



# TRANSFORMED – Our Lives Renewed to be Like Christ (a DISCIPLESHIP Journey)

Mile Marker 10 ... “A Transformed Life – Living *Here-and-Now* in Light of *Eternity* (HOPE)”

“*Colossians 3:1ff + others (especially from 1 Peter)*”

With this mile marker, we reach the end of a phase in this journey (the last week for the Fall 2018 session). We have been looking at this theme of transformation, what this discipleship journey is all about. As we follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit shapes and molds us to be like Christ. These two quotes from Dallas Willard provided a good summary of this transformation:

- “[The goal] is to bring **every element** in our being, working from the inside-out, into harmony with the will of God and the Kingdom of God.” It’s about Jesus permeating every part of who we are and influencing every area of our lives.
- “I am learning from Jesus to live my life as He would live my life if He were I. I am not necessarily learning to do everything He did, but I am learning how to do everything I do in the manner that He did all that He did.” In the midst of our here-and-now lives, we are Jesus’ apprentices – those learning from Him and following His pattern (again, not just the actions, but even more so the underlying attitudes, etc.).

Without a doubt, all of that includes **a TRANSFORMED LIFE** – where we turned our attention in Mile Marker 9. As much as the Holy Spirit’s shaping and molding is INTERNAL work (it’s not just an external makeover), it definitely should flow out to every category of our lives. Indeed, *how* we practically live – our CONDUCT – certainly matters in Christ.

In this mile marker, it seems fitting to wrap-up this portion of our journey by looking at some future-related themes like HOPE in Christ and ETERNITY. This is a foundational aspect of the Good News of Jesus: as one person succinctly put it, “**our faith has a future.**” Whatever blessings we might experience here-and-now in Christ, our faith ultimately clings to the promise of what is *beyond* this life (for examples of this emphasis in the NT, see 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Ephesians 1:14; Philippians 1:21; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; 1 Peter 1:3-7 or 2 Peter 1:3-4; it’s also a prominent theme in Jesus’ teaching and in the book of Revelation ... obviously☺). Such themes may *seem* to be idealistic dreaming of what will someday be; that’s what is behind the accusation of some Christians being “so heavenly minded” that they are of “no earthly good.” Yet, throughout the NT, what we see is something entirely different – our future confidence in Christ should inherently impact our lives today!

## Our Confident Hope in Christ – We are a “WAITING” People

Back in Mile Marker 1, we focused on our stories being a part of God’s grander STORY, the STORY that runs from Genesis to Revelation. **It’s the story that moves from CREATION to FALL to REDEMPTION (through Jesus’ death and resurrection) and finally, to RESTORATION (brought to completion at Jesus’ return).** As those who live between these two comings of Christ, one of the consistent postures of us is this: ***we are those who are WAITING.***

**READ the following texts that emphasize this posture of “WAITING” or “LOOKING FORWARD” to what is in store – READ Romans 8:18-25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 3:20-21; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28 and James 5:7-8.**

*What does this posture of WAITING suggest to you about our lives as followers of Jesus (think about it in comparison to anything else good for which we might have to wait)?*

Here are some features of this WAITING:

- **We are WAITING with anticipation for something beyond amazing and wonderful.** Whenever we see talk about the future God has promised *to His people*, it is always language that affirms nothing but goodness and blessing. This is what makes the promise of the Good News so beautiful. God’s Word speaks of the future to whet our appetites for what is in store!
- **Because it’s grounded in God’s promise through Christ, we are also waiting with CONFIDENT EXPECTATION – it’s our sure HOPE.** In Scripture, waiting on God to act *in accordance to His promise* is directly related to words like faith, trust and hope. It’s true in the OT (in fact, one Hebrew word can be translated either “trust,” “wait” or “hope” – in fact, it’s the word used at the beginning of Isaiah 40:31) and the NT.

Let’s make sure we take note of this significant aspect of what we call our HOPE: as we live here-and-now between Jesus’ two comings, we are waiting for what our *faithful* God has promised in Christ to become reality (see the emphasis in Hebrews 6:18-19 and 10:23). Because it is grounded in His *promise*, we can have confidence in our expectation. *By the way, this is a massive contrast to the way we use the word “HOPE” in our context – for us, when we use the word in general, there is usually ZERO sense of a guarantee; it’s merely our wish or preference.* Because our HOPE in Christ is attached to the certainty of God’s promise in Jesus, our HOPE is offered as a GUARANTEE! It’s why it’s appropriate for us to attach the qualifying word “CONFIDENT” to any Biblical reference to our HOPE in Christ.

- **It’s an ACTIVE, not passive, waiting.** God’s Word doesn’t put this on the back burner as something only relevant *eventually*. We see this sense of God’s people living with His promise for the future at the forefront of our hearts, minds and attention. Part of our active waiting involves this ongoing practice of keeping this hope where it belongs. Additionally, just like FAITH generally in the NT, our waiting should include a confidence that is displayed *practically* in the way we live. Like parents expecting the arrival of a baby (especially a first child), the waiting has all kinds of activity towards it – so much of life becomes filtered through the lens of what is coming. That becomes a key feature of what the NT has to say about what we await in Christ (for examples of this idea, see 1 Peter 1:13-16 or 2 Peter 3:11-13)!

Without a doubt, here’s a significant part of the Biblical emphasis regarding these themes: it’s not some pie-in-the-sky idealistic dreaming. *Precisely because we have such confidence in this promise assured by God’s faithfulness in Christ*, we can and should go about our lives here-and-now in a fundamentally different kind of way from those who are outside Christ. Indeed, as followers of Jesus, this future hope becomes practically significant to our here-and-now TRANSFORMED LIVES.

