

REPENTING OF WHAT WE ARE

Delivered to a live audience in Summer, 1989.

by Philip Shields

www.LightontheRock.org

.....
Summary: One of my favorite heart-felt messages, delivered to a live audience in CA in 1989 but as current as ever. Use this as part of a pre-baptism or pre-Passover examination of how far we have truly overcome or changed since God called us. We explain how we do what we do because of what we *are*. We have to acknowledge what we *are*, repent and have God give us His new nature before real and permanent change occurs. Why does this make any difference? Repentance will take on a much more personal and much deeper meaning after this message.

**

[Philip's note: I definitely recommend you listen to the audio on this one – but use the notes also because the audio is old and not as clear as brand new messages are. If you'd like your own clearer audio copy from the original cassette, I'd be happy to send you a copy. Just drop me a line. But I feel there was a real connection with the audience and more importantly, with God's spirit on this day. This was delivered live in 1989 while I was a salaried pastor with the church of God, but the message is as current as ever. There's a lot of "give and take" and audience reaction that I can't convey in a transcript or notes. Some comments are moving, others are funny, but you'll get a lot more if you listen to the audio of this sermon while you have the transcript in hand. This is far more true on this sermon than my other sermons, which are not delivered in front of an audience.]

Good morning everyone. The special music that was just performed has a lot to do with my sermon topic today (Comments about the dedication of their choir and time they spend on the choir).

(Humor) I'm a substitute for your pastor today. I told someone one time that as a substitute, I was like a cardboard replacement one might use to temporarily replace a broken window. Not as good as the glass piece, just a cardboard replacement. I must have given a good sermon that day, because one woman came up and said, "You're not a cardboard substitute. You're a *real* pane."

(Other introductory comments; including my family in the area, etc. Some discussion about living in the South – some humor to begin with)

Turn with me now to Revelation 21. (some more off-the-cuff comments).

We're preparing for a new heaven and a new earth, a new millennial reign of Christ, a new order of things. In the first four verses of Revelation 21, all things are being made new. The former things have passed away.

Revelation 21:1-4

Now I saw a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, *for the former things have passed away.*"

Now look at verse 5:

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Verse 7 says if we overcome we shall inherit all things. IF we overcome.

Do we realize that "all things being made new" starts with the people of God being made new – you and me. It starts with Jesus Christ living in you and me.

Are you and I really becoming new? Are we really changing? Are you and I becoming something we have never ever been before? As new as new can be. Not a rehash of the old.

You and I are to be as new as new can be. Something that has never been before. A new life, a new creation. Never used before. Sometimes we think we are to be overhauled. God does not refurbish or overhaul. God "makes new". *Are we becoming new?*

Another way of putting this question is this: are you and *really* converting? Are you and I becoming really converted, or are we just putting on a front and a mask? That's so easy to do. We learn early in life what "the right answers" are, what to do for appearances sake, and not really be changing what we *are*.

Matthew 18:3

"Assuredly, I say to you, *unless you are converted* and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Unless we change into something we weren't before, unless we become new, like little children – we will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. This matter of changing what we ARE, instead of just changing our outward form and appearance, we won't be in God's kingdom. I know I have examined myself as well. We each can "look good on the outside" but what are we really like inside? God looks upon the heart. What are we really like, from the inside out?

That's what we're talking about today. Changing, and being real, from the inside out. Changing what we are.

The redwood trees are giant trees. You have many of them here in central and northern California. Even the giant Sequoia trees are giant trees. If you walk through the parks of these giant trees, there are signs everywhere "Beware of falling trees". As you look up at these skyscraper trees, you have to wonder how they could ever fall down. Then a guide tells you: these trees don't have a deep root system. *They have very shallow roots.*

You and I can be like that. We can be "giants in the church" – deacons, song leaders, ministers, elders, long time members of the church – but have shallow roots. We can look good, and not really be that good.

When we counsel with people- - they often say, "Well, pastor, that's just the way I am. You're asking me to be something I am not. I can't change that".

But we're not talking about the size of their nose or their height. We're talking about character issues; what makes each of us what we are. And so when someone says "that's just the way I am", he/she is really saying "you have to accept me the way I am. *I don't really want to be converted*, I don't really want to change, because I don't think I can change."

That will not do. (Discussion about the conversation with the man on the airplane, a multi-millionaire, who talked about the importance of character)

Luke 13:1-5

There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; ***but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.*** 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Repentance is the foundation of change and real greatness – and becoming new.

