



Newsletter

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The Appearance of a Refining Christian

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I am going to talk about my beard again – different story though.

I shaved my beard off on a Friday and I drove all day to pick up Liz and Jack in Wheeling, West Virginia and bring them home. I spent most of Saturday morning helping Liz around the house and then I decided to go to the gym. The section of the gym that has the free-weights is surrounded, wall to wall, with mirrors. There is no way getting around looking at yourself while you are working out. Typically I don't care for the mirrors but that day, I was pleased they were there.

I had just put the dumb-bells away and I stopped, cocked my head, gave a slight closed-mouth smile, and said "there you are".

It sounds very odd, but for a day and a half I couldn't see myself; I honestly could not recognize myself. I had only had the beard for a month and a half but I grew accustomed to seeing it as a part of my face – and when it was gone...it changed my appearance drastically.

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

I have been trying to process, in my own life, the phrase "transformed by the renewing of your mind" for a few days now. I have been trying to challenge myself with this thought: I altered my appearance by changing an outward characteristic, but have I altered my appearance lately by changing an inward characteristic?

I believe there are times we get so comfortable with the way we look we don't want to change it anymore. We say things like, "I know what I believe" or "what I am doing works for me". The real question is, does it work for God? Our growth cannot depend upon how we feel, what we want to look like, or even what we know thus far. We should have a desire to always want to know and do more.

If we were to present our bodies to God today and present them as a living and holy sacrifice, would they be acceptable? Do you have the same body, mind, and heart that you had a year ago, or has it grown? What do you look like on the inside and is it manifesting itself on the outside?

As Christians, spiritual growth is expected. Spiritual growth begins the moment a person comes to faith in Christ and should continue until a person enters Christ's presence after this life. Peter urges his readers by saying, *"Make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8).*