

STONE HARBOR

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at johnny@stoneharborchurch.org.

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,

Johnny

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

Date: May 2, 2010
Series: The Church of God's Intention
Part: Part 1 – What God Intends the Church to Be
Section: The Church of the Spirit
Topic: The Church
Message Title: **The Church is the Church of the Spirit - 4**
Short Title: The Church of the Spirit - 4
Text: 1 Cor 11-14
Key Words: Church, Spirit, Transform

Message Outline

The Church is the Church of the Spirit – 4 (Deb, use in sideways heading.)

The Spirit Transforms the Church (Deb, use as heading of the Outline above the three points.)

- A. **What** the Spirit is Changing Us **Into**
- B. **How** the Spirit is Changing Us
- C. What **Our** Part Is

Related Scripture

1. John 3:1-8
2. 1 Cor 11:17 - 14:40
3. Eph 4:11-16
4. Rom 12
5. Rom 8 (esp. v. 29)
6. John 17 (esp. v.17)

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. How have you already been changed by God?
2. When God is through changing you what will you be like?
3. What is your role in your spiritual transformation?

Memory and Meditation Verse

“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (NASB)

3. The Spirit Transforms the Church

In Pastor Kit Culver's Sacred Space study (pp. 197 ff.) we have learned that it was the Spirit through whom God created all things. (Gen 1, Psalm 104:30). The Spirit is implicated in the breath God "breathed" (Gen 2:7) into man bringing forth the creature uniquely qualified to bear His image and live in communion with Him. We further see the Spirit "as the agent" of creation of the nation "Israel as the singular 'son of God' (cf. Luke 3:38 with Exodus 4:22-23; Hosea 11:1)." The Spirit is credited with empowering Bezalel (Ex 31:3) with "wisdom" "understanding" "knowledge" "craftsmanship" so that he would make the tabernacle according to the Lord's design in which He chose to dwell in the midst of His people. Moses had the Spirit of God upon him (Num 11:17), as did Joshua (Num 27:18) empowering them to lead Israel on behalf of God. The prophets spoke of the Spirit's vital role in renewing estranged creation including and especially man. And we see the Spirit overshadowing Mary at the conception of Jesus the Nazarene and coming upon Him at His baptism by John.

We can rightly regard the Spirit as the agent of our spiritual formation even though we read in the Bible sometimes of God changing us and other times of Christ doing the work of transformation; for the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit is the Spirit of God.

Today we will look at how the Spirit transforms the church: What is the Spirit changing us into? How does He do it? What is our part?

a) What the Spirit is Changing Us Into

(6) Individually

The Spirit Changes us From... To...

(a) From Non-Existent to Existence

(i) 1st Adam

God fashioned the very first man Adam from dirt and then breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 2:7). This was the work of the Spirit.

(ii) Last Adam, Jesus

In His earthly existence, Jesus was conceived by the Spirit (Lk 1:35)

(iii) All Mankind, You and Me

[Psalm 127:3](#) – "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward."

[Psalm 139:13-14](#) – "For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well."

(b) From Dead to Alive

(i) Eph 2:1-7 – We were dead in our trespasses and sins... but God made us alive together with Christ...

(ii) See also John 3:1-8 where we see a clear distinction between the fallen humanity we were born into from our mother's wombs and the new life we are born again into which is a life given us by the Spirit.

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

(c) From Not Knowing Jesus to Knowing Him

(i) 1 Cor 12:3b "...no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

(d) From Spiritually Ignorant to Spiritually Wise

Many of us began our Christian walk worldly wise yet spiritually ignorant. We did not even know who Jesus was.

(i) Jesus who?

ILLUS. I grew up thinking that Jesus was like Santa Clause. Some people believed in Him, but then you grow up.

(ii) God the Father?

(iii) The Holy what?

(iv) Salvation from what?

(e) From Selfish to Selfless

(i) From: Self-referential, mutual reciprocity. (See Sacred Space pp.253 ff.)

(ii) To: Mind of Christ

(f) From Natural to Spiritual

(i) “Natural mindedness.” (See Sacred Space pp.253 ff. & 1 Cor 11)

(g) From “Old Man” to “New Creature”

(h) From Wimpy to Powerful

(i) Ex 31:3

(ii) Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism (Lk 3:21-22; cf. 4:1, 14)

(iii) Acts 1:8 – You shall receive power...

(iv) Peter's Story – preaching, healing

(7) Corporately

Just as the body is more than any one member and as a building is more than a single stone, the church is more than any one person.

And just as God through the Spirit transforms individuals, He also transforms His church – the collective body of all the individual believers.

