

Will God Change Me

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of accepting Christ, which leads to a new life free from the bondage of sin.

Duration: 30:36

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 3:12, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Acts 2:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "Transform"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the concept of transformation and newness of life through Jesus Christ. He emphasizes the role of John the Baptist in introducing Jesus to the people and highlighting the inadequacy of human efforts to change themselves through religion. The speaker encourages the audience to embrace the message of Jesus and experience the freedom to break out of societal constraints and become evangelists for the truth. He emphasizes the need for a personal decision to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, who died on the cross for our sins, offering eternal and abundant life.

Transcript

There's an incredible verse in the New Testament, the new part of the Bible, and it says, if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature, that means a new creation. Old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new. That was the verse that really began to intrigue my heart 37 years ago.

When a man that I met who was a Christian, I was a police officer, and he was a Christian police officer, it was the first time I'd ever heard those kind of words spoken in my life. That if Christ is in you, or if you make a choice to let him be who he wants to be in your life, you become a new creation. He called it being born again.

It's as if you get a chance to start all over again, and all of those things from the time that you were born, a natural birth, to the time you find yourself in today, everything that's been built up in your life, the foundation that's been built there, whether it's a good one, a semi-good one, or a bad one, all of these things begin to change, and everything begins to be made new. And I remember thinking in my heart, is this possible? Could this really happen? I tried to change. I didn't like what I was becoming.

I didn't like the amount I was starting to drink. I didn't like how bad my temper was getting. I didn't like the fact that I seemed incapable of loving people.

I was incapable of being a good husband. I didn't feel like I was going to have what it took to be a good father. But is it true? Is it possible? And that was my question, and it's a legitimate question, and it's one that you should ask.

Is it true? Because I knew I couldn't change myself as much as I would try. I'd drive home, and I would say, I'm just not going to do things a certain way that I've become used to, and I'd get through the door. I wouldn't get five minutes, sometimes not even three minutes, inside the door, and I'd be back to the way I always was.

And some of you know what this is about. You form in your heart the intent to do right, to be better, to do good, but you find yourself unable to do so. Paul the Apostle talked about it in one of the books in the New Testament.

He said, I know what to do, and I actually want to do it. But I seem to be captivated by this, he called it the power of sin, the law of sin inside of me. I'm captivated by something that keeps me bound, and the things that I delayed in my heart to want to do, I can't do it.

As much as I want to, I can't. It's impossible. So how does it work? If it does work, how does it work? That was my question.

How does it work? Is it instantaneous? Is it over a period of time? What is my part in all of this? And what is God's part in if this is a reality? Now, there was a man who came to, he was sent by God to introduce Jesus Christ on the earth. He was a cousin of Jesus actually, and his name was John. We know him as John the Baptist.

And John was introducing Jesus to the people. He was bringing them out of the city and their whole more or less state of religion, and he was baptizing them in water. And what it was really signifying is that this whole religion that was an effort of humanity in itself to change itself was powerless, and the people knew it.

So there had to be a putting away of something in order to enter into this newness of life. And he had a message for the people. And he talked about the coming of Jesus Christ, and what is it gonna look like when he appears? And if he becomes part of my life, what's that going to feel like? And in the gospel of Matthew, he said three things.

He said, now the ax is laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. And that's exactly the way God works. When Jesus Christ died on the cross for my wrong and for your wrong, we call it sin in the Bible.

When he died on that cross, he paid the penalty for the wrong things that we have done. He made the bridge for you and I to be restored back to God. And the moment you turn your heart towards him and say, Jesus, I can't change myself.

I am a person who, I live in sin. I can't, Proverbs says a leopard can't change its spots. I can't change my character.

I can't change what I'm becoming. As a matter of fact, I'm getting worse all the time. And I know there's a downward spiral here.

I seem to be incapable of stopping. But when we turn to Jesus Christ, I've found this over the years. When we turn to Jesus Christ and say, Lord, I admit that you died on a cross in my place.

The wrath of God was poured out on you. You were beaten in a measure that I deserve to be. You took all the shame and the spitting and the despising and the wrath and the turning away.

And all that you endured was for my sake. And all you asked me to do is open my heart and believe that you died in my place and receive you as my Lord and Savior. And I found that when I did that back in 1978, just as John the Baptist said, the ax is laid to the root of these trees.

