

Chapter 10 Moving on with being changed.

Changed? What's wrong
with me the way I am?



Some things are changed instantly, some take time.

I can remember one of the first things God revealed to me when I first met Him was how the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died on the Cross (Mark 15:38). The Holy Spirit used that to reveal to me that what Jesus did on the Cross gave me entrance to the presence of God. There was nothing I could do to earn or deserve this, it was totally something that He had done. In the King James Bible the word used for torn is “rent.” I used to go around telling everyone, “The veil is rent, the veil is rent!” They looked at me like I was on some drug trip or something. But I knew what I meant.

I owned a neighborhood grocery store when I first met Jesus.

Hundreds of people saw me change overnight! I remember someone asking me, “Now that you are a Christian, do you have to stop doing this or that?” I would say, “I can do whatever I like.” They would look at me in amazement. Discerning the question in their minds I said, “The thing is, what I like has changed. The only things that I like to do now are those which please God.” Now when my desires are improper, the Holy Spirit makes me miserable.

I was a “social drinker” when I met Jesus. I know this is a controversial subject in some cultures, but what I am telling you is not my opinion or argument, it is the way the Lord dealt with me; it is testimony. One unforgettable day a few months after I met Jesus, I reached into my refrigerator for a beer and I heard the Holy Spirit say, “That will grieve Me.” I asked Him why and He said, “Because it replaces what I am supposed to do for you.” I have never regretted not drinking alcohol since then. For me, alcohol is one of the “other gods.” Ask the witch doctors in Africa and Haiti about alcohol.

God changed my likes and dislikes immediately. However, I had no idea how lost I really was and how much of a struggle I was facing. I had no idea of how far my life had strayed from the original blueprint

God had for me. I thought God had really received a prize when He got me! He very gently changed my mind, letting me realize that I was very valuable to Him, but that I needed to change.

I can honestly tell you after walking with God since 1979, the closer I get to Him, the more I see how far I had really strayed from His original blueprint for me. You need to approach this subject with great humility and purpose in order to drop your pride and self-righteousness.

God's eternal purpose for your life is stated in Romans 8:29, which says, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

It took you less than one minute to receive the eternal life of God into your spirit and to make Jesus Lord, but it will take you a lifetime to be changed into His image. True, you have the life of God living in your spirit, and you have been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Actually, you obtained perfect righteousness when you received the life of God into your life. Do not let anyone take that truth away from you. Compromising on that truth will neutralize your walk with God. However, there is another truth for you to realize.

I went through much agony seeking God as to how this whole thing worked. I kept asking Him, "If it is all of grace, then why do I have to perform? Is it really grace, or is it mixed with my works and performance also?"

I have been emphasizing the grace of God and the mercy of God. I have been emphasizing that there was nothing that we could do to earn God's favor or earn our way into Heaven. This is true, and please do not let anyone take that away from you. Read the book of Galatians and discover the message that Paul was trying to give to the church in Galatia.

However, there is another side of the coin that we need to see. Now that you are a believer in the Lord, you should have a passion and desire to live a life worthy of the Lord. "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Ephesians 4:1). Here the apostle Paul urges the Ephesian believers to live a life worthy of the Lord. This means that they have a choice to live a life unworthy of the Lord.

Before I pursue that too far, I need to set a foundation. God created man in His own image. One of those attributes is having a free will or an independent volition. Man is the only created being who has a

free will. True, angels did rebel against God with Satan, but that is still not the same as man's free will. I believe that God probably gave angels one free choice to follow Satan's rebellion or to stay with Him. The fallen angels can never choose redemption as a human can.

Dogs can choose to go left or right, but they must always act like dogs. They are pre-programmed. However, a believer can choose to act like an unbeliever even though he has received a transplanted spirit in the nature of God, Himself. True, the life of God dwells in the believer, but the believer's free choice is still active and he can choose to act as he did before he became a believer.

I am not proposing that one must just act like a believer or imitate God. That is ridiculous, no one can imitate God successfully. God's life must be in that person and that person must choose to allow God's life to be manifested through His strength and His power by the Holy Spirit.

This chapter discusses your responsibility as a believer. In no way am I suggesting any form of legalism or "works program" in order to find favor with God. God's grace has never been "cheap." God paid the highest ransom price to rescue you from the world and Satan.

If you feel that you may live your life as a believer the same way you lived your old life, it may be that you have never really made Jesus Lord, and possibly you have never been born again. No one can make that judgment about you, however please take this as a merciful warning. Don't be deceived, you are not a healthy Christian unless you have a passion to be conformed to the image of Jesus. Notice, I did not say that you were not healthy if you were not perfect. I said you should have a passion to be changed into His likeness. Make sure that you are not going to "other gods" for your needs. That is often the root cause of an unhealthy attitude. Be honest with God on this issue. It is a matter of eternal life and death.

