

CRUST-BUSTERS

Have you looked in a mirror recently? You should. What you'll see will shock you. At least, it would if you knew what you were supposed to look like. You see, what you're beholding is filled with and ravaged by sin.

Now, if you are not born again by faith in the Messiah, Jesus, what you see is all you've got (and it's rapidly falling apart). On the other hand, if you are saved by believing in what the Lord did on your behalf – dying on the cross for your sins and rising again – what you see in that mirror will one day soon be amazingly transformed.

And here's a question for you who know the Lord – why the wait? No, not weight? Wait. Why does God wait to complete this transformation? I'm ready now! (I think...) I mean, I'm just sick and tired of the sinful old man – oh, not just this body's pitiful appearance but that old sin-nature that presents me with a nearly constant struggle to do what's good and right – and not to do what's bad and wrong.

Why not just completely transform me instantly when I believe? Now, I know there was definitely a difference when I got saved, there is for everyone! At the moment of salvation, we are finally set free from the penalty and power of sin; the eternal penalty and its former power over our lives..

But God doesn't remove that crusty old man yet. I am forced to fight with him daily to break through his crustiness. (Now, admittedly, sometimes I don't deal with him and the results are really ugly!) But why

the wait? Let's do it now, Lord!
Ever feel that way?

Now, being the crazy nature-lover that I am, I can appreciate this answer and hope you can too. The Bible says that the firmament, that is nature, shows His handiwork (Psa 19:1). This is clearly evident in its beauty, its majesty and its intricacy, but also in the spiritual lessons God displays if we'll pay attention.

There's a wonderful parallel to observe – the lowly caterpillar. Here he goes, inching slowly towards a tasty leaf. And when he finally gets there, he just eats and eats – feeding himself seems to be the only goal in his pitifully limited life. From one leaf-binge to another, he slowly creeps.

But then, suddenly, he gets it into his little caterpillar mind that there's more to life than chlorophyll and he puts himself in a real predicament – dangling by a thread so to speak. You see, he realizes he's 'out on a limb' and it's time to 'turn over a new leaf', to 'branch out' (sorry). Anyway, he takes this whole new course, this leap of faith – and there's a radical change.

Yet to those watching, it's a conundrum, a mystery, a seeming blunder because he's now living in a chrysalis – a very 'limited' life in the world's eyes – no leaf parties, no upward mobility. I mean, life is over, right?

Still, while his fat-cat(erpillar) buddies scorn or laugh or scratch their little caterpillar heads, a metamorphosis is taking place – a dramatic transformation. Within that shell, a whole new creature is being formed (2Cor 5:17). And when the

time is right, a struggle begins inside.

At first, the shell – what's left of the old caterpillar resists. But then, there's a crack ... then another. Slowly, and with tremendous effort, this beautiful new creature emerges – fighting and struggling, then resting, then fighting and struggling. You almost feel sorry for him.

Finally, as he breaks free of the old caterpillar shell, he spreads forth his beautiful new wings. Drinking in the sunlight of a new world, he flies over the old world of leaves and twigs. On the breath of God's Spirit, so to speak, in the light of His Son, he now looks for flowers – a whole new diet, a new life, a new freedom – completely unimaginable to the old caterpillar. But the struggle to emerge was very important.

A scientist studying this phenomenon, cut open the chrysalis just as the butterfly began to emerge, and guess what happened? Instead of helping it, he actually impaired its ability to fly. He found that in the course of the struggle, the breaking loose (that is, dealing with the old caterpillar), the veins of the new butterfly's wings were filled with the fluid that causes them to stiffen and expand. No struggle, no flight – a new creature but no lift-off.

And so it is with us who believe in Christ. Upon getting saved, we indeed change. Though the world perceives us as 'constrained', we are constrained by love (2 Cor 5:14) and an inward transformation now begins. As we grow in the Lord, we start to sense the hardness of the old man and the closer we come, by relationship, to the Lord, the more we detest its influence. We want to be free from it.

But the struggle is important and necessary for in it we learn to make good choices – to resist evil and to cling to good. Our eternal character is shaped. We are humbled by the honest assessment of our old nature and we are strengthened as the living waters of God's Spirit course through our spiritual 'veins', preparing us to fly. And fly we will!

So don't be discouraged when the 'old man' rears its ugly head. Fight the good fight (1 Tim 6:12, 2 Tim 4:7).

You will emerge one day soon into a whole new world with a new body, a new perspective, a new life – that for which you were born!