This matter of becoming new starts with the death of the self. A lot of try to change what we *do*, without changing what we *are*. Changes will never be real, will never be permanent, if the only change we make is in what we do, without changing what we are. That's the essence of real repentance. We have to let the self die.

The Jar on my Desk

Some time ago I had some battles I was losing with a particular weakness. So I got a jar and filled it with ashes and left it on my desk. I figured that would be about the amount of ash I would be if I ended up in the lake of fire, if I didn't change, if I didn't repent, if I didn't overcome. A half a jar full of ashes. I wrote on that jar, with masking tape, in large letters "ME" and left it on my desk for a week. When I'd pray, I'd say, "Father, if you don't change me and make me something different, I'm just a jar of ashes. I need to be something different. I need to really change. I don't want to just 'look good' or 'sound good'. I want to become really different."

So I'm talking about changing what we really are. And it starts with understanding repentance. We know there are altar calls full of emotion. But true repentance does include a rending, a tearing of the heart (Joel 2:12-13). Feelings *are* involved. Father says, "*rend your heart*, and not just your garments". Has there been a real rending of our hearts when we repent, and cry for mercy – not justice – at God's throne, when we come to see ourselves?

In Peter's day, after His sermon in Acts 2, the audience was moved. Something hurt. They were deeply moved, and asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter told them to repent and be converted [when they would receive God's Spirit]. They had to really change. Prove your sorrow by real change.

An emotional person will show more emotion than an unemotional person. So if you're an unemotional person, don't conclude you haven't repented if you haven't felt as much emotion as an emotional person would. But being sorrowful is not the full story nor is it necessarily the same as being repentant. There is a godly sorrow, but being sorry is not enough. ***Being repentant means new, godly actions follow that true repentance.*** We will still slip up, but our way of life is changing.

We may not ever be perfectly sinless before the resurrection, but *our way of life changes*. We no longer regularly lie, or look at porn, or regularly steal, or cheat on income tax, and rob God of His tithes. Our way of life changes, or there's no real repentance, no real conversion.

David was converted, but he still had some slip-ups. We read of Bathsheba, but we don't read of the same murder/adultery happening over and over. We don't read of Rachel, or Jane, or Isabel. He had some slip-ups. He numbered Israel, glorifying himself. He lied at times. But you don't find him doing those sins over and over as a way of life.

So conversion is a process. But there has to be growth, there has to be newness, or we won't be in God's kingdom. If we're still routinely breaking God's Sabbath, or using His name in vain (which I hear more and more in God's own house the church) – can we say we are changing? If we still abuse our wife, and aren't honoring her and coming to know her, are we changing?

Little Sins and Baby Goliath

One brother in the church once asked me: "I've changed a lot of areas. Am I not allowed to have one 'little sin' or one 'little problem'?" Do we have that attitude sometimes?

We think, "well, I've quit keeping Christmas, I don't eat pork anymore" – you know, the 'big important things' [tongue-in-cheek there], "I'm home more often with my wife and kids – come on, surely I can be allowed to have one sin? It's just a little problem."

I replied, "You know, Goliath was once just a baby, maybe even a cute baby. Just a 'little problem'. That baby the Israelites spared grew up to be a giant problem. Sins are the same way. These so-called "little sins" can grow to be giant problems for us too – and take over!

So we cannot say we have truly repented, unless we have given up and died to every area of our life.

When a person has deeply repented, our lives show it. Our marriage is going to show it. If we have deeply repented, our finances are going to show it. If we have deeply repented, our child rearing is going to show it. The way we treat everybody – from a baby on up -- is going to show it.

We think we've "repented" because we're here on Saturday instead of Sunday. We think we're converted because we no longer keep a Christmas tree in the house in December. But sometimes we go on – we've all done it – living a life that is not a new life. There's been no real deep repentance, unless it shows in our child rearing, in our marriage, in our finances, in the way we work, in the way we talk, the way we walk, the way we dress, the way we eat – because everything we do is to bring glory to God. There are no exceptions, for we are to bring glory to God in everything we do.

We're not allowing any "baby Goliaths" ('little sins') to live and grow in our lives. Then we know we are starting to repent of what we are. It's a commitment to total change. It's not just accepting a new set of doctrines. There are a lot of people in God's church – everywhere – who think they are "God's people" because now they keep a Saturday sabbath and they go to the Feast, they don't believe they are going to heaven, and they hope they are not going to hell.

