

BEING TRANSFORMED INTO HIS (CHRIST'S) LIKENESS

(Part #2)

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE OF THE CHRISTIAN TOWARD GOD WHO HAS SAVED THEM BY HIS GRACE?

Even greater dedication and transformation should be the response of those who have been saved by God's grace. This is God's purpose for cleansing us of our sins. **Ephesians 1:3-8 (NIV)** 3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace** 8 that he **lavished on us** with all wisdom and understanding."

The response of the Christian in relation to the grace of God and His sacrifice for our sins (allowing Christ to take our place and become our sin on the cross (**Romans 8:1-14**) should and must be to continually die to the "old man," **because that is our mindset, that is our goal!** God's grace and sacrifice for our sin should make us all the more determined to put off that old man of sin and put on the new man in Christ Jesus. **Having been released from the bondage of sin, we should not desire to return to it!** The inspired apostle John explains all this in **1 John 3:5-9 (NIV)**, 5 "But you know that he appeared so that **he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. 6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning**" (That is, **does not walk in sin [R.P.]. "No one who continues" to sin** (That is keeps walking in sin [R.P.]) **has neither seen him or known him.** 7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. **He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 He who does" (continues to do)" what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin"** (Practice or walk in sin [R.P.]), **"because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God"**. Even though we commit sin, we have been **made righteous by Christ** (**1 Corinthians 1:30 (NIV)** 30 "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, **who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption**". We must remember that Christ has **made us righteous by substituting His blood as a sacrifice for us**. Our debt is fully paid when He washes us with his blood in baptism (**Colossians 2:11-13**).

If He has **made us righteous** (through His sacrifice and our faith and obedience in accepting that gift) according to God's will and purpose, there is nothing anyone or anything can do to change that! (**Romans 8:31-39**). We are assured that nothing and no one can take us away from Him – **John 10:28-29 (NIV)** 28 "**I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand**".

Keep in mind, it is not through our goodness or works (**Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 4:1-25**), but through His grace in providing Christ as our sacrifice for sin that we are saved! **Abraham was justified by faith** even before the Law of Moses was given (**Romans 4:1-25**). **David spoke of the man whose sin would never be held against him**) and this was after the Law of Moses had been given and before the New Covenant had been given (**Psalms**

32:1-2, 5, repeated in Romans 4:7-9)! This was in the mind of God before the world began. God had, in His eternal purpose, taken care of our sin problem in Christ before the world even had its beginning! **Ephesians 1:3-4 (NIV)** 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. 11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory”.

Everyone is saved the same way because God predestined it in Christ before the beginning of time. It is according to His plan and eternal will (**Ephesians 1:11** above).

CHRISTIANS MUST NOT GIVE UP!

WHEN THEY FAIL – JUST REPENT AND ASK GOD’S HELP.

TRIALS AND HARDSHIPS ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH.

The person who has truly repented, confessed, and submitted to baptism in order that their sins be taken away (**Acts 2:36-38, 41; 22:16; Romans 6:3-7; Colossians 2:11-13**), will not give up; They will not be easily discouraged and give in because they know that God has power to help them (**Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)** 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us; **Philippians 3:21 (NIV)** 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”) True followers have, as their goal in life, to do what is right (**1 John 3:6-9**)! If they sin, they will acknowledge it and repent, asking God to forgive them (**1 John 1:9**) and strengthen them! ***They will recognize that all the trials, temptations, and shortcomings are evidences of the spiritual warfare that is mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-18.*** A good thing to remember is, “If you mess up – Fess up.”

God has a growth process for us to go through. Like a child, we do not become full-grown the minute we become a Christian. A transformation takes place (**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)** 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!.” But growth comes as we are faced with temptations, which we overcome, and trials, which we work through with God’s help (**James 1:2-8, 12; Romans 5:2-11**). The apostle Paul speaks of this transformation in **2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)** when he, by inspiration, says, 18 “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” Paul was referring, in this context, to those who were coming out

of Judaism. They had been practicing the Law of Moses and found it difficult to let it go at times. They were now under the New Covenant, which Christ came to establish and in which, we will all be saved. (2 Corinthians 3:7-18; Hebrews 8:8-13; 9:15; 12:24).

Christ saved us from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10-13 [breaking the Law brought condemnation and therefore was a curse], **but being in Christ brings justification, forgiveness, Galatians 3:21-28; Romans 3:24-30**). Christ releases us from the curse of the Law (which condemned us because of sin) and we are **being transformed into his likeness daily** as we surrender to Christ. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-10), not by Law keeping (Romans 3:9-20; Galatians 2:16). **Grace allows us to be transformed into Christ's likeness and this takes time.**

We are saved when we obey the gospel (Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:14) and we **continue to be saved** as we are being transformed into Christ's likeness day by day. When we see that we have sinned we repent and confess it. We do not try to give the impression that we have not sinned for then we would be liars, 1 John 1:6-10 (NIV) 6 "If we claim to have fellowship with him yet **walk in the darkness, we lie** and do not live by the truth. 7 But **if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.** 8 **If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.** 9 **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.** 10 **If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word has no place in our lives.**

It should disappoint us when we sin but it should not by any means destroy our faith! Christ's blood continues to cleans us of our sins as we walk in the light.

All the trials that come our way serve to make us stronger. Note what James says about trials in James 1:2-8 (NIV) 2 "**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,** 3 **because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.** 4 **Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.** 5 **If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.** 6 But **when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.** 7 **That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;** 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does." What then are the purpose of trials? **To transform us into the image of Christ! We remain saved all through the trials!**

Paul agrees with James (since they were both inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the things they did). Paul assures us that the trials that come our way mature us, transform us into the image of Christ and that we are saved all the time we are going through the trials. Romans 5:1-11 (NIV) 1 **Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,** 2 **through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.** 3 **Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;** 4 **perseverance, character; and character, hope.** 5 **And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.** 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 **But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** 9 **Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!** 10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we

were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 **Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

Trials and temptations are not sin. Sin takes place when we give in to the trial or temptation. (James 1:12-15 (NIV) 12 “**Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.** 13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but **each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death**”. Jesus was tempted in all things like we are and yet He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15 (NIV) 15 “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but **we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are —yet was without sin**”).

Transformation is a beautiful thing although it can be quite trying on the one being transformed. **Complete transformation** does not happen immediately but over a period of time, otherwise we would not be told that we are **being transformed**. The ugly caterpillar does not turn into a beautiful butterfly immediately. First it weaves a web around itself and changes to a “pupae,” attaching it to a bush, tree or some branch. During the time the caterpillar is in this state it is still alive but in a state of change. If you look at the pupae you can sometimes see it move. One day the caterpillar emerges in a different form altogether. You would not recognize it as a caterpillar ever! It is a beautiful butterfly with colorful wings and after drying out, it flies away. It is not through with its journey in life. It still has other things to accomplish.

John the revelator by inspiration wrote, “...**be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.**” (Revelation 2:10)