

## SMALL GROUP NOTES – WONDER OF TRANSFORMATION

- Philip began with the observation that the Christian life is not easy, despite the wonder of grace that offers salvation to all those who put their trust in Jesus. He illustrated this from the lives of Paul and Peter, who suffered setbacks in their Christian lives ranging from the betrayal of Christ by Peter to the agonies over Paul's inability to avoid sin in Romans 7. The overall process is portrayed in a diagram of our lives (slide 5) as we progress from fallen non-Christians to glory after we die as followers of Jesus. The key point is that sanctification, the process of the Christian life after conversion, is not a smooth one. We can flat-line or even regress at times, not at all moving in the direction of increased holiness.
- Understanding the overall issue is helped by the Freedom in Christ course, which emphasises three barriers to our growth as Christians, the world, the flesh and the devil. In Christ we can resist these traps and our lives can be transformed. But Philip preferred to present a different, complementary approach, which stems from Waverley Abbey.
- Humans are designed to bask in God's presence as Adam and Eve did at Eden. There, they gained all the significance, self worth and security that they needed. It was like being under a beautiful tropical waterfall. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were cast out of paradise into a hard world where all their goals in life failed to be met. The result was anger (for blocked goals), anxiety (for uncertain goals) and guilt and shame (for unreachable goals).
- God's response was the rescue plan of the cross, which opened the way again for us to enter his presence. But even for Christians, life doesn't always feel like that. The reason is that we try to get self worth, significance and security from somewhere else. And here is a crucial verse, **Jeremiah 2:13** "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." We put something else than God at the centre of our lives. And this can happen even when we are Christians, because old ways of thinking don't disappear as soon as we are saved – as Peter and Paul found out.

- Philip went on to show that thinking, feelings, choices and behaviour conspire to lead us to put our trust in such “leaky cisterns” (slide 12). Our challenge as Christians is to repent of such behaviour and return to God’s presence – the waterfall (slide 6). This is transformation. The flesh, the world and the devil will seek to obstruct us, but with the power of the Holy Spirit it can be done. Philip illustrated the pattern with experiences of his own life, as did a number of brave individuals willing to give testimony of transformation of their own. In most cases, an adverse experience, lies from the enemy, negative feelings, choices and a “cistern” could be discerned as they spoke.

### **Issues for discussion**

- *Could those who have done the Freedom in Christ course tell the others of the benefits they obtained and encourage everyone to take part?*
- *Reflect on Jeremiah 2:13 and consider what cisterns you might be drinking from, instead of being under God’s waterfall.*
- *Discuss what insights into your spiritual difficulties you gained by thinking about childhood experiences, and resultant thinking, feelings, choices and behaviour.*
- *Could those with stories of transformation present their testimonies to the group?*
- *Pray for each other, and for the individuals whose testimony moved you in the church.*

