

OH WHAT A CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

As Spring progresses, it's a beautiful picture of new life. We see green shoots everywhere, blossoms on the trees and flowers have begun appearing. The beautiful fragrance of Spring is in the air and it's a wonderful time of year.

God has created such spectacular cycles in nature, out of the dryness, where we have not yet had much rain, beauty is springing up.

This week Cheryl taught her grade R class about another one of nature's beautiful cycles, the life cycle of a butterfly. It moves from egg to caterpillar to pupa to butterfly. Some caterpillars can be quite beautiful, but they are not nearly as beautiful as they are when they finally emerge from the cocoon or pupa stage as a butterfly.

As human beings, we also have a life cycle. From embryo, to baby, then toddler, child, teenager, adult, old age and finally death. But we have a second life cycle, the life cycle of our spirit. Jesus told Nicodemus of a second birth experience, not a birth entailing exiting from our mother's womb again, but a spiritual birth: **John 3:4-5** (NKJV) Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

That born-again experience begins a spiritual life cycle – it's almost like when the caterpillar goes into the cocoon and is closed inside. An amazing miracle of nature takes place and the caterpillar emerges a beautiful butterfly.

This is a spiritual transformation. It's described in **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 encounter Jesus, everything changes. The title of this message describes the change that takes place, it comes from the old song, "O what a change".

MESSAGE

A SPIRITUAL METAMORPHOSIS

The scientific name given when a caterpillar goes through that change to become a butterfly is "metamorphosis".

It comes from three Greek words: "meta", meaning "after" or "something taking place afterwards", and "morph", meaning "change in appearance or character" and "osis", meaning "condition" or "state".

So, in my words, metamorphosis is the state of change in appearance or character that takes place after what happened before.

When we are born-again a type of spiritual metamorphosis begins in our life.

Galatians 4:19 (NKJV) My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,

Here we read that Paul was laboring in birth – birth brings forth new life and the product of this new life is described as "Christ being formed in you,"

At this very moment, every born-again believer has entered the process of Christ being formed in us. The word "formed" comes from the Greek, "morpho" (morphaoh). It comes from the word "morph" that I described earlier meaning a change in appearance or character. The word morpho here speaks to an internal as opposed to an external change.

What a joy to know that Jesus is being formed in us. We are in a process of transformation which is taking the old sinful, hopeless worm that we were and its transforming us into a beautiful reflection of Christ Jesus himself.

Say this with me today, "Jesus is being formed in me".

TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS

2 Corinthians 4:6-7 (NKJV) For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

This amazing scripture builds on the knowledge that Christ is being formed in us! It speaks of light shining out of darkness!

- Our life without Christ was filled with the death and darkness of sin.
- But since the seed of Jesus Christ was planted in us, His light began to shine.
- Where the light is, the darkness must flee.
- What once was dark is now light. His light shines in our hearts – praise the Lord, it's not our light, it's His light!
- As Christ is being formed in us, that light gets brighter and brighter.
- The amazing thing is that we are still the same human being. We have been enveloped in a cocoon of transformation, but our earthly body has not changed, nor has our fleshly nature been removed. We still battle the flesh.

We are still subject to weakness and failure; we are imperfect earthen vessels, and this makes the miracle even greater. Why?

- Because the excellence of the power in us is of God and not of us.

The treasure that we carry is the Gospel Jesus Christ. I would like to take it further. Jesus is the Gospel. The One who is being formed in us is the treasure.

We are in effect, human treasure chests. We carry a treasure whose worth is beyond measure. Jesus spoke about treasure: **Matthew 13:44-46** (NKJV) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The Kingdom of Heaven is ours through Jesus Christ. The One pearl is Jesus. Christ in us is the most valuable treasure we could ever possess.

Jesus Christ in us is our treasure, we, though not perfect, carry Him and we are being formed and transformed to be like Him in character. He is worth giving everything else up for.

As that light within us grows brighter and brighter, it pierces to the outside and we become a picture of Jesus Christ to the world around us, shining forth with His love and His Gospel everywhere we go.

