

PART 11 –FULL OF DARKNESS OR FULL OF LIGHT

PART 2 – HOW TO CHANGE

In our last study, we looked specifically at [Romans 1:20-21](#) which said,

Ro 1:20 (NKJV) For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but BECAME futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

What we gleaned from this passage was twofold. First, you cannot ignore the obvious. What God has done is “**clearly seen**”, obvious. We saw that when you ignore the obvious that everything you do becomes vain and worthless. Secondly, we saw that the Christian life demands that we “**think**”. We must think before something happens, think after something happens, think about our daily activities, think about what is important and what is unimportant, and think about what pleases or displeases God. We know that you cannot be a godly person without having a godly mind. We know that bad thinking leads to bad choices which lead to bad habits which lead to bad consequences. We saw that God has given us His Word and He has given us a mind that is able to think, to analyze, to evaluate, to understand, and to choose. However, and this is where the rub happens, when we understand the truth, then the Word of God compels us to integrate what we know into our life. This is called “living out the Christian life”. This is how Christ lives His life through your life. This is embracing change.

Now, this morning I want to continue to teach some more on HOW we integrate God’s truth into our life. Our methodology of this series is that every other week, these teachings on HOW will be progressive and they will build on one another. We are trying to answer two practical questions related to application – (1) **what do we need to do**, and (2) **how do we do what we know that we need to do**”. These are very critical questions that we have to determine how to incorporate into our life. For instance, the Sermon on the Mount in [Matthew 5-7](#) is the first sermon that Jesus ever preached, and He begins immediately in [Matthew 5:3-10](#) with providing PRINCIPLES of what constitutes a godly life. Each of these are easy to discern, and they are easy for us to determine if any of these principles have actually been incorporated into our personal lives.

Mt 5:3 (NKJV) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Now, what I want to glean from these eight verses is that they are NOT commands. The word “**blessed**” is an adjective. It would be like saying “**The poor in spirit are blessed people**”. These verses are what we would call SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES. They are truths on which we build our lives. Jesus is giving us eight divine principles that say when we live this way, when we spiritually digest and assimilate these truths into our life, that our choice to live this way has eternal outcomes. Let me read you again the outcomes of incorporating God’s principles into your life. “**Yours is the kingdom of heaven, you**

shall be comforted, you shall inherit the earth, you shall be filled with righteousness, you shall obtain mercy, you shall see God, you shall be called sons of God”, and for a second time, “yours is the kingdom of heaven.” The first words of His first sermon are so explicable, so clear – **think right, choose right, live right, and you will enjoy the greatest blessings that God has for your life.**

Each one of these are **character** based spiritual attributes. The people that you trust the most are those people where you know their character. Their character, their integrity, their honesty, their uprightness is always on display in their life. I trust my wife completely. I trust the elders of this church completely. Why? It is because I know their character. Think of it this way. This is super critical.

What we are and how we live speaks much louder than what we say.

You can tell someone anything that you want, but until your life actually reflects what you say you believe, no one will really have any reason to listen to you or to even trust you. Each of us intuitively know that there is no way to display spiritual excellence apart from godly character and apart from actually living a godly life. We can pretend to be godly, but no one is fooled when we are not. In that scenario, the only one who is fooled is us.

These eight principles with which Jesus starts off His sermon are truths and principles that never change. I will say this over and over throughout this series because it is the foundation of everything that I am teaching, but **YOU MUST BASE YOUR LIFE ON THOSE TRUTHS AND PRINCIPLES THAT NEVER CHANGE**. Stated another way, **the way that you actually change is by basing your life on something that never changes**. Listen carefully. When you do that one simple thing, when you incorporate that one simple reality into your life, you create a “**PARADIGM**” that keeps everything else in perspective. Someone is going to rightfully ask “*What is a paradigm?*” Well, a paradigm is like a set of glasses through which you see and understand everything in your life. Your paradigms are how you perceive life. Normally, it is the by-product of everything that has happened in our life. It involves our parents, how we were raised, our friends, our childhood, schools we attended, our spiritual life, our struggles, our marriage, our teachers, books that we have read, places we have been, things that we have done. All of these kinds of things put together create your paradigm, or the way that you view life, what is called your “**worldview**”. You make 95% of your choices and develop 95% of your habits based on your paradigms, based on your personal worldview. So, when you have a paradigm shift, it creates a quantum shift in two distinct, but connected areas of your life. The first is in **how you think** and the second is in **how you live**. You cannot divorce your life from what and how you think. Proverbs says, “**As a man thinks, so is he**”. Your life is simply a reflection of what and how you think.

