

“God’ Part/My Part in Changing Me”

Text: Philippians 2:12-13

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PRAY!

What would you like to change in your life?

- As a young person I would hear people say, “Jesus changed my life.”
- How does Jesus change your life? Does He brainwash or *Zap!* you?

Another way to look at change is, what am I suppose to do in order to grow? Is it all me or is it all God or is it a combination?

- Paul writes about this very issue. When it comes to spiritual growth, the fact is God has a part and you have a part. Paul uses two phrases to explain this cooperation.

Philippians 2:12-13, “*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*”

- ‘Work out’ is your part. ‘Work in’ is God’s part. We are to work out what God is working in.

This doesn’t say “work for” your salvation. It says “work out”. These are already Christians to whom Paul is writing. He is saying, develop what you already have. Work out the implications. If you’re born again, start growing. Work it out.

- What do you do in a physical workout? You do a workout not to get a body but to develop the body you already have.

Paul says, “...*work out your salvation...*” He’s talking about an individual assignment, that’s our part. Accept personal responsibility for your own growth; your salvation, not somebody else’s. God wants to work out the implications of it in your life individually.

- God does not want cookie-cutter Christians. He doesn’t want a bunch of spiritual clones walking around, everybody copying each other. What does the gospel mean in your life? In Billy Graham’s?

“...*for it is God who works in you...*” That’s God’s part. We get the word “energizer” or “energy” from the Greek word, “work”. God is the energizer for change in your life.

- He says, “I will give you the power to do what you want to do, need to do, and know what is right to do. I will empower you, energize you.”

There are three tools God uses to work in to your life for change and three choices you need to make to work them out.

THREE TOOLS GOD USES

1. He uses the Bible.

- A. 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *“The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God’s way of making us well prepared at every point...”*
- B. The Bible changes our thoughts so it changes us. If you want to get serious about change, you need to get into this book. Read it, study it, memorize it, meditate on it, live it in your life. The more you get the Word of God in your life, the more you’re going to be changed.
- C. Where do you start reading? Start with the life of Jesus (the Gospel of Mark).

2. The Holy Spirit

- A. God puts His Spirit in us. This is where the power comes from to change. Romans 8:11, *“Once the Spirit lives within you, he will bring to your whole being new strength and vitality.”* God will bring power into your life. The Holy Spirit is God Himself. He’s in Spirit form. When you commit your life to God, he comes into your life.
- B. 1 Corinthians 3:18, *“As the Spirit of the Lord works with us, we become more and more like Him.”* God’s number one purpose in your life is not to make you happy, but to make you like Jesus.
- C. God’s ideal is to tell us how to change through His word and give us the power to change through His Spirit. You read it and then He empowers you to do it. Unfortunately, we don’t always follow the ideal. So God has to use a third way to change us when we don’t respond to the Word or the Holy Spirit.

3. Circumstances

- A. Problems, pressures, headaches, difficulties, stress always get our attention.
- B. Romans 8:28-29, *“To those who love God and are called according to His plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good. For God chose us to bear the family likeness of his Son.”* There is nothing that could come into the life of a believer without God’s permission. He doesn’t say all things are good, but He will use them all for good to fit into a pattern. There is a divine pattern.
- C. Where are my problems coming from? Did I cause them? Are they from the devil? From God? It really doesn’t matter where the problems in your life come from. No matter what the source is, God can use it in your life if you’ll let Him. All things can fit into a pattern for good – to make me like Jesus.
- D. If God is going to make me like Jesus, then He’s going to take me through some situations that Jesus went through.

1. There were times when Jesus was lonely.
 2. There were times when Jesus was tempted.
 3. There were times when Jesus was tempted to be depressed or to get angry and blow up or to be impatient.
 4. And God allowed Jesus to go through those things. Do you think He's going to spare you from those things? He's more interested in your character than your comfort.
 5. Proverbs 20:30, "*Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways.*"
- E. God works first through His word, then the Holy Spirit, then, if those two don't work, He uses circumstances. For instance: Scripture says, "*Be humble. Before honor is humility.*" You read it from the word and ask God for the power to get rid of the ego in your life. That's God's ideal way of dealing with that. But if you don't learn to be humble from God's word, He will humiliate you through a circumstance. It's very easy for God to humble me. He has 1001 ways to do it. And God often has to depend more on the third way than the first two. God sometimes has to bring some thunderstorms into our lives to say, "*Do something. I want you to change. Don't get stuck in a rut.*"

II. THREE CHOICES THAT WILL HELP YOU CHANGE

1. I can choose what I think about.

- A. Proverbs 4:23, "*Be careful how you think. Your life is shaped by your thoughts.*" Your thoughts don't just direct your life, they are your life.
- B. Ephesians 4:23-25, "*Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the 'new self' that has been created in God's way.*"
 1. Change always begins with new thinking. The Bible word for change is the word "repentance". In Greek it means "to change your mind". When I repented I changed the way I thought about God, the way I thought about myself, the world, others. I changed my outlook. When I became a Christian it changed my whole perspective on life and I began to see things differently. I began to challenge some of those old ways of thinking, old values.
- C. If you want to be changed, start with the renewing of your mind.
 1. Think, feel, act. The way I think determines the way I feel. The key is to start with the way you think.
 2. E. Washington illustration
- D. One of the things you ought to start choosing to think about is God's word. Jesus said, "*Thy word is truth.*" If you want to change start filling your mind with the scripture. If you're not spending daily

time in God's word you're not seeing much change in your life. Or at least not as much as you could be seeing.

2. I can choose to depend on God's Spirit moment by moment.

A. Jesus said in John 15:4, *"Take care to live in me and let Me live in you."* Jesus is saying that we need to be plugged in to God because God has the power. How do you know when you're depending on God's Spirit? Check your prayer life. Whatever you're praying about you're depending on God for. What does it mean to depend on God? It means to pray continually—your decisions, feelings, relationships, deadlines, purchases, everything. Whatever you want God to bless, that's what you pray about.

1. You are aware that God is constantly with you.
2. You practice His presence and have a running conversation with Him.
3. You whisper up a prayer to God no matter what you're doing.
4. Talk to God about anything and everything. That's what it means to depend on His Spirit.

3. I can choose my response to circumstances.

A. James 1:2-4, *"When all kinds of trials crowd into your lives don't resent them as intruders but welcome them as friends. Realize that they come to test your faith and produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance fully develops and you become people of mature, character, people of integrity, with no weak spots."*

B. Remember God's goal is for Christ-like character in your life and this is a process. What happens to you is not the most important thing in your life. What happens in you is what matters most. That is a choice. We've seen people put in the same bad circumstances. One will come out a winner and the other will come out a whiner. One's complaining and the other is turning it into a gold mine. Will you become bitter or better? It's a choice.

What do you want to change the most about yourself? The power to change comes from God's power and your choices.

PRAY!