

PART 3 – THAT WHICH NEVER CHANGES

This morning I want to provide you with what I consider to be the overriding principle for this entire series. It is the principle that will actually govern every study that we will have in this series on “Embracing Change”, so it is extremely important that you listen very carefully as I provide it to you. Understanding this simple principle is what will help you as much as anything to actually make the kind of changes in your life that you probably already know that you may need to make. Please remember the premise that we have already addressed that everyone of us has areas of our life that God wants us to change. So, here is the principle. This is so super important, so critical for each of us to understand. It is very simple and uncomplicated, and that is what makes it so spiritually profound. Every study going forward will be based on this one spiritual principle, so getting this right in the beginning is very important. Here is the principle, so please write it down.

MEANINGFUL CHANGE IS ALWAYS BASED ON THAT WHICH NEVER CHANGES.

In our case, we are obviously talking specifically about “spiritual changes”, but there may be other common sense type changes that we need to make in our life that support what we want to achieve spiritually. For instance, if we always feel sluggish, unmotivated, and tired, the problem may be that we need to make some physical changes in our life and lifestyle.

1. We may need better rest.
2. We may need to eat better and get rid of all of the junk food and processed foods that are not good for us.
3. We may need to exercise or walk more than we do.

This is just good common sense - right. So, for the record, these are not what we would necessarily consider “spiritual changes”, but I can assure you that when you are physically sluggish, unmotivated, and tired, it WILL impact you spiritually. How you feel physically always affects the other areas of your life, so these may be some of the kinds of changes that you need to make to simply **feed and support** the spiritual changes that you need to make in your life.

For instance, as we go through this series, we will be talking some about how to develop good habits in our life. Why? It is because everyone builds their life around their habits. Some habits are good and some are bad. Whatever habits that you are exercising today are actually a picture of what you will be tomorrow. Whatever habits you have today are shaping what you will become tomorrow. Every single habit that you have in your life today is taking you somewhere tomorrow.¹ Listen very carefully.

Successful people do consistently what unsuccessful people just do occasionally.²

Good habits create good results, and bad habits create bad results. For instance, if choose to eat a lot of junk food, you will get a junk body. If your habit is to binge on junk television, then you will get a junk mind. If you choose to walk regularly, you will be much healthier. The Scriptures call this the law of sowing and reaping, and this spiritual law will not change for us.

❖ EVERYTHING IS CHANGING VERY QUICKLY

¹ Groeschel, 149.

² Groeschel, 158.

Now, the problem that we all have is that we live in a world that is constantly changing. Nothing ever stays the same. The culture is changing, the climates are changing, ideas are changing, technology is changing, lifestyles are changing, the church is changing, the monetary system is changing, the family structure is changing, cars are changing, education is changing – everything around us is changing. So, the point is simple. If you choose to build your life **ON** those things that are always changing, then you will never have any security or stability in your life because you will have nothing to which you can anchor your life. You are simply riding the enemy’s merry-go-round – round and round you go. Right now, today, this week, this year – you are either building your life on something that never changes or you are building your life on that which will surely pass away. [Matthew 24:35](#) says,

Mt 24:35 (NKJV) Heaven and earth will pass away, BUT My words will by no means pass away.

The Word of God and the absolute truth that is contained in it will never change. In the foundational principle for this series that we started with this morning, the Word of God is “**that which never changes**”. The Word of God will not change for you, for me, or for anyone else. It is **UNCHANGING**. It does not care about our opinion about it, our ideas about it, or our personal estimations of it. Our view of the Word of God will never have any bearing on it. The truth of its words will never change. [Hebrews 13:8](#) says,

Heb 13:8 (NKJV) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

This is one of the **anchor verses** that stabilize our life, give us direction, and calm our life when we are anxious. Jesus never changes, His Word never changes, His truth never changes, and His principles and direction for our life never change.

There is no such thing as being on spiritual “auto-pilot” where we just cruise around in our Christian tuxedo based on what a great Christian we have been in the past. That scenario simply does not exist in the Scriptures. Maybe you think that you do not need to change very much. If you think like that, then all that you have to do is to just read the New Testament and that kind of thinking will quickly change. Just read it, just be honest about what it says in some verse or passage and it will quickly dispel that kind of thinking. There are so many verses in the New Testament that just cast both me and my ideas of self-importance to the ground like dust, and the Scriptures have such a unique way of exposing me for what I really am and for how much change I really do need to make in my life. I read them and they make me very uncomfortable and extremely uneasy in my life. I have been a committed Christian since January 1971, but when I read some verses, all I can say is that they almost frighten me as to where I really am in my Christian life.

❖ PART 1 – AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT TO CHANGE

Now, I want us to just look at one simple, little passage to see if we can get a handle on where we really are in our Christian life from the perspective of Jesus Himself. This is a very strong passage, and I only use this passage to make the point that the Scriptures WILL make us uncomfortable, and if they are not making us uncomfortable, then my fear is that something is desperately wrong in our Christian life. Everytime that I read this passage it makes me extremely uncomfortable. In [Luke 9:23-25](#) Jesus said some of the most incredibly challenging words that He ever spoke. When I read these verses, I want you to let me know where you think you are on the spiritual barometer when it comes to addressing

verses like these. In your mind, just envision a scale of 1-10, and then make an honest assessment as to where you think that you may rate on that scale after reading these three verses. I am not trying to play the part of the Holy Spirit, so please forgive me if it even comes close to sounding that way. If you struggle with these verses, then please know that I struggle with them just as much. These verses are as convicting and challenging as any passage that you will find in the New Testament, and they literally demand changes and adjustments for anyone who wants to really follow Christ. So, please do not fool yourself into thinking that you are the exception and get an exemption from verses like these. No one gets an exemption from these verses – no father, no mother, no young person, no pastor, no elder, no believer. Here they are, so listen carefully. These are hard, difficult, demanding. They speak loud and clear, and they never let us off the hook. They will NEVER change.

