

SPREADING OUR WINGS_ (Keep The Change)

This is the last lesson in our series on transformation, entitled “*Keep the Change.*” Those of us who are in Christ are new creations (2nd Corinthians 5:17), called to participate in the process of transformation. I remind you of the Apostle Paul’s use in Romans 12:1-2 of the term “*metamorphosis*” when referring to the believer’s need to be “*transformed.*” Though we may be at different phases of the process, we’re all “*becoming.*”

Yet, in Philippians 3:7-16, even Paul admitted that he had not yet fully developed. You can follow along on page 1829 of our pew Bibles. Pay close attention to the Holy Spirit inspired text.

⁷ Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Paul’s focus should be our focus. His goal, our goal. Three times he stresses he is determined to strive for it, using the phrases “*press on*” and “*straining toward*” the prize. And the prize here isn’t what we might think. In context, it’s not heaven - but what he hopes to attain on the way there. He wants to be like Christ, having the personal righteousness that can only be possessed through faith in Him. And according to Ephesians 4:24, it’s what we were created for.

Notice also, his urging to “*live up to what has already been attained.*” No more backsliding. No more losing ground because of whatever attacks, or assaults, or accusations the enemy throws at us. He’s talking about digging in and holding the line of scrimmage. For some of us, that alone would be victory. But, don’t miss this. He’s also talking about gaining yardage – pressing on toward the goal, which isn’t just passing through heaven’s gates. It’s becoming like the One who opened them for us. So, consider once more that metamorphosis of the caterpillar becoming a butterfly.

We are to be changed, transformed to the point when we can “**spread our wings and fly.**” Now, not everything that has wings can fly. Penguins don’t fly. Neither do ostriches. We have this flock of turkeys that have made the neighborhood their habitat. Periodically I see them flap their wings and gain some altitude. They “fly” over our fence next door. They “fly” up and down from roosts in trees. But they don’t fly far...and they don’t get too high off the ground. Some in this crowd may recall an episode of a 70’s sitcom **WKRP Cincinnati** where the station manager assumed that tossing live turkeys out of a helicopter would be a great advertising gimmick. It was a disaster.

I find it interesting that even after wings have formed on the butterfly, and it breaks free from the cocoon, it cannot fly right away. The newly formed muscles that move the wings must be flexed and exercised before it can take flight. Spiritually speaking, I submit to you that we are intended to fly higher and farther than we do. In fact, one of my favorite passages says as much. It’s found in Isaiah 40.

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom. ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. ³⁰ Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; ³¹ but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Did you catch the wording? We’ve seen that we are new creations, created to be like God in true holiness. We are to be transformed through a process of renewal. And by God’s sovereign grace and power, we who hope in Him are to soar. We can reach heights we never thought possible. We can be lifted up from the deepest of pits by the current of God’s Spirit beneath our wings. We can overcome obstacles, and demolish strongholds that have kept us chained to this earth.

You may have bought the lie that you cannot be like Jesus. You may have listened to the accuser tell you that you, of all people, could never live like Him or give like Him or forgive like Him. Think again! If you are a born again believer, you have all you need to become like Jesus, because you have the Spirit of the Living God within you.

Listen to Paul now in Philippians 4:13. It’s a well-known, but often abused, passage. **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”** Paul is not saying that we can become whomever we want to be. In context, he is saying that we can become who God wants us to be. And guess who that is?

We’ve seen repeatedly the answer to that question, but I ask you to open your hearts and listen to the reading of Romans 8:28-39 to reaffirm it once again. Let the Word of the Lord sink in and let the truth of it saturate your spirit. Let your mind be renewed...

²⁸ We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified. ³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: **"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."** ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God wants us to be like His Son Jesus_ and promises that one day we will be! We'll be just like Christ. Meanwhile, I've got some growing to do and some muscles to flex before I can fly as high as He intends. I've not been created anew to crawl along the ground like a slug – and neither were you. By God's grace and power, what we've been created to be is what I am going to be! How about you?

In Revelation 21:5 the Lord says, **"Behold I am making all things new."** Notice He didn't say *"Someday" I will make all things new.* - but that He is working on that renovation project right now. May we participate in the process!