

Being Transformed by the Spirit

“FROM GLORY TO GLORY,
EVEN AS BY THE
SPIRIT OF THE LORD”
2 Corinthians 3:18, KJV

By Randy Hurst

*We live on the edge of eternity.
At any moment, Jesus will return
for us. When He comes, we will be
completely changed.*

Being Transformed by the Spirit

The apostle Paul taught, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These perishable bodies of ours are not able to live forever. But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die.”¹

Before we are physically transformed on that day, the Holy Spirit is already working in us to transform us spiritually. God has a purpose for our lives on earth, and

Jesus’ promise

The last of Jesus’ words recorded by Luke are these: “That repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”²

It would seem that a task as important as proclaiming Christ’s message to all nations should commence immediately. But Jesus told the disciples to wait in the city to be “clothed with power from on high.”

Just before He ascended to

requires a witness beyond words. Our witness is comprised of not only what we say, but also how we say it and who we are.

The apostle Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica: “Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”⁴

Our emotions, attitudes and actions are as much a part of our message as our words. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul said, “Let your speech always be gracious ... so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.”⁵ And the apostle Peter wrote, “Always be prepared to give an answer to

witness.⁷ When people can look at our lives and see love, especially for those who have wronged us, they won’t soon forget it. The convincing evidences of overflowing joy in sorrow, peace in the crises of life, patience in tribulation, and gentleness in response to hostility communicate a much more effective message than words alone.

Our message is validated by our Christian character — by who we are. While this has always been true, it is even more critical in a culture that is increasingly skeptical of Christianity. The content of our message will be greatly hindered if our lives are inconsistent with our words. With many people, especially those we know personally, the difference Christ

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He works through us and also in us. When we face our Lord, only two things will matter: that we have accomplished the purposes for which He created us and that we have become what He designed us to be.

Jesus used three metaphors — salt, light and branches — to reveal the nature of what His followers were to be. Notice that all three metaphors share one primary quality. All have an effect beyond themselves. Salt affects whatever it touches. Light shines upon everything within its reach. Branches extend the life in the vine to the fruit that is produced.

The lives of all followers of Christ should make an impact on those within our sphere of influence and even beyond.

heaven, Jesus reminded His disciples: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”³ Jesus clearly stated that the essential purpose of the Spirit’s empowerment is to be His witnesses.

Witness beyond words

I am sometimes asked what the most critical issue in evangelism is today. I believe it is the credibility of the messenger.

Unfortunately, some wrongly identify the Spirit’s empowerment as involving merely our speech, or what has come to be termed “witnessing.” But effectiveness in reaching the spiritually lost

everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”⁶

Notice that both Paul and Peter emphasize a witness that includes more than mere words. Paul says our speech should “always be gracious.” Peter says we should speak “with gentleness and respect” and keep “a clear conscience” as we live with “good behavior in Christ.”

The fruit of the Spirit in the believer’s life — love, joy, peace, patience and all the other characteristics Paul describes in Galatians 5 — is a vital component of our

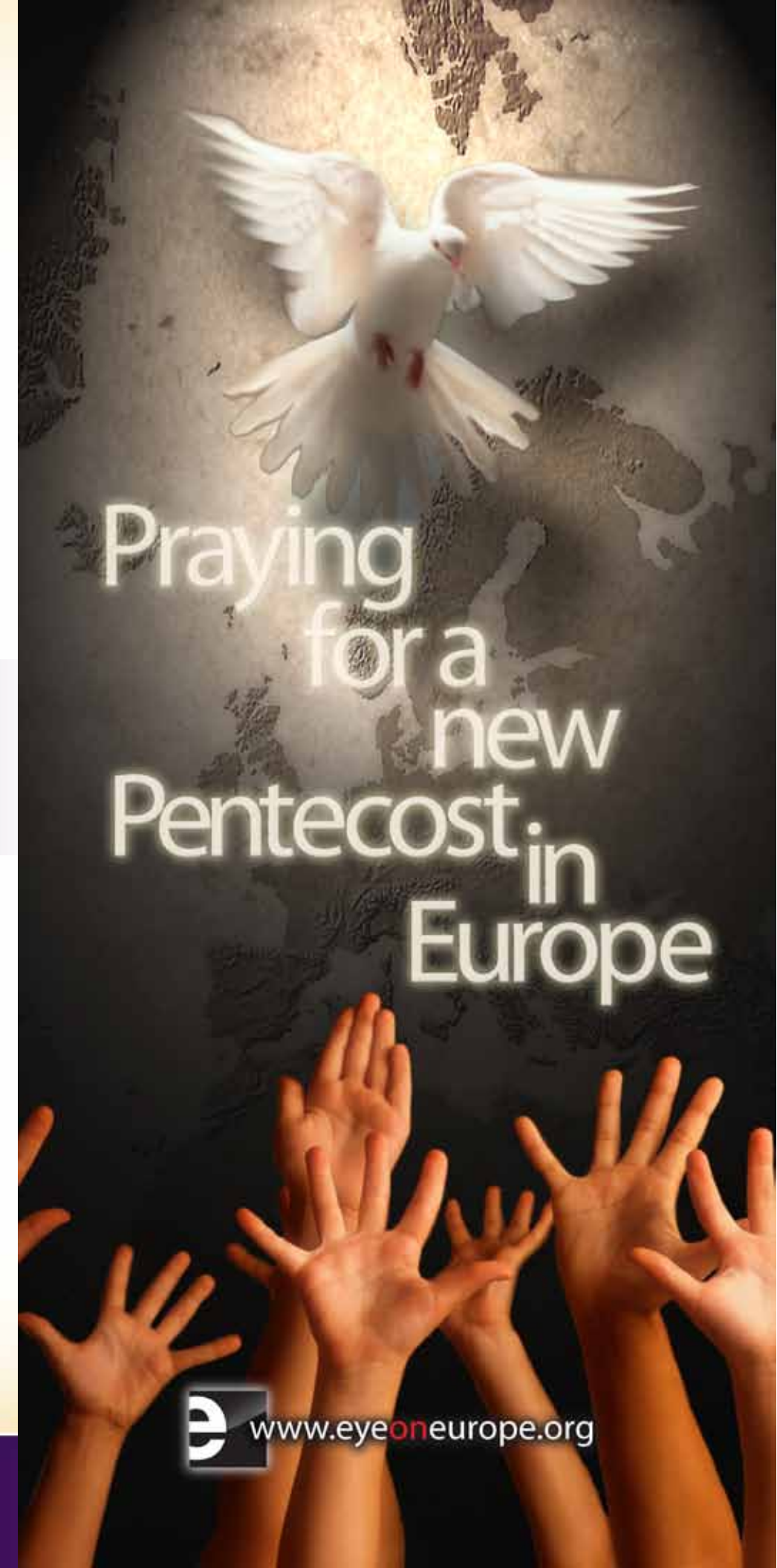
has made in our lives and its consistent proof through our actions will be our most compelling personal testimony.