When I was saved over 52 years ago, everything in my life changed – everything. What and how I thought changed, how I lived changed, my speech changed, my goals changed, by friends changed, and my habits changed. Salvation brought about the greatest paradigm shift that I have ever experienced. It was a **quantum shift**, a dramatic shift. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) says it this way,

2Co 5:17 (NKJV) **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

The Greek Interlinear does not actually use the word “**all**”. The NASB and the ESV say it the best.

2Co 5:17 (NASB) **Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.***

2Co 5:17 (ESV) **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

This is what salvation is. This is what salvation does in a person's life. **Salvation is a new life.** Before, there were “**old things**”, but now they have “**passed away**”. The Greek word for “**passed away**” means to perish in an absolute sense.¹ Listen carefully. This “**things passing away**” and all things “**becoming new**” define Christians versus pseudo-Christians.

This is the difference between followers versus spectators, between disciples versus just church members, and between short-lived decisions and biblical conversions.

When someone is saved, everything changes. The “**old**” life passes away, and God's life becomes active in that person's life – what Paul calls “**new**”. Salvation **IS** a change, actually the greatest change that will ever happen in a person's life. Stated even more strongly, the “**old**” life, the former way of living **MUST** change, or in reality it cannot be considered genuine salvation. It can be considered an experience of some kind, but not salvation. When someone is truly saved, their paradigm, their view, their perspective about life is turned upside down, inside out, and if that has not happened to them, then in reality, it is doubtful that they have been saved. I know me saying all of this cuts across the grain of modern, American, evangelical, easy-believism theology, but this is what a genuine spiritual salvation paradigm shift does in a person's life. God does three very real and distinct things in a new believer's life. He supernaturally **indwells** them with the Holy Spirit, He supernaturally gives them a **new heart**, and He supernaturally makes them a “**new creation**”. At the moment of salvation, “**all things have become new**”. If nothing changes, then there has been no real salvation. Real and obvious change must occur, and when real salvation has occurred, real and ongoing change continues.

The verb for “**have become**” (“**all things have become new**”) is translated in the Greek Interlinear as “**he has become**”. It is in the indicative mood which means that it is a fact that it has actually happened. It is also in the perfect tense which means that it is something that will continue to have an ongoing impact in that person's life. The unbeliever “**has become new**” because a new kind of life now indwells him that was not there before. It is like he has been given a heart transplant. He has transitioned from unbeliever to believer, from lost to saved, from darkness to light. Each are exact opposites, and create exact opposite effects in a person's life. Before salvation, he may have been a nice person, or what some call a good person, but he was not a saved person. However, now he sees everything differently. He thinks differently and desires to live differently. Why? Listen carefully. **It is because he IS different!**

Now, what this series wants to do is to make sure that we all have the right paradigms, or stated another way, that we think the way that God wants us to think. The changes that we want to embrace in our life are **DEVELOPED** from the truths and principles found in the Word of God that never change. When you finally see your life through the lens of God's Word, then His truths and His principles will drastically impact how you see life and how you respond to what happens to you in your life.

¹ Zodhiates, *paraerchomai*, ep.

Your paradigms are the way that you see and perceive something in your life, and they are why you think, act, and respond in a certain way.

A bad paradigm will always lead to bad choices which will always lead to bad results. We have already studied this principle. It is called the “Law of Sowing and Reaping”. You reap what you sow. So, just take someone who is always unhappy, who is always difficult to get along with, who lacks character, who lacks self-control, who is always reacting rather than responding to difficult moments. What is their problem? They have an ungodly and unscriptural paradigm, and until they have a godly “**paradigm shift**” in their life, which may simply be getting saved, nothing in their life will really change. Their life will never make a spiritual impact. When they stand before God, He will not be able to find anything in their life that even really mattered, and certainly nothing that had any eternal value. Jesus clearly describes this in two different verses. This is important, so listen carefully. [Matthew 6:23](#) says,

Mt 6:23 (NKJV) But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Jesus is simply talking here about someone’s paradigms. They see life wrong, and therefore they think wrong. Once they think wrong, they make wrong decisions. Once they make wrong decisions, they develop wrong habits in their life. Jesus calls this process, this progression, this paradigm a “**great...darkness**”. He said something very similar in [Luke 11:34](#),

Lk 11:34 (NKJV) The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when *your eye* is bad, your body also is full of darkness.

