

For the Love of the Family Ministries

Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family

Why I Cannot Change My Life?-Part Two

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In the first article on this subject, we talked about the process of change described in Ephesians 4:22-24, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be **renewed** in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4 is the change chapter of the Bible and in these verses we find the putting off process of the old man and the putting on process of the new man. The key to this process is in Ephesians 4:23, "**renewed mind**". I have been studying for some time how people change from the Bible. **Biblical change is what is needed in our lives as Christians.** There will be no change in a person's life without getting specific in our lives. We also provided in the last article a chart that is called a 'Personal Inventory Sheet' to get specific about your life. I hope you took time to do the inventory sheet. If not, I am providing it again with this article.

Romans 7:15-18, "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Does this sound like your life? Most Christians feel like the Apostle Paul was here. I am really glad to see that Paul tells us he is struggling here. Did you notice the phrase in verse 18, "for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Paul says here I am failing at the Christian life. You mean the Apostle Paul was struggling with his Christian life? Yes!

In fact, he seemed here to be frustrated and wanting to change his life, but was failing in the effort. He did not feel too good about himself, Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That sounds like a cry for help to me. Many of us, in fact, most Christians are just where Paul was here. What is he saying? You will remember the Apostle Paul as a go getter. He persecuted Christians and did it with zeal. When he got saved on the Damascus road he determined to go all out for God. That is the issue; HE determined HE would go all out for God. Here in Romans 7 he is literally worn out and exhausted. Most Christians are like Paul here. They are in their lives where Paul was in his. You know the Bible tells us about obedience. We preach about that a lot. You come to church and you hear about how God wants us to be obedient. That is well and good, but God wants us to Biblically change our life to be obedient to the Spirit of God and to the Word of God. He wants us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, II Peter

3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." So, we hear the message on obedience and ask God to forgive us for our sins. (It takes more than just confessing our sins). We renew our commitment to doing better and even promise not to do it again and by Monday or Tuesday we have failed again. Then we say, "I do not understand this God! Where are you?" You are totally mentally wore out and exhausted! You are defeated, discouraged, angry, and mentally defeated.

Romans 7:15-24, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This is where most of us live. We would really like to change. Romans 7:22, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." We want the things of God in our life, but we feel like a complete failure. We can even put on a front like we are happy and joyful, but in reality we are worn out, tired, exhausted, and defeated. Of course, the big question is why is that? Paul gives us the answer here. Romans 7:25-8: 1-2, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

So, how can I really change and what is the matter with me that I cannot change? Why am I so exhausted? Why do I feel like such a failure? Notice the phrase in Romans 7:25, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". There is the answer. We are like Paul; we are living the Christian life in our own power. That is what Paul was doing and it was exhausting. That kind of living, though well intentioned, is really no more than self-powered sanctification, and it always leads to exhaustion. Always! Folks, you and I cannot live the Christian life. Stop trying to live the Christian life in your own power. You will fail, be miserable in the process, and end up being destroyed. Many people in life like to win. It gives them temporary joy. When you win there is joy. When you fail there is defeat. We want to be winners and we are working at that in our own power. Okay Pastor, I am with you so far. I understand why I am exhausted, miserable, failing and have no joy. **I am trying to live the Christian life in my own power.**

So, how do I change that? Romans 8: 2, 4-5, 8-11, 13, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." "**So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.** But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you, Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." "**For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.**" Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**" So, the reason Paul was failing here was **he was walking after the flesh-**

seeking to do it in his own power. Notice the last word in verse 1, “Spirit”. In verse 2 "Spirit"; verse 4, "Spirit"; verse 5; "Spirit", verse 6 “spiritually minded is life and peace”; verse 9”; Spirit”; verse 10 “Spirit”; verse 11 “Spirit”. All right, so the answer is? The power of the Holy Spirit! Verse 11, “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” **I cannot do it in my own power; I have to have the Spirit’s power.** How can a Christian miss that? Most of us do, because we know we cannot have a part of our salvation, but we think now that we are saved, we can now take control of our life and live the Christian life. It doesn’t work that way. What is the end result of living the Christian life in my own power? Romans 8:12-13, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. **For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: (means be destroyed)** but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”. Many Christian’s lives and their children’s lives are destroyed because they attend church, but seek to live the Christian life in their own power. So, if I really want change in my life and not be exhausted, defeated, and mad at God and everyone else (children, wife, husband) what should I do? Ephesians 4:25-29, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.” **I must put off the old man and put on the new man. In that process I must replace the old life with the new life.** I have to understand that point. Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:25, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” **I have to be filled, powered, and controlled by the Spirit of God. If not, I will be utterly destroyed and defeated by my own self effort at the Christian life.** The answer to this is in Colossians 2:6-7, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Notice the phrase **“received then so walk.”** Just as you got saved, you could not do anything to save yourself. You are to walk in your life the same way, in essence, not by your own power but by the Spirit’s power. There will be no change until you quit trying to live by your own power and seek God’s power in your life. Now that we are saved we are dead to sin. When we are trying to live in our own power we are letting sin reign. We are dead to that and we must turn it over to God.

