

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE

“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said: ‘Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside of a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean” (Mark 7:15).

Are you having a problem with sin? Is your conscience bothering you because you are doing things that make you feel unclean? If you are, then listen to Jesus! He can help you solve your problems. Your problems is not “outside” of you, it is “inside” of you.

The problem is your heart! Jesus continued: **“What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within out of men’s hearts come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice deceit lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean” (Mark 7:20-23).**

Adam and Eve did not sin by accident! Judas Iscariot did not sin by accident! You and I do not sin by accident. The problem is inside of us. The problem is our heart! **“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure” (Jer. 17:9).**

Centuries before Christ was born Ezekiel promised that God would give us a new heart. He wants us to be cleansed from all of our impurities. God promised: **“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ez. 36:26-27).**

You, however, must open the door and let Jesus come “inside”. Jesus said: **“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:19-20).**

Opening the door to your heart, however, makes you vulnerable. C. S. Lewis offers this insight: *“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.”*

When Christ is on the “outside” you are in charge! You can do and say anything you want to! When you open the door and let Christ “inside” things are different. Jesus will be Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all! When Christ is on the “inside” **“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17).** Christ “inside” of you is good news for **“Christ in you (is) the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).**

PREPARING A PLACE

For three years Jesus was with His disciples giving them guidance and direction. At that time Jesus said: **“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to**

lay his head” (Matt. 8:20). According to W. E. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* the command “follow me” is found 77 times in the four Gospels of following Christ, and only once otherwise. In Mark 14:13 Jesus commanded two of his disciples to go into Jerusalem and “follow” a man carrying a pitcher. During these three years Jesus was with His disciples and guiding them, but He was still “outside” of them. That, however, was soon to change.

On the night before Calvary Jesus said: **“Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later” (Jn. 13:36).**

One reason Jesus was leaving was to prepare a “place” for them. He was not abandoning them like orphans but promised to return to them in the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus insisted: **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may also be where I am” (Jn. 14:1-2).**

The Greek word translated as “rooms” is “mone”. It is only found two times in the Bible. The first instance is in John 14:2, and the only other instance is in John 14:23. In the first instance it is translated as “rooms” and in the second it is translated as “home”. **“Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come go him and make our home with him’ (John 14:23).** In the first instance Jesus promises to prepare a “room” for them, and in the second instance Jesus promises that if they would love and obey Him, then He and the Father would love them and make their “home” “inside” of them!

This same promise is also for us! Jesus is also preparing a place for us in heaven. Let us also prepare a place for Him in our hearts!

CONFORMATION OR TRANSFORMATION

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Rom. 12:1-2).

“Conformation” is pressure from “without”. “Transformation” is pressure from “within”. The Law brought pressure from without but it did not change the hearts of men. Jesus lamented **“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Matt. 15:8).** What the Law could not do from the “outside”, however, “God accomplished through Jesus on the “inside” (Rom. 8:1-4). **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).** As a “new creation” we also have a “new heart”!

The word “transformation” is from the Greek word “matamorphoo” from which we get our word “metamorphosis”. This word describes the “transformation” of a caterpillar into a butterfly. It is used only four times in the Bible. Two times it refers to Jesus, and two times it refers to Christians. It always refers to transformation that comes from the “inside”!

- In Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2 we are told that Jesus was “transformed” on a high mountain so that His face shown like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light. Whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. Obviously something happened “inside” of Jesus that made this happen.
- In Rom. 12:2 we are told that Christians are “transformed” by the renewing of our minds. In 2 Cor. 3:18 we are told: **“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”**. Conversion is instantaneous. When you become a Christian your sins are immediately forgiven! Transformation, however, is a process that takes time. The glory of this transformation happens “inside” of us and is “ever increasing”.

THE CATERPILLAR AND THE BUTTERFLY

The life of a Monarch butterfly begins with an egg laid on a milkweed plant in a place like Northern Mexico. The eggs will hatch in 3 – 8 days and become a tiny caterpillar. That caterpillar eats its egg case and then starts eating the milkweed plant. It eats a lot and grows quickly. Some caterpillars can consume 27,000 times their body weight in only a few weeks. Their tiny bodies can increase in size a thousand times. Caterpillars can destroy a garden. A caterpillar travels slowly and usually doesn’t range over 10 meters from the place where it was hatched.

Then the caterpillar goes through a period of transformation. It spins a cocoon around itself and hangs upside down from a tree limb. In about two weeks the ugly and destructive caterpillar is transformed into a beautiful butterfly. The butterfly is a new creation. It is totally different from the caterpillar it used to be. Now it does not destroy a garden but merely sips nectar from flowers. While the caterpillar will crawl only a few meters, the butterfly can fly as far as 3,000 miles.

No amount of money or education can teach a caterpillar to fly. No amount of training or threats can change its destructive nature. When it comes out of the cocoon, however, it is a new creation. It has new abilities and new desires. This is a beautiful illustration of what it means to become a Christian.

The Apostle Paul, for example, was hateful and destructive before he became a Christian. He told king Agrippa: **“On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities”** (Acts 26:10-11).

When Paul became a Christian he testified: **“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen”** (Romans 9:1-5).

Paul was not “conformed” by the world but “transformed” by the renewing of his mind!

BY THEIR FRUITS YOU WILL KNOW THEM

Jesus said: **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them”** (Matt. 7:15-20).

The true nature of a teacher is not determined by what they “say” but by what they “produce”! Peter witnessed many miracles performed by Jesus, but the “transformation” of Christ on the mountain was the principal reason for his faith. Peter wrote: **“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain”** (2 Peter 1:16-18).

The “transformation” of a sinner to a saint is powerful evidence! When you see someone who is “transformed” it makes the message of the prophets even more certain: **“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”** (2 Peter 1:19-21).

- Witnessing a transformed life makes the message of the prophets completely reliable
- We begin our study of Scriptures like a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and we see the truths of God clearly.
- Above all, it is clear that the prophets wrote as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit!

THE BURNING BUSH

While Moses was tending sheep for his father-in-law in the land of Midian he was fascinated by a bush that caught on fire, but did not burn up. Moses said: **“I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up”** (Ex. 3:3). The bush did not burn up because God was inside of it! When Moses focused on that bush is when God spoke to him! When we focus on being born again God can also speak with us!

When God is “inside” of us we are also indestructible! Jesus said to Martha: **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”** (John 11:25-26).

The question is, do you believe it? If you do, Christ in you is your hope of glory!

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21).