

## Consider The Butterfly

**Metamorphosis from Worm to God**

**John W. Ritenbaugh**

**Given 04-Jun-05; Sermon #722**

**Proverbs 6:6-11** Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provides her meat in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall your poverty come as one that travels, and your want as an armed man.

This series of verses is an invitation for us to explore a very insignificant part of God's creation so that we might be better equipped to understand a way that we can be more successful in the business of living in God's creation. It is advice from a successful father to his children, and this successful father though, is our Creator.

Despite the insignificance of any individual ant, it is nonetheless a specific portion of God's creation. I say that because God put specific thought into this insect, and He deposited in it its characteristics—a tiny, but nonetheless important portion of God's mind so that we will know how to be more successful.

There are two lessons to be learned from this illustration. The first is that the characteristics created in the ant that work to produce success is its self-driven diligence to accomplish its task. Its tasks are demanded by its part in the overall scheme of things, and it does not allow itself to be distracted and sidetracked for very long from the business at hand. It is a self-starter, and like the bunny in that advertisement, it keeps on keeping on.

The second lesson is that our Father in heaven is warning us that in the scheme of earthly things, if we do not copy the ant, our poverty is assured, that step by step, as one travels, it will come. And so then, success is directly tied to one's sacrificing oneself to diligence.

When I was a boy growing up in the general area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, every so often, as I was riding into the city on a streetcar on my way to the downtown area, I would pass by the Buhl Planetarium. This planetarium is an impressive, beautiful, solid building of marble and granite construction. On the side of the front wall facing the main street, Psalm 19:1 is chiseled into the granite. It states: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." This too is an invitation stating that if we want to know more about God and our part in the scheme of things, we must look at what He has made.

The general idea from this verse is that the heavens are something that is within easy view of everyone with sight and conveys the obvious impression of the greatness of the power and the majesty of God.

David did not perceive the sky as essentially empty, but a place that was filled with wonder and awe because of its immensity and the radiance of all of its parts and the precise movement of the bodies within it.

In Romans 1:16-20 we find the apostle Paul added something else. The heavens and the information that is available from it comes through the eyes, but here in verse 16 he adds another of our facilities to it.

**Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Another sense is added here besides our eyes. The gospel can either be heard by our ears, or the gospel can come through our eyes too as we read of it in God's Word. We are encouraged by David, Solomon, and by the apostle Paul to use our senses to understand much about God through His creation.

**Romans 1:17** For therein [that is, in the Gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

What we are looking at here is God's righteousness that is in the gospel—His right doing and configuring of things.

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**Romans 1:18-20** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold [or rather suppress] the truth in unrighteousness: Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Everything that God does is right. That is what righteousness is. It is rectitude, and Paul is declaring that God is neither confused nor absent-minded, but rather He is purposeful, powerful, and instructive at every turn. Paul declares that this revelation of Him is so clear and strong that mankind is without excuse before God. Because it is so clear, mankind is required to live by faith—that is, believing and trusting in what is so clearly revealed by what man can observe with his eyes and hear with his ears.

In Acts 14 something else is added. This little episode occurred whenever people confused the apostles as being representations of, or even the gods, of their mythology.

**Acts 14:14-17** Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered [allowed] all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, [It is going to witness of something very specific.] in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

This verse actually adds another concept, and rain is the illustration. It specifically says that God *sends* rain, thus implying that the rain has been *directed* there. That rain is not a haphazard occurrence, but is provided by God to insure life even though people are ignorantly unaware of God's

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graciousness in providing it in spite of their evil conduct. In Matthew 5:45 Jesus confirmed this, because He said that, "God *makes* His rain to fall on the just and the unjust."

So the creation, in an overall sense, reveals that God is a God of order, that He brings order out of what appears to man at first glance to be chaos, and that He *mercifully* rules what He makes. A serious looking into His creation reveals His artistry, His craftsmanship, wisdom, and a pattern that all He has made is progressing toward a predetermined conclusion.

We are going to add something else to this. I am going to read the entire chapter of Proverbs 8, because it is so meaningful.