In a society in which people are rapidly losing faith in the integrity of leaders in business and government, the personal credibility of Christians is more than an added blessing in witness; it is an essential requirement.

Transformation

Paul uses a word translated “transformed” in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18, a Greek word from which we get the word “metamorphosis.” It refers to an extreme change in nature from something of one kind to something of another kind that is totally

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¹ Corinthians 15:50-52, NLT, ² Luke 24:47-49, NASB, ³ Acts 1:8, ⁴ 1 Thessalonians 1:5
⁵ Colossians 4:6, NRSV, ⁶ 1 Peter 3:15,16, NIV, ⁷ Galatians 5:22,23

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different from what it used to be, both in resemblance and substance — like a caterpillar that becomes a butterfly. In these two instances Paul reveals essential principles of spiritual transformation.

1. Transformation happens in stages

One of the most dangerous and even destructive attitudes a Christian can have is a sense of spiritual arrival. To become what God has purposed us to be, we must recognize our ongoing and continual dependence on Him. Paul was confident that God, who began a good work in us, will complete it.⁸ He likened this work of God in us to a birth process when he wrote to the Galatians

image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.¹³ The transforming work of the Spirit in us is happening in stages — “from glory to glory.”

2. Transformation happens through submission

The only other time Paul uses the word translated as “transformation” is in his epistle to the Romans. After he explains God’s wonderful, saving work in Christ Jesus, he urges believers to present themselves as living sacrifices and no longer be conformed to the world. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

His exhortation to be transformed is an imperative — a

followed and served Christ, each of us must recognize that we still fall short of becoming what God has designed for us. Not only have we not arrived, we have a long way to go.

Paul clearly addressed this challenge in his own life when he wrote to the Philippians: “I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection! But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be.”¹⁷

Like Paul, we are not yet fully mature spiritually. We are pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.¹⁸ As we do, we must

Because of God’s mercy and grace, we can accept who we are. Because of His power, we don’t have to settle for what we are.

that he was in labor until “Christ is formed in you.”⁹

The apostle Peter taught that as we become “partakers of the divine nature”¹⁰ we must diligently make every effort to add to our faith “goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”¹¹ He then makes the wonderful promise that we can become “neither useless nor unfruitful” in the knowledge of Christ. But this only happens if the qualities he lists are “are increasing” in our lives.¹²

Paul wrote, “But we all ... are being transformed into the same

command. But the action is passive. We cannot transform ourselves. We depend on God to transform us.

Because of God’s mercy and grace, we can accept who we are. Because of His power, we don’t have to settle for what we are.

To be our Lord’s witnesses in the world, we must continually submit ourselves to the transforming work of the Spirit. As we become “partakers of the divine nature”¹⁴ and “Christ is formed in [us],”¹⁵ we will prove ourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God. He will enable us to live above reproach. Then we will be able to offer the “word of life” to a spiritually lost world.¹⁶

No matter how long we have

be conscious that “our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”¹⁹

Until then, we continually need the Spirit’s transforming work within us to effectively be His witnesses in a world that so desperately needs the message of the Savior. **tpe**

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ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

“There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God’s forgiveness and repent of your sins.

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13 (See Acts 3:19.)

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

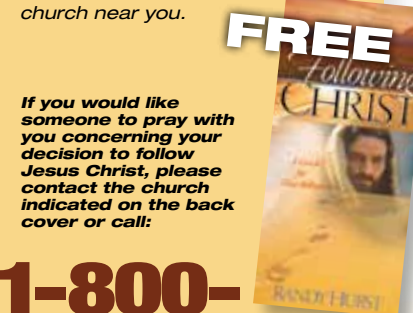
Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

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⁸ Philippians 1:6, ⁹ Galatians 4:19, NKJV, ¹⁰ 2 Peter 1:4, ¹¹ 2 Peter 1:5-7, NIV, ¹² 2 Peter 1:8, NASB, ¹³ 2 Corinthians 3:18, NKJV, ¹⁴ 2 Peter 1:4, ¹⁵ Galatians 4:19, ¹⁶ Philippians 2:15,16, ¹⁷ Philippians 3:12, NLT, ¹⁸ Philippians 3:14, ¹⁹ Philippians 3:20,21