They've accepted a new set of teachings, doctrines, but have not accepted a new way of life.

I mean to speak to your heart today. I hope I'm causing your heart to be pricked. If so, we'll come to see the need to convert and repent very deeply.

What do we repent of? First – sin. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). Acts of commission.

What else is sin? (Interaction with audience). "what ever is not of faith is sin". Breaking our conscience intentionally is also sin. God wants us to have a tender conscience.

Another one is James 4:17 – which defines "sins of omission" – the times we should have done something and we did not. I don't know that we repent often enough of this kind of sin. We more often think of the things we did that we shouldn't have done (Commission), but not the things we didn't do, but should have done (sins of omission).

(Examples given of sins of omission). Sometimes we know of someone depressed, for example, and we should have called just to brighten their day and let them know you're thinking of them. (more examples of sins of omission in the audio version).

James 4:17 – "he who knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin."

I've gone over this part quickly because I want to get into this next section about repentance.

Repenting of the Root Cause of Sin

We don't repent of just sin. We repent of what CAUSED the sin. Do you know who that was, or what that was? The other thing we repent of is "self". We've heard that before, but just in the past few years I began to focus more deeply on that.

What does it mean to repent of the self? To repent and change what we are?

When I counsel for baptism, I typically ask people something like this: (ask yourself honestly how you would have answered this at the time you were baptized) "Mrs. so-and-so, are you a gossip?"

Now here's the minister in your home, or in his office, and he's asking you point blank, "Are you a gossip?" [Notice I didn't say, "DO you gossip?"] How would you have answered that when you were baptized? The usual response goes like this:

Woman: "Well, everybody gossips".

Minister: "I'm asking about you—are YOU a gossip"

Woman: "No, not really. Everyone's gossiped once in a while, but it's not like I'm out there gossiping all the time."

Minister: "OK, so you gossip sometimes. Once, twice... maybe 20x, 50 times, 100 times."

So let me ask again, are you a gossip?"

Most say "no". Very few have said yes. That hurts to look the minister in the eye and say "I am a gossip". That's hard. You might even think, "How do I know HE'S not a gossip and he's going to go around and tell everyone I'm a gossip." [laughter]

[Humorous story about the 4 ministers confiding their 'secret sins' with one another.]

So "ARE you a gossip?" You see, this really hurts to bear the soul and admit you ARE a gossip. It's much easier to admit you DO gossip once in a while, but to admit you ARE a gossip, that's hard. We can admit to gossiping once in a while, maybe 20-30-50 times or more, but please, don't say I am a gossip! That's how we reason.

Ted Bundy was a notorious serial murderer. How would we feel if Ted Bundy were to say, "Sure, I killed a lot of people – maybe 30, 35, 50 or more – but hey, don't call me a murderer. It's not like I'm out there killing every day!" (laughter) "I don't do it every day, OK, I slipped up".

Are we getting the point? It hurts to say "I am a liar". It doesn't hurt as much to say, "God forgive me because I lied." Because when we admit to doing something, it's easy to isolate the deed apart from the person. But when we bring the evil deed next to the one who did it, and admit, "I lied because that is what I am: a liar", boy that hurts. That humbles you. Now you're beginning to repent of what you are.

You see, when we lie, it is because we are a liar. When I commit adultery, or break God's sabbath, or – name the sin – it's because that's what we are. If you don't pay your tithes, or lie on your income tax, that is because you are a thief.

So in the same way, if we lie, we don't just repent of what we said, we repent of what we are: a liar. Because what we are, caused us to do what we did.

How many times does a murderer have to murder, before we say he is a murderer? One time. But somehow when it comes to the so-called lesser sins, we can gossip a thousand times, and so long as we're not doing it continually, we claim we are not a gossip. That is self deception. (How about lying? God says everyone, every man, is a liar – Romans 3:4. Can you admit you are a liar – at least up to the point of repentance and baptism?).

To change what we are, we must first come to see what we are when we do these things. This is a good aspect of repentance to understand if you're coming to baptism. Repentance is like any other subject. We grow in our understanding of it and other topics. I look back at my repentance when I was first baptized in 1971, and wonder how much I really understood about it back then.