You can take a lesson from the apostle Paul who had a passion to be conformed to the image of Jesus, however he kept falling short. Paul said in Romans 7:15-25, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not

want to do--this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."

You are not two people dwelling in one body! Some Christians actually believe that. No, you are a new creation in Christ Jesus and your old nature has been put to death. Paul did not say he had two natures. He said that there was the "law of sin" at work in the members of his body, which waged war against the law of his mind.

I believe that your old nature is like a tree that has been cut down, but still has live branches that have not yet died. You still have old memory tapes in your brain that want to play. Most of your struggle will be with your mind. You may, however, have to deal with spiritual strongholds and/or demonic strongholds. We will discuss those in later chapters.

So how do we please God, and what is our responsibility? Follow Paul's example of how he solved his dilemma expressed in Romans 7. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:1-5).

First, we need to know that we *have* already been set free. Paul used a description in Romans 7 of a Roman torture when he said, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). There was a Roman custom of strapping the dead victim's body to the murderer's body. The murderer would have to try to live his life in this manner. It

would not be long, however, until the death spread into his body and killed him also. But notice Paul said, “Thanks be to God [He did set me free]--through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25).

In other words, Paul knew that his dead body had been legally released, and what he was dealing with was residual in his mind and in his members. If you keep this in mind, you will live in victory.

Next, you need to heed Paul’s words in Romans 8:1-5 stated above. That is, to live “in accordance with the Spirit, and have your mind set on what the Spirit desires.”

You must then learn to walk in the Spirit, or live in accordance with the Spirit. What does that mean?

Galatians 5:16 says, “I say, then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Walking in the Spirit is a simple, but different way to live. It is the easiest way I know to be right with God on a daily basis. The process that goes like this:

- 1. You continue to look into the Word of God (mirror)** and ask God to show you how to live. Ask Him, and seek what His standards are for your life. For instance, He says to not lie, to treat your friends with love, to submit to your parents and teachers, to treat your brothers and sisters with kindness, to not get drunk, to not be selfish, to not be angry, to always forgive no matter what, etc.
- 2. You determine to live the way God wants you to live**, knowing that you can walk a life worthy of the Lord only through Jesus living His life in you.
- 3. When you fail, and you will**, be totally honest with yourself, God, and others around you. Repent (turn) quickly. The promise is that when you repent (turn) the Kingdom of God is “at hand”, or within your reach.
- 4. Confess your sin to God.** 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- 5. Confess what the Word of God says** about your situation in a positive way. Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with

Christ, and I live; yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And that life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf.”

6. **As you continue to live this way**, those old habits and old sinful ways begin to disappear. The grace of God takes over and gives you the character of God instead of your old character.
7. **Grace “kicks in” for your sin.** You did not become righteous by the things you did. Therefore your righteousness is still there; it just has some dirt on it. While you walk in the Spirit, God gives you grace for your mistakes. He takes the penalty of the sin that you would normally suffer, and He gives you a blessing that you do not deserve.

“Walking in the Spirit” can also be defined as what Jesus called “taking up your cross daily.” “And He said to all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me’” (Luke 9:23). Remember that your relationship with God is based upon a blood covenant. Two thousand years ago He took up His cross in order to shed His blood for the covenant. Now, in order to activate the covenant and make it a reality in your own life, you must take up your cross, which is your act of “shedding your blood.”

Notice that Jesus said “deny himself.” Those two words taken together simply mean to say no to the “old nature” that rises up to take control of your daily decisions. You must say no to your own will, intellect and emotions, and replace them with God’s will, God’s mind and the emotions of the Holy Spirit living in you. I guarantee you that this does not make you a machine or a robot, but it mixes the character of God with your own unique personality and makes you a whole person.

One of the rules I keep in mind is to not live by rules. It is found in Colossians 2:20-23 which says, “Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”

If you have ever tried to break a habit, like overeating, you will understand this Scripture. The more attention you pay to your bad habit or

even sin, the stronger it becomes. Instead, we should *replace* our concentration on the sin or habit with concentration on something or Someone else. This is stated in Colossians 3:1-5 which says, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death [put to death literally means to kill by ignoring], therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

You will tend to become like whatever your eyes are fixed upon!

Do you have a passion and desire to live a life worthy of the Lord? If not, be real with God. Tell Him about it and He will give it to you. If you do have such a passion, remember, live your life without condemnation and “walk in the Spirit.”