In terms we are using, Jesus is saying that when your paradigm is good, then your entire life will be full of wisdom, full of understanding – what He calls “**full of light**”. However, when your paradigm, or your way of looking at life is unscriptural, then your life will be “**full of darkness**”. The Greek word for “**darkness**” in these two verses is “*skotos*” and it refers to spiritual ignorance and error which ultimately leads to sin and misery in your life.²

So, how do we want to understand godly principles? Well, godly principles are spiritual truths that have universal application. They apply to every believer, every marriage, every relationship, every organization. So, what we want to do is to **INTERNALIZE** God’s truth into our life. Once the truth and principles that never change are internalized, then they can be developed as personal habits that become our lifestyle, our way of life, our way of thinking. Listen carefully.

When you develop godly habits in your life, they EMPOWER you to live above your circumstances, above your trials, above difficult people.³

This is so super important, so critical to the Christian life – learning how to live above our circumstances. Godly principles are self-evident. I.e., just consider trying to live a godly life based on the **opposites** of godly principles. For instance, would you consider dishonesty, bitterness, hatred, laziness, arrogance, adultery, or fornication to be a solid foundation for lasting happiness and success?⁴ I seriously doubt that you would. Why? It is because they are the very opposite of biblical principles.

² Zodhiates, *skotos*, ep.

³ Covey, 43.

⁴ Covey, 43.

You have to have what we want to call an “**inside – out**” approach to life.⁵ I.e., we want to start with ourselves first – with our paradigms, our character, our motives, our choices, our habits. We want to evaluate and analyze what things in our life are out of character with Christ. I.e., if you were doing something and Christ walked in on what you were doing, would He be pleased or displeased? Would He say “*Well done*” or just say nothing? You have to answer that question for every part of your life. Is this what God really wants me to be doing or saying or thinking. **You must learn how to have personal victories before you can ever have relational victories with other people.** You cannot INVERT this process. Think of it this way. You cannot harvest a crop before you plant it.⁶ You cannot take shortcuts in the Christian life. You want to have a particular mindset that says “*I am going to make biblical choices that help me develop biblical habits in my life.*” Here is the principle.

The deeper your spiritual convictions, the more spiritual will be your choices and habits.

So, where do you begin? Well, you make small commitments and you keep them. You want to become a model of consistency in your personal life **one choice, one step, one habit** at a time. Work on things that you know that you can do like read your Bible for 15 minutes a day. Make your first goal achievable. Work on the goal of becoming Christlike. Always ask yourself “*Is what I am doing developing Christlikeness in my life?*” Here is where you begin, so write this down.

Pick one area that you know you need to change, and then work on it until it becomes automatic.

Keep a journal of when you started, when you failed, and when you succeeded. Consistently review the journal to assess your progress or lack of progress, to analyze why you failed or why you succeeded. The more you convince yourself that you will do what God wants you to do, the sooner what you wanted to change will become a godly habit in your life. If you were not able to make the change you desired, then confess it, start over, correct it, and seek forgiveness if necessary. Do it quickly. Do not wait.⁷

Force yourself to learn from your mistakes. Listen very carefully, and I will close.

Your life will have the most importance to and influence on both yourself and others when you choose to organize your life to do what matters the most.

Jesus said that if you choose to save your life that you will actually lose it, but when you lose your life for His sake, that then and only then will you find it. Begin tomorrow with the end in mind. Begin with a clear image of what you know God wants your life to be, then think about what He wants you to do to achieve that goal and go find and develop a way to do it. Use your mind. Think, analyze, go do.

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⁵ Covey, 50-51.

⁶ Covey, 59.

⁷ Covey, 100.