**Proverbs 8:1-36** Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She stands in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She cries at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be you of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understands, and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honor are with me; yes, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their

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treasures. [It is still talking about success here.] The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. [God is speaking here.] When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso finds me finds life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sins against me wrongs his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

In this chapter wisdom is not the general *right behavior* in the overall setting of the entire book as it was in chapter 1, but rather it is the correct *conclusion* that one reaches just before making the choice to conduct himself properly. Wisdom is personified here as an individual woman, and she declares in the first three or four verses that **wisdom is not hidden**. It is clearly available. Now where do you think it is available from? You are living in it—in God's creation! Right now you have wisdom right before you in that Bible. It is part of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it should be your companion every day.

Recall that Proverbs is counsel from a father to a son, and he purposely used the female as his metaphor in chapter 8. By doing so, he is suggesting to his son that wisdom is something that his son, a male, should be drawn to, to look at wisdom more than just casually, just as surely as if he were standing on a corner watching all the girls go by.

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Notice again verses 1-3, and verse 9.

**Proverbs 8:1-3** Does not wisdom cry? And understanding put forth her voice? She stands in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She cries at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.

What is God saying here? He is saying that wisdom is everywhere we look. Are we thinking, brethren? Are we analyzing? Are we judging? Are we making decisions to choose the right and the good?

**Proverbs 8:9** They [righteousness, frowardness, perverseness given in verse 8.] are all plain to him that understands, and right to them that find knowledge.

In verses 1, 2, 3, and 9, God is saying that wisdom, metaphorically, is making noise in order to draw attention to itself. This is why David said something similar in Psalm 19:1 when he said, "The heavens declare [or proclaim] the glory of God."

I can speak to the young fellows here. Do you not understand that women, especially single women, to some degree dress to draw attention to themselves? In the sense of what is written here in Proverbs 8, when a woman does this with her attire, she is making noise, proclaiming, declaring, so that others will look at her and be instructed.

Let us make this real obvious. Why do streetwalkers wear the clothing (or I should say *almost* wear the clothing) that they do? Are they not proclaiming to the men who are going by what they are? God is using that sort of analogy that this is the way it is with wisdom. There is wisdom in His creation if we will look at it, and think. There is wisdom in His Word that will help us to be successful.

Virtually all the remaining verses from verse 10 on in chapter 8 are proclaiming how useful wisdom is, and therefore how valuable it is to success in life.

From here I want you to go back to the New Testament, to the book of Hebrews.

**Hebrews 1:1-4** God, who at sundry times and in different manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His son whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds. [The word "worlds" here is mistranslated. It should read "ages."] Who [the Son] being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

The author of a commentary I once read said that this is without a doubt the greatest first paragraph in any book that has ever been written. He said it is like a thousand fireworks going off at one time if we could only understand what is being said here about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that He is the effulgence of God's glory. It is declaring His greatness, of which we only know a very tiny portion.

Last afternoon and evening I was in my motel room in Denver, and we got hit with a pretty spectacular storm. It was one of those storms where the rain was coming down in buckets and sheets. There was a fairly strong wind, but not of hurricane force. Lightning was flashing all over the place. I was watching that, and toward the end of the storm as the rain was slowing down, and the lightning strikes as well, I got to thinking: What would that have been like if all of those lightning strikes had taken place, let us say, in five or ten seconds? That would have been magnificent! That is kind of the way I look at the first paragraph of Hebrews 1.

Do we deliberately take notice of God's creation for the purpose of accumulating knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in order to enhance our relationship with Him? Do we take notice of His creation in order to understand a bit more about His greatness and to be more appreciative of the

life that He has called us to, knowing on the one hand that someday we are going to be in the image of this very God that is being described right here who is the effulgence of the glory of God?

The creation describes His mind—everything from His sense of humor to His sense of justice, to His lovingkindness—in order that we be shown, so that we can know Him better. As we see here, He is daily sustaining life in this entire creation. He is the power behind all laws, forces, and energies. Laws receive a continuous supply of power from Him in order that they continue to *be* laws, because a law is only a law when it is always acting and reacting in the same way. He did not just create them and walk off allowing them to work on their own.