Say with me today, "I am a treasure chest, carrying priceless Treasure".

A BETTER TOMORROW

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

When Christ is being formed in us, we have a better tomorrow. In biblical terms, the latter glory is always better than the former. The butterfly is always better than the caterpillar. This is in many ways a principle of nature. What is being formed must be better.

The moment we are born-again, the glory begins. The light has begun to dispel the darkness. But that light gets brighter and brighter. As we persevere and allow Christ to be formed in us, the transformation progresses from glory to glory. It's getting better and better!

God's word gives much of evidence of this:

- Jeremiah 29:11 tells us we have a future and a hope.

- In Genesis 17:5 we see how God changes Abram to Abraham –“Exalted Father” becomes “The Father of a multitude”.
- In Genesis 17:15, Sarai becomes Sarah. The meaning is almost the same, both mean “Princess”, but God made a covenant with Sarah at the same time and she who was barren became a mother of nations and God said, “kings of peoples shall be from her”. Sarah became a queen in her own right.
- Jabez, who was named, “he will cause pain” was transformed when he prayed a prayer of faith, “that I may not cause pain”, and God granted it to him.
- Jesus renamed Simon to Peter when he was the first to publicly confess Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Christ being formed in him made him a powerful apostle whose mere shadow falling on people resulted in their healing.

We have a new name waiting for us too if we are willing to persevere and overcome the flesh and the sin that relentlessly works to bring us down.

Revelation 2:17 (NKJV) “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’

A new name is linked to a transformation, a change in character, a new life that is filled with the blessings and glory of the presence of Christ who is being formed in us!

Say with me today, “I have a new name waiting for me in glory”.

IT TAKES TIME

Does it sometimes feel like things will never change? Do you remember having silkworms when you were a child. The worm would spin its cocoon and be hidden in there for a period that seemed to go on and on. It only takes three weeks, but for a child that may have felt like forever.

It's the same with the Believer. We want to be perfect overnight, but it takes time for Christ to be formed in us. It will take our whole born-again lifetime.

We need to trust God as He works in our life. He uses people, circumstances and life experiences. He never stops. We may even suffer setback on this journey, but Christ Jesus on the inside is being formed and each day we become a little more like Him. This growing and transforming is ongoing.

Philippians 1:6 (AMPC) And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you.

The work that is taking place continues until the time of Christ's return. Only when we receive our glorified bodies at Christ's return will we be completely perfect, however, the blood of Jesus makes us perfectly forgiven in the eyes of our Heavenly Father even now because it was shed once for all.

Don't give up, don't try to emerge from this time of transformation before you have been perfected. If you try to take a butterfly out of its cocoon before it is ready, it will die, or its wings won't open properly. We can't rush God's work in our life. God is glorified in our lives in His time. Let us trust Him to complete the good work in us in His time too.

If you're struggling right now, there is great hope for you. God will complete the good work that He has begun in us. We will gain perfection if we remain in Him!

Let us state this: "Lord, please complete the work you have begun in me".

CONCLUSION

When people look at us, can they see evidence of this change? Can they see the light of Jesus shining out of our lives? Do they remember back to what we used to be and say, "O what a change"?

Colossians 1:27 Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The definition of faith from Hebrews 11:1 is that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things that are not seen. Hope always speaks of the future. That is why Jesus, whose character we are being formed into is our hope of glory. We will see glory if we are patient. John 3:30 will become a reality in us. As Christ transforms us, He will increase, and we will decrease.

Isn't it wonderful to know that we are going through a Christian metamorphosis? Our old sinful life and nature has been removed and Jesus is being formed within us.

- He is in us, changing us from the inside out.
- We are treasure vessels, carrying Jesus Christ, the greatest treasure of all.
- As we persevere in Him, we have a better tomorrow.
- But metamorphosis takes time, we must be patient. The work only ends when Jesus comes to fetch us. But we have His promise that He will complete the good work that He has started in us.

Until that day, let us not lose hope, let us keep our eyes on Him and let us rejoice in the change that He is bringing about in our lives. Oh, what a change!