

February 14, 2010 AM

I CAN CHANGE

“Anchors That Hold”

Ephesians 4:17-32

“...Don’t give the devil opportunity...” (Ephesians 4:27)

“...Don’t grieve the Holy Spirit of God...” (Ephesians 4:30)

For too many Christians the theme chapter in the Bible is Romans, Chapter Seven. The struggle to be Christlike in their lives and the need to change on the inside is slow and frustrating. Sadly it’s not uncommon to see believers struggle with the same sin. We have allowed satanic strongholds to enter into our minds and hearts. It is not only wrecking their spiritual life, but contaminates their family and their church. Satan has gained a foothold in their lives and that begins a downward spiral to defeat and ruin.

Today we are going to gain insight about how we can cooperate with God in a way that will dramatically change the rate of change in our lives. I’m not suggesting we will live flawlessly or be perfect overnight, but you, as well as others will recognize that God is changing and transforming your life.

The secret of this change is not “trying harder.” The truth in trying harder is our own wisdom and will often make real change less likely. Practice does not make perfect; it makes permanent. The world’s methods cannot change our hearts. Believers are a “new creation,” therefore they are very different.

- We are different in our mind. We think different. A believer thinks about things differently than an unbeliever does.
- We are different in our heart. We feel differently about things. We value different things.
- We are different in our soul. We are alive to God and, therefore see our world and our relationships from a different perspective.

We may look the same outwardly but we are different. The Book of Ephesians is to get our focus off the outside (how we appear), and on the inside (who we are).

I. I must want to change.

A. Motive for wanting to change.

The truth is not everyone wants to change. They are comfortable with their life. The average professing Christian is not that different from their neighbor. That's sad, but I think it is true. People are convinced that they are good enough.

Paul uses life before Christ as our motive; seeing life without the transforming power of Christ. ***“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.²⁰ But you have not so learned Christ...”*** (Ephesians 4:17-20) You're not a pagan so don't live like one who is going downward away from God.

1. Futility of their mind: That which fails to complete the desired results. It doesn't matter what I do, I can't get positive results.
 - They want happiness but don't know how to get it. So they seek it through success, sex and selfishness.
 - They are good at seeing the problem, but don't know how to resolve it.
2. Their understanding darkened: A godless outlook. Darkness is a picture of a rebellious heart. It's as if they are blind. “Alienated from the life of God.”
 - No unprompted thoughts of God.
 - God never enters into our thinking. ***“Having lost all insensitivity they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”*** (2 Timothy 3:7)
3. A hardening of their hearts: Moral callousness.

People “before” Christ give themselves over to sensuality because that's the only pleasure they know in life; the only happiness they can find. There is a continual lust for more. “I've got to have something else to fill this hole in my life.” Anything but God. They

feel no pain over their sin. A life oblivious to God, His will or His way. “Insensitive and numb to God.”

4. Consuming passion: They give themselves up. Few can come back from this step. God gives people up but before He does, they give themselves over.
 - Greedy to practice.
 - Absence of moral restraint.
 - They live like animals, participating in every kind of impurity. Whatever I want, whenever I want it. This is life without God!

B. Be honest with yourself; are you really in Christ?

1. If so, what needs to change in your life?
2. If the answer is “I’m as good as I am,” then you are on the downward spiral.

II. I must have a pattern for change.

“But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus...” (Ephesians 4:20-21, NASV)

A. You can’t be sanctified if you are not saved.

1. Don’t try to be changed by the gospel if you have not embraced Christ and been saved by the gospel.
2. You have to hate your sin and be sick of yourself.
3. The power to change your life is found in the truth that is in Jesus Christ.

“For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:15)

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” (1 Cor. 11:1)

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.” (Ephesians 5:1)

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Phil. 2:5)

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...” (1 Peter 2:21)

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” (1 John 2:6)

III. I must have a plan to change.

A. Put off the old stuff.

“...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts...” (Ephesians 4:22)

1. It's a decision of your will.
2. The old way of living he is talking about is the world's way of living.
3. He's saying the more you try to get happiness that way, the more corrupted you feel and the worse life gets. “The way of the transgressor is hard.”
4. That's why there is a continual desire for more.

NOTE** Notice “deceitful lust.” The old nature is a liar! It says, “This will make you happy...this time it will work out really good...this time you won't feel ashamed...this time it won't fall on your head.” No it won't. ***“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44)

- It promises joy – misery & shame.
- It promises good – corruption.
- It promises hope – leaves you empty.

***KEY** Never try to put on the new before you put off the old.

B. Be renewed in your thinking.

“...and be renewed in the spirit of your mind...” (Ephesians 4:23)

1. Your old way of thinking is a habit entrenched deeply within your mind.
2. I have listened to the old nature so long: This is what I want; what I need.
3. I have to intentionally ask, “What does God say I need and will make me happy?”

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2)

How do I renew my mind?

- Choose your friends that love God. New nature friends.
- Choose your entertainment carefully. Don't feed your mind with things that stimulate the flesh, but instead feed your spirit.
- Choose God's Word. Nothing will renew your mind like God's Word.

C. Put on the new nature.

“In the same way count yourselves as dead to sin but as alive to God in Jesus Christ.” (Romans 6:11-13)

***KEY** You have to see yourself as alive to God and dead to sin. You have to see yourself in a new way before change can happen in your life. You have to see who you are before you can become whom Christ wants you to be.

- Name the lie and insert the truth.
 1. Remember the good life was not good at all. “There is pleasure in sin for a season.” It always goes rotten! If you could see the

reality of your life you would see guilt, shame, loneliness and a feeling of unfulfillment.

2. Understand you are free from having to fulfill the law.
 - Jesus fulfilled the law. You don't grow spiritually by rules and regulations.
 - Rules can produce change, but not growth.

“The old way trying to be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, it ends in death. But the new way, the Holy Spirit gives life.” (2 Cor. 3:6)

***NOTE** He is not saying the law is bad or that it has no place. The purpose of the law was before we were saved. It pointed us to the need to be saved and that we were far from God. We missed God's perfect standard. The Holy Spirit made us new (2 Cor. 5:17). Start seeing yourself as new: A saint who sometimes blows it; not a sinner who sometimes gets it right.

3. Recognize I have a new master.

“And now you are free from your old nature, Satan, and you've become slaves to your new master, righteousness.” (Romans 6:18, NLB)

- Being renewed in the Spirit of your mind is seeing things the way God sees them.
- I must set my mind on the things above me.

It's not enough to simply not take my cues from the world around me (not believing everything I'm being told by this world); I must focus on who Christ is and who He has made me to be and what He is saying to me from His Word.

The world around me is like “a loud speaker.” The Holy Spirit is my new nature and I must learn to listen for His voice.

Satan's voice: Temptation.

God's voice: Inspiration.

Old life memories: Lies to respond grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30)