

**Friday, September 25, 2020**

**SERIES: GROWING AND GOING**

**SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD**

**TITLE: An Interview with Michael Frisina Pt.2**

**Now, let's go to Pastor Nat and his guest, author Dr. Michael Frisina, about his thoughts on Christian transformation, and his book *Metamorphosis: Why Christians Don't Change*:**

NC: Today I am excited, because I've got a special guest - my friend, speaker, author, and founder of The Frisina Group, Dr. Michael Frisina. Michael, thank you for coming on the show today.

MF: Sure Nat. Thank you. It's a real pleasure. God bless you. So great to see you looking so well.

NC: I appreciate it – you too. Well right now, I'm working through the book of Galatians for our Back to the Bible radio show. And it dawned on me, there's a difference between *being* free, right - kind of a theme of Galatians: being free - but then there's a disconnect sometimes, with *living* as free, right. We can be free, but not live that way. And I think that's ultimately what you're talking about - Being saved, but not reflecting that in our behavior. So I'm just curious from your perspective, and what you found by writing this book, why should Christians change, and what prevents them from doing so?

MF: The fundamental obligation for why a Christian should change, is missing out on the blessings of what God wants to give. God created us for His good pleasure. God wants to bless us. God has a greater desire to bless you as a believer, than your desire to be blessed. [Ah, wow.] And if we could understand, and we could put things in a right perspective - you know, people pray, “Lord, I need a job,” or “Lord, I need good health”, or “Lord, I need this”, “Lord, I need to heal this relationship”. And they pray in a form of desperation, as though somehow if they just had the secret sauce of prayer, then they could get God's ear, and then God would answer the prayer, and bless them. What they need to understand is, God has a greater desire to bless them, than their desire to be blessed.

But there's a requirement on our part. You know, if you go to Second Peter, and look in Second Peter, he tells the believers there - he said, “I know you're saved”. He had no doubt about the sense of justification - our theological terms, right - being saved. Then he said, “But you've got to add to your faith, these things”. In other words, there's work that we're required to do – not to be saved– but work that is evidence of the growth of our salvation, into our sanctification, holiness process.

And fundamentally, I think there's been just so much bad teaching through the last 30 years or so, where people who have large exposure, with large ministries, have been teaching Biblical

fallacy - that somehow God is a super-sanctified Santa Claus, that's obligated to make sure that you're healthy, that you're wealthy, that you never struggle, that you know - and it's a heresy of Biblical doctrine.

And it goes to the Parable of the Sower, and the seed, where there's four soils. And it's the third soil that we get the answer to this question. The tares, right - the false wheat - grows up with the legitimate wheat. And it looks just like the legitimate wheat, except there's no fruit. And then there's a reason why there's no fruit. The tare is still concerned - and this is metaphor, right - a believer - who's made a profession of faith, but hasn't made this metamorphosis transformation into holiness, is struggling with one of three things or a combination of all three - the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire of other things. There hasn't been teaching that salvation comes with a cost. And that cost is the forsaking of the things of the world, to connect to, and to strive to, receive the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I use a metaphor: If you could have committed murder, and were convicted of murder, and you were on death row - and I was the governor, and I commuted your sentence, and I gave you a full pardon, and just expunged this crime - so that if you went out on the internet, and looked you up on the internet, and did a criminal background search - you wouldn't even find that catalogued somewhere on the internet. It would be completely expunged, okay? So the guards come down - the Green Mile, this is called - they open up your cell, and they tell you you're free to go. And somehow, over the amount of time that you've spent in that solitary loneliness, the bondage of that prison cell, you've become accustomed to the comfort of that cell. So with the door wide open to freedom, you choose to stay on death row. And the guard finally says, "Well, okay, look, you're free to go. And I've got other work to do. Anytime you want to leave, just come out and you can go". And Paul talks about the idea again, of the liberty of a believer having been saved: it's not the freedom *to* sin; it's the freedom *from* sin.

Again, there are just foundational, fundamental principles - spiritual growth and development - that many, many, many pastors and churches have just neglected to teach. And so, we have people who, "I love Jesus. I want to serve Jesus. I want the blessings of it". And they don't understand that they're either keeping themselves in a self-contained prison cell of bondage, or they have yet to give up the participation of desires of the things of this world, deceitfulness of riches, caring for other things.

