

# FREEDOM – The Miracle of Maturity

*Metamorphosis Series*

*May 15, 2005*

**Slide 1** - This morning we finally get to talk about butterflies!

For the last three weeks we've been looking at eggs (not too interesting!) – caterpillars (rather ugly!) – and cocoons (not much action there!)...

Finally we get to look at the finished project!

A few years ago we took a little vacation time and went to Chicago. One of the highlights was a visit to the Butterfly Gardens at the Museum of Natural History. Walked through a greenhouse-type building filled with butterflies! It was fascinating to be surrounded by butterflies of all sizes, shapes and colors. I had a new camera so I got a bit carried away but it was fascinating! You couldn't help but be amazed at the diversity of God's creative touch. Speaking of which, I was reading recently about one small corner of a national park in Peru where they have recorded 1,300 different butterfly species.

**Slide 2** - The butterfly has been a symbol for the church for centuries (See the Bulletin Cover this Morning) – a symbol of freedom, of resurrection, of new life. In fact, our word, metamorphosis, is a Greek word that is used in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

**Slide 3** - *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has gone, the new has come.”*

During this series we've learned about some of the principles of spiritual growth from observing the stages of the life of a Monarch Butterfly – and from Paul's letter to the Colossian Church.

From the egg we have learned that all spiritual life begins with a simple act of faith. *“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, not of yourselves, it is a gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8)*

From the caterpillar we have learned about the necessity of feeding our spiritual life with spiritual truth. God's word is the source of all spiritual growth. *“Like newborn babies – all of us are to – crave pure spiritual milk so that we may grow up in our salvation.” (1 Peter 2:2)*

From the cocoon we've learned how transformation takes place slowly; that it's necessary for the spirit to be protected so that the process can accomplish it's full purpose and that it's often during the dark, discouraging times of our lives that the most dramatic changes occur.

*“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve the will of God...” (Romans 12:2)*

Today...we finally get to learn from the butterfly. Imagine the chrysalis starting to crack open and from the shell emerges a creature radically different from the creature that entered that cocoon. Once a caterpillar, now a butterfly!

**Slide 4** - And we are going to learn some lessons from this finished product!

**Slide 5** - The first is this:

1) AIM HIGH, AIM HEAVENLY

**Slide 6** - *Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (3:1,2)*

Just like the butterfly emerging from the cocoon must not think he is still a caterpillar and go back to crawling along the ground and eating leaves – but instead must take to the sky, fulfilling his true destiny – so once we experience new life in Christ we must not go back to our old lives but set our sights on Christ and obedience to him.

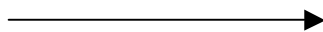
**Slide 7** - Paul ties this truth in with BAPTISM.

*“...you have been given fullness in Christ...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” (2:10, 12)*

A person’s baptism is an experience that you never forget. It’s a time when you are laid back into the water and the water engulfs you as you enter it. That is a symbol of your identification with Jesus who was laid into the grave totally engulfed in death. But even as he was raised to new life so you are lifted out of the water – a symbol of your new life in Christ!

You’ve gone through the time in your life where you did what you want. You know the feelings of guilt and shame that come from poor choices. You’ve felt the sting and the pain of the consequences of those choices. You’ve heard the offer of Jesus for full forgiveness through the cross – of a chance for a new start – and you have responded to that offer – not by calling a 1-800 # but by talking to God in prayer. And something has happened in your life. It may not seem like much, it may not seem significant, but it’s new. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Because all that is true your aim must be high. You must leave the old behind and press on to the heavenly.



As the Monarch emerges from the cocoon it expels the meconium, the metabolic waste that has accumulated in the cocoon, before it does anything else.

