

When God Brings About Change

The VISION Newsletter / March 2018

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

2 Corinthians 3:17–18 (NKJV) “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

God is in the process of changing us into the image of His Son. Because God is holy, He is so different from us and we are so unlike Him. Because we are so proud and self-righteous by nature, it takes us years to recognize everything that needs to change in our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors to become more like Him.

One of the ways that God makes us aware that our own self-assessment is wrong is through pressure. Pressure pushes to the surface what is restrained deep within us. God knows it is there while we deny it. Pressure forces us to face reality. Pressure reveals the need to change. That is why He allows us to go through pressure and difficult circumstances. Don't curse God's process of sanctification. We don't like it but it is necessary! The process of becoming more like Jesus will never happen without change in us.

Why does God require us to change and not change Himself? It is because God never changes: “*For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.*”¹ God has always been the same. In addition, Jesus has always been the same. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.² The only reason we are not consumed by His holiness is because He has dealt mercifully with us to bring about change in us. As it has been said, “God loves us just like we are, but He loves us too much to leave us like we are!” God is faithful at all times and in every generation to bring about holy change in His people.

Change is inevitable. Seasons change; times change; nations change; music styles change; technology changes; our cultures change. In our personal lives our marriages, ministries, and financial situations all change. If we going to move toward God, we will have to change.

We often say that we need revival—and we do. Ministers often ask, “Are you ready for revival?” In all reality, revival requires change. Therefore, the question should be, “Are you ready for change?” Are you?

Although God never changes, He is constantly moving His church from an imperfect state toward a more perfect state, from one state of glory to the other, i.e. from “glory to glory.” We usually sense by His Spirit when God is moving us from “faith to faith” and from “glory to glory.”

There are five important things to remember when God is bringing about change. First, we must remember that God has a people. This people is called the “church”. We as believers are a part of that church. The church is not a dead or rigid “organization” but a corporate living “organism” called the body of Christ. The body of Christ is made up of individual members who are called by the Lord out of this fallen world system to be separate and holy unto Him.

Second, we must remember that God has a purpose for our lives and for His church. One of the biggest changes is letting go of our own idea of what we want to be and to achieve so that we can embrace His purpose for our lives. Some have stated our purpose as “to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever”. Others have stated our purpose as “to know Jesus and to make Him known.” Either one moves us in the right direction.

Third, we must remember that God has a process to bring about change. Again that change is to conform us to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. The Biblical name for this process is called “sanctification”. Paul declares, “*But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning*

¹ Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)

² Hebrews 13:8

chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,"³ Sanctification is the process by which God changes us from glory to glory to reflect His image and likeness.

Fourth, God has placed over us a Pastor-Shepherd who is actively working out God's process. His name is Jesus. Regardless of who is in the pulpit, we must remember that Jesus is our Pastor-Shepherd. Jesus then delegates human pastors who will shepherd His people with His heart. These pastors and leaders are imperfect but they are His instruments. Because they are human in every sense, it is important to pray for them. Because He has delegated them, it is also important that we submit to them as unto Him: *"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"*⁴ Jesus has assured us that He will never bail out on His church. He has promised us that He will build His church and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Change does not come easy or without resistance. I want to mention five enemies of change as found in 2 Corinthians 3 from which the foundation text of this article is found. The first enemy of change is the past, i.e. "the glory that was" (verses 7-11). Often when God begins to bring about needed change in our lives, we hold on to the past. God is bringing us from "glory to glory". The glory of the past was necessary to bring about change then, but there is a new revelation of God's glory that is needed to bring about the changes needed now. When the glory of God begins to come today, we often stop and camp by the "glory that was." We call this man-made or religious tradition.

The second enemy of change is the future. When Joshua and Israel were about to cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land, God told them, *"You have not passed this way before"*.⁵ Change means we must get out the rut we have been in. Change is a risk and it takes faith and courage. Someone once said, "It takes guts to get out of the ruts!"

The third enemy of change is complacency. We must never settle in our spiritual development. We must never become complacent in our spiritual walk or maturity level. We have not arrived in the land of glory. We are not yet like Jesus. When Israel was in the wilderness, they camped until the glory cloud began to move. When the cloud moved, they were to move: *"Whenever the cloud lifted, they set out"*.⁶ Complacency is the result of selfishness and satisfaction. God never allows us to settle on the way to the Promise Land!

The fourth enemy of change is stubbornness. Stubbornness is the hardened determination to resist the will of God. When Israel failed to trust God by going to possess the land, God told them that they would dwell forty years in the wilderness until that generation of faithless ones died off. When they realized their mistake, they disobeyed God: *"Nevertheless, some of the people went out"*.⁷ We are creatures of habit. We stubbornly insist on doing things our way.

The fifth enemy of change is pride. Pride is an exalted view of self. Its attitude can be described as, "I am, and there is none besides me". Pride is the idea that we have "arrived." Nadab and Abihu were destroyed because of their proud action that did not regard the holiness of God. Instead of worshipping God according to His prescribed ordinance, they presumed to worship God according to their own reasoning. God never changes. Only God can say "I AM"; we can only say "I am becoming."

God is continually bringing about change in each of us. He is continually bringing about change in His church. Revival is one way He brings about change. God has worked in the past to bring about change and He is at work in us today to bring about change. We must not be settled or satisfied with the changes He has made in us yesterday. We must embrace the change that is necessary. We cannot produce that change in ourselves. It is pride to think we can. No, we must get into His presence and behold His glory. His presence and glory will bring about the changes necessary to transform us into Christ's image. Change is our friend when God is in it. May we pray, "Lord, I trust in You, the God who never changes." May we also pray, "Lord change Me to be like You." Then get ready to change to be more like Jesus!

³ 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV)

⁴ Hebrews 13:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Joshua 3:4

⁶ Numbers 9:19-22

⁷ Exodus 16:26-29