And so they haven't gone through this mental transformation that Paul talks about in Romans 12: The power of the Holy Spirit to renew our mind, to change our thinking, to change our emotions, to change our habits, to change our behavior - and that's a progress in which we have to participate.

We have to do the work in those areas, as Peter exhorts believers to do in Second Peter [1:5]: To your faith add virtue - moral excellence. My goodness, then how lazy it is to just dabble with sin, and allow a sexual sin, or a pride sin, or a gossip sin, or a glutton sin to come back in your life, and say, "Well, God understands. And so I'll just ask for forgiveness again." Yes, He can forgive you. But my goodness, what a lower level of spiritual growth and development that is - to just live off the crumbs of the table - when the Lord has prepared a banquet feast for you, if you are willing to come in. [Right]. That's the book. That's the premise, that's the main core of this element of ministry.

NC: There's something you said earlier - you talked about lordship and salvation, and what I've come to discover as a pastor - and probably you've discovered this as well - is a lot of Christians today, they've been - I guess - fed the wrong Kool-Aid, right - the wrong Gospel. "Hey, the Gospel says health, wealth and prosperity". "The Gospel says, Hey, grace abounds, so go sin." "Hey, guess what? The Gospel says it's the simplicity of the Gospel, plus some extra works." In other words, we've been taught a false Gospel, and it completely wrecks our mind and our thinking. And so our behavior doesn't change. So I'm curious, I've heard you speak a lot about this notion of how our thinking impacts our beliefs, which impacts our behavior. How does the Word of God influence that process?

MF: Great question. So, you know, the Bible talks about striving to enter into that narrow gate, right? So there's a clear sense in which I have to be actively participating, and disciplining myself, into daily rituals that ensure that I keep abiding in Christ. Remember, we're a branch that's been grafted in. If you can graft the branch in, you can graft the branch out - you can cut a branch off. And so, you know, this goes to the age old idea of the phrase, "once saved - always saved". "I prayed a prayer, confessing my heart to Jesus. And so now I have eternal security. I'm always going to be saved", you know. And there are verses of Scripture that seem to support that. And there are verses of Scripture that seem to say, "You are saved by God's grace through faith." And there's an abiding nature, where every day, there's a re-commitment to that relationship, and that abiding relationship.

So there's a process that you can create as a habit. And that habit then becomes a daily ritual - where you wake up in the morning, and you're thankful, and give God gratitude, and thankful that you have another day to live your life on this Earth.

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### **Now let's return to Pastor Nat Crawford and special guest, Michael Frisina:**

Look, if we were going to make our body really healthy, and you were to hire an exercise physiology coach, the first place they start working is on your core. So, we go to the core spiritually - what are the core principles? What are the core values that you're going to incorporate into your life? What are you fundamentally going to believe about what the Scripture says you need to be doing as a believer - both to become saved, and then what you're supposed to do after you're saved? And Paul spends a good deal of time on both of those. It isn't an either/or; it's an "and". You know, he said you were Gentiles. You were lost, with no hope, until the mystery of God was revealed - that salvation was for the Gentile too. And so the circumcision isn't the physical outward circumcision of the cutting of the skin - and it is a metaphorical circumcision - where you die to self, self-desires, self-wants, self-ambition. You've cut that flesh man to death, so you can rise and walk in a newness of life in Christ.

Now who's teaching that message today? Turn on any television ministry, and go through the litany of Christian television, cable stations, and YouTube ministry stations. What Gospel are you hearing? Are you hearing a Gospel of repentance? Are you hearing a Gospel of redemption? Are you hearing a Gospel of - walk worthy of Christ within you? Are you hearing a Gospel of holiness? No. You don't hear that. And if you do, it's just very rare - and it's a snippet - somewhere muddled in-between something that's supposed to make you happy. And then we take the offering, and we're done.

