

# CONFORM



# TRANSFORM



by  
Elaine McLachlan

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## INTRODUCTION

In my first book (Of-fences) I told about my life up to the point of becoming free of the pain of the past by learning forgiveness and letting go of grudges which build fences. At the end of the book I belonged to a small church and I thought the book was finished – everything in the future looked hopeful.

Since the first book was finished I found God had new adventures for me – my future – but though this was a dream from long ago, when I first became a Christian, I never knew that a God-dream is always reliable and God always brings it to pass if we are willing and obedient. God wants us to hold on to Him and His promises, both in the written word and in His thoughts and revelations planted in our hearts.

Actually He gave me the title of this book (and the picture on its cover), even while I was writing the first book. An alternative title could be 'How does one *fly* over circumstances?' I have come to the conclusion that God never designed us to be "trudgers". Under His wings we can soar! (Psalm 91:3)

*Romans 12:1,2 Therefore I urge you brothers (and sisters) in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual (reasonable) act of worship.*

*Do not conform any longer 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.*

## CHAPTER 1. What do I want to be?

Some people are very happy with their lives. They are clever, successful, rich even, and have all they need and some over to spend

on favourite pastimes and even luxuries for themselves. They don't mind that others suffer (even at their expense) and are even sometimes generous enough to give away an offering to these every now and again. This present life is all that matters.

Others are at the opposite end of the scale. They never have enough, and what they do have is wasted, often on favourite pastimes and bad habits they can ill afford. They are frequently sick and demand the government or the welfare agencies (sometimes the church) to help them, so they can continue to squander their lives, making do and complaining all the way. Many get caught in addictions to numb their pain – alcohol, gambling or even pornography &/or sex.

There's an interesting proverb (30:8,9). "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you, or I may become poor and steal and dishonour the name of my God."

This saying however is not attributed to Solomon, one of the richest people in the world, but to Agur, son of Jakeh, about whom nothing is known and who seems to know nothing much about God (Proverbs 30:2,3). Perhaps he knew God's own testimony in Job 38. He does believe God exists but is far away, and he certainly does not realise that God desires relationship with His highest creation – man, such as Moses and Abraham had.

This attitude of Agur is how the average person sees God. God is out there but irrelevant to daily life, yet it is still worth praying to him at a time of need.

However even the Old Testament shows examples of people who have relationship with God through faith. Moses desired fellowship with God, entered into covenant relationship with Him, sought Him regularly in all matters. Abraham also was a friend of God, having entered into covenant relationship with Him by faith, and Abraham communed with God regularly, worshipped and obeyed Him and submitted to God's training and leadership.

These two examples make it plain that a personal relationship with Almighty God, who actually desires our fellowship, is the only satisfying life.

The New Testament makes it even plainer. Before Jesus came, people had the Law and the Prophets to guide them, but people had to learn the written word by word of mouth, because there was no easy access to learn by reading for oneself.

There is no excuse in our times, where there is easy access to the written word for most people, and we can read it for ourselves. Only in the poorest countries where they have been indoctrinated in tribal and other religions that there has been no demand. Even then faithful missionaries have tried to produce translations of God's word in the local languages, and as these people read for themselves, the Holy Spirit interprets the truth to them, and they begin to embrace it.

So here are our choices – 1. we can ignore God and God’s word and develop our own lives in our own way in our own strength

2. we can rely on handouts like baby birds do,

3. we can take control and find out the best value, system with serious intent – become a seeker after truth,

4. we can read or hear the testimony of someone who has found out the best way to live, learn from that person and pursue that course.

In the first example we are our own god and conform to our own ways with their own limitations. This can be discouraging and is self-defeating if we want change in our lives.

In the second example we conform to get what we want but are totally subject to the giver’s values and virtually become slaves to that person or agency.

In the third example, because God promises that all who seek will find, ultimately even the small faith of expecting to find answers will lead to God’s way, because God loves faith – this is how we relate to Him.

The fourth example is simple faith which God loves and promises to increase in us, so that we actually experience what we have purposed in our hearts. God promises that all who put their trust in Him will never be confounded. He actually stands by every promise He has made, and as we claim them He brings them to pass in our lives.

This fourth example is what I chose from my teenage years, and I have proved that God is totally reliable. He puts us through training

and disciplines us (Hebrews 12:7) but He is so good, so generous and so loving.

