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CHANGE—A NECESSARY PROCESS

Change! All around us, things are constantly changing. We see social, political, economic and a host of other changes taking place around the world. Things do not always remain the way they are. “There is one thing constant in the world today and that is change!” goes a common saying. The word ‘change’ denotes either an event or a process that causes things to be different from what they currently are.

Change is important for the Christian too! Our Christian life began with repentance, which essentially is a change of heart and mind, from sin and Satan, towards the living God. At that very moment, God changed us on the inside. We became born-again! We became new creatures in Christ. In an instant, God did a creative work in our spirits that brought us out of darkness into the light, from being in bondage to Satan to being free in Christ. The Christian life is a continuous process of change. God has predestined us, “To be conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29). It is through a continuous process of change that we are transformed from the kind of people we are to being fully Christ-like. We are looking forward to that great day of change—when the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with the sound of a trumpet, and in the twinkling of an eye, we will all be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51,52). Mortals will put on immortality. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Our life in Christ began with an instant of change and it culminates with another instantaneous event of change. However, between these two points is a continuous process of change. This book dwells on that subject and is primarily motivational and intended to stir us up to be actively involved in this continuous process of change. We will also consider areas in our lives that need to be subject to the process of change.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (changed) into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If our focus is on the Lord, then it is an inevitable consequence that we will be changed into His likeness. In fact, the closer we draw to Him and the more we gaze into His glory, the more we begin to recognize areas of our lives that need to be changed. The verse above tells us that we are “being changed” (note the present continuous tense implying that action is in progress). As we are being changed, we are progressing from glory to glory. Change therefore, is a necessary process to move from one realm to the next. This is what brings about the spiritual growth or progress. There can be no spiritual growth without change, because growth itself is a process of change. We believe that it is not God’s desire that any of His children remain in the same condition spiritually over an extended period of time. Rather, He desires that we keep moving forward. God does not want us to become stagnant.

Not only is change necessary when it comes to our spiritual lives, but it must be evident in every aspect of our daily existence. We must welcome change in our personality, behavior, intellect,

skills, capabilities, finances, plans, goals and the like. There must be a determined and intelligent striving to move on “from glory to glory” in every area of our life. After all, God is interested in every detail of our life on Earth—education, career, family, profession and ministry. In each of these areas, there are always higher and better things to work towards.

For instance, if you are a successful doctor, you can strive to become better. Perhaps you could think of new ways through which you could help bring medicine to those who do not have the access or the means for treatment. You could think of doing things, which were not necessarily part of your plan before. As a student, you can strive to improve your knowledge and performance. As a homemaker, you could seek to improve the quality of care and comfort you provide for your family. As a minister, you could seek to improve your homiletics and hermeneutics. However, each of these will be possible only if we are willing for ‘change.’ In the following chapters, we will consider some of the areas of change.

If our focus is on the Lord, then it is an inevitable consequence that we will be changed into His likeness. In fact, the closer we draw to Him and the more we gaze into His glory, the more we begin to recognize areas of our lives that need to be changed.

2

CHANGE IN OUR MOTIVES AND DESIRES

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast (right) spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

Our inner motives and desires are extremely important. We need to realize that even the most spiritual and well-meaning Christian can have a wrong motive or desire in a certain matter. None of us are automatically insulated against such evil. Instead, we are to constantly be on guard against these. The Lord admonishes, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). The responsibility to protect our heart from becoming captive to wrong motives lies with us. There is nothing wrong if we search our own hearts and recognize that there are indeed such motives and desires. This is important and the first step towards change. The Scriptures repeatedly tell us to examine ourselves.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Corinthians 11:28).

“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged” (1 Corinthians 11:31).

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Motives in Ministry

Having recognized wrong motives and desires, we need to confess them and ask the Lord to change us. Pray as David did, “Lord

create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.” Personally, in our own lives as we minister to people, we have to constantly guard ourselves against wrong motives in so many different areas. We need to ask ourselves, “Why am I doing this? What is my motive? What is my earnest desire?” For example, if we are invited to minister at a certain place, we should ask the Lord to prepare our hearts and give us a pure motive in going there. We have to guard our hearts from focusing on the offering that they may give to our ministry. As we desire supernatural demonstrations of God’s love and power, we have to guard our hearts from an ulterior motive of wanting to be recognized as a ‘very anointed servant of God.’ As we seek to grow in ministry, we need to guard our hearts from desiring this just to promote our own ‘ministry’ or ‘kingdom.’ We have to constantly remind ourselves that this is ‘God’s work,’ not ‘our work’ and that this is ‘God’s Kingdom,’ not ‘our kingdom.’

