

# Local Church

## Transformation of Character

Galatians 2:20 — “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

The greatest benefit of being faithful is the transformation of our character. When we surrender to God the things He tells us to surrender — resources, time, body, or gifts — we are allowing selfishness to be removed from our hearts, giving room to love and kindness. When that happens, our character becomes like Christ's.

Time and again, Ellen G. White presents this principle in her writings. She states: “It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p.14) She also wrote, “God planned the system of beneficence in order that man might become, like his Creator, benevolent and unselfish in character, and finally be a partaker with Him of the eternal, glorious reward.” *Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 552

These quotes contain two very important pieces of information. First, character restoration comes through a constant manifestation of our faithfulness to divine directions. Second, God Himself designed the faithfulness system so that our character could be transformed from selfishness to altruism.

In practice, it works like this: You are sitting at a table full of food, and you realise that some foods are in disagreement with God's guidelines for the development of good health. If you decide to eat whatever is on the table, your selfishness will be strengthened because you decided to do only what you wanted in opposition to the expressed will of God. On the other hand, if you choose to give up your desire and follow divine guidance, selfishness loses the battle and its strength is lessened in your heart. It's not just a matter of you getting ill or not; it's mostly a matter of who wins the battle for your heart: selfishness or God's will.

When at the end of the month you choose not to be faithful by returning your tithes and offerings, the problem is not that the church suffers from a shortage of resources; the problem is that selfishness gains strength and dominance in your heart. On the other hand, when you are faithful in returning the resources God has placed in your hands, the self is dethroned and character is ennobled.

**Appeal:** Reaffirm your commitment today to put your selfish desires last and God first.