## CHAPTER 2. Where am I at the moment?

In chapter 1 I have outlined two extreme scenarios. Perhaps you, the reader, are at one or the other but you are still reading. I would like to explain what it means to conform to this world.

At the very beginning, Adam and Eve were in a perfect place and God had given them absolute authority over every created thing in the garden. God had also made them “speaking spirits” like Himself, with the ability to create by the words they spoke. The only restriction was a small requirement to help them understand that God was ultimately in charge, and that they were stewards of the world – “Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” – God warned them that breach of this stewardship would give them “the sack” – He put it like this – “if you eat from this tree you will surely die”.

There was quite an amusing advertisement on TV about a boss who had flu symptoms and one of his employees thought he would not come back from lunch, so he sat down in the boss’s chair at the boss’s desk with his feet up on the desk, only to be caught out when the boss came in, obviously unexpectedly. The boss had made a

miraculous recovery, thanks to some medication and was not amused and the employee was very ashamed and embarrassed. I can't remember whether the employee got the sack or not, but he certainly took a risk.

Well if you remember the story, Adam and Eve did eat the forbidden fruit and they did get the sack and were sent out of the garden of Eden. There is however another aspect to this story which makes what they did much worse than the employee in the above example.

God and all God's people have a deadly enemy who wants to be God. His name is Satan, or the Accuser, also known as the Deceiver. He is also a liar and a murderer.

The Genesis story tells how Satan came to Eve in the form of a snake and first accused God of holding out on Adam and Eve. This caused Eve to be confused and speak words that indicated that she had received the lie that God had held back a blessing from them. She added to God's instruction – "or even touch it". Satan is recorded as telling a straight-out lie, refuting what God said. Satan said "You will not die", and Eve was deceived into believing him and then doing what Satan wanted. Obedience to Satan is disobedience to God, betrayal of allegiance and failure of their stewardship. When Adam, instead of correcting Eve, participated too, their innocent trust in God was broken. Once their allegiance to Satan was given, he became the "de facto" authority on the earth because God always stands by His word and could not therefore take it back, once given. He had



decided that humankind were to be the stewards of the earth and therefore humankind had been given the right to “rule” even if they messed up. The Bible makes it clear that Satan has control in our world and that this deliberate act of defiance to God and His ways is born into every person from that day to this, causing every person to be spiritually disconnected from God until they are “born from on high”. This spiritual disconnection causes us to be subject to the “de facto” god of this world, and the lies and deception that he would feed into our lives and the lives of our families, past, present and future. This is why we have family failings and weaknesses. The curses go to 3 and 4 generations when we are given an opportunity to repent and choose LIFE. Satan only knows how to manipulate and curse. He is not able to bless – ever.

Because God is always in the blessing business, He desires to reconcile His precious created humans to Himself and undo this dreadful event. Even in the garden of Eden He planned the redemption of Man. He planned and prepared that one day one man would pay the death penalty for all mankind to be reconciled to Himself. They would be able to be “born again” spiritually, and become His children by adoption into His own family through faith in Him.

We are therefore automatically in Satan’s kingdom unless we choose to change our allegiance. The direction we are going in life is automatically towards death, not only physical but also spiritual.

Repentance is a change of direction. Being “saved” is exactly that – rescued from spiritual death and also, in a sense, from physical death too. We certainly do not stay in this world, but our soul and spirit crosses over into “eternal life” when our body no longer has breath. Opening our heart for God’s Holy Spirit to enter causes us to be “born from above” and have “genes” implanted in the likeness of the Eternal Immortal One.

This is a choice we make willingly, deliberately and by faith. God invites us – He sets before us blessings and curses – choose My way – choose LIFE. We only have our physical lifetime to make this choice.

### CHAPTER 3. Where do I want to go?

Everyone has a dream – actually something God has planted in our hearts. He has designed everyone to be unique. Although we have similarities, everyone is different and the most interesting combinations in partnerships and marriages are when we have different strengths and weaknesses. As they say, “Opposites attract”. It is actually quite natural that this should be so, but in sinful humans it is a recipe for TROUBLE and STRIFE.

Because of the curse and being in Satan's kingdom (he enjoys causing strife!) we do not appreciate (an expression of love) differences. Our comfort zone is conformity, especially to the lowest common denominator. Picking, criticizing, one-upmanship, superiority, quarrelling, envy and jealousy and suspicion are normal responses if someone is "different", because we need to justify our position all the time and to know we are right.