## Eternity Impacting Today – Our New Identity in Christ: Citizens of Heaven

Let's look at three specific ways God's Word shows how this reality of HOPE in Christ – our confident anticipation and even expectation – *practically* impacts our here-and-now lives. **First, it's part of our NEW IDENTITY!**

When we place our faith in Christ, there are several ways the NT emphasizes that a NEW IDENTITY comes with it. It's really a beautiful reality to read of all that changes about *who we ARE* once we are in Christ. For example, we become a "NEW CREATION" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have a "NEW NATURE" to put on (see Ephesians 4:20ff). God makes us HIS ADOPTED CHILDREN who receive the promise of an eternal inheritance (Romans 8:15-17 and Galatians 3:26-27; we even become *co-heirs with Christ!*). There are so many powerful expressions of the NEW IDENTITY that becomes ours. Here's one of them: **we become CITIZENS of HEAVEN *even here-and-now!***

Consider these verses – notice that this language is not what we *will be*, but what we already *ARE*:

**Colossians 1:13-14** ... already, we have been rescued and transferred to Christ's Kingdom.

**Philippians 3:20** (we read this earlier) ... "our citizenship *is* in heaven."

**READ 1 Peter 2:9-10** ... v. 9 includes some powerful OT references to the way God referred to His OT people. Part of Peter's point is that this has become *our identity* now in Christ (not based on ethnicity, but our faith in Christ).

**1 Peter 2:11a** ... part of that emphasis on our new identity leads right into this statement of our being "temporary residents and foreigners" here on this earth (see also Peter's greeting in 1:1). Some translations read "aliens and strangers." It's the idea of "**you're not from around here, are you?**" – words that might be spoken to someone demonstrating behavior peculiar to an area. Anyone who has spent extended time in a foreign country has experienced this. It's part of our NEW IDENTITY in Christ. In fact, this is a major theme in 1 Peter – we are practically living in this world *as people who truly belong somewhere else!*

**READ HEBREWS 11:13-16** ... like OT heroes of faith, part of our own lives of faith is this same kind of pilgrim experience until we are truly where we belong in our "heavenly homeland." It's true even for us in Christ!

*Jot down some reflections on this NEW IDENTITY that is ours in Christ – when we use this idea of "citizenship" and where we truly belong, what does that suggest about our way of life as followers of Jesus living here-and-now? Remember, it's not what we "will be" someday; it's what we already "are" in Christ!*

## Eternity Impacting Today – Our Perspective: Seeing Life Differently

**Second, with this "NEW IDENTITY" comes a "NEW PERSPECTIVE" – we see life differently because of what is already true in Christ.** Throughout God's Word, faith involves seeing things differently ... even with "eyes of faith" (think Elisha in 2 Kings 6 praying that God would "open the eyes" of his servant or 2 Corinthians 4:18). In Christ, we are to see things through the lens of ETERNITY!

**READ Colossians 3:1-4** ... notice that Paul refers to this as a present reality – our NEW LIFE in Christ (it stretches back to the baptism language in Colossians 2:12). Because of that new status, we are commanded (1) **“to set our sights/seek after the realities of heaven”** – a pursuit that certainly implies focus and (2) **“to think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth”** – a word that refers to a mind that is concentrated in a certain direction. Here’s how *The Message* puts it (there are some parts where the paraphrase captures the sense quite well): *“Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don’t shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ – that’s where the action is. See things from his perspective.”* Because of our NEW IDENTITY in Jesus, we should see *everything* about this life in the light of eternity – that’s a part of our HOPE in Christ!

This text is the basis of our “Green-Tape Life” language. Imagine a long rope, say 100’s of feet long. Imagine at one end of that rope, a 6-inch portion that is taped green. This text (with others) invites us to see life this way – the green tape represents our earthly lives; the rest of the rope (the vast majority, in reality, it’s unending) represents eternity. This is how God’s Word would package things for us. While in the midst of this life, it may be easy for us to think that “this is it.” And yet, the reality is that this is such a miniscule part of life in the context of eternity – FOREVER! One of perhaps our biggest challenges when it comes to the way our culture teaches us to look at life is resisting the pull of focusing so much on temporal-only things that won’t last into eternity (see 1 John 2:15-17).

***What are some ways you can find yourself struggling to see things with an eternal perspective instead of a temporal/here-and-now only one?***

## **Eternity Impacting Today – Our Conduct: Actually Living in Light of Eternity**

Third, both this “NEW IDENTITY” and this “NEW PERSPECTIVE” help to bring about a NEW WAY of LIFE practically (our CONDUCT). This is why we reflect on this theme within the context of a TRANSFORMED LIFE. Notice where Paul practically goes in Colossians 3:5ff – a text we looked at last week. Indeed, this is not a pie-in-the-sky idealism, it becomes the foundation and motivation for how we live our lives here-and-now *differently* ... as those who belong to Christ!

This is an ongoing emphasis throughout the NT – while we are waiting for what God has promised, our CONFIDENT HOPE in Christ spurs us to live in light of what is to come! It is common in life for us to experience a tremendous change that not only causes us to see life differently, but also to live life differently. For example, a life change like getting married or having a child or even losing someone ... such events change so much. Coming to faith in Christ may not change the external circumstances, but in the same kind of way, it is a new reality that transforms how we see and live. In fact, this becomes a reality with implications for how we live in every aspect of our lives.

***Jot down some categories in life (e.g. a job, our relationships, money, our recreation/leisure, parenting, etc.) and reflect on what it might mean to practically live in light of eternity within such categories.***