Evelyn and I were listening to the Paul Harvey news at noon a few days ago, and he was describing something that one of these huge powerful telescopes picked up. It picked up a massive tremendous explosion that took place tens of thousands of light years away. How long ago it took place, I do not know, but what Paul Harvey proclaimed is that the astronomer said that the creation is still taking place. Is our God still working, thinking of His children who are going to inherit His Kingdom?

We are going to take a look at another of God's creation, and like the ant, it is insignificant in the overall scope of things, but it shows the thoughtful detail that God has put into His creation.

Some of His creations are beautiful to behold; others, to this man anyway, are downright ugly, and they have features that we might consider to be detestable, but every one of them is purposefully made, and performs some sort of a role, that we may not consider, in this creation. If we look carefully enough, we can find that they play a role that either helps support human life, or instructs us concerning God Himself and His purpose.

About a month ago I received a mailing from a group having a church of God connection, and it contained an article titled "Consider the Butterfly." I hope that I will be forever grateful to these people for sending this to me. The article was written by Jerry Healan. It was such a helpful article to me,

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drawing attention to an amazing parallel between God's regenerated children and the butterfly that I wanted to share it with others, and that is why you are getting this sermon.

Now none of what I have already said was in his article. That was my own addition to serve as an introduction. I also felt that since it is springtime and that Pentecost is right around the corner concerning its instructions of God's first spiritual harvest being right on the horizon, that this subject material is appropriate for this time of year. Spring is a time of new birth and regeneration. New things are brought forth as seeds germinate into trees, flowers, grasses, and even weeds. It is a time when much livestock bring forth their new generation.

Much that has lain dormant through winter springs forth, awakening to a new generation of life to begin again the cycle of life of its kind that has been followed for perhaps thousands of years. In fact, this season derives its name from this process of living things springing forth to new life after a period of winter dormancy.

The butterfly appears to live a carefree existence, and is one of the more beautiful of God's creatures, but it was not always carefree or beautiful, and in this is a very important lesson for us.

The butterfly's life begins as the great majority of all of God's creatures. It began as an egg that had to be fertilized, and in turn hatched into a worm or a caterpillar, which is certainly one of the least desirous, and in fact even a detestable, portion of God's creation. At birth the caterpillar, or worm, emerges with a voracious appetite. Butterfly and moth caterpillars can eat their way through whole gardens, and have been known to consume an entire forest, and in this stage of their life they can do a great deal of harm. They can wreak such devastation as even to tip the ecological balance to such an extent that they wipe themselves out of existence.

This beautiful creature actually begins its life cycle in such a fashion as to be rightly considered as a monster. However, it eventually reaches a state in its life cycle that tells it somehow that it has done enough, and so it searches out a suitable place, and spins a cocoon that will be its home for awhile, and goes to sleep.

Now while in the cocoon, does the caterpillar slowly change into a butterfly? This may be surprising, but it does not. Fairly recent biological studies have shown that the caterpillar contains a substance within its body called by the scientists "anlagen." Anlagen contains the DNA which produces the butterfly. The caterpillar actually perishes. It dies. Meanwhile, the anlagen cells—the building blocks of the butterfly—produce a ***brand new creature*** ! During the first part of the caterpillar's life the anlagen cells are there, but appear to be dormant, and toward the end of the caterpillar's life the anlagen cells wake up and begin to grow. In reality, while it is still in the worm stage, the butterfly is growing *inside* the caterpillar. The caterpillar is just food. The scientist who discovered the anlagen cell called this unusual factor "an embryo within an embryo."

Once the cocoon is produced, a butterfly emerges in somewhere between 10 and 12 days. The caterpillar was ugly, hungry, and destructive. The new creature that emerges from the cocoon is entirely different. But consider the changes. The emergent creature looks different. It is very beautiful, colorful, delicate, desirable, and even lovable.

The caterpillar was earthbound, but the butterfly has beautiful wings and is able to flit about from place to place in what appears to be a carefree manner. It is no longer destructive, insatiable, having a voracious appetite, nor does it even eat the same things. After the butterfly emergence, the only thing that it eats is the nutritious nectar of flowers.