It is very difficult to achieve a God-given dream by ourselves. God, in His wisdom has decided partnerships are the best way to accomplish dreams. As you can see from the above explanation, if one is a member of Satan's kingdom because he/she does not realise how it is, the dreams are doomed from the start. Strife, frustration and even victimisation will put a serious blockage in the plans. Many businesses and marriages are shattered because Satan's strategies and characteristics intervened in a good plan. I believe this causes God as much grief as it does to the people concerned. When people begin the path of a dream with hope in their hearts, they invest time, money and talents, God is genuinely delighted. He loves zeal and hard work and desires to reward it. I believe He is cheering us on and longs to be invited into the project/ relationship/ whatever. Because He sees the end from the beginning He knows the pitfalls along the way and wants to help us through the "fires" and "floods".

Sadly, mostly, we leave God out of the equation. He is left on the sideline while we pursue His dream for us in our own way. We say "I'm OK", but we aren't of course. At the first "fire" we expect God to

bail us out. When He doesn't do as we tell Him, (as if He were our servant) or if we did not think to ask Him at all, we blame Him for not caring, we accuse Him and doubt His motives, just like Eve did in the garden of Eden. We say "where was God when this or that happened?" But our beautiful Lord was there all the time, holding out His hands and saying "please invite Me to help". As I explained before, unless we invite Him, He has limited Himself not to interfere. He has given us the authority and cannot go back on His word to take this authority back.

God is interested in all our dreams and desires, whether it is studies, jobs, relationships, family, health or other. Nothing is hidden from Him, yet He will not interfere. But if we invite Him to be a part of our activities, and are willing to submit to His greater knowledge and experience, waiting on Him to guide us, He will reveal His secrets to us. I'm convinced He intended to do this for Adam and Eve in the garden, to give them the knowledge of GOOD so that our choice would never be the evil that comes from the Tempter, Satan, because we would understand that evil brings death – to a relationship, a dream, our health or finances etc.

Everyone understands GOOD is success, health, prosperity, happiness. It's what we all want, but most of us do not achieve it. God's word says in 3 John that is what the blessing of God is because God is good.

When I understood this message and believed it, I decided for myself that was where I wanted to go, but how to achieve it is the

challenge. One thing I understand is that conformity to the lowest common denominator takes one on a downward path, not an upward one.

## CHAPTER 4. The Best Method – God’s Way

I mentioned in my first book (Of-fences) that I have never been able to conform to the demands of people. Sometimes I tried but when pressured I seemed to rebel. Certainly that was how the people who wanted to speak into (or even control) my life saw it, thinking that they were “training” me. People think they are doing right and when we are children this training is necessary. The way of God for each person, however, is a unique design and the best way is to hear from the Designer Himself.

It is so easy to give up your own identity and become a people-pleaser but that is not God’s way. It is also easy to just fight the status quo and rebel, finding all sorts of weird and wonderful ways to protest, through the clothes and/or jewellery we wear, the way we do our hair, have body piercing etc. These are quite minor protests but we can move into serious folly and sins as well because Satan enjoys rebellion and feeds into our hearts and minds all sorts of unusual and

fascinating things, especially religious stuff such as new-age and witchcraft.

In our present ministry we have met those who are into “goth” and “emo”, into promiscuity, and binge-drinking which can really ruin our health. Satan enjoys starting a new fad which unsaved teenagers fall into very easily. The terrible thing about these fads is that people do not know that they are slaves to Satan and trapped in a downward spiral of spiritual death which often leads to premature physical death too. These people do not know that, in an effort to not conform to the world, they are in actual fact conforming to the hidden plans of the god of this world – the evil one.

As I said in the last chapter, God has made every human unique and He also has a perfect life plan for each one. No one should have to do or be the same as any other person. Nevertheless, for the sake of unity (not unison), we need to respect each other, appreciate each other, especially the differences in our personalities, experiences, likes and dislikes etc. Sometimes we need to voluntarily rein in our freedom for the sake of others, and this is where maturity and wisdom are needed. Babies do exactly what comes naturally, without any thought for any work they cause others, but when we are grown-up we need to consider the consequences of our actions. At this point I will concede that there are many people of young age who act maturely and many adults, such as drunks who get in a car to drive, who act like babies.

So how do I find this life plan and follow it? It's really very simple if we are not proud.