Acts 1:8 is a great example of what I am talking about. Jesus told His disciples just before He ascended to heaven, “go to Jerusalem and wait until the Holy Spirit comes and empowers you. Do not try to minister without the Spirit’s power”. It is the same thing for you and me. We cannot live the Christian life in our own power. It is a foolish thought, but most Christians seek to do so. Biblical change in our lives truly only happens as we are powered by the Holy Spirit. Folks, God expects us to be changing to be more like his son. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of a sin, it means God is telling us He wants us to change. Most Christians confess the sin to God and continue to live in their own power failing over and over again. How do we change it? There is no change in our life with out getting specific.

1. Take the “Personal Inventory Sheet” below and get alone with God. Ask God to show you the areas of your life that need to change. (Do not be discouraged if you find more than one you will probably find several). Remember God doesn’t expect us to be perfect but He does expect us to be changing to be more like Christ. Remember that the sin that God shows you is an **idol**

of your heart. An idol of the heart is a strong demand lust in your life that motivates behavior. It is something you have to have to make life work for you. That is what God wants to change. You will never change if you do not find out what the idols of your heart are.

2. Confess the sin to God and ask God to help you Biblically change that idol of your heart.
3. After confessing all known sin, ask the Holy Spirit to fill and control you.
4. Start reading your Bible specifically on the area (idol of the heart) God wants you to change, Ephesians 4:23, Romans 12:2. To change this behavior you must start to see it the way God sees it. You will not change your behavior in that area with out your mind (thinking) changing about it. Remember you need to read the Bible to apply it, not just read it.
5. You will need to replace the old with the new. Many times when God is talking about an idol of the heart He tells you what to replace it with in the Bible. Read Ephesians chapter 4 several times and especially verses 21-32. Notice that Paul gives things that must be put off and then replaced by new and good things. We always get into trouble and fail when we emphasize the putting off and not the putting on.
6. Continually turn the idol of the heart over to God. You will never change without the Spirit's power in your life. The prayer should be. "Lord, I want to turn this (name it over to you).

Getting Specific: My Needs for Change

Here is a list of attitudes, feelings (areas-sins), idols of the heart, that every follower of Christ needs to put off, Ephesians 4:22, in his life. Place a number, from 0 to 10 before each item to indicate the extent of it's presence in **your life**. Do not give this to your spouse to evaluate you. This is for you to do about you. Mark 0 if it is "not an issue at all" and 10 if it is present on a regular basis. If it is extremely rare put a 1, occasional 2 or 3. If it is sometimes a problem, score it a 5. If it is often a struggle, then you are a 7. If you know it is one of your significant weaknesses, you are in the 8, 9, 10 category. True change will never happen in your life until you become specific about what God really wants to change in your life. Do not get concerned if there is more than one area to deal with, there will probably be more than one area and maybe several areas.

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|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Hostility | <input type="checkbox"/> Resentment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual lust | <input type="checkbox"/> Restlessness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Idolatry | <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Impatience | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-centeredness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bigotry | <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-confidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bitterness | <input type="checkbox"/> Impure thoughts | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-deprecation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boastful | <input type="checkbox"/> Indifference to | (self hatred) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bossiness | others problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-gratification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Causing dissension | <input type="checkbox"/> Inhibited | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-indulgence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conceit | <input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity | <input type="checkbox"/> Self--justification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled by emotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Intemperance | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-pity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled by peer pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-reliance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Covetousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Laziness | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-righteousness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical tongue | <input type="checkbox"/> Loner | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-sufficiency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deceitfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Low self esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Lust for pleasure | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual lust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dominance | <input type="checkbox"/> Materialistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow to forgive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drug Dependence | <input type="checkbox"/> Must strive to | <input type="checkbox"/> Stubbornness |

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|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drunkenness | <input type="checkbox"/> re pay any kindness shown you | <input type="checkbox"/> Temper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Envy (depressed by the good fortune of others) | <input type="checkbox"/> Negativism | <input type="checkbox"/> Unloving (of the unlovely) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> False modesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Occult involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Vanity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear | <input type="checkbox"/> Opinionated | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of rejection | <input type="checkbox"/> Overly quiet | <input type="checkbox"/> Workaholic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of stupidity | | <input type="checkbox"/> Worry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of weakness of helplessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Overly sensitive to criticism | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of worthlessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Passivity | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gluttony | <input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greediness | <input type="checkbox"/> Profanity | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt (false) | <input type="checkbox"/> Projecting blame | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hatred | <input type="checkbox"/> Prone to gossip | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellion to authority | |

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