

Living a Transformed Life

When you accepted Christ, some changes occurred *in* you, but for the most part, you accepted what was done *for* you. Salvation was a gift from God to you. All you could do was accept what Christ made possible *for* you on the cross. Now God wants to do more *in* you, along with what He is doing *for* you. The transformation God wants to complete in you is referred to as *sanctification* in the Bible.

Sanctification is an act of God in which He declares that you belong exclusively to Him by cleansing your heart from its bent toward sinning and filling you with His Spirit so you are transformed and empowered to live a holy life. You cooperate with God's work by placing your faith in His sanctifying grace and fully consecrating yourself to Him.

Freedom from the penalty and power of sin

God promises to free you from the penalty *and* power of sin. He freed you from the penalty of sin when He forgave you. But the power of sin will still be felt in your life. There is something inside you that remains responsive to temptation and may even lead you back into sin. You may know what is right and want to do what is right, but you can find yourself doing what you don't want to do (Romans 7:18-24). God wants to break the bondage that sin continues to have on you. This bondage is the result of your "sinful nature" (Ephesians 2:1-3). We all have a sinful nature that causes us to do what is wrong much easier than what is right. There is hope, however. God promises to cleanse your sinful nature and to implant His divine nature in you (2 Peter 1:3-4).

Forgiveness and cleansing

Justification is the act of God that frees you from the penalty of sin and cancels the judgment against you. *Sanctification* is the act of God that cleanses your heart and sets you apart for a special, holy purpose. You belong to God now and He is transforming you by forgiving and cleansing you. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins (justification) and purify us from all unrighteousness" (sanctification). We need both forgiveness and cleansing.

Empowered for life and service

God promises to empower you for effective life and service. You can't always live at your best and serve God effectively on your own. You may already have found that you do not always have confidence and experience the results you would like in your witness and in your work for God. You lack something. When He left His disciples, Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the gift God was going to give them: "In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:5, 8).

Filled with the Holy Spirit

This is God's great promise to you. He will give you His Spirit to fill (baptize) you (Ephesians 5:18) and to live in you. This is His provision to assist you in becoming more like Jesus. You can't walk like He walked without the cleansing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Don't you already have a hunger for more of God? Doesn't something in you tell you that there must be more He wants to do in you to make you like Christ?

How can it happen?

Faith

God always accomplishes His work in us through our response of faith. Faith is accepting the promise of God and committing ourselves to partner with Him as He works out His purpose in us.

Complete commitment

The first thing God wants you to do is to commit yourself completely to Him. He wants you to yield yourself to His work in you. He wants you to realize that when you are in control, your life can quickly lose control. He wants you to see that you are incapable of living a holy life, and allow Him to *make* you holy. You must first surrender to Him.

Leave the past

God wants you to die to your old way of living—to really leave it all behind. Old habits, responses, and associations are not always easy to break. God wants you to be willing to die to all the residue of your past way of living. The Bible says, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry...You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived" (Colossians 3:5, 7). You have to be willing to die to your sinful life in order to experience God's full life.

Love God

God wants you to love Him with all of your heart. You must decide that you are going to set your affections on God alone. When you love God with all of your heart, He will help you to love other people in the same way that He does—unconditionally.

Are you prepared to surrender your life completely to the will and work of God?

God is a work

God is working in you and is waiting for you to take the step of faith that will fully release His cleansing and filling of your life. The Bible says, “He [God] who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians. 1:6).

Surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit

Becoming a Spirit-filled, sanctified, holy person began on the day you accepted Christ as your savior. Now that you more fully realize your need and are willing to surrender to His work, God is ready to more fully do His work in you. It may take awhile for you to see the areas of your life that are not pleasing to God and that need His cleansing. This is the work of the Holy Spirit that was given to you when you accepted Christ—to affirm that you are a child of God and to turn the lights on in the closets of your life that need to be opened up and cleaned out. This started when you took your first step of faith. It is made more complete when you surrender fully to the Lordship of Christ and to the cleansing of the Holy Spirit.

You will not always perform perfectly, but your heart can always be perfectly set on Christ and your motives can always be pure. Ultimate perfection will only come when you are released from a body and a world that carry the residue of sin. That will be the final step—when you leave this earth and complete the journey by stepping into heaven.

Take the step

Meanwhile, your next step awaits you. God is waiting to fill you with His Spirit, cleanse your sinful nature and empower you for living a full and effective life. Are you ready to take the step?

When you realize you cannot complete the journey unless God does something more for you and in you, God is leading you into His next big step for you—the sanctified, Spirit-filled life. You need to cooperate with God by

- allowing Him to be in charge of your life, not you
- being willing to die to everything that represents sin in your life, and
- determining to love God with all of your heart.

Then He is able

- to fill you with His Spirit
- to fully cleanse your heart from sin
- to empower you to be effective in your witness and work
- to help you love Him and others with a pure love, and
- to overcome the power of temptation in your life.

God always works in partnership with your will and your faith. You hold the key that opens the doors to the rooms of your life behind which lie those things that hold you back spiritually and hamper your walk with God. When you unlock the doors and give God access, you allow Him to do those things that will enable you to walk like Jesus did.

Are you ready to say—

I want my heart to be pure and my witness and work for God to be more effective. I totally commit my life right now to Christ and open my heart to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that He might cleanse me of anything that is contrary to God's purpose and provide me with the ability to walk like Jesus did—holy, victoriously and effectively.

Tell God you need to be cleansed and changed. Surrender yourself to Him—every part of your life. Turn your back on the patterns and habits of your old life. Receive the Holy Spirit who will enable you to live a transformed life. Trust God to sanctify you wholly.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

(1 Thess. 5:23-24)