

2013 Leadership Conference: Europe/CIS/Middle East
Saturday, April 6 Devotions by Gary Hull

Four who were transformed

Revelation 3:15 I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot.

Would that you were either cold or hot!

Revelation 22:11 He who is unrighteous, let him practice unrighteousness still. And he who is [morally] polluted, let him pollute himself still. And he who is righteous, let him practice righteousness still. And he who is holy, let him be made holy still.

From these verses we may rightfully conclude that God desires people of both a **pure** and **consistent** character. God prefers people to be either wholly evil or totally pure, on fire for God or on ice for the devil. We may therefore consider anyone who has not yet reached a state of total and perfect holiness, or total and perfect depravity, as a candidate for spiritual transformation. By a series of moral choices, decisions, and decisive actions, each person can and should become either more hot or more cold, more righteous or more unrighteous, more filthy or more holy. And this transformation should bring us to the intended goal: either **Christ-likeness**, or Satan-likeness.

Cain had the power to choose when Sin came crouching at his door. The Lord warned Cain that sin desired to possess him and that he must master it (Genesis 4:6-7). Cain therefore knew that he had to obtain victory in a struggle with sin. But instead as he left the worship service, Cain gave way to his new-found evil feelings of **jealousy and anger**. Instead of rejoicing with his brother who had found favor with God, Cain reached out and killed him. His inner transformation into a demon possessed murderer became obvious to everyone when God placed a **mark** on him. It was mark so awful, that even those who wanted to kill him were unable to even touch him. Every time a person sins, it leaves an awful mark on his character leading him closer to his final destruction, in desperate need of the blood of Jesus.

Lot's wife also faced a choice: to obey God's voice or to give way to her love for the world she knew. When she went against the word of the Lord, her transformation was made obvious to all. She saw up close the righteous judgment of God against the sins of Sodom. So why could she not set her affection on things above, and let God work a transformation towards holy living within her heart? Because she loved the world and the things of this world more than she loved God. She gave way to this worldly attraction and turned back from following the Lord (Genesis 19:26). Her sin resulted in her becoming a **pillar of tasteless salt**, which easily crumbles and supports nothing at all. But God's express desire is for us to become upright and strong pillars in His house, stabilizing factors in the overall support structure of the body of Christ. The Hebrew word **NATZIV** that we find translated here as pillar is used only eight other times in scripture, always for **watchful soldiers** or **overseers** who stand in their assigned places and keep watch. The very next place the word is used is in 1 Samuel 10:5. That story takes place on God's hill. **Saul** is sent there by Samuel to experience his transformation. Saul passes by Philistine pillars, the soldiers on guard, watching the road. But like Lot's wife, they are dead spiritually and do not notice what is going on. Prophets come down the hill praising God with singing. The Holy Spirit comes on Saul. He joins in the prophetic worship and scripture says he was transformed into another man. But did the benefits of this transformation last until the end of Saul's life, or were they wasted and lost through his own inconsistency?

Because **Lot's wife** turned back to stare at her world, she became stuck in her world. She no longer advanced in God's kingdom. When her spiritual growth stopped, when her obedient following of the Lord stopped, she transformed into a petrified soul, frozen in adoration, not of the Savior, but of the judged world she loved. She became a dead watch-woman, a dead on her feet overseer. Although rescued by grace, and walking in the midst of her congregation, she slid back into the second death. She became her own gravestone, a monument to every would-be backslider who

would dare defy the voice of the Lord. Putting her hand to the plow, but looking backwards, she was no longer fit for the kingdom. It doesn't matter what people call us, whether soldier, overseer, superintendent, or field director. Lot's wife ended her tour of duty as the overseer of Sodom! Saul passed a group of spiritually dead overseers and tasted the powers of the age to come. But in the end, his last supper was at a séance, where he drank the cup of demons!

So being saved and receiving a call on our lives does not guarantee us victory in the end. In itself a calling does not make us holy. It is the daily choices we make, that guide us into our chosen path of transformation. As a young college student I foolishly chose to follow the path of Hinduism in order to find the Light of the world. I daily chose to eat no meat, to be celibate, and to devote myself to hours of physical discipline and mental meditations. The one thing I found strange in all of this was the declared goal of the path of yoga that I was on. I was taught that there was a serpent sleeping at the bottom of my spine. Yes, and he would one day awaken and arise and fill my mind with his wisdom and announce that I am god! It took me a year and half to discover that this serpent was real, but that his path of transformation was leading me to become a devil like him. I was on my way to destruction. But thank God for His search and rescue team that can deliver us from the devil's grip! A stranger gave me a Bible one day and this holy book opened my eyes to my need for the Savior and true holiness.

Ezekiel had a high calling on his life. Born into a priestly family, he wanted to follow his father's example and serve God in the temple in Jerusalem. But before he could finish his training program, he was captured and forcefully removed from the Bible school, the city, and the nation he loved. Satan saw an opportunity when he found Ezekiel wandering by the canal near his refugee camp in Iraq. I believe the devil probably sent a wave of depression and self pity towards this man, whom he hoped to capture spiritually, as well as physically. How many of our Bible school students or ministerial candidates have been called into the ministry but then faced some experience that broke their heart and left them vulnerable to depression and self-pity? This was the big turning point for Ezekiel. Which way would he choose to be transformed? Would he step out onto the path of holiness, or bitterness? Would he continue to pursue God, or curse God and die?

