

September 26, 2021 The Heart of Freedom Fellowship Series: Transformation

This series defines seven "non-negotiable" foundational aspects of Freedom Fellowship Church, describing our home at Freedom. We've discussed these four:

- Intimacy with God and intimacy with others.
- People are Priority.
- Seeking God's heart and not just His hand.
- Simplicity.

and today... Transformation.

Transformation is the thorough and dramatic change in form or appearance. Transformation is becoming something that we are not. **Romans 12:2** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...* To be conformed means to be squeezed into the mold of this world. Transformed is to become something that you cannot be on your own as you embrace God's Word and allow His power to change you.

Romans 8:29-30 *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*

- *Predestined...* God in eternity saw our lives and saw everything we ever did and said He chose us. Theology teaches different ideas on predestination. One way to explain it... a sign that leads into Heaven says, "Whosoever will may come." Then after passing through the gate, the other side of the sign says, "Predestined before the foundation of the world."

Called... God calls us and we answer. Some do not answer that call.

Justified... is to line up our lives with His purposes. Jesus justifies us.

Glorified... **John 17:22** *The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one...* The glory of God, His mark in us, is what draws people to God. Transformation is the glorious goal of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's intention was to transform man by the glorious sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. From the moment of sin in the garden, all the way to the cross, to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, God's intention was to transform man through His Son.

Psalms 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* The heart of man cries out to God. We can't do it on our own and we need God to do something that we cannot do or earn.

Ezekiel 36:26 *Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* They had no power until Jesus came with the transforming power of grace. **John 20** Jesus appeared to the disciples and He breathed on them the Holy Spirit of God. The life-giving Spirit of Promise began and continues into today.

Pray that the Holy Spirit's great love will clear a path for each of us to hear God's voice and obey.

The landscape of the church has changed with this pandemic. Many do not intend to return to in-person worship after the pandemic ends. Though unwelcome, the church is different - we are transforming.

Caesarea Philippi is the place in **Matthew 16** where Jesus takes His disciples - a Roman city dedicated to a Roman emperor that they thought to be a god. He takes them to a huge rock and place called the "gate of hell" - a place of the worst and most vile idol worship.

Matthew 16:13-16 *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."... Verse 18 I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."*

The name "Peter" (Petros) means important, usable, solid stone. *Upon this rock* (petra) means a solid, immovable stone. At this place of idol worship, Caesarea Philippi is the place where God will begin to build a people, called by His name, empowered by the same Holy Spirit that raises the dead and brings new life. The keys, the authority of the kingdom of God, is given and is the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

The question... will you be part of God's team? Look at **Verse 18**...

- *I will build.* Jesus builds a dynamic, living church - it's always transforming.
- *Upon this rock.* In the midst of mankind's depravity, in the world's sin and mess, dysfunction, and disagreements is where the grace of God may be found and carried by the church of Jesus Christ.
- *My church.* Jesus calls His church to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. **Isaiah 42:8** *I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to idols.* The word "ekklesia" means an assembly of like-minded people of common passion. In defining the church, it's this group of people, not a building.

When we fall away or drift from that calling of sharing this common passion, then we should gather and remind ourselves of what God has called us to be (giving up our own desires and preferences)... so that we can preach the good news to this world with authority and power. The ekklesia, the people of God, are a dynamic representation of God's plan to transform. It's God's desire and purposes - not our own - His glory to His church.

Ephesians 5:27 *That He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.* Jesus intends that His glory is given to the church to look like Him and be like Him.

Transformation. The church is transforming (not morphing or adjusting) into what God needs going forward to become the weapon of God's choice to beat back the gates of hell and usher in the second coming of Jesus Christ.

John 7:38 *The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'* From the place of terrible destruction at the actual Caesarea Philippi's "gates of hell" flows the Jordan River - a lush spring of fresh, living water. If you hear His voice, go to the living water. He promises new life to those who ask.

What did you learn from the photos and actual place and rock at Caesarea Philippi?

Does your life need to be transformed? to break any cycles of disaster?

What has changed in your understanding of "*upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it*"?