

2CH Sunday at 7.30
Sunday 6 January, 2008
A New Year – A New You
Presenter: Graeme Best

Introduction

Good morning. As we move into the year, how are you going with your New Year's resolutions? Did you make any this year?

I read lots of suggestions people could adopt to make a new you in the new year. Exercise more, lose weight, improve your eating habits, have a face lift, get out and about more, help someone in the community, be more confident, dress more smartly and so on.

Of course almost all these suggestions to make a new you are mostly about image. What other people see. That makes sense because this is what the world says is important isn't it? Your image.

Now many of those suggestions are good. We should exercise more. We should eat a healthy diet. We should get out and about and help others. All good things.

But this morning I want to suggest that of far greater significance than our outward appearance to others, is our inside. This morning I'd like to speak to you about being a new you on the inside based on some verses from 2 Corinthians 5.

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Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

As one trained in science, I am always amazed at one of God's display of grace in nature. That one thing is the process of metamorphosis. Like a tadpole changing into a frog. Or the transformation of a caterpillar into a gorgeous butterfly.

An ugly caterpillar. Things some children love to quash with a stick while others run away from them with a squeal. But in a grace moment, something amazing happens.

A thick film covers the caterpillar and a chemical reaction changes the very make-up of the creature. This is known as the Chrysalis period. And soon the emerging butterfly can be seen within and it spreads its wings and it begins to kick off its old life and begin its new one.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come." In essence, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthians and telling them that they went through a spiritual metamorphosis when they became a Christian. An amazing change. A change definitely, like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly... for the better.

Paul is saying that in the life cycle of a sinner saved by grace, God's works the miracle of a spiritual metamorphosis. It's like, once we were like useless, self-focused caterpillars, but in a instant the Holy spirit comes into the cocoon of our hearts and begins a spiritual metamorphosis with the end result being a gorgeous work of God that can fly to new

heights and have limitless potential.

This morning.. as the year stretches out before us .. I want to reflect on the change that takes place in the lives of Christians because this spiritual metamorphosis changes us in at least four ways.

Firstly, we have a **new relationship with God**. Our relationship with Jesus as we have faith in him brings us into a new relationship with God the Father.

2 Corinthians 5:18: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ." We are no longer enemies of God. We are now called his friends. His children. Precious and much loved children. We can commune with God one-to-one.

But when we become new creations in Christ we also have **a new relationship with the those around us**. Paul said in verse 16 of 2 Corinthians 5. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view." We will be wanting others to find faith in Jesus .. the abundant and eternal life that we have found. We will be wanting to love others as Christ loves us.

Not that others will always like us. Be kind to us. Accept us or what we believe. On the contrary, just as many people reacted against Jesus and had him killed, many will treat us with contempt.

But our relationship with God changes the way we view the world.

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Secondly, Christians have a **new identity**. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus became sin for us that we may become perfect in the eyes of God. Sinners become saints. As believers we take on a new identity. We take on the identity of Jesus. Because we belong to him. We take on his righteousness because he died in our place. As our substitute.

Adam was the head of the old creation. Jesus is the head of the new creation. The old creation was plunged into sin and condemnation because of the disobedience of Adam.

The new creation means righteousness and salvation because of the obedience of Jesus. As Christians, because we belong to Jesus, we are part of the new creation and everything has become new.

Not that we are perfect and free from sin. This side of heaven we will never be that. But when God looks at us, he no longer sees our sin but sees the purity, the righteousness, of his Son who indwells us by his Spirit.

As Christians we are known, or we should be known, as Christ followers. Those who live by faith. Our view of Jesus.. our belief, our faith in Jesus gives us a new identity. We now belong to God. We are part of his family.

The birds that once ate the caterpillar don't even recognize the butterfly that shares the skies with them. The caterpillar has a new identify. A new beginning. A fresh start. If you are a sinner saved by grace you also have a new identify.

Now, many of you may not feel like you look much like Christ.. I certainly don't much of the time ... because the film of our old lives still lies across our life style - our daily habits.

But take heart, right before or prior to when the butterfly will emerge, the chrysalis cocoon becomes transparent so that the butterfly can be seen within You can see its wings and legs and so on.

It does not really matter whether or not you see your wings ... but we know God sees you as a butterfly .. He sees the new creation. He sees the potential lying beneath the surface.

Jesus saw the potential of the flawed life of Levi the tax collector, and Peter, the fisherman.

Jesus believed .. no, He knew .. people could change. Because he could change them. He looked at Peter and saw a church leader. He looked at the tax collector and saw the author of the first Gospel. And thanks be to God that He sees in us what no one else sees.

He can take our flawed lives and make something meaningful and useful of them. More than that. Jesus gives us a brand new life. Not a redecorated life. Not an extreme makeover. He makes us into a new creation with a new identity whose names are written in the Book of Life.

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Thirdly those who are in Christ have a **new purpose**. 2 Corinthians 5:9 and 15. "So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it." "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

Outside of Christ we have no desire to please him, to live for him. But as new creations our whole purpose in life is to please God. To live for him and bring glory to him and his name.

Eph 2:10 " For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good work which God prepared in advance for us to do!"

A caterpillar is no help to those around. It does not eat other pests. It only eats lots of leaves and drinks sap from trees and plants. It basically lives a self-centred life.

As Christians, we no longer live just for ourselves. We no longer live to make us look good. Or shouldn't. Our new lives are to make God look good.

We have a new purpose. To please God. To live for him. To help others , especially to help others find God. As Paul says, we are Christ's ambassadors. Jesus has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

New relationships. A new identity. A new purpose. Fourthly we have **a new eternity**. A new destination.

2 Corinthians 5:1 “Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.”

When we believe in and follow Christ ... our eternal future is very different to those outside of Christ. Outside of a relationship with Jesus, the Bible makes it very plain there is only one possible eternal destination. An eternity spent in the pain and torment of hell. Jesus himself said, “No-one comes to the Father, except through me.” Through faith in me.

Don't ever be fooled by those who want to teach a different gospel. Those who want to teach that by doing good works or being a good and nice person, God will accept you into his kingdom. Never. It won't happen. Because Jesus said so.

But for those who have faith in Jesus .. heaven is guaranteed. Verse 5 “Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

The fact that we have the indwelling Holy Spirit .. only new creations have that .. is confirmation that our eternal future is secure.

And what a tremendous comfort that is. It's not a matter of doing enough to get to heaven because we could never ever do enough. Our place in heaven is assured because Jesus has done it all.

All we have to do is to be a new creation ... in Christ ... where our old identity, our old relationships, our old purpose for living and our old eternal destination are all gone ..

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In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul said, “We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.” This morning, you are either a new creation in Christ or you are not. It's true that those of us who are new creations are not yet perfect. It's like we are still climbing out of the cocoon. Sometimes we fly and other times we still act like caterpillars. But we are new creations. God certainly sees us as such even if others don't.

But if you have never put your faith and trust in Jesus, then like Paul I implore you to be reconciled to God by believing in and following His Son who died for you. Become a new you in this new year.

With God's help, live like a butterfly, not like a caterpillar. God wants you to fly. Fly from yesterday's failure and tomorrow's fears. Fly from the old and into the new .. in Christ .. with Christ .. and for Christ!

May it be that this year .. you will all experience all it means to be a new you. Not in the world's sense. But in the spiritual sense. A new creation ... in Christ.

Thanks for listening.