When we face these testing times in our lives, and we surely will, we need to cry out to God and present Him with an offering: our broken spirits. These are acceptable sacrifices that will not be refused. As the scripture says, "**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**" (Psalm 51:17). God saw that the desire of Ezekiel's broken heart was to pour out his soul in prayer. Ezekiel's tears were not mixed with anger and accusations. They were an expression of deep sorrow over a lost opportunity to serve the Living God in a particular ministry that was good and acceptable. But what Ezekiel was about to learn was that the good and acceptable will of God must be laid on the altar when we are willing to step into the **perfect will of God** for our lives. God chose that day of prayer to open the heavens and reveal His glory to a man. In a revelation that unrolled like a scroll, God drew the affections of Ezekiel's spirit, higher and higher, from one manifestation of glory to another, until, at last, a man was looking into the face of God. First in the four mirrors called cherubim, he saw the perfect character of Jesus portrayed. But then his attention was lifted even higher, to the enthroned son of man himself. A veil fell from the eyes of this man. Paul describes the experience, "we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed** into the same image, from one degree of glory to another." 2 Corinthians 3:18

Ezekiel learned a wonderful secret that day when his calling was not just renewed, but revealed as the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. He discovered that he could avoid the devil's pathways of **transformation**, those that take people down filthy, evil, cold, and barren landscapes filled with either anger, depression, or pride. Ezekiel found that God's love does break through to touch broken hearts. He found that tears of adoration can wash away the veils that blind us from seeing Jesus as He really is: high and lifted up, full of grace and truth, pulsating with glory, surrounded by rainbows of love and mercy, and flashes of lightning, as His Word goes forth to perform His good

intentions. Ezekiel's transformation was successful to the end. The good work God began in him was made complete. It passed through four stages and we quickly summarize them now.

1. Ezekiel kept looking up until he saw the glory of the Lord.
2. Ezekiel kept listening to and obeying the powerful voice of the Lord.
3. Ezekiel kept hungering for more of God and ate His holy Word.
4. Ezekiel faced his opponents and let God make him hard-headed enough to persevere through **consistent purity**.

One of God's good intentions is that you and I should be totally **transformed**. Not into a serpent's image, and not into a whirlpool of depression, or a mountain of pride. God's intention is to surprise you and delight you by visions of Himself, enthroned above a river of life. He wants to lift up our heads, and to remove the spiritual cataracts from our eyes that hide His glory from us. He wants us to see His Glory shining ever so brightly from the face of Jesus Christ. He wants us to hear His voice, feast on His Word, and overcome all of our opponents.

Since your first calling have you come to a turning point in your life? Have you ever failed to control your anger, and like Cain, let loose with all your might on someone God loves? Have you ever, like Lot's wife, been caught longing for the things God was taking away from you, for your own good? Have you, like Saul, found that wonderful place of transformation on God's hill, but then somehow gotten off the path of fellowship with the Lord? Or have you, like Ezekiel, been crushed by some misfortune, or drastic change of plans? Has a lost opportunity left you feeling hopeless and confused?

Based on Ezekiel's example of total and successful transformation, I can now declare unto you the **Good News**. When you lose your position, possessions, or your health, or when your ministry is closed down due to circumstances beyond your control, do not despair! Run to Prayer Mountain! Climb your mountain of transfiguration and stay there bathing the feet of Jesus with your tears. If you do this, then God will show you a very high and wide door in heaven, so heavy that no man can open it. You then, approach that door and do only what you can – knock on it! And keep knocking until you see it begin to open from the inside. Then, by faith, go through the open door God has set before you, and you will be transformed by a metamorphosis, a putting on of the mind of Christ, so that you can walk in His perfect will, in the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Each one of us today has a choice to make: we can either be more filthy, or be more holy. We can be more cold or more hot, more unrighteous or more righteous. As we pray, may we be found following the example of Ezekiel, and not that of Cain, or Lot's wife, or Saul. May we keep our eyes lifted up and fixed upon the likeness of the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the path of **transformation** that gives God great pleasure and satisfaction. May His perfect will be accomplished in and through us, as we allow Him to transform us from glory to glory. Then our testimony will not be about ourselves, but all about Jesus and His amazing love. As we stretch toward our finish line, we join with all the others making up the Bride, who are washed in the blood of Jesus, and clothed with fine linen, pure, clean, and white. See her walking toward the groom, standing at heaven's altar. A prayer is on her lips. What is she saying? "Father, let Him kiss me!" (Song of Songs 1:2) Then she testifies: "His love is better than wine!" Yes, Jesus' love is better than all pleasure, and better than work, better than position, and better than applause, better than promotion, and better than awards. Jesus' love is better than anything and everything. This is the testimony of the transformed bride of Christ who cries out with all her heart, "Even so, come Lord Jesus, and kiss us!" Come because we love you, and we want to be with you, and we want to be like you. If that is your prayer and your testimony, then you will be enabled to hear Him say to you, "How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride. How much more pleasing is your love than wine!" (Song of Songs 4:10)