John 8:44 – "You are of your father the Devil...He was a murderer from the beginning...because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources....for he IS a liar and the father of it."

God cannot lie because it is not his nature. A mouse can't crow, because crowing is not in a mouse's nature either. You and I do these things because it is our human nature. Is there any good in the self before God's spirit comes in to us?

When we come to repentance, we have to come to see that God has to give us a completely whole new nature. God preserves much about our personality traits, but as far as goodness in the carnal self, God does not want to save a lot of that, if any.

Romans 7:17 "The law is spiritual, but I AM carnal".

Paul, who was still in the flesh, who had been an apostle for many years when he wrote this, doesn't say "I was carnal", but "I AM carnal". As long as we remain in this flesh, we will have human nature and there will be part of that nature in us. He said the same thing to the Corinthians that they were still carnal.

Romans 7:18 – "Now I know that in me, in my flesh, nothing good dwells."

Now in Paul also was God's spirit. God's spirit IS good. God's spirit is God's nature and that is why he qualified verse 18 with "in my flesh nothing good dwells."

In Philippians he says everything he had accomplished was just dung.

When we counsel people for baptism, they'll say things like "I'm not a bad person. I'm not like everyone else. No, I have always been good or tried to do good all my life". Makes me want to say something like, "I thank thee, Lord that I am not as this publican..." and they usually get the point.

Or like the millionaire on the plane. He said, "Philip, I have no character flaw." I smiled. I thought to myself, "It's nice to meet God". (Laughter). Who knows, maybe I'll meet him again. No character flaw, he said. A little proud maybe, but no character flaw. So many of us were light that when we first visited the minister for baptism. We have to come to see ourselves as Jeremiah described, that our hearts are desperately wicked, deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). We can let our own hearts fool us, unless we recognize it for what it is. Now that means my heart. It means your heart.

We have to come to be like David, who said "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord" (Psalm 51:3), as he asked for God to renew His Spirit within him. Read all of Psalm 51.

Now once we come to really see the self, why do we defend it? We defend ourselves all the time. I do too. You do. When you and I get offended, because of some accusation that may or may not be true or completely true, it is because we are taking that old self, the old corpse that we buried at baptism, and we're basically digging the "old man" (as Paul calls it in Romans), dressing it up in a tuxedo, then we put makeup on it and we say, "what a lovely corpse. Doesn't he look good?". (Laughter) But that's just trying to make the old self, the dead cadaver, look good. But our old self, the old human nature that we still unfortunately have, should be a dead body, a thing we don't want to or need to defend! But that's tough. I do it too.

Have you ever been to funerals? The people look at this cadaver in the coffin and say, "doesn't he look nice? They sure did a good job on him. He looks so natural." But he's dead! (laughter). Right?

I was counseling with a man one time who had committed multiple fornication and adultery, and he was justifying himself. I finally said to him, "You know what you're doing? You're putting a tuxedo on to the old self, a corpse. It's still a corpse. I'm not here to roast you. I'm here to help you. I'm not here to condemn you, but to love you. I'm not here to put you out of God's church (forever), but I'm here to help you into God's kingdom. But don't defend the cadaver, the old self. Let it die. Let it go. Let it be buried."

We've all done this. I've done it, you've done it, and we fall into this often from time to time.

Taking Personal Responsibility

How do we defend the old self, the cadaver? We start to blame other people. When we're really trying to see the self and become new, we don't blame other people or circumstances. We take full responsibility for our actions.

For example, what do we say? We say, "she made me mad". (repeat).

What did she do to make you mad? Did she turn a switch that was beyond your control? No, you let yourself become angry. She didn't make you mad. Don't blame her.

Or we say, "he seduced me". He what? Where was your role in this? Did he put a gun to your head and did he say, "take your clothes off; we're going to bed"? If not, you made the decision to commit a sex sin.

We must each take responsibility for our actions and sins, and that hurts. But when you see that you were both at fault, and each one takes full responsibility for his/her part in sin, progress can be made. Fine, you can acknowledge you were weak that day. Perhaps you hadn't been praying regularly. So you were easily tempted, you were weak, and you did it, and so you say, "I did it. I am sorry, I repent, and I want to change, I want to be new". Now we're getting some place.

We'll blame our spouse for all kinds of things. I do that too. If we're late, it's the wife's fault somehow. She wasn't watching the map properly. She forgot something. She didn't put the cat out. It's always the wife's fault – or am I the only husband who does that from time to time?