These things in my life that I can't change. As a matter of fact, they're growing. The one thing about a tree is if you stand there and stare at it, it doesn't seem to be growing.

But over time, it gets bigger and bigger and starts producing more fruit. Now, God could just literally wipe it out in a moment of time, but he doesn't do it that way. But the cross was the ax of God and it was laid, literally cutting the root.

Now, I had a farm and we used to have wood on that farm. And so I understand these things. If you want to kill a tree, cut its roots.

When you cut the roots of something, it no longer has the power to draw its life source. Even though it's still standing for a season, the thing is eventually gonna dry up and rot and just fall down and blow away. It's gonna take time.

But Jesus Christ, when you open your heart to him, that cross puts an ax to the roots of every rotten thing in your life and my life. Everything unlike God, everything trying to destroy us, every power of sin that found a drawing place of life because we walked away from God and we're living in rebellion to God. The ax of God comes and cuts those trees at the root.

And suddenly old things are passed away. All things begin to become new. Suddenly new trees start to grow.

They're small in the beginning. It's only a little bit of love. And I wish I could say that I got saved and suddenly I loved everybody, but it just didn't work that way.

But a little tree grew. There was a big, big one that hated everybody, but the ax cut the roots of it. And it lost its power to live.

And it lost its power to grow. And right beside it, a little green shoot came out of the earth. And as you nurture that, and as you walk with God, it begins to grow.

The other one is dead and something new begins to grow. It's been a miracle. It's been an awesome journey.

And after that, he said, I indeed baptize you with water to repentance. But he that comes after me is mightier than I am, whose shoes I'm not worthy to bear. And he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

I bring you to a place, John said, of admission, in a sense that all your human effort to save yourself is not going to work. You can't save yourself. That's what really going down into the water really means.

I die to all the efforts to change in my own strength. I can't build a bridge high enough to get to the water. I can't get to heaven.

I can't become the man or the woman that I feel that I was created to be. I am cut off from God because of sin in my life. And so now I'm inviting Jesus into my life.

And I'm going to go down into these waters of baptism unto repentance, which means I am determined in my heart to become the person that God intends me to be. That's what it really means. I can't do it in my own strength, but I'm determined to become that person.

As God leads me, as he guides me, as he gives me the strength, I am going to move away from what is wrong, and I'm going to lay hold of what is right. He said, I'm baptizing you with water to repentance. And that's basically the introduction to Jesus Christ.

That place of saying, I've tried it and I'm done. I can't do this. It's not going to work.

But he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Oh my goodness. I remember the night he filled me with the Holy Spirit.

You would have thought I'd lost my mind. I so loved God. The ax was laid to the root, and the old things in my life had no power.

But I wanted that new life that God promises. I wanted that place that God says he will take you. But there was a measure of pride in my heart.

As a matter of fact, there was a lot of it. And God took me to a halfway house with a lot of guys. I was in uniform too.

I was a car. I was on duty. No, I was actually going somewhere else, but I was in uniform.

And he took me to a halfway house with a whole bunch of guys out of prison, reintegrating into society, basically. And a friend of mine took me there because he said there was an ex-biker that had come to Christ. And I didn't believe that was possible.

I said, there's just no way. These guys don't get saved. Can't be.

I've been in the clubhouse. I know what goes on there. There's just no way.

And he said, no, it's true. As a matter of fact, I met him. I was preaching in Canada a couple of years ago.

And he's an elder. He's a deacon in one of the Pentecostal churches in Canada now. And I remember going in there.

And it's a whole bunch of people from prison. Big, heavy-duty stuff, too, not the light stuff. It was heavy stuff.

And they're reintegrating. And most of them, all of them got saved in jail. And that's why they were in this halfway house.

And I remember them saying to me after they had a time of worship, are you filled with the Holy Ghost? Have you been baptized in the Holy Ghost? And I remember looking at them thinking, well, you guys need

that. You know, you're just coming out of jail. You know, and you're trying to reintegrate into society.

And man, you got a long way to go. And so you need all the help you can get. But you know, I'm an officer of the law, you understand.

You know, I've got a lot of, I've got an image to uphold. And inside this little voice is saying, shut up. Who do you think you are? You know you're not, you know you don't have the life that you feel that God wants to give you.

