



Our reading for the beginning of the Autumn Term stands two thirds of the way through St. Paul's letter to the Romans. The previous chapters provided detailed and carefully argued statements of the core truths of the Christian faith, but Paul never taught truths to be merely known, he always translated them into practice with a big 'Therefore' preceding ethical teaching closely resembling that of Christ as recorded in the Gospels. **Read Romans 12: 1 – 2.**

1. What does it mean to 'be Transformed?'

- Transformation is our rendering of the Greek word 'metamorphōō' which signifies a total change from inside out- a transfiguration, a change in form or shape, a spiritual transformation: **Matt 17:2 and Mark 9:2.** The metamorphosis a caterpillar experiences transforms it from a short, stubby unglamorous creature into a stunningly beautiful butterfly.
- We are transformed when we become a Christian – we are reborn in Christ, either suddenly or over a period of time. However the Greek Paul is using means he is commanding us to go on being continually transformed, day by day. And he isn't telling us to transform ourselves but to 'be transformed' by the renewing of our minds

2. The four revolving stages in continuous Transformation. (Lessons from a caterpillar.)

- **EAT.** Caterpillars feed voraciously and grow hugely until ready to form a chrysalis. Christians need spiritual nourishment in order to grow and transform: from reading the Bible; through talks and sermons; by belonging to a home group; by going to New Wine/Greenbelt all these things begin the process of transformation into becoming more like Christ.
- **PRAY.** The fully grown caterpillar turns into a chrysalis and hides away, apparently inactive. In fact, it is during this apparently quiet phase that the enormous physical changes occur which transform the caterpillar into a butterfly. At the right time, it emerges from the chrysalis, but with folded wings which won't facilitate flying. Christians, too, need times of stillness or even solitude: times to pray and wait on God, listening for His still, small voice to encourage and change us.
- **DEVELOP.** The new butterfly summons up all its energy to pump blood into its wings to get them working so it can learn to fly. We are saved by grace, but to be transformed we must put in effort. We need to work to develop our God-given gifts and talents, to learn new skills or take up new challenges. We may need to re-train.
- **LOVE.** After all this eating, hiding away and exercising, the beautiful butterfly bursts into the world to attract a mate and reproduce. Continuing the analogy (but not literally!) – we are called to be out in the world fulfilling God's purposes for us as Christ's ambassadors (**2 Cor. 5: 20-21.**) God has committed to us the task of reconciliation between our broken world and God, on Christ's behalf. Jesus tells us that serving others is the same as serving Him (**Matt. 25: 34-40**). We are to be out in the world, sharing and living the gospel message of forgiveness and love.

3. What does Transformation look like?

- In **Romans 12: 3-8** Paul makes it clear that humility and being a team player are hallmarks of the transformed life. These are unfashionable qualities in popular culture, and even sometimes in the church: we talk about 'my ministry, God's plan for me, what I'm looking for in a church' Paul says we are part of a bigger whole and we all belong to each other, we bring different gifts and only by working together can we be effective.
- Other hallmarks: brotherly love, spiritual fervour, being joyful in hope and patient in affliction, sharing with the needy, practising hospitality, living at peace with everyone. Such transformation is only possible if we remember to keep up the four stages of metamorphosis: Eat. Pray. Develop. Love.

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." **2 Corinthians 3: 18.**

Things to talk about

1. Christian ethics emerge from Christian theology. How do we make sure our faith is shaping our conduct?
2. I have always wondered if the process of metamorphosis is painful for the nascent butterfly..... What about our spiritual transformation - does it involve struggle or is it so gradual as to be painless?
3. Our transformation comes from the renewing of our minds. Do we have a truly Christian mind-set?