We might even say, "the alarm didn't go off". Or, "my mother didn't get me up on time". Anything to dodge personal responsibility. Have you ever thought about that? The alarm didn't go off. If you have a clock that doesn't work, throw it away (laughter), but don't blame the clock. Why didn't the alarm go off? Did you put it on "pm" instead of "a.m."? Did you not turn it on? You see, the clock works fine. We didn't turn it on. But we blame the clock. I have done things like that dozens of times myself.

We had a question in Spokesman's Club [a training club to teach men how to speak in public] table topics, about whether or not we should have credit cards. One man got up and said, "Oh, I cut up my credit cards, because they just get me in debt". (laughter). Do you see the deceitfulness of the self. What did the credit card do? Did it jump out of your wallet and say "hey I want one of those." Cash or visa. Back into the wallet. (laughter).

Start hearing yourself. You'll find we aren't taking responsibility, but we are defending the old self, the old cadaver, so beautifully. "Where did my shoes go?" "Where did the car keys go". (laughter). We laugh, but we do it all the time. So easy to blame anything and everything (audio is rough at this point for a minute).

[bonus scriptures about justifying the self and seeking our own righteousness: Prov. 30:12; Isa. 65:5; Isa. 66:5; Luke 16:5; Rom. 10:2-3. See sermons on Righteousness of God series in website www.LightontheRock.org.)

You know what we do with dead bodies (the old self)? We bury it. Don't try to keep a part of it going. We like to nurture the "fun" parts of sin, like a little Goliath, that will grow up to become a big problem.

When we baptize your entire body, all of you, symbolic of burying 100% of the old self. Then we raise you up in newness of life in Christ. When a man was counseling for baptism once, as we talked about what he had to give up and stop doing and start doing, he said he didn't know if he was quite ready to give up that pleasurable sin we were talking about. At least he was honest. So I suggested, in jest, "so when we baptize you, let's let you poke your arm up above the water, symbolic of the part of the old self you want to keep alive, unburied."

When we immerse or baptize you, we put the whole self under the watery grave. It is symbolic that there is nothing worth salvaging there. There's nothing pure about the flesh that is worth salvaging. Human nature is not good enough for salvaging.

When we come to repent this way, there will be a deeper view of this topic than ever before. But we must start taking responsibility. I've heard ministers say, "where'd that verse go? It was here this morning." (laughter).

Turn now to Luke 18. When we trust that we are righteous, it naturally leads to the next step described here: we despise others. The Pharisee was a self-made man worshiping his creator (himself). Notice the Pharisees lauded the fact they were "not like" other people. Have you ever thought of that.

Luke 18:9-14

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, '**God, be merciful to me a sinner!**' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The publican recognized that he had to repent of what he was – a sinner. He did not have to list every single sin he had ever committed. When we repent of what we are, a sinner, that covers everything. A sinner. That's what we are at this point. He didn't ask for justice. No, he asked for mercy. He saw what he was.

Job came to that point, when he said "I AM vile, I abhor myself". He didn't try to list all the things he had done wrong. His outward appearance of his life record was impressive. When he came to see himself, he said "I abhor myself".

Job 40:3-4

Then Job answered the Lord and said:

4 "**Behold, I am vile**; What shall I answer You?

I lay my hand over my mouth.

Job 42:5-6

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,

But now my eye sees You.

6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

As we indeed come to see God and His holiness, we must come to this condition of recognizing we are vile, we abhor ourselves in light of His holiness and perfection. We want HIS righteousness, HIS holiness, HIS grace, His way, His new life to become ours.

When we come to see ourselves as we really are, nothing can be said about our carnal nature, the old self, that could be too strong because you and I can do and can be just about anything apart from God. If you have not yet come to see that about yourself, than you don't see yourself yet. Any one of us can do anything under the wrong set of pressures and weaknesses on our part.

I can commit adultery. I can kill. I will admit that. Can you? If you think you couldn't kill or commit adultery, you don't know yourself. (Examples given in audio to illustrate and demonstrate that you could kill and do other horrible sins).

Changing our Nature

So we come to see the potential of the self. Repenting of the self has to do with attitudes. We start to say things to God in prayer like, "I am self-righteous. I justify myself. I am so full of pride and vanity. I get my pride offended too easily. I am self centered, spiritually lazy. I am a racist, I am stubborn, I am head strong and rebellious. I am unforgiving and judgmental. I am a sinner and I realize I have to change."