Pride is the very thing that caused Satan's downfall – he wanted to be like God. Pride says 'my way is best' whereas God's way needs to be acknowledged as best. God says His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. This means that we cannot necessarily understand or reason out God's way – it comes to us by revelation through the Holy Spirit, whom God plants in our hearts when we surrender our lives to Him, by inviting Him in, and giving Him right to become our Master, through trusting Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God. The Bible says God's ways are foolishness to the unsaved person (1 Corinthians 2). People who try to rationalise God's ways, or to prove them "scientifically" are fated to frustration and failure, because faith is defined as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not yet seen". Both science and philosophy begin from human experience and knowledge and based on presumptions which are only ratified by acceptance and repetition and both seek to answer life's mysteries from the human perspective. Often they touch on real "truth" which of course gives weight to the presumptions and those who have put their trust in "science" or "philosophy" believe the whole package.

God's way is that we receive revelation of what is to come, believe it and speak it into being until it comes to pass. God is always moving us forward, not holding us to the past. This holding on to God's revelation takes resolve because as soon as we speak the "dream"

out, the god of this world begins his attack to thwart us from achieving the “dream”. However, when we have committed our lives to God, He is faithful and true and will not give up on us, to help us achieve His own goal for us, which is what the revelation effectively is. The Bible does warn us that (only) His sheep hear His voice (John 10), so this surrender is where we must begin. The dream is already implanted, possibly from a very young age (although not always) and mostly before we have any recognition of it being from God at all, unless we are blessed to be in a strong Christian family.

For example, my first son was already a "manager" when he was only 7 years old. He had a lot of training, even in the school of hard knocks, but God carried him through to his present work, whereas my second son loved pulling things to pieces and putting them back together again, even when he was very young, and became a very good tradesman. I find it amazing to see the gifting of God in such young children, which need to be nurtured and encouraged, never forcing children into the frustrated desires of the parents' hearts, but carefully trained and prepared for what God intends.

Sometimes we are not sure whether our dream is a good dream or a God dream. I can assure you that if we are surrendered to God's will for our lives God will use every mistake, every experience, in training for the plans He has for us. As we move along life's path He steers us, guides us, leads us faithfully and so even our mistakes are not wasted in His plans.



This is why I chose God's way for my life. Even if this training takes many years, and even near-death experiences, God's plans are never thwarted, if we choose to put our trust in Him.

## CHAPTER 5. The Difficulties

All our childhood training is towards conformity to this world's ideas and methods. We live in a world where reason is the principal thing whereas God's word says that "wisdom" is the principal thing (Proverbs 4:7) and God's wisdom only comes by the revelation of the Holy Spirit to us as we seek God, because only the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2).

Most people think that the Ten Commandments are the ultimate standard, whereas God only gave the Law because the Israelite people did not want to relate to Him personally, and God wanted to help them the best way He could to keep out of trouble. They witnessed God as a consuming fire, (which indeed the Scripture says He is), and they let fear rule their hearts. But it is God's holiness that will burn up all our sin. That is why God introduced blood sacrifice, so that the people could be "cleansed" of sin, and be able to approach God, just as Moses was able to on Mount Sinai. The Law was given to prove to us that we could not earn our righteousness, and that we

need God in our lives on a daily basis, repenting of going our own way, and asking Him into our hearts as fresh "manna" so that He can lead and guide us in everything we are and do.

Because we are trained in the world's way we have a lot of unlearning to do. This is very difficult because we like to think we are grown-up and know everything, even if we don't.

God is absolutely faithful in His commitment to us and is more than willing and able to train us, but we have to surrender our own sufficiency. Pride in what we have achieved thus far prevents us from this surrender, especially if we are living a "good" life, relatively clean and have achieved a measure of success in life. This is why Jesus says that it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That story in the Bible is very interesting because when the rich man asks "What must I do?" Jesus asks him about five of the commandments only. The rich man, probably quite truthfully, answers that he has kept these from his youth. Jesus did not ask him about the five that he probably would not have kept, as he obviously loved money before God, and probably coveted more. The Bible says that Jesus came, not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved. Living slightly more righteously than our neighbour is not meeting God's standard of righteousness so we are expected to measure ourselves by God's standard – "Be holy because I am holy". I think Jesus was hoping the rich man would be curious as to why Jesus had only mentioned five commandments, but it seems that

pride in his achievements had blinded the rich man to the truth of his failure to keep the whole law.

The scary thing about pride is that Satan was cast out of Heaven because of it. The Bible warns that pride goes before a downfall (Proverbs 18:12). It blinds us to the reality of our situation before God.

