

The Primary Mark of Spiritual Transformation

by Hieromonk Damascene

The primary mark of spiritual transformation is love, which is the bond of authentic spiritual love, empowered by Grace.

Scripture: John 13:35, Romans 12:9-21, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Transformation"

Description

Hieromonk Damascene preaches on the marks of transformation in a Christian, as outlined by St. Paul in Romans 12. These marks include showing mercy with cheerfulness, genuine love, kindness, humility, diligence, fervent spirit, rejoicing in hope, patience in tribulation, and overcoming evil with good. The essence of spiritual transformation lies in the ability to love authentically, moving away from self-centeredness towards a focus on God and others, as exemplified by the teachings of Fr. Isaaky and Archimandrite Sophrony.

Transcript

Now, having looked at the nature of spiritual transformation and the way to that transformation, let us examine more closely the marks of transformation in a Christian.

We have already discussed in some detail the first two verses of Romans, chapter 12. St. Paul devotes the remainder of this chapter precisely to the marks of transformation. Continuing his exhortation, he tells us what we are to be transformed into. He tells us we are to show mercy with cheerfulness, to let love be without hypocrisy, to be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Then the Apostle goes on to say: Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Set not your mind on high things, but associate with the lowly. Be not wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.... Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:8-18, 21).

What a profound and beautiful blueprint of the Christian life! It is the blueprint of a life not conformed to this world, but transformed and renewed in Christ. Each point in St. Paul's exhortation deserves a discourse of its own, but here I will only discuss all the points generally. What is it that all of them have in common? Clearly, it is that we are to have love for one another, and even for our enemies. St. Paul is only

expounding on the great commandments of Christ.

The most essential mark of spiritual transformation is that we have love. Our Lord tells us: By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:35).

In November of 2002, a friend of ours--Abbot Jonah of the Monastery of St. John in Point Reyes, California--visited Valaam Monastery in northern Russia. While on Valaam, Fr. Jonah had a wonderful conversation with a hermit, Fr. Isaaky, on a small island off the main Valaam island. Fr. Jonah asked Fr. Isaaky about how we grow to spiritual maturity: in other words, how we are transformed in Christ. In answering this question, Fr. Isaaky drew from the teaching of Archimandrite Sophrony, which he had obviously internalized and which he now lived out in practice. Here I would like to quote from Fr. Isaaky's words, which Fr. Jonah recorded in the journal *Divine Ascent*, because they go to the heart of spiritual transformation. For Fr. Isaaky, as for St. Paul, transformation means being able to love in the most authentic way.

"At the beginning of our spiritual journey," Fr. Isaaky said, "when we are spiritually immature, our entire religious attitude is ego- centered, emotional, and rational. The deeper level of awareness, the noetic consciousness [that is, the consciousness of the nous], has not yet been fully opened. We are our egos, defined by our passions. We are far from being authentic persons because we are caught up in our isolated individualism. [But] as we grow, and gain more control over our passions, and our souls become purified, Grace illumines our noetic consciousness. We become more aware of God-s presence, and more aware of the other. We move away from self-centeredness. The focus of our attention is on God. As this happens, our own personal 'I' expands and encompasses others, so that we cannot conceive of ourselves in isolation from God and our brothers. This is the bond of authentic spiritual love, empowered by Grace. The more we grow in this noetic consciousness, the more our love embraces all of those around us. We pray from the heart for them, and for the whole world. We are purified by Grace, so that we can authentically love in a purely unselfish way. This is the essence of what it means to be a Christian: to authentically love.

"By truly loving God and our neighbor--we are purified, illumined, and deified. We are restored from our fallen state, from our ego/self-centeredness, and from the tyranny of our rational and emotional consciousness. The passions come under control, subordinated to the love of the Other. We become purified of all that focuses us on ourselves and of all barriers to love." [17]

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/hieromonk-damascene/the-primary-mark-of-spiritual-transformation/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net