Why don't you just humble yourself? And so I remember in the meeting, they said, can we pray for you? And I said, okay, sure. Pray for me. And so they surrounded me.

So and I'm surrounded by these guys that are just out of jail. And there's a guy stepped behind me. And I said, get away from behind me.

I just didn't like people behind me. So I said, get away. And he says, well, I think I should stand there.

I said, no, you don't need to stand there. Just get away from behind me. And so they laid hands on me and I put my hands in the air.

And man, I hit that hardwood floor so hard. It was amazing. And I'm speaking in another tongue.

And I'm laying in uniform on a floor and I'm speaking in another tongue. Pastor Teresa and I went to church that didn't believe that that still existed today. And I had up to that point not believed it either, but it wouldn't go away.

And so I'm driving home and I think, did that just really happen to me? Okay, I made that up and I'd open my mouth and just this river would come out of my mouth. And I felt electricity in the car and I felt so alive. And it was just amazing.

And so we got back to the farmhouse and I walked through the door to the kitchen. I said, hey, Teresa, listen to this. And I started speaking in other tongues.

And then I ran out the door and I ran through the field and I was shouting and yelling because God's power had come into my life. The ax was laid to the root first. And then God sent his Holy Spirit, baptizing us in the Holy Ghost, giving us the power of God.

To live this life that God promises, the power to believe the promises of God and to believe that God could make these promises a reality and to baptize us with fire. That's the passion of God, the passion of God to honor him, the passion of God to become the person that he promised that I could be or that God promises that you could be. That's the part that has to be in your heart.

If you don't have a passion for God, there's not going to be much growth. You have to pray for that. You have to ask God for that passion.

God, give me a passion for you and your word and to be the person that you called me to be. Don't let me be sold short of it. If you promised me life and life more abundantly, then I want that life and I want the fullness of that life.

I don't want a halfway bake sale to what you have for me. I want the whole thing. I want all of it, oh God.

So give me the passion for it. And I remember after being filled with the Holy Spirit, I would read his word and I would weep and every promise came alive to me. Everything was mine.

It was like I was reading the last will and testament of my father and he left me all this treasure and it all belonged to me. It wasn't somebody else's, it was mine. The power to be a father, the power to be a husband, the power to break out the borders of everything that had ever been spoken over my life, the power to become another person, the power, as the scripture says, to see the old things pass away and all things become new, the power to live a life that would bring glory to God, the power to be able to speak into the darkest places of this world and see others brought into this life that God freely offers through his son, Jesus Christ.

Then John said, whose fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor, gather his weed into the garner and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. In other words, God, there's a season coming where God will just speak and he will just blow away all that shouldn't be in your life. Remember in Acts chapter 2 verse 2, there was 120 people in an upper room and most of them had failures and they came face to face with their own weakness and there was a deep sense of sorrow for having abandoned the will and the purposes of God as they saw it.

But suddenly it says, he came like a rushing mighty wind and you can see in that room that fan that's in his hand thoroughly purging his floor and blowing out of our lives that which has no longer any right to be there. And he does it supernaturally. He does it sovereignly, he speaks and when God speaks there's an air put into motion by divine breath and when he speaks over our lives it takes out of us that which no longer has a right to be there.

As children of God, you have a right to freedom. You have a right to be healed in your heart from bruises of the past. You have a right to stand up and live even though the whole world is telling you to lay down and die.

You have the right to break out of all the confines that have been put around you. You have the right to be an evangelist if he called you to be one. You have the right to stand up and proclaim the wonderful truth of what God is willing to do for those who trust in him.

You have the right, that's your right, that's your birthright as a child of God. Jesus asked his disciples, who do you say that I am? And Peter said, you're the Christ, you're the son of the living God. In other words, you're everything I've ever longed for, I've ever wanted, I've ever needed, everything my heart has ever seen in the testimony of God, everything that I've ever believed I will ever need to be all that I'm called to be.

That's who you are. You're my bread. You're my water.

You're my provision. You're my sight. You're my healer.

You're the key that unlocks my prisons. You're my glory and the lifter of my head. You're the healer of my past.

You're the one who causes me to break out of my weaknesses and into strength. You are everything, Jesus, that the prophets ever said you were. I've read it, Peter was saying.