In our ministry we ask people to say "I repent of my sin". This statement really trips up "churched" people, who frequently say to us that they don't need to say this again because they have already done it. But pride in what we are or what we have done is a barrier to fellowship with God. We need to have a soft heart and we need to agree that God is right all the time and we could be wrong.

The most wonderful experience is when our cold and stony hearts are melted by the love of God. God promises to take away our heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36). It is very healthy to keep on repenting of sin when the Holy Spirit convicts or challenges us, because the more sinful practices we shed so that we no longer want to do them, the more desirable is God's presence to us. The consuming fire has burned up the ugly parts of our lives and God's love fills us more and more to overflowing as He promised. He says He wants to change us from one degree of glory to another.

This word "glory" is the anointing, the clothing of God's splendour which He puts on His righteous ones. People actually begin to see God's beauty on us as we are filled more and more with His love. It is not primarily what we do but who we are in Christ (the anointed one and his anointing).

When we really grasp how the gospel is supposed to work in our lives, not words but power to change, and we are willing to die to self and more and more seek Jesus' way we have reached a watershed and we will begin to change.

Repentance is where we start and that seems to be our main difficulty.

## CHAPTER 6. Change / Transformation

Once we have decided we want to get out of the world's way, we must begin in God's way, and allow Him to train us. The apostle Paul explains in Galatians 3:3 – begin with the Spirit, and continue from that point with the Holy Spirit. We cannot attain our goal by resorting to human effort. Paul also explains in Galatians 5 that reverting to law-keeping indicates we have fallen from grace and have been alienated from Christ (the anointed one and His anointing – the glory of God). This glory of God is defined in Colossians 1:27 as Christ in us, the mystery of God's plan that even angels wanted to know, but could not until God revealed it after Jesus had redeemed us and ascended into heaven. He sent His Holy Spirit to indwell those who will receive.

So perhaps, dear reader, you have repented before, but from what?

In my first book (Of-fences) I told about having been a Christian for more than 40 years, yet feeling the impulse of the Holy Spirit to get "saved". My mind told me that I was saved, born-again, Spirit-filled etc, etc. I have heard many churchgoers say "I have it already", and I was the same. But MY LIFE WAS NOT CHANGING! Many churches say a response – as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. It seemed my dream to be ordained, to be effective for God, and for my Christian life and witness to be fulfilling and successful would never come to pass.

I discovered that law-keeping is the problem. We pride ourselves on what we have and what we are in the church or even in God. I hope you can see the one fatal word in that sentence. However our Lord and Master came not to be served but to serve and give His life (as a ransom) for many. He warned that a servant is not above his master. We must emulate Jesus, and our aim should be to become more Christ-like. Indeed He promises in the apostle Paul's words, to be changed from one degree of glory to another.

### **So what is effective repentance?**

We come to God, without any agenda, any qualification. The Bible says there is none good, not one! We have nothing to recommend us, and throw ourselves on the mercy and love of God EVERY DAY! If there is any good in us in His sight we credit it only to Him. We need fresh blessing, fresh anointing for every deed to be successful in His sight and to be written in the "book" which is to be read at the

great white throne. God's eyes are searching the whole earth for those who desire to be fully committed to Him, to taste and see that the Lord is good. He is looking for sons and daughters who want to be loved by Him, receive His love and to love Him, demonstrating this by obeying His commands, His written word and those words He speaks into our hearts by the Holy Spirit in our time of communion with Him.

Many nominal Christians pick and choose what they will accept and reject what they don't want to accept because they want to continue to go their own way. They have made their own god of their intellect. They manipulate God's word to suit themselves and justify themselves all the time.

I must say at this point, we do not have to understand God's word to obey it. We can and should ask God for wisdom so that we can understand, but children do not understand not to touch a hot stove and just have to obey or suffer the consequence of possibly being burned. It really is the same when we enter the Kingdom of God as a little child (not by natural age but by age of being born from above). Be on the safe side and agree with God anyway. He really proves to be all-wise in His sayings!

So having repented, ie, agreed with God that He is right and we could be wrong because of being trained in the ways of the world, and having decided to follow God in full commitment, like a good son or daughter should do, it is good to confess this aloud. The god of this world needs to be served notice that we have changed kingdoms.

Jesus said that if we confess before men, he will confess before his Father in heaven (Mark 8:38). Many churches have "altar calls" for this purpose, but in the street ministry we just pray with people on a one to one basis. Romans 10:10 makes it plain that we must confess aloud to be saved.