**Slide 8** - 2) EXPEL THE OLD AND WORLDLY

Colossians 3:5 begins the section of Paul's letter where he addresses the need for action; for change in behavior. The commentator Barclay has this to say:

*Paul could think more deeply than any man who ever tried to express the Christian faith; he could travel along uncharted pathways of thought; he could scale the heights of the human mind, where even the best equipped theologian finds it hard to follow him; but always at the end of his letters he turns to the practical consequences of it all. He always ends with an uncompromising and crystal clear statement of the ethical demands of Christianity...*

**Slide 9** - Read 3:5-11

These are all things that belong to the old life. Paul says, "Put them to death..." Those are pretty strong words but these are things that should NOT be a part of your life as a Christian.

*Sexual immorality* is any sexual activity (thought or action) that is not within the guidelines of God's commands for mankind.

*Impurity* fits into that same category.

*Lust and evil desires* are passions that drive a person to do things that are wrong.

*Greed* is an ugly word. Basically it is the insatiable desire to have more. It's the condition of never being satisfied.

*Anger and rage* are twin emotions. The word Paul uses for anger refers to the slow-burning, long-lasting kind. The word for rage is the sudden anger that quickly explodes. As quickly as it blazes up it burns itself out. Both are not to be a part of the new life in Christ.

*Malice* is a viciousness of mind from which all other sins grow.

*Slander, Filthy Language and Lies* all have to do with talking against your fellow man.

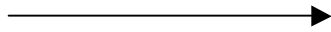
If we ever hope to fly these are waste products of the "old nature" that must be expelled. These things must be put to death. No Mercy! When they show up in your life you must get serious about exterminating them!

**Slide 10** - Paul's words here are just an echo of what Jesus taught when he said, "*If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.*" (Matthew 5:29) Sin is nothing to play with. If you don't destroy it, it will destroy you!

The smell in our car☹ We tried covering it up with cinnamon-apple deoderizer – WORSE! Finally, yesterday we did the nose test. Back seat, driver's side – Bad! Felt underneath – wet and sticky – Really Bad!! We had to get to the bottom of the smell

before we had hope. In our lives we have to get rid of the source, not just cover up the smell!

Look over that list in your notes. Are there qualities listed there that are still a part of your life? Honestly, the answer is probably “Yes” for all of us. That’s because the process of expelling the waste from our lives is a gradual process but it must be a goal at which we tenaciously persevere! Otherwise we will always fall short of our potential!



### **Slide 11** - 3) TAKE ON THE NEW AND CHRIST-DESIGNED

Before the Monarch flies it must wait. When it emerges from the cocoon its wings are small and wet and shriveled. As it waits a substance called hemolymph is pumped from the stomach throughout the insects body. The wings reach full size and within an hour the butter is ready to fly!

Just as we get rid of the old so we must take on the new. Paul uses the analogy of taking off old, dirty, smelly clothes and replacing them with clothes that are fresh and clean. The qualities that fit our new life in Christ-designed! Just as you may wear jeans designed by Calvin Klein or Tommy Hilfiger, so you must wear qualities of life that are designed by Jesus Christ!

### **Slide 12** –

*Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12)*

Paul also talks about Forgiveness and Love, the Garment that ties it all together.

The church is to be the one place in all the world where love is supreme. Go back to 3:11 for a moment. Think about this list:

- Greeks – They were the elite of the earth, or so they thought.
- Jews – They were God’s chosen people and they weren’t afraid to tell you!
- Barbarians – Non-civilized of that day.
- Scythian – They were the barbarians of the barbarians! Scum of the earth!
- Slaves were a piece of property – owner could beat them, kill them (no rights)

In the church, all these people had equal status and each was commanded, in the name of Jesus their Savior, to love each other! WOW!!

**Slide 13** - In fact, whatever we do it is to be the kind of thing that could be stamped with the “name of Jesus Christ.”

This is the hemolymph of the Christian – the life giving resource that is available to us so that we can become capable of flight...to leave the old behind and start life new and fresh.

This is the truth of the book of Colossians:

**Slide 14** – For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (3:4) You are ready to fly! Take off, my friend, and don't look back. Grow to be everything that God has blessed you to be!

Prayer

Worship Team – “I'm Ready to Fly”