# **THE WONDER OF TRANSFORMATION**

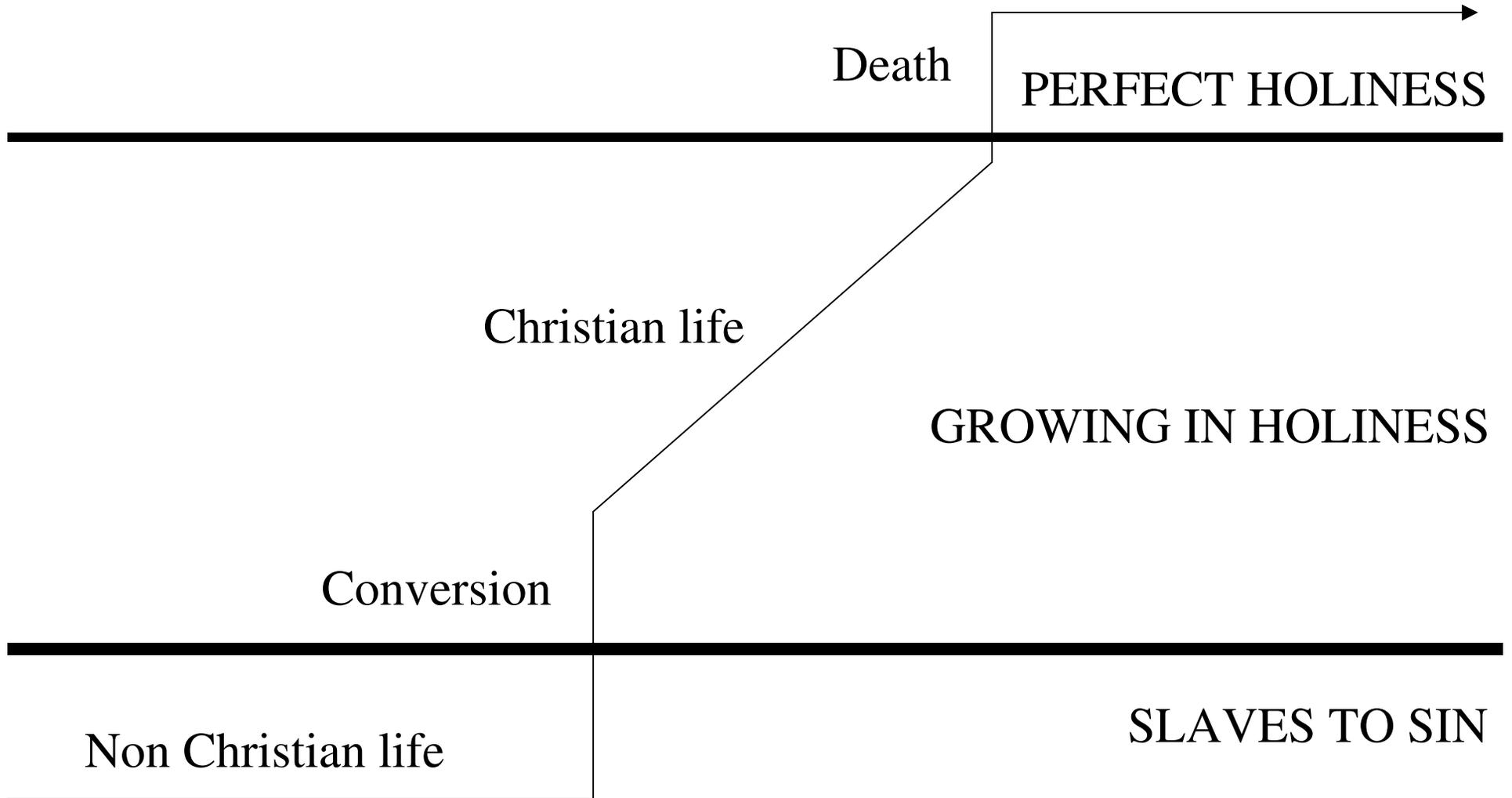
Pembury Baptist Church

24<sup>th</sup> January 2010

# Peter and Paul



# The process of sanctification



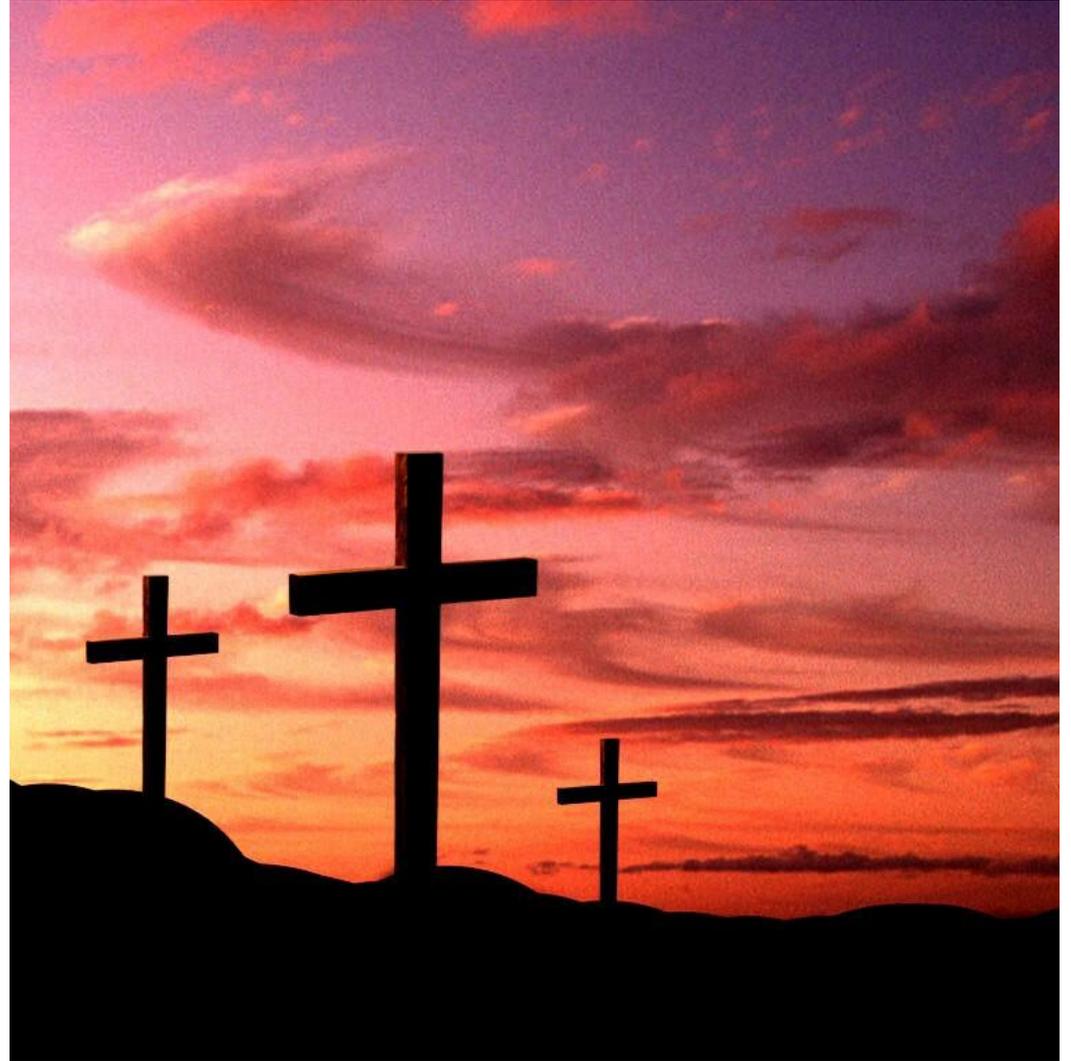
# Eden and God's presence







# The fall and the cross



# Jeremiah 2:13

- “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”



# The process of sanctification

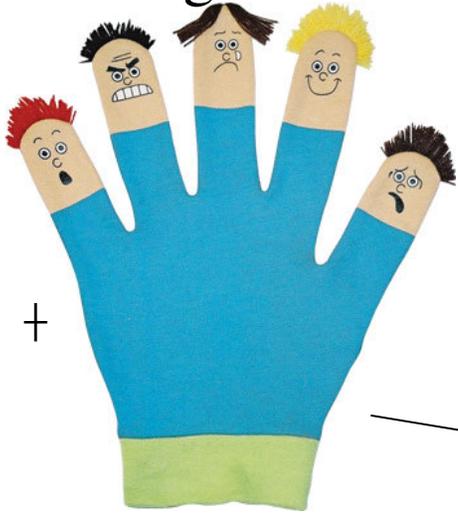
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23: “may God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through”
- Romans 8:13 “if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live”
- Philippians 2:12: “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for God is at work in you...”

Thinking



God's presence – the waterfall

Feelings



“Everyman”

✦ The cross

↑ Repentance

↘ Behaviour



Choices (defence mechanisms and things to feel good about)

“Broken Cisterns”

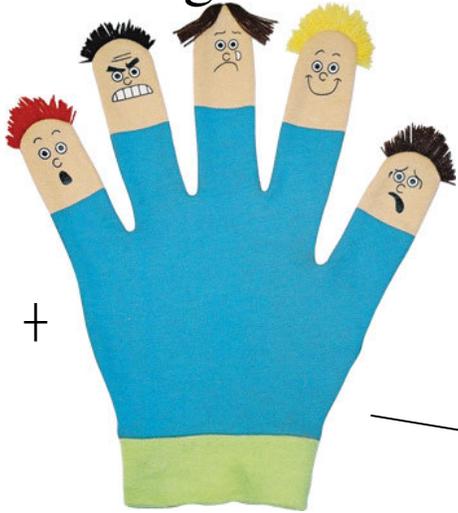


Thinking



God's presence –  
the waterfall

Feelings



+



“Everyman”

+

The cross

↑

Repentance

↓

Behaviour



Choices (defence  
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