



## SHEDDING OUR SKIN\_ (*Keep The Change*)

This morning, I'm continuing in my theme for the new year on transformation which I've entitled "*Keep the Change.*" Last week we considered from 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17-21 that anyone - and I mean **ANY** one - who is in Christ is a **new creation** - but that we are also called to participate in the process of transformation. Though we may be at different phases of the process, we are all "*becoming.*" None of us have yet arrived. I remind you of the example of the "*metamorphosis*" of a butterfly, as that is the precise word Paul uses in Romans 12:1-2 when he writes of the believer's need to be "*transformed.*"

Today, I ask you to contemplate the need in this transformation process for "*shedding our skin.*" You may recall that the caterpillar does this several times before surrounding itself in a cocoon. I cannot help but believe that it is more than coincidence that there is a spiritual parallel found in Ephesians 4:11-24. This text can be found on page 1821 of our pew Bibles. Pay close attention to the Apostle Paul's words.

**11 It was He (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup>From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. <sup>17</sup>So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup>Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. <sup>20</sup>You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. <sup>21</sup>Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

Did you catch the wording? Paul spoke of "*becoming mature*" and "*no longer being infants*" and "*growing up.*" Clearly, the transformation was not complete for them – and neither is it for us. And he specifically told them that they had to "**put off the old self.**" In effect, you cannot be "*a new you*" – until you're ready to be rid of "*the old you.*"

This process is referred to in scripture as **"denying self"** in Mark 8:34, **"not gratifying the cravings of the flesh"** in Ephesians 2:3, and **"crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires"** in Galatians 5:24. Paul goes to great length in Romans 6:1-4 to show that believer's baptism is meant to be a portrayal of one's willingness to **"die to self"** and rise to live a new life.

But, my old self resists. *"I don't want to shed my old skin. I just want a face lift or a tummy tuck. Just get rid of this double chin and drooping eyelids. You can remove the wrinkles, dark circles and age spots. You can improve my vision and hearing so I don't need glasses or hearing aids anymore. You can make me skinny, as long as I get to keep my skin. Just let me pick and choose what I keep and what I let You change."* That may seem reasonable talking to a beautician or even a cosmetic surgeon, but that is nothing short of arrogance when talking to God.

We need to listen to Him about what is to be peeled away. Why? Our perspective is not like His. Isaiah tells us that *"our ways are not like His ways and our thoughts are not like His thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:8) So, **what lies beneath may not be all that "appealing" to us..** Consider this description of what one who is truly shedding their skin might be like...

*As you shed your skin, you'll find that you're not so easily wounded or insulted by being forgotten or neglected due to oversight. You'll find as the layers are peeled away, being criticized, having your desires dismissed, your advice discarded, or your opinions ridiculed don't cause you to defend yourself or be filled with rage. Instead, you take it in stride, realizing it is not of eternal consequence. Shedding your skin results in an ability to patiently put up with people with severe behavior issues, disorders, and shortcomings - whether annoying behavior or lack of sensitivity. You find you can endure wastefulness, foolishness, and spiritual immaturity more like Jesus did. When you shed your skin, you find you can be content with any food, climate, company, clothing, or circumstance. You don't focus on yourself in conversation, look for credit for achievements, or crave men's praise - having learned to be content with remaining anonymous. When you've shed a few layers of skin, you can see others prosper and honestly rejoice with them, without envy or complaint - even if you have deep needs yourself. Freed from the flesh, we can welcome correction and humbly submit to wise instruction without feelings of failure or condemnation.*

Now to us, that may not seem very attractive. But it is growing closer to the new person that God wants for us to be. Listen carefully to Colossians 3:5-10 as the Holy Spirit uses the apostle Paul to speak to this issue in **"Put to death, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these:**



**Anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Don't lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."**

Sounds like I have some skin to shed. How about you?