

# TRANSFORMATION

## How It Works



**VINEYARD**  
Church of Elgin

“I’m only human” is both a cop-out and a lie. We settle for believing it because, for years, we have tried our best to “get it right.” But inevitably, we fail. If you are a Christian and this is your story, there is hope—hope for a clear mind and a pure heart. Hope that you will get out of the way and let the “Christ in you” become your life! That is his plan, and it is also your inheritance...in *this* life!

Written by Peter Payne  
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## Called To Be Holy

Our Father directs us to "Be holy, for I am holy."<sup>1</sup> Really? Or is this hyperbole, just a platitude from a zealous and demanding God who doesn't really understand our human plight?

- Paul proclaimed, admonished and taught everyone... "so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ."<sup>2</sup>
- "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure."<sup>3</sup>
- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"<sup>4</sup>
- "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this (a new heaven and earth), make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."<sup>5</sup>
- "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."<sup>6</sup>

We (those of us saved from death and destined for life) are called to holiness, purity, perfection: not just someday "in the by and by," but here, now, in this life. We are now God's children. Because we have taken on his very DNA (Christ in you), we have already taken on his nature. God has called us to righteousness and, through Christ, has provided his righteousness to us. So, why is the sterling character of Christ so hard to see in so much of the Church? Why do we each find it so

impossible to “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect?”<sup>7</sup> Well, the fact is that it is impossible for man, as long as man tries to purify himself. But, listen to this: it is not just theory. It is truth and life: "What is impossible with men is possible with God."<sup>8</sup>

The roots of this intractable dilemma are very deep, not only in our souls, but in our Christian culture. Before we can get to the “is possible with God” part, let’s review some basics that may not be fully or rightly understood.

## **Salvation**

The Christian experience of salvation is what snatches us from a life of rebellion (destined for Death) to a life of grace (destined for Life). Scripture describes this salvation experience as having two parts: justification and sanctification.<sup>9</sup> Each is a grace from God.

- *Justification* is what happens at the moment we surrender to the love of Christ by confessing our desperate, dark and deadly condition and accepting his gift of grace, forgiveness and life. In the eyes of heaven, we (and our sinful state) are immediately and literally crucified with Christ.<sup>10</sup> That old nature is dead, dead, dead! And, just as we died with Christ, so we are risen with him and made citizens of heaven.<sup>11</sup> We are fully justified.
- *Sanctification* is that long-term process of growing in our trust relationship with Jesus.<sup>12</sup> This is where we shed the old habits and attitudes from our sin

nature (which is now dead), and we grow in grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to transform our minds.<sup>13</sup> Christ actually becomes our life!<sup>14</sup> We become holy—just as God is holy.<sup>15</sup>

## **Our Typical Experience**

So, as we celebrate our justification, we begin to chip away at our sanctification. Month after month, year after year, we try our best to become that good Christian we are supposed to be. But, at some point in the process, we seem to stall out. No matter how many conferences we go to, or how many times we go forward for prayer, we feel stuck in some besetting sin or addiction or depression—some barrier that we just can't get past. Trying harder doesn't cut it. After a while, we become weary, and eventually we give up. We think, "Maybe this Christian life works for others, but not for me. I must be missing something, but I have no clue what."

This sad outcome results from a clever deception that is widely sown by the enemy of our souls. If he can no longer keep us out of heaven, at least he can steal our joy and keep us sidelined from contributing to Father's family Kingdom business. The deception? "It's all up to me to become that good Christian."

## **Christ in You**

When we surrendered to the love of Christ, repented of our sin and accepted the gift of life, the Spirit of Christ

came immediately to take residence within us.<sup>16</sup> This is the wonderful gift that was promised by Jesus before he returned to heaven.<sup>17</sup> In fact, it is “Christ in you...the hope of glory”<sup>18</sup> that accomplishes the work of sanctification. Jesus knew that without him literally residing within us, we wouldn’t have a chance of shedding our old habits and growing in grace. The long, sorry story of Israel’s failure was proof enough of that. Jesus told the disciples that it was better for them that he return to heaven so the Father could send the Holy Spirit (which is the very Spirit of Christ) to dwell *in* them—no longer just being *with* them.

But it seems that many Christians don’t understand what “Christ in you” actually means. Perhaps they consider it to be a figure of speech. After all, isn’t God omnipresent—everywhere present? So, of course he is present in me, too. But what so many are totally blind to is that Christ, when he moves into a heart, brings in his full complement of holiness, godliness and righteousness with him. Where do you think all that delicious fruit (love, joy, peace...) that Paul talks about comes from?

So, there it is inside of you. There is only one problem: his glory-light within us can shine out only to the degree we allow it. Until we step out of the way, giving him permission, his glory cannot shine out through us. We have some pretty ingrained habits of doing life our way,

and we don't even realize that we and some of our accumulated trash are blocking his goodness from radiating out from us. We are designed and destined to be like a lighthouse on a hill. And the light is already *on!* All we have to do is recognize and confess our opaque obstructions and then move aside so his brilliance can shine unimpeded.

## **Eyes Fixed**

The reality is that we give ourselves to what we gaze upon.<sup>19</sup> This truth is both our nemesis and our hope. The more I look at me, the more narcissistic and egocentric I become. The only object truly worthy of my focus and attention is Jesus. Everything else around me is a distraction. Really, is there anyone more humble or worthy of our affection than Jesus? “Fixing our eyes on Jesus”<sup>20</sup> is the only choice we have if we truly want to gain humility—the kind of humility that elicits God’s grace to empower us to step out of the way and let Jesus’ glory-light shine out. By gazing on Jesus (through worship, building his Word into your soul, opening your heart to him 24/7), you will willingly step aside (“surrender”) and be amazed at the beauty of his glory-light as it illuminates your world around you.