The butterfly does not destroy the creation with vigor, but rather promotes life by being a pollinator. In fact scientists have found that the life of some plants actually hinges on whether a butterfly pollinates them, and without the butterfly those plants would die. This is a far cry from what the worm had been before the butterfly emergence from the cocoon.

We are now going to look closely at the parallels and the lessons for us in this creature. Because you know God's plan and purpose, you are already beginning to be aware of an *amazingly* close analogy there is for us to be encouraged and from which we receive understanding and wisdom.

Let us go to the book of Isaiah. On the surface, this originally was intended for the nation of Israel. I want you to take this personally because we are going to see that this is really intended for you and me.

**Isaiah 41:8-14** But you, Israel, are my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth [This is one of the reasons I know this is intended for the church. Ancient Israel was not taken from the ends of the earth. The church is, from all over the world.], and called you from the chief men thereof, and said unto you, You are my servant; I have chosen you, and not cast you away. Fear you not: for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish. [This is coming, brethren.] You shall seek them, and shall not find them, even them that contended with you: they that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the Lord your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not; I will help you. Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel: I will help you, says the Lord, and your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Do you see what God called us human beings? A worm. The whole nation, the whole church, is populated by worms. That is an interesting perspective, brethren. Are we really better than a caterpillar? We certainly have a great deal more potential. But I am going to confirm this to you. We are going to go back to Job 25. It is interesting here because the speaker is Bildad.

**Job 25:6** How much less man, that is a worm?

What we have to get here is the proper perspective; because man is being compared to God, and compared to God we are a worm. Now if we are compared to other things that are on earth that are also part of God's creation, we might appear to be pretty great in comparison to them. But from God's point of view, He puts us in the proper place. Compared to Him, we are a worm.

Let me show you something in Psalm 22 that is surprising. I know that you have read these things. In Psalm 22 David is speaking of himself, and what he wrote about himself turned out to be applied to Christ.

**Psalm 22:1-6** My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? [Who said that? Jesus said it while He was on the stake.] Why are you so far from helping me and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But you are holy, O you that inhabit the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in you: they trusted, and you did deliver them. They cried unto you, and were delivered; they trusted in you, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

In His humanity, Jesus did not elevate Himself above other men. He took upon Himself the seed of Abraham, and as we saw in Isaiah 41, and in the book of Job, He called Himself a worm in comparison to God.

In one sense this gets even more disgusting because there are several words used by the Hebrew that are translated into the one English word "worm." But the ones used in all of the verses that I just read is the word that specifically means "maggot." I think, brethren, that there is hardly anything more detestable to human senses than a maggot eating away at dead flesh. Compared to God, we are maggots.

Why then are we humans, who are so full of pride and lust, who devour wherever we happen to be in our environment, so puffed up about ourselves? When we are seen from *God's* perspective, how do we look at ourselves? The way we act is largely driven by a matter of perspective; that is, the way we perceive ourselves. We are self-centered to the core, and the result is that we do not look at ourselves very much from God's point of view because God is not in all of our thoughts very often. But brethren, what we just saw in these three verses is reality.

I want you to think about what I am just about to now say: Man is the only destructive, *by choice*, physical creature that God has created. Man is a **worm** destructive to God's creation, and to himself. In Galatians 5, we find what Paul wrote. Remember, he wrote to converted people.

**Galatians 5:13-15** For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. [We can choose which way we are going to do.] For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, [That is what maggots do.], take heed that you be not consumed one of another.

It is very interesting that Paul used the very word "devour," because what we just read is the lead-in to the "works of the flesh," beginning in verse 16.

**Galatians 5:16-18** This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law [because we do not bring upon ourselves the death penalty].

Now here is how we devour one another:

**Galatians 5:19-21** Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

All of man's ways are ultimately destructive because he does not see the bigger picture from God's point of view. He does not see himself the way God does, and in his overall view he has tunnel vision, and he drives himself

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to use his environment as he self-centeredly sees fit, and that environment includes other people.