We have already seen how Jesus said, “...I will **build** my church...” (Mat 16:18). Following the Pentecost event we have been looking at for the last several weeks of Acts 2 Luke records that “...the Lord was **adding to their number** day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47) And Peter, speaking to a plurality of believers said, “... you also, as living stones, are **being built** up as a spiritual house...” (1 Peter 2:5a). Paul likewise speaking to many people of several churches says, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, **having been built** on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, **is growing** into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom **you also are being built together** into a dwelling of God in

the Spirit. (Ehp 2:19-22). And to the Colossians Paul speaks of the church as the body which "...grows with a growth which is from God." (Col 2:19). See also Eph 4:16 and context.

This language makes it clear that God is changing His church by way of adding to its numbers and building it according to His design to accomplish His purposes.

ILLUS. The image of a physical stone temple under construction by Trinity Construction Partners., is helpful to me. As I pass by the construction site on my way to work I see a beautiful building. Each time I go by it has been worked on and has changed a bit more. Sometimes it has gotten bigger with more stones being added. Other times it has been made more beautiful by the finishing work done on a whole section that had already been roughed in. Still other times parts of a wall have been taken down and are being rebuilt in an altogether better way. Whatever the nature of the work done on the job site the construction project is always progressing right on schedule, i.e., the Builder's schedule.

He is doing that right here at Stone Harbor. He is building a body of people who each know Him and each other more completely. This has been a rich year for me and for many of us as our studies together have brought us significantly greater understanding of ourselves and God and what He is up to in this world and in our lives. We have grown; certainly not in number, but just as certainly in depth of knowledge and therefore intimacy with God. We are growing in our union with each other. We have more to grow. God's work of transformation is not complete, it is ongoing. It will continue all the days of our life until we lay this mortal body down and see Him face to face (see Philippians 1:6).

This ongoing nature of God's continuing transformation could breed exasperation if we look at it as a hole we have to dig and will never get to the bottom of. But it can just as well breed excitement, anticipation, and great joy as we regard it instead as our loving God continuing to disclose Himself and His love for us and His plan for the world with ever increasing clarity and newness.

"Oh, that's how that works. Oh, You are so good, I see now what You were up to. Oh, even this You have forgiven? Oh, You were able to supply the strength for that. Oh, I thought I knew what was best, but You have showed me clearly a better way."

What is the Spirit changing us into?

(a) Christ's Body in Fact NOT only in Name

b) How the Spirit is Changing Us

(6) The Spirit Changes us By Means of His Word

(a) The Word of Jesus Himself

John 1:14 -- “And the **Word** became **flesh**, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

(b) The Word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Romans 1:16 -- “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

Romans 10:14 -- “How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?”

(c) The Word of all the Scripture

2 Tim 3:16-17 -- “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

John 17:17 – “**Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.**”

(7) The Spirit Changes us By Means of His Body

The Spirit changes us by working through the other members of the body of Christ for our growth unto Christ-likeness.

Eph 4:11-16

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets,
and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,
12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service,
to the building up of the body of Christ;
13 until we all attain
to the unity of the faith,
and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
to a mature man,
to the measure of the stature
which belongs to the fullness of
Christ.
14 As a result,
we are no longer to be children,
tossed here and there by waves
and carried about
by every wind of doctrine,
by the trickery of men,
by craftiness in deceitful scheming;
15 but
speaking the truth in love,
we are to grow up

16 in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,
 from whom **the whole body**,
 being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies,
 according to the proper working of each individual part,
causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.
 Look at verse 16: The...body...causes the growth of the body!

(8) The Spirit Causes this Growth in Us as Individuals

(a) Regeneration

1 Peter 1:3 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”

(b) Sanctification

In speaking a parable in Luke 6, Jesus made it clear that when a teacher is done teaching a student, that student will be like His teacher.

Luke 6:40 —“A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.”

Jesus is our ultimate teacher. He taught His disciples while alive in the flesh. He continues to teach His disciples even today through His Spirit.

We saw last week that the Spirit, who Jesus calls the Helper, reveals truth and particularly the truth about Jesus. We saw in John 14-16 that the Spirit takes what God the Father entrusted to Jesus (16:14-15) and brings that to us by way of:

- His Presence with us (14:16) and in us (14:17)
- His Teaching (14:26)
- His Reminding us of Jesus' words to His disciples (14:26)
- His Testimony about Jesus to us (15:26)
- His Guidance of us into truth (16:13)
- His Disclosure to us of God's plans of redemption.

All these things the Spirit who dwells within each Christian brings to us and with them changes us from the people we are right now to the people of His original and ultimate intention, people who are like Christ.

(c) Glorification

The life long work of the Spirit transforming us into the image of Christ will ultimately give way to our glorification when Christ

returns and we are with Him in every way and without any remaining barrier.

1 Thes 4:18-18 -- 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Cor 15:50-57 -- 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(9) The Spirit Causes the Growth of the Corporate Body

As we use our spiritual gifts for the good of each other in the body we build up each other and thereby the church as a whole.