And so, we're faced with a challenge of the spiritual truth that develops in you - that you commit to, that you practice every day. So you get up every day, having created this desire to connect with the Holy Spirit, to be led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to the disciples in John 14, "I'm going away, but don't worry. I'm going to send *another* to you." The Greek word for "another" is *allon*, and it means identical. So if you had rented a luxury car, and you go to pick it up, and you're expecting a Beemer, or BMW, or something, and they show you a Ford Escort, you'd say, "Wait a minute - this isn't the car I deserve. Like, I mean, it's got four tires, and it's got the wheel. It's got an engine, but this isn't like what I was expecting". When Jesus used the word *allon* for the Holy Spirit, it's also what gives the Holy Spirit presence and identity in the Godhead. If the Holy Spirit is just like Jesus, and Jesus is God, the Holy Spirit has to be God too.

And sadly, today too, we don't have a lot of consistent, accurate Biblical teaching about the Holy Spirit. Some denominations don't want to talk about the Holy Spirit at all. Some denominations want to talk that the power of the Holy Spirit to transform your life was a first century dynamic. And now we have the Scripture, and we only need the Scripture, and we don't need the Holy Spirit anymore, you know. So again, we don't have a consistency of a solid Biblical basis of understanding how to live my life in metamorphosis - how to live my life transformed. And it starts with you understanding as a believer, that there is work that you do daily. You commit to that work daily. You walk worthy as a saint - the calling of Christ in you daily.

So that means you're reading your Word. You're fellowshiping with believers. You are putting to death the flesh - this old man that Paul talks about - you're putting on the new man. Again, he writes about this in Ephesians very clearly, about the separation, about death to the flesh, dying to self, rising and walking in the newness of life, in this resurrected, transformed metamorphic state. And then he tells you specifically what you're supposed to do.

So we get these beautiful passages in Ephesians, where he goes through all these personal relationship dynamics: Husbands love your wife as Christ loved the church - go ahead and preach that today and find out how popular that message is. Go ahead guy - die to yourself; love your wife as Christ would love her. What would Christ be like? What would life be like for your wife if she was married to Jesus, instead of being married to you? Parents, don't provoke your children to anger. Parents, you know, raise your children up, and children - how about being obedient and honoring your parents? Because it's a commandment that comes with a promise, you know. And then this was a really heavy one, right? Masters/slave owners - real slave owners to real slaves - masters - how to treat your slaves; slaves - how to be faithful and obedient to your slave owner/master.

I mean, this is transformational stuff. This is radical stuff. And where do we hear it today? Who's teaching this today? And then we wonder why Christians make a profession of faith: They go forward, they pray a prayer. They go and get baptized. And then, poof with a magic wand and pixie dust - life is supposed to be magical and transformational. And there's no effort of connecting to the Scripture and practicing the Scripture.

What makes this life - as this question gets to the point to - I now live in freedom. I live in liberty, but I live in the blessing of God. I also live in a mind that's open to allow God to bring anything into my life - that's filtered through His will for my life. And if it's a part of that is going to be trials, and difficulties, and illness, and a loss of a job, and a brokenness of a relationship - then if God can keep me from these things - which He has in my life. Like there

have been a host of other trials that have come into my life. I don't want anybody to think that I've lived a rose-colored life. We had a Prodigal Son walk out of our life for four years. We didn't know where he was. We didn't know if he was alive. We're going out to church one Sunday night at about 6:30 and the front doorbell rang. So I had to come from the back of the house, where the garage was, to the front of the house. I opened the door. There's this filthy, dirty, smelly, bearded, haggard, older-looking man. And as soon as I opened the door, I mean this smell just caught me. And in the midst of that, he said, "Dad, if you still love me, will you help me? Because I think if you don't help me tonight, I'm going to die." And that was a realization that my son was standing in front of me. [Wow].

My wife has been through a life-threatening illness, and a cancer, and a cancer recovery. I had a cancer, and am a cancer survivor. We had military deployments. My wife prayed several times through this - the word of knowledge of the Holy Spirit that I was in trouble. And we were able to reconnect. And this was prior to the internet, so you had to make long distance calls. And she said, "You know, I felt a need to pray for you on this particular day at this particular time, where you were in the time zone - were you in trouble?" And I said, "Yes." And literally prayed me safe through what could have been life-ending - the situations with the military.