Something else very interesting happens as you fix your eyes on Jesus. Not only does his humble Spirit begin to work in your spirit, but you begin to see other unflattering traits in yourself that you may not have

noticed before: pride, fear, anger, unforgiveness...some really ugly stuff that has been operating out of the back of your soul for years. The enemy will surely be close by, too, trying to intimidate you with thoughts about what a loser you are. But this condemnation is all lies. The cross already took care of all your trash. All you have to do as you become aware of more trash is acknowledge it, repent of it, lift it up to Jesus and ask him to exchange your trash for his grace. He won't be shocked. He'll do it with a smile! And this is not just a one-time event; it becomes a lifestyle. The further we travel along Sanctification Blvd., the more of our hidden trash Jesus will highlight and haul off. All we have to do is remain humble and willing, letting his light shine through. And that inevitably makes for a joyful journey.

There is yet another amazing thing that happens as more and more trash gets removed. The more we realize how much we have been forgiven, the more humble we become (pride loses its iron grip), and the more our hearts expand with love.<sup>21</sup> Naturally, this love response is for Jesus himself. But it also spills over into love for our brothers and sisters—real, compassionate and deep love. Loving our neighbor becomes a delight and a joy. We actually look for opportunities to bless people.

So now, understanding “Christ in you” and having our eyes set on Jesus, we are positioned and provisioned to grow.

## **Transformation (Sanctification) Process**

*Scripture passages highlighted in blue are suggested for memorization.*

### **► First, Build a Firm Foundation**

#### **1. Develop a deep love of God’s Word, intentionally building it into your day and life.**

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”<sup>22</sup>

#### **2. Allow that treasured Word to spill out and bless others in your life.**

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>23</sup>

### 3. **Be clear that you are literally and eternally dead, buried and risen with Christ.**

- “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”<sup>24</sup>
- “And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’”<sup>25</sup>
- “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”<sup>26</sup>

### ► **Then, Allow Christ to Build His Virtues into Your Soul**

1. **Pray (heart open to God)** on each of the four Transformative Virtues of Christ which follow this section. Starting with the first—Love—take one verse at a time, **memorize it and meditate on it until it becomes "you"** and the Lord gives you permission to move on to the next verse.
  - For example, 1 Cor. 13:1... "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love,

I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."

- Is my communication/articulation something of an idol for me?
  - Am I more concerned about how grand my message sounds than about the love with which I deliver it?
  - Am I more concerned about how clever I look than about how cared-for they feel?
  - Do I hesitate to speak for fear of sounding foolish?
  - Ask the Holy Spirit to apply the truth of these musings to your soul.
  - Confess and repent where needed. Let the truth become who you are as you learn to obey the heart of what it portrays.
  - It may take 1-2 weeks or it may take 1-2 months for Christ to clear away the debris hiding that particular virtue. Remember, the virtue is already there because he brought it with him when he first arrived in you.
  - No rush, just stay with each verse until this aspect of Christ becomes your true reflex, your new nature.
  - Then go on to the next verse.
2. **If your life slips** on one or another of these virtues in the future, return to it again until the Lord releases you.

3. **This is not about performance...** you doing it, working harder to get it right.
- If I could do it on my own, there would be no need for prayer, and "Christ in me" would be meaningless, his work on Calvary unnecessary. God knows very well what is impossible with man, which is why he made the costly provision through Christ.
  - This is all about being willing, allowing "Jesus in me" permission to do what I cannot.

Give it time...lots of time. Remember, *this is Christ's work in you*, not your achievement by "trying harder." What is impossible with man is *only* possible with God. Give him opportunity and permission to do in you what only he can do. And enjoy the delicious fruit that spills out. For sure, your neighbor will!

## **The Transformative Virtues of Christ**

### **1. Love**

*1 Corinthians 13:1-13*

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. <sup>4</sup> **Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not**

arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup> So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

## **2. Old man/New man**

*Colossians 3:1-17*

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you

must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. <sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### **3. Fruit of the Spirit**

*Galatians 5:22-25*

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those

who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.<sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

#### **4. Thought-life**

*Philippians 4:4-8*

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.<sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.<sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

**This is our joy and our destiny here on earth...**

...to “Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.”<sup>27</sup>

**Christ in you** is your provision for doing it!

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet 1:16

<sup>2</sup> Col 1:28

<sup>3</sup> 1 Jn 3:3

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor 5:17

<sup>5</sup> 2 Pet 3:14

<sup>6</sup> Rom 12:2

<sup>7</sup> Matt 5:48

<sup>8</sup> Lk 18:27

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 6:11

<sup>10</sup> Gal 2:20

<sup>11</sup> Phil 3:20

<sup>12</sup> Phil 2:12-13

<sup>13</sup> Rom 12:2

<sup>14</sup> Col 3:4

<sup>15</sup> 1 Pet 1:16

<sup>16</sup> Rom 8:9-10

<sup>17</sup> Lk 24:49

<sup>18</sup> Col 1:27

<sup>19</sup> Matt 6:21

<sup>20</sup> Heb 12:2

<sup>21</sup> "I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven —for she loved much.

But he who has been forgiven little loves

little." Luke 7:47

<sup>22</sup> Deut 6:4-9

<sup>23</sup> Matt 28:18-20

<sup>24</sup> Gal 2:20

<sup>25</sup> Lk 9:23

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<sup>26</sup> Heb 12:1-2

<sup>27</sup> Phil 2:15