

THERE IS HOPE

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Introduction

God has changed the lives of many people. Sometimes He even changed their names. That was usually to indicate that something new was going to happen, a new beginning, new blessings, or maybe saying that no matter the past, there was hope.

Examples: Abram – Abraham, father of nations; Sarai – Sarah, a princess; Simon – Peter, a rock.

Names are not often changed, but great transformation always takes place when Jesus becomes Lord of a life.

My life was transformed 70 years ago, not my name, but the course of my life. Then I knew that I had a future, a future that would be uplifting and filled with purpose.

Samaritan woman – John 4

John 4: Jesus went to Samaria for a specific woman. He waited at the well until she came. It appears that her life was a sad one, running from one man to the next – or maybe being used by them and never finding joy and fulfilment with someone special. Then Jesus came! Everything changed then.

Her mind was focused on her natural need for water, but Jesus knew that she needed something more. When He asked about her husband, He put His finger on a sensitive issue of her heart. He loves enough to confront someone with the truth. She was living in adultery; He knew it and she knew it. All she thought she needed, was water, but Jesus knew the real lack in her life. She tried to change the subject, and He used the opportunity to teach her about worship. Worship is so wonderful, it enables entrance into God's presence, the place where lives are changed.

Jesus offered her living water, water that would become a spring of water welling up into eternal life. She experienced a 'wow' moment! Her spiritual eyes were opened, and she came to understand that she was being offered a new life, real life, life that promised joy, fulfilment and purpose. She left her waterpot – something resembling her past and went to the city. This woman became an evangelist, sharing the good news and telling the people of the city that she had met A MAN! Many believed, some because of her testimony and many after meeting Jesus.

This woman had been changed in the presence of Jesus and she affected an entire community. They believed that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. They saw Jesus, they heard Him and light entered their lives. The love of Jesus is so great, He doesn't want to leave anyone the way they are.

There is a gospel song where part of the chorus says, When Jesus comes our tears are wiped away, when Jesus comes, He takes the gloom and fills the night with glory, for all is changed when Jesus comes to stay.

The same Jesus is here this morning, and He is offering you this precious life, so filled with freedom and love.

Hephzibah – Isaiah 62

Another Beautiful testimony of a life transformed by the love and grace of Jesus Christ, was portrayed by the graceful dance moves of the children.

When we read the book of the prophet Isaiah, we find some of the most beautiful and encouraging portions of Scripture. In Isaiah 51:1 there is a call to everyone who seeks the Lord. Further on in this chapter God says that He is the One who comforts His people, He encourages them to break forth into singing and promises that He will go before them and also be their rearguard. Then in chapter 55 everyone who is thirsty is invited to come to the waters, to come buy and eat without money and without price. Great glory and blessings are available. In chapter 60 where we read about the future glory of Israel, we come to one of my favourite verses. Verse 5 says, *“You shall see and be radiant and your heart shall thrill and exult.”* Or as the living Bible says, *“Your eyes will shine and your hearts will thrill with joy.”*

Then in chapter 61 we find the words that Jesus later on declared in Luke 4, saying that they had now been fulfilled. (NKJ) *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty for the captives... and in verse 3b **“to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness...”*** Is there anyone here who doesn't desire beauty instead of ashes and joy instead of despair? These are certainly wonderful exchanges, and it will be very worthwhile to investigate how they can be made. So let's find out.

In chapter 62 we read about Hephzibah. That's the lady we heard about in the dance testimony. Who is she and how did she come to be given this name?

God is here talking to His nation, Israel, the object of His love. Does that include us? Galatians 3:29 says, *“If you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring.”* This means that every child of God is part of the Israel of God. So what we discover about Hephzibah applies to us!

Let's read Isaiah 62 from verse 2b.(NKJV) ***“You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the Lord will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, And a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land anymore be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, And your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, So shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.”***

We've seen that Hephzibah means, the Lord delights in you and Beulah means, married and marriage portrays loyalty. To Jerusalem on that day, and to you, who has made Jesus Lord of your life, God says, *“You are My delight and the Bride of God.”*

What does this mean for us and how can we make the exchange?

Isaiah 1:16 says *“Come let us reason says the Lord though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson. They shall become like wool.”* When you realize that you can never be good enough, holy enough, to appear in the presence of a mighty and totally holy God, One who said that you must be holy like He is holy, and you come to Jesus, acknowledging your sin and your need of Him, asking Him to cleanse and forgive you, He does so.

He washes away your sin, making you white as snow. He not only saves you, promising eternal life, but the Father adopts you as His own child. It's not an ordinary adoption, but a very special one, because that day you are born of God and that means that **you get the DNA of God**, you get **a new nature**, you are born again, born all over again, so that **the old life is gone and you become like one who has never sinned**. How amazing, how glorious, doesn't it make you jump and sing for joy? When Jesus gave His life for you, all because of His astounding love, on that

day, as He hung on the cross, all your sin and sickness were piled onto Jesus and He received the punishment that was what you deserved. He paid the price so that you can go free, and you can become one in whom the Lord Delights, His Hephzibah. Also, on that day the heavy curtain in the temple, that prevented ordinary people from entering God's presence, was torn in two and now you can enter your Father's presence, all because of what Jesus has done for you. You can talk to Him and listen to what He wants to say to you. Then the beautiful verse in Isaiah 61:10 applies to you, ***"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness."***

Not only are you now cleansed and made His own, but your destiny has changed. No longer will circumstances, or the devil, do this, the Lord now defines your destiny and the special plans that God has made for your life, become a reality. **Spend time with Him, reading the Word, talking to Him in prayer and waiting quietly and patiently on Him. There will be times when He will share His heart's desires with you and times when He makes His plans known to you. These are tremendous privileges, appreciate them.** Know that should you be weary and feel like giving up, the Lord never gives up, He acts for you, fights for you and is the Lover of your soul. Always remember, child of God, that He delights in you.

Conclusion

If you have not yet committed your life to Jesus, if you have not repented and made Jesus Lord of your life, do not postpone doing so. There is no one who loves you more, there is no one else so powerful who can protect you at all times, no one else who delights in you and makes good plans for you, the way Jesus does. You cannot risk one more day without Him. He wants to give purpose and value to your life and make it all worthwhile.

Maybe there is someone who at some stage did commit your life to Jesus, but you are battling, life has been tough, you've been hurt by circumstances and people and may even have become rather embittered. You feel like an orphan, rejected, alone and the devil has been whispering in your ear that your failures are so great that God can't love you anymore. Tell the devil that he is a liar – because he is – and just start worshipping the Lord. Tell Jesus that you love Him. Confess to the Lord that you have drifted away, but today you are coming back. Deal with the lies that you believed about yourself. Jesus will transform you and again fill you with peace and joy. The Lord knows all your failures, but still delights in you. A precious verse in Zephaniah 3, verse 17, says that He rejoices over you with great gladness. With His love He calms all your fears and sings a happy song over you. He takes the ashes of your life and gives you beauty instead. He promised to do so and He will. He takes great pleasure in you.

He wants to make your life purpose-filled, no longer will you drift about. He wants to use you to help others who have no sense of self-worth and identity. They will see how you have been transformed and will realize that there is hope, even for them.

To all of us He says, Come to Me, I want to pour out My love all over you, you are special in My sight.