And so, you know, He sees you from these things, or He sees you through them, but He is always faithful. And when we go through the trial, and we come through the other side - if part of it is for our growth, and our resiliency, and our toughness - but it also gives us the ability to witness into the lives of people who are hurting, and say with great legitimacy, "I know what you're feeling. I've been there." And then real ministry happens in the empathic compassion of the working Spirit. And we have legitimacy to talk to hurting, broken people, because we've experienced that same thing. [Wow].

I know you've experienced with serious illness with a child, and there can't be anything more hurting for a parent than to have to just suffer through. And we had a son, where we labored at the bedside of an ICU with him - septic and dying, and at 14 years old - and just praying feverishly at the bedside, "Lord, if you're going to take him- Thy will be done. If you're going to give Him back to us, you know, Thy will be done." And the Lord was gracious, and He gave him back to us. So, you know, I know where you've been, and I know where you still are. And so God bless you in that as well.

NC: Well, thank you brother. Well, unfortunately, our time is up, but I just want to kind of summarize this all. I mean, again, if you're watching this, or listening to it, and you have not picked up this book *Metamorphosis*, I would encourage you to, because this is a real problem today. So many people are experiencing Jesus Christ, but something is amiss, and you're not taking those steps to grow in your faith. You're not taking the steps to really change, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform you. You're not renewing your mind daily. And Dr. Frisina has said this so eloquently here, and in other places - what we think about dramatically impacts what we believe, and what we ultimately believe, will impact how we live, and how we behave. And that's why this makes such a difference - because Jesus Christ came not just to save your soul, but to change your life.

The world will see the difference that Christ has made. Perfection? Never. We all struggle with sin, but I promise you, God has something great for you. But we have to be willing to go through the struggle, just like the butterfly has to struggle through and break out of that cocoon, so his

wings can spread and fly. And then people say, “Wow, look at that.” That's what God does with us. He transforms us from sinners to saints; from corpses to masterpieces. And He says, “Wow”. And when we do that, the world will say, “Wow”, as well.

Michael, there are people who are going to say, “Okay, great. I want to get the book. I want to learn more about Michael”. Where do they go? Where do they get a book? And where do they find out more about what you are doing with The Frisina Group?

MF: Sure. Amazon has copies – easy to obtain. There also - there's an e-book version, on Amazon, and Kindle, and Apple Books as well.

And the other thing I want to leave folks with is - Look, God has said already that He has perfected us. And Paul said, *I'm not yet what I am to be*, right. So there was this constant sense of the journey - working toward becoming - you know, what God has for us - but in potential, we're already there. We just have to go through the change process - just like the butterfly does to get to this place. And it's real, and you can do it. And there are ways in which you can live with essential joy and peace, that I know so many Christians are desiring and feel lacking in right now, but it all starts - as Nat just said - nothing changes until your thinking changes. You need to pray and ask the Lord - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - to help you change whatever thinking is still tied to the things of this world, and ask Him to renew your mind. As Paul wrote in Romans 12:1, that you can present yourself then holy, as a living sacrifice, and discover God's gifts that He's given to you, and start putting those gifts into practice and service for others, and developing a heart and a mind of gratitude and thankfulness, which is totally contrary to the American culture today - which is a culture dominated with self, and living for self, and getting for self, and I'm not getting mine. And this entitlement lie that Satan is using to destroy our country.

No, the Bible says die to yourself. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and your strength. Love your neighbor as you love yourself - the greatest of the two commandments. Live with a mindset of thankfulness, of gratitude. Go out and do a random act of kindness for a total stranger. All of these things are the strategy and the living tools, that we teach and offer to people - that as they think about them, and their emotions change, and they start practicing them - they cultivate the habits. And then they wake up every day, walking worthy of the calling of Christ within them. They put these strategies to practice every day, in the way they think, and how they ultimately behave. And then life is lived the way Jesus intended for us. He says, “I've come that you have life, and have that life more abundantly”. And I'm offering to all believers today, the opportunity to live in that promise. He has promised you life, and life more abundantly, and it's just there for you to take, because He has a greater desire to bless you, than you desire to be blessed.