A very important part of this initial step of being born from above (see John 3) is to invite the Holy Spirit into our lives, into our hearts. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot know the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2) and therefore His way for us, so it would be impossible to obey without "human effort". We would end up law-keeping again and thinking and doing all sorts of things which we could fool ourselves into thinking were pleasing to God, especially being a doormat to people's demands, when the Holy Spirit might actually want us not to do. This brings us back to slavery to the world's way. Jesus told us that it is good that He went to Heaven because He would send the Holy Spirit who would guide us and lead us into all truth. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to bless us and enable us to be born again into God's own spiritual family, not of the "flesh" but of the Spirit, and to continue and finish our lives in His ways. Christians cannot be Christians without being born anew into God's Spirit-breathed family, otherwise called born-again or born from above by the Life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. All this must be received by faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God. Someone put it this way: we take a step of faith towards God (on His terms) and He meets us every time with arms open wide, like the prodigal son's father did in Luke 15:20.

Because Jesus died for us while we were still sinners, God does not mind where we have been, even in a pig-pen, so long as we turn around to Him. The Bible says that the angels rejoice when a sinner (a person who is not in relationship with and/or has rebelled against God) repents as I have outlined. The father in this story put a clean new robe on the son. In other places in the Bible this is called a robe of righteousness or a wedding garment.

When Jesus comes into our hearts by faith by the Holy Spirit a miracle occurs. All the old ways are cleaned out. We believe that at this point it is best that a Christian leader imparts the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands and this is the reason many churches have the altar call, so that the pastor can impart the Holy Spirit and the new believer can receive power to live the life he/she has just been born into. God promises to work with His disciples in preaching the Word and confirm it with signs following or accompanying the ministry. This is how a person who has taken this first step will know God has met them. There will be a consciousness or even a feeling of God's presence, His loving arms around them, receiving them and melting their hearts, giving peace and a sense of having come home. Usually people feel clean inside and often new hope arises in them. Our experience is that God does this every time we come to Him for a fresh touch. Isaiah put it very well when he wrote "...I (God) live with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)



For an ongoing relationship with the invisible but very real God, this reality is absolutely essential. We believe this must be conveyed by physical touch. Research on orphans has discovered that if they are not touched they never receive love in their hearts and we believe this is also true for those who are born again into the family of God. The presence of the anointing also causes the demons to flee, as the Holy Spirit comes in all His fullness.

Once these first steps are done, transformation will begin. But it is only a beginning because Satan does not like losing and he will prowl around looking for entry points (1Peter 5:8), and will attack our minds to make us fall again by doubting God, as he did to Eve in the garden of Eden.

## CHAPTER 7. Walking

OK – so we are now truly born again – not just assenting to the theory of being born into God's family. Unfortunately, because this is a book and we are not physically connected, if you, dear reader, have not actually been blessed by a pastor who has prayed for you to receive the Holy Spirit by impartation, right now ask the Holy Spirit to bring you someone who can do this, so that you can experience the transforming power of the loving arms of the heavenly Father. This is

the calling and anointing of a few ministries<sup>1</sup> to do this work and we visit many places, and have these Divine encounters. The people we meet who choose to pray with us have received the appointing and anointing to do this work in our place. There are also a few churches that minister in this way.

Once we are born-again we must learn how to walk in the Spirit. There are many instructions in apostle Paul's letters and these should be our aim. I want to stress though that our life in the kingdom of God is a journey. A lot depends on where we have gone in our old striving life, and for how long Satan has controlled our thoughts and actions, causing us pain. We develop coping mechanisms to avoid pain, whether it is physical, mental, emotional or spiritual, and we have to relearn God's way for us. God is so generous and loving. He really longs to retrain us, even more than any good father or teacher would, and as He promises that His sheep hear His voice, He is able to make his way not only known but plain. We receive revelation and conviction in our hearts – where our born from above spirit abides.

(James 1:5)

Our main difficulty in relearning is new pain at letting go of the old ways. For example when I decide I want to lose weight and I resolve not to eat biscuits and cakes, it is amazing how an immediate "stress" situation arises – the very thing that my mind remembers that cake soothes. Of course it doesn't really remove the stress, but it temporarily makes me forget the stress. Afterwards, of course, I still

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1. eg, Combined Churches Mission Group, Mu Nu Ministries

have the stress to cope with anyway plus the problem of a few more Kg. The cake is a coping mechanism, but God's word is a more reliable solution.