Technically, I've read it and I've known that this is who the Messiah is and that's who you are. You are everything to me that I will ever need. You are the one that will make my life everything I cannot make it to be in my own strength.

You are merciful when mercy seems to have exhausted itself. You are strength when strength can't be found. You are light when everything around seems to be darkness.

You are the one who's even working good in my life when I can't see it and all hell seems to be breaking out on every side of me. You are the one who promises that even though I have to go through the valley of the shadow of death, I will go through it and I will come out the other side and my testimony will be goodness and mercy have followed me all the days in my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And he looked him in the eye and he said, you are Peter.

And that was significant because before his name really meant pebbles or small little things. But he says, now you're not that anymore. You're a rock.

That's what it meant. That foundation, that is the foundation of the Christian life. That what you've just spoken, that trust that's now in your heart, that thing which you long for.

And God says, I won't disappoint you in that. That's now the foundation stone of your life, Peter, and not just your life, but the foundation stone of a church that I'm about to build and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. No weapon of darkness formed against it is going to prosper.

Every tongue that rises against it in judgment. My people have a right to condemn because I have given them a righteousness that is not their own. It's mine.

This is a marvelous life. And so I'm here 37 years later after asking the question to tell you, if any man is in Christ, he's a new creation. It is true.

The old things do pass away and all things become new. Oh God, there comes a point in your life when you don't need any more proof about the reality of God. Let the theologians argue all they want.

Let them write their books. I don't care. I know him.

There's a huge difference. There is a huge difference. I thank God with all my heart.

What an amazing life this has been. It's been amazing. I have no other way to say it.

I have been, as Amy said tonight, I've been taken where I can't go. I've never been qualified to do anything I do in the kingdom of God. I've been made into what I could never be.

And I've been given by God what I could never have possessed in my own strength. And that's what makes it wonderful. If I could have done it, I would be telling you how to do it tonight.

But instead, I'm telling you who does it. If anyone be in Christ, the question I guess tonight in my heart is that are you tired of trying to be who God made you to be in your own strength? Are you tired of living in despair and depression? Are you tired of spiraling down and becoming worse and worse and worse? Are you tired and are you ready to let God be God? It does require a humility. It does require an acknowledging that I can't do this in my own strength.

It does require getting to the point of saying I'm done trying. I'm not going to do this anymore. I have enough confidence in God to say to you tonight, prove these words, prove them.

Prove it yourself. Open your heart to Jesus Christ. Invite him in to be your savior and your Lord.

And let him prove to you that what I'm saying is the truth. I read the gospel of John. I pulled over on the side of the road in 1978.

I opened my heart and I said these words. Lord, if what Irv, his name was Irv, the guy who was witnessing to me, said if what Irv is telling me is the truth, if it's the truth, then I open my heart to you and I invite you into my life to be my Lord and my savior. Went to work, didn't hear angels, didn't see anything, didn't feel anything, didn't feel any different.

Went home that night after my shift, went to bed, slept throughout the night. In the morning I got up and I've said it in this church many times, and I'm just going to keep on saying it until I die so I get used to it. But I remember it like it was yesterday.

I remember what side of the bed I got out of. It was on the right side of the bed and I shifted over and I put my feet on the floor and I knew I was a different man at that moment. I had an inner knowledge that something had changed.

And what had changed is the axe had been laid to the roots. And the sin nature in my life was dealt a death blow when I invited Jesus Christ into my life. I didn't have the theology to understand it, but I had the experience beginning.

And shortly after that, I walked forward in a church and publicly gave my life to Jesus Christ. That's the baptism of repentance in a sense that John spoke about. I acknowledged I can't save myself and I did it publicly in a church.

And then shortly after that, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and God's fire came into my heart. There was this fire about the future. This hope for the future was like when the jailer ran in with a torch into the inner prison.

There's this fire came into my heart that I don't have to live where I am and I don't have to be what I've become. And there's something of God in my heart that's going to change me and make me into a different person. And then I found over the seasons that these old things in my life just began to, like chaff, just begin to blow away by the breath of, as God's word began to speak, that the word of God began to blow these things out of my life.

And I became another man. I used to have a picture of myself before I was saved. It's scary to look at that.

It really is. I mean, I remember, I'm thankful my house burned down. I lost it.

But I remember looking at that picture one day and thinking, wow, that was me. What a dark face I had. What a hopelessness on my countenance.