For example, why does a rooster crow and why does a cat not crow? Why does a rooster crow? Because that is what roosters do. They are crows. That's their nature. Just being true to his nature. (Illustration/story from series "Roots" given in audio).

It would take a miracle to take a cat and make it start to think, move, live and act like a rooster. You would have to take a rooster nature and put it somehow into a cat. Or vice versa. God is doing essentially that to us. He is letting us keep our human nature as long as we are flesh and blood, but now He adds HIS nature to ours – His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) that we receive when we receive His Holy Spirit.

Again, repentance and conversion is not so much about accepting a new set of beliefs as it is changing what we are and becoming new in Christ. The new set of beliefs come along with that, sure, but that's not the major part of it.

So now we have human nature and we also have God's nature. If you can think of a rooster having rooster nature but then someone gives it a cat nature as well. That's where we are. So the two natures – our human nature and divine nature -- are at odds, and fight one another. (see Gal. 5:16-17).

Galatians 5:16-17

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

This is the battle we feel so often. God is allowing us to exercise His new nature and it becomes strong in us. It takes time. So God knows – in our analogy – that the rooster will still crow at times because it still has that nature, even though he has put a cat nature in it. WE too, have a new divine nature, but we still have that old human nature as well. Which one will we follow?

Paul says in Gal. 5:16 if we walk in the spirit we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. It depends on which one you and I listen to, and which nature we choose to follow. We will still slip up. But if we go to God and confess, He saves us day by day and we are being changed into something we have never been before.

Jesus is our Savior. He doesn't save us by his death. His death justifies us (Romans 5:9), reconciles us, and forgives us, but Romans 5:10 says we are saved by His LIFE. What does that mean?

Romans 5:9-10

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be *saved from wrath through Him*. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, ***we shall be saved by His life***.

It means day by day we are being saved by Him, today. We are to ask Him day by day to save us. We pray, "Today let your thoughts be me thoughts. Today, let your ways be my ways, your will be my will and your life be my life."

We have to ask Him to put His thoughts into our very being. That's why we seek Him and pray daily. That's why we study daily. So we feed that new divine nature and crowd out the old human nature – and become something we have never been before. A new creation in Christ!

The total NEWNESS in Christ

When God puts His new nature into us, we are HIS new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). It's something that has never been before. It's not a reconditioned life, it's not a refurbished life, it's not a spruced up old life – no, no, no. It's something that has never been before.

Some of us think God is just cleaning us up. Think of old coffee filters as representing our old life. Does God just take the old filter out and wash it out and reuse it? No. That's not new. It's used. It's done. He chucks the old way and gives you a brand new, never been used before, bright and clean new filter – a new life, if you follow my analogy.

God sees you as new. We need to see each other as new now as well. We should not keep harping back to what was our old self or his/her old self. It's a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

He died for all – including me personally, just me. He would have left the 99 sheep with a shepherd, and then gone to look for the one lost sheep.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if ***anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away***; behold, all things have become new.

We're going to become totally different.

If you're in Christ, you are a new creation. That's the new you that God sees – the life in Christ. The old self still sometimes slips up.

We need to start replacing the old with new ways. It's not enough to just quit lying, but start speaking truth. It's not enough to quit stealing, but to start SHARING. As we read Ephesians 4:22-32, notice how it is not enough to just stop doing the wrong, but we must start doing the right in very proactive ways. It's not enough to stop saying bad things, but to start speaking words of edification and inspiration. People feel edified when they hear us now. They've heard something good, inspiring and gracious – something good and wonderful.

This is changing what we ARE.

Ephesians 4:22-32

“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.

25 *Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,"* for we are members of one another. 26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. 28 *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.* 29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.* 32 *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

At the end of this section Paul talks about “forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you”. When God forgives, He leaves a blessing. He invites you to eat with Him and share His throne (see end of Revelation 3). He doesn't forgive and then say, “but I never want to see you around here again”, as we do. That's not forgiving as Christ forgave you. (See my sermon on the website on “Forgiving One Another As Christ forgives”. It's one of my favorite sermons. It is far deeper than we might first think.). No, what does Christ say when He forgives us? He says, “here, share the whole universe with me. Be a co-inheritor, a co-heir with me of all things. Let me give you kingdoms and realms, and have this and this and this.” They are blessed who are forgiven.