I have decided not to eat cake for the good of my body, but the Devil wants to kill, steal and destroy. He brings one of his more than willing and obliging servants (usually nice people) to put some pressure to bear on my supposed-to-be-being-renewed mind so that I am tempted to turn to the old way. But God's word says, "draw near to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you." It's my choice. Obey God or listen to the tempter. This is constantly going on in our lives.

The most beautiful attribute of God though, is that He never condemns us. He knows our weaknesses. Just like a baby beginning to walk – when it tumbles over we don't smack it around the ears and tell it that it is an idiot. We smile and say "good try" and "have another go", because we know that practice makes perfect. God is much more generous than ever we can be because He is perfect. He is always ready to give us another chance. He wants to help us so much to be the people that He sees us to be, because of Jesus' intercession for us – to be changed from glory to glory into the likeness of His dear Son.

Testing develops perseverance (James 1:3,4) and perseverance develops character (Romans 5:4). When we really believe that God is in these trials we begin to trust God more. His word assures us that though these agents of the devil probably do mean it for evil, God

always means it for our good. He is right there, not only beside us but, remember, actually within us, by our own invitation, to strengthen, protect, encourage and guide. When we saturate our minds with these qualities of God and avail ourselves more and more of Him as our resource the old coping mechanisms become obsolete and we are eventually able to reject them completely. Suddenly we realise that we just don't need them – they are out of our lives at last. Good riddance!

This is what overcoming is about (1John 5:4). Everyone who is born of God overcomes the world's way. It is through our faith.

## CHAPTER 8. Leaping – becoming confident in the calling of God

Being an "overcomer" is a wonderful thing. For a start the believer is constantly conscious of God's "well done". It is not a smug self-satisfaction but the awareness of the partnership – human spirit with God's Spirit. We know that we have cooperated with God in HIS plan, for the success of both of us, united in purpose. God's will is for all people to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). These words are succinctly expressed but there is breadth, length, height and depth in the outworking of this. It includes our own freedom

and maturity, our unity in the Body of Christ, adding souls to the church, and the very believability of the gospel itself to the world when Christians demonstrate the power of a changed life – a visual testimony of Christ (the anointed One and His anointing) in us, the hope of glory (the richness, the splendour of God Himself). The power of the effectiveness of the Cross for forgiveness and cleansing from sin demonstrated in our lives brings honour to our beloved Saviour. Everything that is reclaimed from Satan's control is a victory for God and honours Jesus and the enormous price He paid to save the world. Every victory brings joy to heaven itself and is written in the "books".

What are these books? They are mentioned in Revelation 20:12. When I learnt about these books I was inspired to learn how to have my name in these books. After all, this is the final Judgement, the wrap-up of the world as we know it. The Bible says that if anyone's name is not found in the Book of Life he/she would go to the lake of fire forever.

It was very reassuring to find that the Book of Life contains the names of all those who have been born again by the Spirit of God. We have been marked with the seal (Ephesians 1:13) – the Holy Spirit is our Advocate at the final judgement. Jesus does give us a warning about this though – I know my sheep and my sheep know Me. (John 10:14) In Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of My Father." This passage in the Bible ends "Depart, I never knew you".

This is where the other books come in. These are the books of the deeds we have done which are the will of the Father. These are the records of the fruit of our obedience, which demonstrate that we truly love and appreciate Jesus, for what He has done for us.

One of the terrible "fruits" of being a people-pleaser is that we do "good" things that are not the Father's will for us. These works do not bring honour to Jesus, but allow others to have "satanic" powers, often over us. Therefore in effect it brings honour and glory to Satan himself. Because Satan is hungry for God's power all the time, until we realise this we are ignorant of his devices.

This is why being an overcomer, cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the good works He has prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10) is so important and so satisfying. This is why God Himself reassures us with that "well done", the joy of success in His assignments.

I would like to, at this point, say that these "works" are not necessarily what we call work. I was very impressed when I learnt a poem by John Milton – "On his blindness". The last line is – "They also serve who only stand and wait". Sometimes a whole troop of soldiers just stand ready and waiting.

God sees victory over sin as a good work, any victory over sickness as a good work. In fact everything that Jesus won for us on the Cross – sin, sickness, sorrow etc, any negative thing in life, when we decide to enforce God's stance in this matter, this is a good work. God is primarily interested in our character development, our relationship with Him through Jesus. Often this does involve physical work such

as a challenging job for the mutual benefit of the employer and the employee. Some are led to defend the oppressed and disempowered and personal time is involved which is a sacrifice. All who have family responsibilities have to put in that personal investment of time to be faithful in the relationships. The most important thing is that the Holy Spirit always leads and guides our steps, and sometimes He even takes us out of the action when we would like to be in it.