Mankind's histories provide ample evidence that unless there is a God who can transform us from what we are, that there is no hope, because we will do as has been done in the past until nobody is left. This is exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 24:

**Matthew 24:22** Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved [alive]: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Jesus is saying that if God did not do something, if He did not intervene, if there is not some sort of transformation, we will destroy all human life off the face of the earth. We will devour one another completely. What is needed is a metamorphosis.

Metamorphosis is a term used for the caterpillar's change into a butterfly. Forms of this word appear occasionally in the New Testament. The term is derived from a Greek word and, according to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, means: transformed, transfigure, a change of form, shape, structure, or substance; a marked or complete change of character, appearance, condition.

In order for mankind to not devour itself right off the face of the earth, man must be transformed. He must be changed. Of primary concern is a transformation of the heart of our very spiritual nature, and thus our character and conduct. Not only that, we find in the New Testament that our very substance must be changed.

**I Corinthians 15:50** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

That is interesting. We are worms. We are maggots. We are corruption.

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**I Corinthians 15:51-53** Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Human life cannot continue indefinitely as we now are. We are approaching a deadline because man's technological knowledge has successfully devised ways of destroying all human life, completely devouring ourselves. Here we find that if mankind is going to continue on, even his form of life must be changed. But how are we going to come to this change?

Do you remember the anlagen? Think about what you know now about DNA. DNA carries the code of what it is, and what it will reproduce into. The anlagen is within the caterpillar, but it is not really a part of the caterpillar. If it were part of the caterpillar, it would reproduce another caterpillar. The anlagen carries the DNA of the butterfly.

Can you understand that in order for life to continue on into the Kingdom of God *we* must receive something from without? We must receive something that is not part of our nature—something that is not by nature a part of us and does not carry human DNA. Now that "something" is *God's* Holy Spirit

How does the process that institutes this necessary change, this transformation, begin? Go with me to Acts 2. Peter, under the inspiration of God on that first Pentecost, said the following words.

**Acts 2:38** Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The transformation begins with a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of moral reflection, a change of one's moral and spiritual thinking processes in relation to God and to His standards. Repentance is a *change*.

What I just said is extremely important because people can change their minds about many things in life, but if this process—a moral and spiritual metamorphosis—is to begin, the change of mind must be in relation to God. Nothing else will do. And if we do, we are promised the gift of God's Holy Spirit, and that will begin the transformation into a new creation—a new being of very great difference in nature and substance.

When true godly repentance occurs, the person truly, honestly, and humbly now begins to see everything from God's point of view, that person's worldview—the way he now looks at things—becomes biblical. He begins to see everything through the words of God, and what God has made that reveals His mind.

What happens then when one repents?

**Romans 7:8-11** But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without [apart from] the law sin was dead. For I was alive without [apart from] the law once: but when the commandment came [i.e., when understanding came], sin revived, and I died. [Paul knew he was guilty, and God had him dead to rights, and could execute him at any time, and Paul's view of himself, in relation to God, shrank to the level of a worm, and he died, he said.] And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Paul is describing his conversion. He is describing the process that began when God struck him down on the road to Damascus, and said to him, "Why are you persecuting Me? Why are you kicking against the pricks?" The shell that the apostle Paul had built up that consisted of his view of himself began to crumble and was just like a snake shedding its skin (metaphorically, of course). When he understood his relationship with God and His law, he symbolically died. And so we find in Romans 6 the next step.

**Romans 6:3-6** Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also

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should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Paul was symbolically buried, and just as surely as the destructive and voracious caterpillar must die in order to give way to the butterfly, so we must put aside our destructive and voracious ways of life that we acted out in sin, and we must put on the new creature that a new man may begin to be formed in us.

Remember that the butterfly was formed from the remains of the caterpillar, and what we see on the outside when we look at each other, brethren, if we are converted, is the remains of the worm. And as with the caterpillar and the anlagen, the Holy Spirit must grow within us and increase even while we are yet alive. Let us see a couple of scriptures on this just to confirm this in our minds.

Turn to II Peter 3. Peter concludes this epistle by saying:

**II Peter 3:18** But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

**Galatians 4:19** My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

Something is taking place if indeed the Holy Spirit is within us and it is growing. A new creature is being formed, and that creature is Jesus Christ.