I have emphasized the importance of watchfulness in the ministry because our motives and desires determine and influence many things in our lives. Above all, God sees beyond our outer expressions. “For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). God desires truth in the inner man (Psalm 51:6). Keep a constant watch on your motives and desires. If they are not right, go to the Lord and ask Him to C-H-A-N-G-E you!!

The responsibility to protect our heart from becoming captive to wrong motives lies with us.

3

CHANGE IN OUR THINKING, ATTITUDES, SPEECH AND CONDUCT

“And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind ...” (Romans 12:2).

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

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12)

The Lord wants to see a change in our thinking and attitudes. The “renewing of our mind” (Romans 12:2) indicates that there has to be a change in our perspectives, attitudes and the way we think. There are many dimensions to this. We need to change from thinking ‘worldly thoughts’ or having attitudes that are ‘worldly’ and take on the very thoughts and attitudes of God. We need to get rid of thinking ‘low’ and raise our standards to think in harmony with the Word and from the standpoint of faith. Some of us need to get rid of our pessimism, that negative ‘can’t-be-done’ approach and begin to see the great possibilities available through simple faith in God. Some of us are so entrenched in the ‘old way’ of doing things that we are unwilling to accept the ‘fresh and new’ that the Lord Himself wants to do. Our religious customs and traditions have so bound us in our thinking that we assume that God can do it no other way except in the way we have been taught.

Some others have dreams that are so small, aspirations that are so low, visions that are so dim that they need to see a change in

these areas. We need to dream big, aspire to accomplish much for God and have visions that will make a difference in the world. Some of us—because of experiences of failure, defeat, discouragement or calamity—have fallen into a state of apathy, of hopelessness or even despair. There seems to be no drive, no motivation, no striving for progress and increase. God can change all that if we are only willing to give Him a little bit of our cooperation!! Some may be just plain lazy, so laid back about things, so lackadaisical. We need a drastic change in our attitudes!! Some are perpetual procrastinators and they need to change that. Some are planners and talkers but just won't put their "hands to the plough." This needs change too. Some are bound in fear, pride, bitterness, or other character traits that are not pleasing to God, and He wants to see that changed. God wants to lift us up to higher levels in our speech and conduct. Our speech and conduct should be of that befitting a believer.

Personally, in our own lives as we become aware of thoughts or attitudes that are not right, we need to go to the Lord, acknowledge them before Him and pray that He will change us. Even after many years of walking with the Lord, we will still recognize areas in our lives that need to be changed. Can you recognize attitudes and thought patterns in your own life that you want to bring to God and say, "Lord I need to see this changed in my life?"

We need to change from thinking 'worldly thoughts' or having attitudes that are 'worldly' and take on the very thoughts and attitudes of God.

4

OPEN FOR UNEXPECTED CHANGES

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Being born of the Spirit ushers us into a life where everything cannot be fully explained. Some things just have to be yielded to and experienced. The Lord Jesus paralleled the new birth brought about by the Spirit to the wind which blows where it wants. We only experience it. We do not know its exact origin or destination. So also, many of the works of the Spirit cannot be fully explained. We only experience and know what He has executed. The Lord at times may orchestrate events and circumstances in our lives, which to us is totally unexpected. We have no prior knowledge that we would encounter such things. They were not a part of our plan. Nevertheless, the wisest thing to do is to yield to the Lord and ‘go where the wind blows.’ It is so very important to learn to be open to unexpected changes, which the Lord brings into our lives. These can be turning points in our lives.

Changes in Our Ministry

Both Amy (my wife) and I can recount so many instances of how God used unexpected changes to lead us into what He had in store for us. Around 1995, my father had been on a business trip to the U.S. He decided to stop by for one night and visit me at New Brunswick, NJ, where I lived. He came in on a Saturday and was to leave the following evening. My father had always wanted to visit