When we put our trust in God though, God is faithful, and if we make a mistake the Holy Spirit always gives us a nudge. It is so easy with a softened heart to say sorry and receive forgiveness.

I have headed this chapter "Leaping". When your life journey into being transformed has reached this stage (even with a few regressions) we are so comfortable with the presence of God, and we love the "well done" so much, as any child does, that we miss Him if He has drawn back or if we are even so slightly off track. The warmth of God's abiding presence has our spirit leaping for joy in His love. We become more and more conformed to His way because it gives such peace and contentment.

An old song put it like this – *Heaven above is softer blue*

*Earth around is sweeter green*

*Something lives in every hue*

*Christless eyes have never seen*

and –

*Loved with everlasting love*

*Led by grace that love to know*

*Spirit breathing from within*

*You have taught me it is so  
Oh this full and perfect peace  
Oh this rapture all divine  
In a love which cannot cease  
I am His and He is mine.*

## CHAPTER 9. Praising God – seeing results

All the Apostle Paul's encouragement to Timothy and to Titus come from his own struggles and his own experiences. Indeed he wrote to the Corinthians – "God comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort one another as we have received from God". He knew from Joseph's life as recorded in Genesis – they meant it for harm but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20).

This perseverance, this character-building, this training and enduring of hardship qualifies us and equips us to be good-work-men (and women). Paul encourages Timothy to do his best to present himself to God as one approved. A good tree brings forth good fruit, Jesus says. We are made holy, so as to be useful to the Master, and prepared to do any good work. In Titus the apostle Paul puts it this way: "Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us (from the evil one and his ways) to purify for Himself a people that are His very own,



eager to do what is good". Again I repeat...good according to the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, not our own way, our own definition of good.

Why did God tie His own hands in this world, giving authority to those He created in His image?

We do not understand God's wisdom in this because His ways are higher than ours, His thoughts than ours but Psalm 8 gives us a clue – verse 2..."from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise"....and verse 5..."you have crowned him with glory and honour".

There is no pleasure in machines operating as they are made to do, and only irritation if they fail. But great love given and reciprocated is the ultimate in relationships. Respect, order, synergy make for satisfying life and smooth function. As I said earlier in the book, God decided that partnership was the way to go. He wanted this with Adam and Eve and He has never changed. Psalm 133 says "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live in unity together". The power, strength and glory of God flow into the world and create His Kingdom here on earth.

God chooses to use people who are dependant on Him (His children, not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit). We receive His advice and His instructions and work with him, wherever He leads. This brings praise to Him, the "sacrifice" that He enjoys most. Why? Because Jesus deserves the honour and glory, because He was obedient, even unto death.

However partnership is a wonderful thing. When He gets the praise, the human partner gets caught up in it too. God is able to get the blessings He wants to pour out, into the world. He says "How can they hear without a preacher". He needs those whom He has called, anointed and appointed to cooperate by the Holy Spirit's power to bring His will into the earth.

Many people do not understand this and so they come to the wrong conclusion that God does not care about a matter.

God however has made His family a kingdom of priests. From the moment He breathed the Holy Spirit onto the disciples immediately after His resurrection He gave them His authority to forgive sins (who can forgive sins except God alone) – to claim back what the devil had taken. He had already told them that they would do even greater works (than calming the storm, raising the dead etc) and they had even tried this ministry already as they went about with Him during those three years that He taught them. He expected great faith in His followers. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for (not yet become visible).

From this moment after the resurrection there was only one more thing – wait in the city till the power from on high comes upon you. After Pentecost there was no stopping the Kingdom's spread. From that day to this the power of the Holy Spirit in, and the anointing on the disciples of Jesus advances the Kingdom. The only thing that can slow or stop it is lack of **faith** and the **recognition of God's purposes** in those who say they are believers.

*You are my friends if you do what I command.*

*He who wins souls is wise.*

*The prayer of faith will make the sick person well.*

*You will be My witnesses... to the uttermost parts of the earth.*

Our success is promised and assured, if we choose God's way.

Jude says "build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love...be merciful to those who doubt, snatch others from the fire and save them...to the only wise God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord (working in us and through us)... now and for evermore.

AMEN.