We are going to turn now to a scripture that we have used frequently of late, and we are going to use it again because it contains a principle important to us.

**Romans 12:1-2** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

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acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed [changed] by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

I said at the very beginning that in order to be successful we have to sacrifice ourselves to a life of diligence.

Now we are going to turn to an amazing scripture.

**II Corinthians 3:18** But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed [transformed] into the same image from glory to glory [from the glory of man to the glory of God], even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

In these verses, Paul appeals and pleads with us. Why did he have to do that? It is because we have free moral agency, and like I said, we are the only physical creature that God has made who is purposefully destroying his own environment. Because we have free moral agency, to a very great extent, brethren, we control our own destiny. Are we going to grow, or are we not?

In Romans 12:1-2 and II Corinthians 3:18 the word "transformed" there is from the word "metamorphoo." It means, "to change into another form." God's Holy Spirit is our anlagen, and it makes possible our change from one creature to another. It has no human DNA in it whatsoever. It will reproduce what *its* DNA pattern is, what *its* code is, and its code is **God**.

We are going to go now to Ephesians 1.

**Ephesians 1:13-14** In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest [the down payment] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory.

In the process that God has begun in us we have received sufficient of His Holy Spirit to guarantee that it can be completed. However, the process is

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not yet complete because a full transformation (a transfiguration, if you prefer) to a far better life has not yet occurred.

**Hebrews 11:13** These [heroes of faith] all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth

Now this may not be pleasant to contemplate, because I think that all of us would like to be alive when Christ returns, having experienced the traumatic events just prior to His return. But we have to consider that our death is a possibility that we have to factor into our present thinking. Jesus clearly revealed that the first death is a type of sleep.

**John 11:11-14** These things said He: and after that He said unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps: but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

Add to this what Paul stated in I Corinthians 11 where he did exactly the same thing.

**I Corinthians 11:30** For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Brethren, our change, like the caterpillar's, must begin while we are still alive. It begins in the mind by submitting to the Spirit of God as we are being fashioned into the likeness of our elder Brother.

Now is entering death similar to the caterpillar's entering into a cocoon? Well, it certainly appears so, and just as the final changes in the caterpillar occur in the cocoon, so *our* final change will take place in the grave.

Think about this: Jesus went into the tomb a horribly disfigured human being. He emerged from the tomb transfigured into very God. That is the pattern we must follow.

We already read I Corinthians 15:50-51. There the word "changed" is from the Greek "allatto," but it means the same thing. It means to be changed, to be transformed—transformed into something far different from what it had been before.

Let us go to I Corinthians 15.

**I Corinthians 15:38-49** But God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. [That is very clear.] There are also celestial [or heavenly] bodies, and bodies terrestrial [or earthy]: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul: the last Adam [Jesus Christ] was made a quickening [life-giving] spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Whose DNA then are we carrying, brethren? That is what we are going to be reproduced into.

We are going to look at a couple more verses. Turn to John 3 to see what Jesus told Nicodemus.

**John 3:6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

We will be composed of spirit.

**I John 3:1-3** Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.

You can read Revelation 1:12-17 and see in words the way Jesus Christ is now. We are going to be like Him, but we will not radiate with the same intensity of glory because of what we have just read in I Corinthians 15, that as one star differs from another in glory, so will we. Even our bodily substance will differ from what we are today, but more importantly, our heart will be different. Our nature will be different. Then we will always be other-centered. Never will we allow our desires or our appetites to plague us or others with the evil fruit of prideful self-centeredness. Always we will promote and aid God's purposes. Always we will give ourselves over to beautifying God's creation and make right use of His laws.

So the next time you see a butterfly flit past you and light on a flower, you might pause to reflect upon your own struggling with human nature, of enduring the depressing enervating conditions of the world human nature has created, and remember God's plan for His people by considering the butterfly as a reminder of our great hope freely given us of God.

So, "Go to the ant, you sluggard, and be wise," because "every man who has this hope in himself purifies himself, even as He is pure."