And I remember looking and I said, that man died. And the day Jesus came, another man was born. It's true.

It's true what God does. Now, tonight, I can't do this for anybody here. I can't grab you by the arm and force you into the kingdom of God.

It's a voluntary choice. Everybody has to make it on their own. But I can tell you that what I told you tonight is the truth.

And I'm confident enough in God to say, do you approve it for yourself? But it requires an opening of the heart. It requires that first step of the heart that says, Jesus, I believe that you are the son of God. I believe that you did die.

You were nailed to what they call a cross. It was a T formation of wood. And you were nailed to that for the wrong things that I have done.

You took my place. An innocent man took my place. And you promised that if I would turn to you, that you would give me life, eternal life.

And you would give me abundant life on this earth. That I would become a new creation. The old things in my life would pass away.

Yes, it would take time. But they would. They would pass away.

And everything would become new. And I've heard the testimonies tonight. And I've seen the lives.

And I've heard the songs. And I know this is right. I know it's true.

There has to be something in your heart tonight that says, I have an inner witness that this is true. Just like Pastor Carter had 37 years ago. I've got a witness inside that this is the truth.

And so I'm going to take that first step tonight. And I'm going to open my heart. And I'm going to receive Jesus Christ as my savior.

If that's you this evening. And that's something you want to do tonight. I'm going to ask you to just join me and just raise your hand wherever you are.

God bless you all over the place. God bless you. Thank you.

Up in the balcony. Just raise your hand. Now we're going to sing just for a moment.

Just a short moment. We're going to stand up. And those who raised your hand.

I want you to come down and meet me here. And we're going to just simply pray a prayer together. That's all I want you to do.

Meet me at the front of this auditorium. When we do stand, if you brought a friend with you. Your friend is afraid to make that public decision.

Just turn to your friend and say, if you want to go down there, I'll go with you. And please do that this evening. If you should have raised your hand, you come too as well.

God bless you. Let's stand together in the balcony. Go to either exit.

Make your way out, please. Just join me here. And we're going to pray together.

God bless you. God bless you, sir. God bless you.

Praise God. Thank you, Lord. Just keep coming.

Slip out of wherever you are. The balcony. Go to either exit in the annex.

We'll wait for you. Come on over. God bless you.

Let's pray together. Now, those that are come down front. Let's pray.

You and I, you have to believe that God will receive you when you open your heart to him. He will come no matter what your understanding is of him. Pray this prayer with me.

Lord Jesus, I'm tired. I'm tired of life. I'm tired of trying to be something that I could never be in my own strength.

I'm tired of doing wrong. And I want to do right. I want a new life, the life that you offer me, that you died to give me.

So tonight, I open my heart to you. And I give you my life because you gave me your life. And I invite you into my life to be my God for the rest of my days.

Thank you for receiving me, for loving me, giving me the courage to believe that your promises are mine. You told me that you would forgive me. You would break the power of sin.

And you would give me a new life. And that's why I'm here. I believe that you will give me a new life.

You'll change me so powerfully that I will tell others what you have done for me. Thank you, Jesus, for loving me and for receiving me and forgiving me. I belong to you now.

And I will walk with you. Take me by the hand. Teach me what that means.

And help me to understand. Pick me up when I fall. Help me not to get discouraged.

Because you will not fail me. I am a child of God. I am God's and he is mine.

From this day forward, Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life. Amen. Hallelujah.

Don't be afraid of the tears. Don't be afraid of the tears. That's God.

Just there's a lot of pain's got to come out. Don't be afraid of it. Every one of those tears is precious to God.

Let me pray for you now, please. Father, I pray in Jesus' name, God Almighty, keep these men and women, Lord. God, seal them in your hand.

And don't let the devil succeed in telling them that this was just an emotional moment. No, this is much more than that. This is the difference between heaven and hell.

God Almighty, I ask you in Jesus' name to let faith come into every heart. Courage for tomorrow. And Lord, you tonight have laid the ax to the root of sin.

God, your promises are true. And I ask you, Lord, to give these men and women a song, O God Almighty, that is so powerful they'll have to sing it in the subway one day. Oh, Jesus, so change them.

So keep them, God. So give them help and give them hope in the days ahead. Father, I thank you for this, God, with all my heart.

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