

Change

Part Five

You Can Change

Introduction

What is change? It is becoming more like Christ. Is it presenting ourselves as instruments of obedience to God, not to sin. It is putting off sin and putting on righteousness in its place. It is sanctification. It is being a doer of the Word. It is growing in respect to salvation. It is being more like Christ.

Why do I need to change? The Word of God identifies growth, Godward change, as the mode of life God intends for believers.

Can I change? This is an important life question. The answer is "yes, absolutely!" God supplies believers with everything we need to obey Him.

1

The Mindset Of Change

Colossians 3:1-4

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

There's a mindset endorsed in this passage. Do you see what it is? It is setting our minds on things above, not on things on earth. The reason is found in verse 1: we have been raised up with Christ, given a new life with God. He is our Lord; that is why we set our minds on things above, that is where Jesus Christ is now.

What would it be like to think like that? Take inventory of your mind. What things do you think about? What kind of thoughts do you think in regard to your schedule, your spouse, your children, your extended family, your job, your household, your dreams, your interests, your walk with God, your church, what you read, what you watch on television, what you do on the internet, what you want? What must change if you are to set your mind on things above? What would be different if your manner of thinking more typically dealt with how these things relate to Christ rather than how they relate to you?

We all have motives. Motives can not be known by observing behavior. One man works for money to spend on his pleasures, another for the honor of God. They may work just as hard. One woman may work to keep her home beautiful because she wants to please God by working hard and be a blessing to her family; another may work just as hard because she longs to hear others tell her how amazing she is. One father may spend time with his son in fear of rebellion in the teen years,

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another with the purpose of showing love and to speak of the things of God in their house, as they walk by the way and as they repair a car together.

The Christ-oriented, future-oriented mindset of this text necessitates its own set of motives. No present recognition or return on our investments of time and effort are sought. Rather, we have died and our true life is hidden in Christ (as also Galatians 2.20). So the time when we will be understood, known, when our motives become apparent to all, will be when we see the Lord face to face. Our motive is that that moment would go well. Our focus is the glory of Christ, who is our life.

My friend, if you will commit your way to the actions prescribed in Colossians 3.1-4, you will be successful in changing in a Godward direction.

Keep seeking things above. Set your mind on things above.

2

The Force That Enables Change

James 1:25

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Can you overcome sin? Can you change patterns of thought? Can you become more like Christ? Can you, Christian, be victorious in your current battles with temptation? Can you win against anger? Can you change your manner of speaking to eliminate selfish, sinful words and instead speak words that give grace to those who hear?

The answer is in James 1.25. The answer is yes! The one who looks at the Word and then abides by it will be blessed by the living God in what he does. To be blessed by God is to be energized by the force that enables change.

Look intently at God's Word. Learn what it teaches. Be reprov'd and corrected by it. Be trained in righteousness through its truth. Meditate on it day and night. Listen when it judges the thoughts and intentions of your heart. Study it. Consume it. Hunger for it.

Don't hear it and not do what it says. Do it. Abide by it.

For the person whose passion is obeying God's Word there is a certain blessing. What greater force could there be? The God who causes the earth to spin and to rotate around the sun will bless your efforts. He is the One who simultaneously knows five billion hearts worldwide. He says be a doer of the Word and He will bless what you do.

Elsewhere Scripture tells us the same thing. Psalm 1 speaks of the person who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. He will be blessed in whatever he does. Psalm 119:9-11 shows the Word as being the way to keeping your way pure. It is the force that enables us to resist sin. The doer of the Word changes. The doer of the Word is blessed by God.

There is such power here. If you choose one thing in life to focus on, how could you choose other than to look intently at the Word and do what it says?

Be encouraged.

You can change.

3

The War Within That Demands Change

Galatians 5:16-17

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Walk by the Spirit. The idea here is that we subject our will to the Holy Spirit. We are in accord with righteousness. We are keeping a clear conscience. We are doing what we are doing for the purpose of pleasing God.

What are the desires of the flesh? 1 John 2:15-17 puts them in three categories: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life. They are the selfish drives. They can be desires which are godly when submitted to God (hunger for a proper amount of food to honor God by being healthy, physical relations in marriage, earning money to supply family needs), but can become the desires of the flesh, evil, when distorted by motives of selfish pleasure (food because it tastes good, eaten excessively; sex outside marriage; working long hours for money to spend on pleasures). We are all tempted by the desires of the flesh at one level or another.

It's a war! The flesh and the Spirit are opposed to each other. They are enemies. They set their desires against each other. They are attorneys in court. They are football players in overtime of a playoff game. They are soldiers with weapons in hand in the middle of a field in the 1700s. But this war is fought on a different battlefield, this one is won or lost in our hearts and minds.

Have you seen the war in human lives? Have you seen it in the mirror? I have. I do. I have not run out of sin to put off and righteousness to put in its place. The wars of today require needing God's help to walk by the Spirit. When past wars have ended in victory, by God's grace, there has been great joy. Always those moments are filled with thanks, worship, and the sense that this has been the work of the Lord.

Here is the essence of Godward change. Will you choose today to obey the Spirit?

You may not do the things that you please. That's the conclusion of it all. The war inside demands change. It is hard change; it goes against the grain of who we are. We may not do the things that we please.

4

A Christian's Destiny Is Overcoming Sin

1 John 5:3-5

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

To love God is to keep His commandments. He loved us by sending His Son to pay the price for our sin. We love Him by yielding our will to His will. We serve Him as our Lord with thankful hearts, glad to be His. Peter phrases it this way in 1 Peter 1.8-9, speaking of the proof of our faith, "though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." Let us love our Lord by keeping His commandments.

His commandments are not burdensome. When we are fulfilling our destiny as believers we understand this. When we are failing in obeying God it may not seem this way. But according to the Word it is so. We face all temptation with great hope because of the resources God provides, because of the success of our Lord Jesus Christ and because of the presence of God in our lives.

Here is strong encouragement. Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. This is our destiny because of who we belong to. We may face our battles with sin and the need to change with confidence because of who our Father is.

Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? Then you are one who can overcome the world. Indeed, as Romans 6 teaches, we are to consider ourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Christians, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, have the capability and indeed the destiny of overcoming sin.

Conclusion

You can change, believer.

Pursue the mindset which is riveted on things above. Be a doer of the Word. Be in the battle between flesh and Spirit each day. Love God by living a life of obedience and in so doing overcome the world.

Confidently face this day as a child of God. Remember Jesus' words: "In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world."