Being kind, tenderhearted and forgiving – is very, very hard when someone has hurt you badly, or has committed adultery with your spouse or has hurt your children. That is tough. It is easy to forgive the smaller areas, but what about the tough areas? If you can forgive those, you are becoming new and becoming like Christ.

When Jesus talked about forgiveness, he spoke of 70x7 times. The disciples were so amazed by that to the point they asked Him to increase their faith. But what did Jesus say?

Abide in the Vine and you shall bear much fruit (John 15:4-5).

Have you not been growing and producing fruit? Then that's evidence that you have not been abiding in the Vine. Jesus is true. He said if we abide in Him we shall bear much fruit.

John 15:4-5

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. *He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit*; for without Me you can do nothing."

BEING TRANSFORMED is an INSIDE JOB

Now please turn to Matthew 23:23-28. We must understand the principles explained here.

Matthew 23:23-28

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

25 "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed *appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones* and all uncleanness. 28 Even so *you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*"

We can be righteous. Noah was righteous. Lot was called "righteous Lot". We can be righteous. (Hear my sermon series on the Righteousness of God on the website).

In Matthew 23:25-28, Jesus is explaining that our focus needs to be on the heart, on the inside. If we serve a big bowl of lasagna, after dinner we have to wash the pots and pans and bowls. What do the bowls and pans that held the lasagna look like? It's all sloppy on the inside, right? Well, we tend to wash up our outside appearance. We want to look good on the outside. So we would be like someone who is "washing the pots, pans and dishes" but only is wiping off the outside and leaving the sloppy lasagna left-overs untouched inside. The pot or plate are still dirty!

Christ said "for out of the heart proceed lies, murders, etc." Matthew 15:19.

So if we want to be new, we need to change inside what we really are.

Now back to the bowl of lasagna. If we stick it in the sinkful of soapy water and scrub the inside of the bowl real hard, what happens to the outside? It gets clean too. That's what Jesus says too. "Cleanse the inside...and the outside may be clean also" – Matthew 23:26.

It's the inside that counts. God looks upon the heart, not the outside.

(read Matthew 23:27-28)

That's about impression vs. character. This is reputation vs. character. Reputation is what men think you are. Character is what God says you really are.

If we really want to change what we are, if we really want to be transformed, let's go to God and first confess what we are. We say – Father forgive me, a sinner. I am a liar, an adulterer – whatever you want to say probably will fit for you and for me. We tell God that we no longer want to just be looking good on the outside, but want to be real. We are not content that we no longer just don't eat pork or keep Christmas, but we are truly changing. It's more than just having a set of doctrines, but a new birth. In Galatians, Paul speaks of "until Christ is formed in you."

We are sinners that need the transformative work of God's spirit cleansing us, renewing, giving us the divine nature and changing us. We are children of God who need the righteousness of Christ given us by faith even as we now walk with him and walk as He did, or we make ourselves liars (1 John 2:3-6). But the new righteousness is His, it's the holiness of the Lord. It's His righteousness, so no one can boast (1 Cor. 1:29-31). It's by grace, so no one can boast. It's his gift, not something we earn or do on our own (Romans 4:13, 23-24; Romans 5:17; Romans 9:30-32; Romans 10:2-3). But we have been created for good works, nonetheless.

We cannot change until we see, acknowledge, confess and admit to what needs to change.

Turn now to Jeremiah 7:5. This new life is so much more than just going to church on Saturdays. It's so much more than that. It's not enough to come to church on sabbath and then not have changed. The Jews used to say "The temple of the Lord" and felt like as long as God's temple was in Jerusalem, God was happy with them and everything was fine. Jeremiah was saying it's much more than going to the house of God to worship on the right sabbath.

Jeremiah 7:5-11

"For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, 6 if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, 7 then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

8 "Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. 9 *Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know,* 10 *and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name,* and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'? 11 Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the Lord.

A child of God talks like, sounds like, acts like his/her father.

(I tell the story of the man who had a club foot and whose son walked with a limp just like his dad, until the father told his son he didn't have to walk like that since the son didn't have a club foot.)

Which father are we looking like? God, or the god of this world?

With Christ, we can be brand new. We can be something and someone we have never been before.

**

Follow up sermons I recommend:

Forgiving as Christ forgives
The Righteousness of God series
New Creation