Lk 9:23 (NKJV) Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

Without doing all of the word studies, the verbs “**Let him deny** and (**let him**) “**take up**” are both in the aorist imperative which is one of the strongest of all verb parsings in the New Testament. Every other verb in this passage is secondary to what Jesus is saying in these two verbs. The question is simple. Do we really want to be a fully devoted follower of Christ? Is that what we really want, is that what our life is really about, is that where we are really headed, or do we have other agendas that absorb all of our attention and time? Today, do we have so many other agendas in our life that are always suppressing what we know God really desires for our life? It does not take much to become completely numb to spiritual truth. If we are going to truly say that we love God and want to live for Him and follow Him in our life, then we have to make an honest assessment about these kinds of verses. Then to make it even more convicting, [Luke 9:24](#) says,

Lk 9:24 (NKJV) For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

How do you wrestle this bear to the ground? If your life is all about you, all about you doing what you want to do, all about having your way and ignoring what God wants for your life, then make no mistake about it, Jesus simply says that you “**WILL LOSE**” your life. Notice that Jesus did not say that this person “**is losing**” – present tense, but that he “**will lose**” – future tense, indicative mood (the mood of fact). This is talking about a future event, a future time when you actually lose your life. Dr. Zodhiates says that it refers to someone losing their soul. This exact verse is written 6 times in the Gospels – twice in Matthew, once in Mark, twice in Luke, and once in John. **There is not another verse in the entire New Testament that is repeated six times.** The Greek word for “**will lose**” is used 90 times in the New Testament and is used to convey the New Testament teaching on eternal destruction and ruin.³ This is a salvation word. This is not a happy word. Jesus said these same kind of very uncomfortable words in [Matthew 7:21-23](#) when He declared the following.

Mt 7:21 (NKJV) "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many

³ Harris, #616, *apollumi*, ep.

wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Here are people who were outwardly sure and confident that they were saved, but Jesus said they were not saved. He never saw them the same way they saw themselves. These were people who in our vernacular went to church, read their Bible some, even prayed for a couple of minutes before they went to bed, and put some Christian plaques on their wall. Some probably had an “I Love Jesus” sticker on their cars rear bumper. They were so sure that they had checked off all of the Christian boxes for salvation. Can you imagine hearing these words being spoken to you on the other side of eternity – “**I never knew you!**” Nothing could be more frightening than to hear those words. What would you do? What could you do? How do you answer that, what can you say? Actually, you would have nothing to say, and nothing that you did say would matter at all. Listen very carefully. **God will not force you into His kingdom. He will not keep begging you to come to Him or to follow Him or to obey Him.** Jesus just let the rich young ruler walk away. He did not run him down and try to persuade him to get saved.

So, how can you know if you are one of God’s children? Is it because you said the proverbial “sinner’s prayer” at some time in your life? Is it because you have been baptized? Is it because you attend church and have a Bible? The way that you can truly and genuinely know if you are one of God’s children and a part of His kingdom is that you are willing to do “**the will of your Father in heaven**”. Then Jesus makes it even more serious in [Luke 9:25](#) when He says,

Lk 9:25 (NKJV) For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

What have I always taught you about questions? They are generally the most important thing that someone is saying. The question is rhetorical, but carries the most weight. You can have everything you want in this life, and in the process lose everything you need for life. Listen very carefully.

You can keep chasing the wrong things, and God is not going to stop you.

What is the problem with the man in v25? He was chasing the wrong things. He wanted the wrong things for his life. **He was satisfied with the wrong things, but in the end he loses everything that means anything.** You can ignore God, you can ignore His Word, and you can do whatever you want to do, but there are always consequences to those choices, and many choices that you make will have eternal consequences to them that you will not like.

So, how often does Jesus say that I have to do this thing He called “**deny myself and take up my cross and follow Him**”? He says that I have to do this “**daily**”, every single day. “*Jesus, you’re not really serious are you?*” Listen - this has to be what we live for. Every morning when I arise from sleeping, Jesus expects me to talk like a disciple, live like a disciple, think like a disciple – and He wants me to do it **every single day of my life**. These three verses will humble you, they will crush you. These verses will crush your pride, crush your vanity, and crush your perceived self-importance and ego – and there is no escape whatsoever from what they are demanding of every one of us. This is the kind of passage that demands change. There is no back door to these verses where we can escape what they are asking of every single one of us.

Here is the problem that we all will face when we come to passages like this. We will do one of two things with it. **First, we will simply ignore it and just move on.** We will read it, but pay no attention to it whatsoever. Bad choice Number One. **Secondly, we will convince ourselves that this is just way too hard and much too difficult for anyone to obey, so we will casually rationalize and justify to ourselves that we really do not have to give it much attention.** Bad choice Number Two.

Now, I have probably chosen one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament for an example of what we need to change, and you are sitting there thinking “*Oh my, I do not want to come to this series. Gary has just lost it.*” Maybe I have, and then again maybe I have not. Maybe, just maybe, this is that series that helps us all see where we really are in our Christian life. If we are really serious about our Christian life, and I hope and pray that we are, then there is real hope for all of us. Trust me, but this series will be much harder on me than it will be on you. I have to develop these studies, do the exposition, then take the Word of God and find a way to help both of us to make the kind of changes that the Word of God WILL demand of us. I promise that I will not come here every week with a hammer. That is not my goal. My goal is very simple.

I want to identify what God says that I need to change in my life, then do everything divinely possible to change it.

Whatever areas of our lives that He wants us to change, I want Him to reveal those areas to us and then for us to do everything in our power to make the necessary changes that will glorify Him.

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