See all of 1 Cor 12 but especially...

1 Cor 12:4-7 -- 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

c) What Our Part Is

(6) Our Individual Part in the Spirit's Work

Romans 12:2 says, "...be transformed..." – We note quickly that this is an imperative, a command, and therefore something we should do. But we must also note even more importantly that grammatically the voice of this verb is passive indicating that it is another who does the work of transformation not ourselves. That other is the Holy Spirit. Our action is

called for but His is primary. The Spirit is the subject of our spiritual transformation and we are the object of His transforming work.

This means that instead of rushing to do three steps to spiritual transformation, we must first and foremost...

(a) Accept of His Work

Not thinking of yourself in the driver's seat regarding your relationship with God.

[1 John 4:10](#) – “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

[1 John 4:19](#) – “We love, because He first loved us.”

(b) Recognize Him as Our Redeemer

Garden -- Genesis 3:22-24 records that God drove fallen mankind out of the Garden away from His presence to prevent him from taking of the tree of life and eating from it in his estranged condition. God posted an angel and a flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. Clearly mankind in his fallen state was not to find life apart from God making it available to him. The message from God is you may not take and eat.

Just as clearly, in Christ we have the invitation to take and eat of His body that we may have the life we were created to live. “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.” (John 6:35). “...I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:50-51). Later at the last Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper Jesus would take bread, break it and give it to His disciples saying, “Take, eat; this is My body” (Mat 26:26 see also Mark 14:22).

By the work of Christ we are redeemed, and redeemed in Christ He invites us to eat and live forever reconciled to God.

(c) Live in the Awareness of Who We Are In Christ by His Indwelling Spirit

You in whom the Spirit of God dwells, you are the redeemed of the Lord, joined by faith to God through the indwelling Spirit. You are new creatures in Christ. Because you have eaten of the bread of life which is Jesus, taking Him into yourself through faith, having Him dwell in you through His Spirit you are His and He is yours and nothing will ever change that reality.

But it is a reality you can only grasp by faith. Therefore, walk by faith and not by site (2 Cor 5:7).

If there is a human action to the Spirit's work of transformation, and there is, it is supplemental and responsive.

(d) Participate with the Spirit

- (i) Word -- Listen and look at what the Spirit is revealing.
- (ii) Body – Use the gifts the Spirit has given you for the transformation of your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

(7) *Our Corporate Part in the Spirit's Work*

(a) Not Get in the Way of The Spirit

Not set up church structures that are contrary to the Spirit in each of us working for the common good.

I'm the biggest roadblock here. I have a tendency to want to do it all by myself.

For the good of the Church I must let the church be the church, each member vitally using what the Spirit has enabled and empowered them to do for the common good.

(b) Foster the Use of the Spiritual Gifts for the Good of the Whole

Let me try that: Use your gifts! Each of you should, must, please use the gifts that the Spirit of God has placed in you for the good of the body. Don't make your body limp. Help us to run. If God would have us, help us to fly.

It is only when we are each functioning according to God's design and the Spirit's gifting that we will be the body of God's intention. Where do you start? Most of you have started long ago and are currently using some of your gifts for the good of the body. Dave and Brad have bled with me on set up and tear down, Chuck and April and Paul have spent long hours practicing music that we might lift our voices in song. Marie and Kathi and Stephanie and Patty have made sure we have good food to eat beautifully presented. Leslie gives of herself sacrificially almost every day of the week helping me with every aspect of the ministry. Becky tirelessly studies and teaches the word of God to the ladies, and children of the church. Russ is our front line welcoming. Debbie and Nancy are at the door greeting. Dennis serves on our board. Many of you come to our community groups and participate in the body in that way. There are most of the time, plenty of helping hands to tear it all down. So we not starting from scratch!

But here is what I'd ask of you:

- Cultivate a heart that actually cares for each other.
- On Sunday come and help.

- On Monday through Saturday simply live with the realization that the rest of the people in the church depend on you for their spiritual good. That means that if each of us is not actively loving other members of the body, those members, and thus the whole church, are not as healthy as they would be if you brought what you've got to bear on their good.

What is our part? It is letting the indwelling Spirit work on, in and through us.

Today we get to celebrate communion, the Lord's Table. But before we do I'd like us to put some wings to the thought of our life together. I'd like us to pray for each other. We have a prayer card for each of you. I'm asking us print our names at the top and a prayer request on the bottom. Then before we receive communion together we are going to pray for each other according to what is on these cards. You will bring them to the back table and then I'll pair you up and you can pray for each other.

Here's my heart. If we are going to be the church of God's intention we must actually and practically care for each other. One of the ways we can do that right now is by praying for each other.

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