

God Wants Us to Be and Stay Changed

In recent years there have been TV programs featuring extreme makeovers of face and body. These programs can be thrilling to watch when we see the “before” and “after” transformations. Some family members and friends are virtually speechless with joy and amazement when they see the “new” person emerge from behind the curtain!

God wants that kind of change in us spiritually. God wants us to be changed — to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Ephesians 4:23-24 says, “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man [self] which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” R.C. Bell who wrote *Studies in Ephesians* made this statement: “No portion of the Bible draws the contradiction between fleshly and spiritual men more fully, or portrays the depraved, wretched, natural man in more colorful terms than Ephesians does.”

We must have the desire to develop that biblically conscious way of thinking that will change our thoughts, words and actions that are contrary to God’s will. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Dying to self is the grimmest and most distasteful funeral we will ever attend. Many of us are in love with ourselves and our self-serving, self-seeking ways and attitudes. What we commonly refer to as *The Beatitudes of our Lord* in Matthew 5:1-12 are the basic groundwork of the change in our thinking that God requires. This changing that Jesus taught is not an automatic or an easy process. Let’s face it, we have to work our way up to changing into what God expects and wants us to be. However, the submission of our stubborn will is vital for life altering change.

God wants us not only to be changed, but He also wants us to **stay** changed! God wants to see the reflection of His Son in us every time He looks at us. This requires our daily, diligent pursuit of righteousness in our growth and transformation. We need to understand that every day of life God gives us is another opportunity to grow into the realization that this world has nothing of eternal value to offer us. That recognition alone would change us if we would allow it.

Once this transformation has occurred, any thoughts of backsliding must be confronted immediately! Satan will tell us that it is permissible to look back and fall back as long as the sin is insignificant and done in moderation. Apparently, some think they look good and feel better sinning, and perhaps God is giving them more time to keep on sinning! Paul slams the door on such a self-serving, self-seeking mindset in Romans 8:13. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

Others may feel that God will accept a “somewhat not all together” return to the world. The writer again refutes such faulty thinking in Hebrews 10:38. “Now the just shall live by faith; but **if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.**” Verse 39 tells us why lifelong faithfulness is a supreme imperative. “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition [destruction], but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” The faith that is required is the faith that endures as long as life endures. James 1:21 states, “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” God will not grant His blessings to a Christian who draws back and returns to the world. Those who draw back cannot keep their faith to the preserving of their soul.

As we look into that “perfect law of liberty” that James speaks about, we are soon hit right between our eyes with the knowledge that changing to become more and more like Christ is a lifelong process! When a person becomes and remains a faithful Christian, he or she passes from darkness to light. “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). When a person becomes and remains a faithful Christian, he or she passes from death to life. “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death” (1 John 3:14). One’s attitude toward God and others is reflected in the dramatic change in lifestyle. As one of our relatives said, speaking of another relative, “He changed — for real.”

Our relationship to God and our interaction with all others is changed forever. First John 3:1 says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” This permanent change makes us right by the divine standard.

Do we know this enduring change that God wants in us is **only** attainable by His divine power? First Peter 1:3-5 tell us how God **fulfills** that promise and what our part is to **receive** that promise. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope... **who are kept by the power of God through faith** for salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.” Second Peter 1:3 says, “**His divine power** has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.” We are kept secure by God’s power as we stay faithful to Him until we die.

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV). James Meadows authored *A Study of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Bible*. He makes this statement on the verse just quoted. “A diamond in the rough is changed from glory to glory by sawing, polishing, cutting. In like manner, one is in the rough when he becomes a Christian, but God keeps purging and pruning (John 15:1-6) and we are changed.” **The reflection of Jesus Christ, a permanent change in us to the glory of God, must take place to ensure heaven as our eternal home.**

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