

Papilio: The Story of His Resurrection

By Chauncey Giles

This is a shortened and modified version for use in a modern Sunday School setting with time limitations. This version was created by Kim de Chazal.

One warm and lovely summer day, I was sitting under a tree in a garden fragrant with many flowers when a brilliantly-colored butterfly came fluttering towards me and landed on a flower close by.

“Good morning, Mr. Papilio,” I said. “How are you?”

“Very well, thanks, and how are you?” said Mr. Papilio.

When I told him that I was fine but had nothing to do, he answered, “Neither do I, but I don’t want anything to do. I have done enough hard work in my life, and now I like to just fly around in the warm sun and take a sip of nectar now and then.”

“I didn’t know butterflies ever had to work,” I said. “After all, look at how fragile your wings are.”

“Well, I didn’t always have these wings. I didn’t have any wings at all, once.”

“Then what were you, when you had no wings?”

“I don’t like to tell you or even to think about it, but I was—a worm!”

“What? An ugly worm? And did you crawl and squirm, and have a long, hairy body?”

“Yes. Now I wish I hadn’t told you.”

“But that’s amazing - how did you turn into a butterfly? There must be something wonderful about such a complete change.”

“There was another change before that one, and just as strange. I was once a little dot. My mother stuck me onto the underside of a leaf.”

“Were you one of those white spots I used to scrape off the backs of leaves? I didn’t know those were butterflies!”

“They weren’t. If you had looked at me under a microscope when I was that little dot, you wouldn’t have seen a butterfly, only something from which a butterfly is made. All I know is that one day I was cramped and hungry and I wanted to get out. So I struggled and finally broke through and my body wasn’t much more than a slender thread. Butterflies like to use big words, so we call this change from egg to caterpillar our Transformation. Some call it our Resurrection. Anyway, I was so hungry, so I ate leaf after leaf until I got fat and round. Everyone hated us worms and wanted to kill us. Birds wanted to eat us. People would scream if we crawled on them. After a while I grew lazy and very sleepy. So I found a safe, hidden spot, and wove myself a silk blanket and went to sleep.”

“Did you say that you spun silk? A worm making silk?”

“Yes, silk. Even worms have their uses. Anyway, I went to sleep and slept and slept.”

“You must have been dead.”

“Perhaps I was, what you call dead. But it wasn’t death or I wouldn’t be here now.”

“Still, you are a butterfly. Maybe you are mistaken in thinking you were a worm.”

“Well, listen to the rest of the story and then see what you think. When I finally woke up, I felt strange things growing from my sides and I wanted to move but I was tightly bound. I started to be hungry. Finally I felt as if I must get out of my blanket and my old body. I wanted to fly like I had seen birds do. I wasn’t sure what was happening. I thought I must be having another Transformation, and maybe that would lead to a new Resurrection, but I didn’t know. But when my blanket or shroud or grave or whatever you want to call it opened, I was alive and free! I don’t know how to describe it. I couldn’t crawl any more, many of my legs were gone, but then these strange things at my sides began to open like a fan, and I felt so happy it seemed as if I could fly. I stretched them out and away I went. I could fly! How bright and beautiful everything was. And I wasn’t a worm anymore. People liked to see me now. In fact, I’m so happy now I don’t know what to do with myself!”

“But how did you get your wings?”

“I didn’t get them. They just grew right out of me when I was asleep.”

“Then you weren’t dead?”

“Dead! Do you call this dead? I am a thousand times more alive than ever. If I was ever dead, it was when I was a worm. This is my resurrection. This is my life. See how happy and free I am! But I guess you were never a worm, so you don’t need a resurrection.”

“Yes, I do, and I expect to have one.”

“What! to be changed into another form and have wings and live in a more beautiful world than this? But nothing could be lovelier than this world. It’s impossible.”

“Well, I don’t expect to change into another form or grow wings, but I do hope to rise into a world as much more beautiful, bright and lovely than this world as this world seems to you after the world you knew when you were a worm.”

“But what good will that do you if you won’t be changed into some other form?”

“Don’t you see that this body of mine is almost worn out? See my wrinkled face and my feeble hands. I can’t run and jump anymore. But there is a new body growing within this one, just like your wings grew within your body while you were asleep. Someday I will go to sleep just like you did, and while I am asleep I will be raised out of this old body by the Lord, and then I will be in a world far more beautiful than this world. And I won’t need wings, because I will be able to go where I like in an instant and be with the people I love, simply by wishing it.”

Papilio looked at me a moment, and then said, “*Perhaps* there can be a better world than this one, but this one is good enough for me.”

“You are right,” I replied. “It *is* good enough for you, but it is not good enough for me.”

Papilio circled around me, looking at me from all sides, and then went fluttering off among the flowers, and I saw him no more.