learn into practice so that we can show Him our progress. That will glorify Him. The angels will definitely be cheering in heaven when we make proper decisions. When they see that we are growing and becoming more like the image of the Son that we are supposed to be.

Of course, these six points do not cover everything. That is why we give sermons throughout the rest of the year. We add to these things all the time. But, if we have these we are along way toward becoming transformed into the image of the Son.

I will conclude in Revelation 14:1 through 5 so we can see the conclusion of all this?the goal we are moving toward; to see what Christ feels about those who do this and His estimation of those who actually finish the course.

Revelation 14:1-5 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living

creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

John sees a vision of the Firstfruits of God?those few elect who succeed in being transformed into the image of Christ. They have been transformed to such a point that they even have God's own Name stamped on their forehead. That is how much they are like Him. Notice especially verses 4 and 5 where it says they are undefiled; they are virginal in their purity; and they are without fault before the Throne. There is no more sin in them because they have gotten rid of all of it. And they have put in them the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Their re-education has been successful. They have come fully out of sin, and are enjoying eternal life always in the presence of their Elder Brother Jesus Christ.