

A TRANSFORMED LIFE

INTRODUCTION

While I'm away in my time of separation, I like to choose a book to read. I find that often the Lord speaks to me through that book as I seek His vision and direction for the church and for my own life. In fact, the statement "a church of Irresistible Influence", included in our vision statement comes from a book named "The church of Irresistible Influence" which I read in my first time of separation.

This week, I felt led to read a book titled "Every man's battle". I found it in CUM while away. It addresses the real challenge faced by men regarding sexual temptation just by being men and also as a result of the sexual images that we are bombarded with from the media, internet, television and movies and even from the people we see in our day-to-day life, and it gives men keys to get victory over such temptation and the resulting sin.

Why would this impact a message that I'm preaching to the entire church? Surely it's just for men? There are some statements in the book that made me realise that not only men, but men, woman, young and old, need to consider. While we may be under the impression that we are living right before God, is it possible that we have been lulled into accepting a watered-down type of Christianity? A Christianity, that has been combined with what is socially acceptable to our culture but is far from God's expected standards for our lives. Is it possible that many in the church are lukewarm as is described by Jesus in Revelation 3:16? Revelation 3:15-16 (NKJV) "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. This speaks of only PARTIAL TRANSFORMATION not FULL TRANSFORMATION after being born-again.

Today we will look at the following:

- What does it mean to live a transformed life?
- What is God's standard and what must we do to get victory and start living a transformed life that lines up with God's standards?
- Do our standards currently measure up?

MESSAGE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE A TRANSFORMED LIFE?

A very well-known scripture describes the transformed life to us:

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

When we are born-again two things need to happen:

- We must be done with the old things – the old life and its sinful habits.
- Everything must become new – There must be a real change as we start reflecting the character of Christ.

Let's look at a more detailed version of the same verse from the Amplified Bible: **2 Corinthians 5:17** (AMP) Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life].

So a transformed life speaks of a spiritual awakening which results in a change from our previous moral and spiritual condition – this is a miracle, we can't change to be like this on our own – it's the Holy Spirit who brings about this renewal and transformation.

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul says this about the transformed life:

Ephesians 4:22-24 (NKJV) that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

And in Romans 12, he encourages us: **Romans 12:2** (NKJV) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So the transformed life is a total change, we don't do the things we used to do, we don't speak the way we used to speak and we don't think the way we used to think.

One of the statements from the book I've just read says this: "Speaking *the Christian language*, and living *the Christian truth* are two very different things".

Are we truly living a transformed life? Is there a change that everyone can see, or have we drifted into a partial change, looking on the outside like a Christian, but not all our behaviour, speech and thinking has changed?

WHAT IS GOD'S STANDARD

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NKJV)

Living Before God Our Father

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

- God's standard is that we have a holy mind.
- God's standard is that we are obedient children.
- God's standard is that we don't conform ourselves to our former lusts – we now know better!

Peter summarises it in these words, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Being excellent is not enough

One section of the book I read dealt with what the world's standards of excellence look like. They use the example of business: Businesses ask this question all the time, "perfection is simply too costly and eats into profits", "they ask, how far can we go and still seem excellent (perfect)". "By stopping short of perfection, they find a profitable balance between quality and costs".

But if we do that with our Christian walk, how far can we stray from God's word before our sense of godliness, or excellence, is disobedience?

How much holiness is enough?

- Is it good enough to try our best?
- Is it good enough to just be obedient and godly when others are watching?
- What will it take to satisfy God's standards of a transformed life?

Total obedience is what is required!

Jesus laid out the standard: **Matthew 5:48** (NKJV) Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

PERFECT! How on earth can we be perfect?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works

- As we study the Bible and start living out it's truth, it will transform us and bring us to a place where we are becoming more and more like Christ, and He is perfect, therefore, we should no longer strive towards excellence, we should strive towards PERFECTION!
- **John 14:15-17a** (NKJV) "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth,

We have God's Word and His indwelling Holy Spirit that will help us in our journey of transformation into His image. We can become perfect!

Are we willing to accept God's challenge to move from what we think is acceptable behaviour and living, to a place or perfection – total obedience to God's word?

DO OUR CURRENT STANDARDS MEASURE UP?

I'm going to refer back to the book, "Every Man's Battle" which deals with men's sexual purity towards their wives. While I deal with men's sexual sin, ladies, men, old and young can all apply these principles to every area of sin as we ask ourselves this question, "Am I being holy as God is holy?"

Let's look at 3 scriptures regarding sexual purity:

Matthew 5:28 (NKJV) But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Ephesians 5:3-4 (AMP) But sexual immorality and all [moral] impurity [indecent, offensive behavior] or greed must not even be hinted at among you, as is proper among saints [for as believers our way of life, whether in public or in private, reflects the validity of our faith]. 4 Let there be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse [obscene or vulgar] joking, because such things are not appropriate [for believers]; but instead speak of your thankfulness [to God].

Revelation 2:20 (AMP) But I have this [charge] against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess [claiming to be inspired], and she teaches and misleads My bond-servants so that they commit [acts of sexual] immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols.

- Men, are we looking at women and having sexual thoughts?
- Is there even a hint of sexuality, flirting, dirty thoughts or speaking among us?
- What are we tolerating on TV, the internet, movies, radio and social media? Are there sexual nuances that we are enjoying?

LADIES – maybe I can ask you the same question – men seem to struggle more with this, but women are not immune!

Nearly every book of the New Testament commands us to avoid sexual impurity. Are we living in TOTAL obedience?

Men, any of these behaviors is not only a sin against God, but they are also a form of unfaithfulness to our wives! Our sexual desire is meant to be directed to them and not to all the other sources of sexual stimulation.

Men, is our wife the soul source of our sexual gratification? If not, we are in hot water!

The problem is that we have mixed the world's standards of what's acceptable with God's standards!

Let me broaden this discussion to other types of sin:

- ***Do we sometimes gossip about others?***
- ***Do we covet what other people have?***
- ***Do we lie, cheat or steal? What about streaming pirated movies on the internet that are copies of the original? Is that okay cause everyone does it?***

CONCLUSION

Our lives need to change when we are born-again. We need to be diligent and guard our hearts and minds against compromising God's standards.

- Total obedience and perfection are what God requires.
- Excellence is not enough!
- Mixing man's standards and God's standards is not good enough!

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH IT IF WE ARE GETTING IT WRONG?

If we ask God as David did, "**Psalm 139:23-24a** (NKJV) Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me...."

- What would God's answer be?
- Would we fall short?

How do we sort it out?

- We start by making a personal decision to live in total obedience.
- We get help from God by studying His word and with the help of His indwelling Holy Spirit.
- We confess, repent and renounce – Psalm 51 would be a good place to start – "Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew a right spirit within me".
- We trust God to forgive, renew and restore us – **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And then we start living the true transformed life as the children of God that He wants us to be.