an African-American church since he desired to experience their singing and style of worship. There was an African-American church nearby and so we stopped there on Sunday morning. I had never seen or experienced that kind of vibrant, spontaneous singing ever before. It was very loud, almost deafening, and it seemed like the building would come down. At least it appeared that way to me. Up until that time, I had been working and having close fellowship with Korean-American brothers and sisters at the University. We enjoyed freedom in praise, yet it was nothing like what I witnessed there. A thousand thoughts ran through my mind then. I knew deep within me that such freedom in worship was right. I had always wanted to be free to express praise and worship to the Lord. But compared to what was happening at this African-American church, I seemed stiffer than a brick wall. Later that day when I was alone, I seemed to be so confused. One part of me said, "Lord I do not want to go back there. I can never be like them. And I can't tolerate the volume." Another part of me said, "Lord I really want what they have—that kind of freedom to worship you." Well, to summarize, I did go back there. and when Amy joined me, we went back together. Within a short time, I was given opportunities to minister and we did so every Wednesday night at that church. We were able to meet such wonderful African-American brothers and sisters there. We also met Manuel and Tania, a Spanish-speaking couple who were visiting. Later, we were invited to minister at the Hispanic church, which they were planting. Soon after, we began to share much more in the life of the Hispanic church. Manuel and Tania spent time with us on a weekly basis to study the Word. Amy helped in the music ministry at the Hispanic church and with their help we made our way to Ecuador for a time of ministry in November 1996! Look at all that came about as a chain reaction to my father's one-night

stop in New Brunswick!! Unexpected? Most surely!! Did we plan it? Surely not!! We just learnt to go where the Wind of the Spirit was blowing. Never did we imagine that we would be ministering to the African-American or Hispanic communities. Wherever He wishes to blow, we will go!! Be ready and open for the unexpected changes that God wants to bring into your life.

- The Lord at times may orchestrate events and circumstances in our lives, which to us is totally unexpected.
- Nevertheless, the wisest thing to do is to yield to the Lord and 'go where the wind blows.'
- Be open to unexpected changes, which the Lord brings into our lives. These can be turning points in our lives.

5

CHANGE—NECESSARY FOR PROGRESS AND INCREASE

“Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:24).

We are ‘changed’ from glory to glory. Therefore, to move from the level of glory we experience today to the next, we must first be changed. Things that are keeping us stagnant and hindering us from progressing—be it our motives, attitudes, conduct, or speech—must be changed. We’ve got to arise and acknowledge these things for what they are and with God’s help, we’ve got to see them changed. We can consider where we are today as being symbolized by that single “grain of wheat.” If we want to move into that state where we increase into “much grain,” then we must first “fall into the ground,” “die” and then “produce much grain.” This symbolizes the process of change in us. We must first fall to the ground and that requires humility. It requires humility on our part to accept the fact that we need to be changed. We must die to self. This can be a painful process at times. Then we will be raised into the next level of glory, thus experiencing progress and increase.

Things that are keeping us stagnant and hindering us from progressing—be it our motives, attitudes, conduct, or speech—must be changed.

6

THE SPIRIT OF CHANGE

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Genesis 1:1-3).

The Spirit of the Lord changes us from glory to glory. The Holy Spirit is the agent of change. The Earth was formless, empty and dark. But yet the Spirit of God was moving on the face of the waters. God spoke the Words, "Let there be light" and the mighty Holy Spirit of God brought light in the midst of darkness. It is very significant that the Spirit of God was brooding upon the face of this formless, dark and empty Earth at the time when God was ready to speak those creative and restorative words. We are convinced that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of change. He is the one who brings change and transformation. He did it on a very large scale when the face of the Earth was restored (Genesis 1). Then, how much more can we expect Him to work on us by infusing us with the glory of God and transforming us, so that we too can be good in His sight. He works in us only to the extent that we are yielded to Him. Open your heart to the Holy Spirit. Present yourself to Him and ask Him to change you. Ask Him to help you deal with those areas in your life that need to be changed.

The Word of God Causes Change

In the creative and restorative work of God, not only did the Holy Spirit move upon the Earth but the Word of God was also spoken

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over the darkness and emptiness (Genesis 1). Even so, the Spirit and the Word together bring about changes in our lives. Expose your heart and mind to the Word of God. Read and meditate on it yourself and the Word of God will begin to release its transforming power into your life.

Open your heart to the Holy Spirit. Present yourself to Him and ask Him to change you. Ask Him to help you deal with those areas in your life that need to be changed.

A PRAYER

Lord, Change Me!

Dear Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus. Lord, there are things in my life, which I see, that need to be changed. Lord, change me by the power of your Word and by your Spirit. I want to move on from where I am to where you want me to be. I want to become all that you want me to become. I want to receive all that you have in store for me. Lord, change my heart and my mind. Change my motives, my attitudes, my speech and conduct. Help me to get rid of the things that hinder me from progressing and increasing in the things of God. Amen.

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For more information please see the page overleaf.

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