

# Starting the Changes That the Lord Wants You to Make

## I. INTRODUCTION

A. **READ** — Eph. 4:17-20

B. The Christian life is about growth, change, transforming to the image of Jesus Christ

1. There are changes that we all need to make
2. But the obstacle to real change is knowing how to go about it
  - a) It's not to say that we're dumb
  - b) It is to say that ...
    - (1) sometimes we don't give much thought to it
    - (2) sometimes we talk with others much about it in their lives
    - (3) sometimes our efforts at conformity to Christ are not well considered, leading to discouragement, leading to resignation to slavery to sin.
3. Have you ever been there?
4. "But you did not learn Christ in this way..." (Eph 4:20)

C. It needn't be so

1. This lesson has application to you if you're...
  - a) a new Christian
  - b) an older Christian
  - c) a "plateau-ed" Christian
  - d) a human Christian
2. "How do I start the changes the Lord wants me to make?"

## II. KNOW WHAT YOU NEED TO CHANGE

A. There's a certain power in confessing sin

1. Whether to God
2. To the person you've sinned against
3. Or to yourself
4. Confessing puts an official name to what needs to be changed.

B. Make a list for yourself

1. You might be surprised (dismayed) at the list
2. You need to keep that list in your Bible and as you read, add to the list

C. Be specific

1. Not just "I want to be a better Christian."
2. Needs to be something like...
  - a) "I need to be at every service of the church and I'm not"
  - b) "I need to stop swearing"

- c) "I need to stop being so materialistic and start sharing more"
- 3. "If you aim at nothing, you hit it everytime."
- 4. AND **PRAY** SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THESE THINGS TO OVERCOME, SEEKING GOD'S HELP AND THE STRENGTH OF THE SPIRIT

### III. REPENT FROM THE HEART

- A. "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; **a broken and contrite heart**, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalms 51:17, RSV.
  - 1. Comes from a real hungering and thirsting for righteousness (Matt. 5:6)
  - 2. From a true longing for God ("As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God..." Psalms 42:1,2, RSV.
- B. Repentance comes from a realization of...
  - 1. The offense toward God (this is no small thing!)
  - 2. In sin, we have joined the Enemy's side!
  - 3. The destruction of your own soul for eternity
- C. This doesn't include the attitudes that we sometimes have...
  - 1. "I'm sorry, but this is just who I am." (that's not repentance)
  - 2. "I'm sorry about that, I'll get around to doing better one of these days." (that's not repentance)
  - 3. Illus. — Acts 2:37 "cut to the heart and said 'Well, that's just who we are...' or "We ought to do better one of these days."
- D. Starting the changes that God wants us to make...Let our hearts be broken

### IV. PRIORITIZE THE CHANGES

- A. You must prioritize
  - 1. Realize that you can't change everything at once
  - 2. You might become overwhelmed
- B. Suggestions
  - 1. Start with the idea that "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20, RSV.
  - 2. And then next work on the inner man, the thoughts of the mind and heart
    - a) Know when you'll stop swearing? When you stop thinking it!
    - b) Know when you'll stop hurting others? When you stop thinking of yourself first and stop hating others!
    - c) Stop stealing? When you stop coveting!
    - d) Start enjoying worship? When you really start loving God!

- e) Start reading your Bible more? When you really start hungering and thirsting for righteousness!
- f) “As the plant spring from, and could not be without, the seed, so every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them This applies equally to those acts called ‘spontaneous’ and ‘unpremeditated’ as to those which are deliberately executed.

Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruits; thus does a man garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of his own husbandry.” (James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh*)

- 3. Next work on the relationship with God
- 4. Next work on relationships with others
- 5. Once these have been addressed, you may discover that you have already changed many things in your life.

C. Prioritize to start the changes the Lord wants you to make

#### V. SETTLE ON THE PROPER, GODLY SUBSTITUTE

- A. Ephesians 4
- B. Decide and commit to the godly substitute

#### VI. START, TAKE ACTION

- A. The Biblical emphasis is **NOW**
  - 1. Today is the day of salvation (“again he sets a certain day, ‘Today,’ saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, ‘Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.’” Hebrews 4:7, RSV.)
  - 2. And now why do you delay? (Acts 22:16)
  - 3. Would be disciples find reasons to delay (Luke 9:57)
- B. Don’t procrastinate; what if the Lord came a day sooner?
- C. The longer you give yourself an opportunity to rationalize why it’s OK not to start today, the more likely Satan will be to win.

#### VII. START AGAIN — DON’T GET DISCOURAGED AT SET BACKS OR FAILURES

- A. Illus. — As infants turn into toddlers they take lots of falls, but they get right back up and try again.
- B. Overcoming sin isn’t easy and you’ll likely to fail from time to time, but don’t get discouraged — try again.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

- A. Change, transformation, sanctification is an important part of the Christian life
  - 1. "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2, RSV.
  - 2. **READ** — Heb 12:14-17
    - a) "Sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" is a serious warning to every Christian
    - b) Our aim should constantly be to become more like Jesus
- B. Do you need to start?
  - 1. Maybe you've been a Christian for a while, but haven't seen any change, any growth for a while
  - 2. Maybe you're a Christian who's been saying, "One of these days I'm going to have to do better."
  - 3. Maybe you're a person who's not yet become a Christian by the Bible's standard
  - 4. Start your change NOW
- C. Come